

The Books of 1 & 2 Samuel

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(1985–1987 Study)

The following notes on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1985-1987. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by **“Comment”** or **“Q”** (an abbreviation for **“Question”**) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1985-1987)

1 Sam. 1:1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

The phrase “of mount Ephraim” is an improper translation, for the name would mean that Elkanah was from the northern kingdom of Israel. Instead, we believe that Elkanah was an Ephrathite, as stated in the lineage. In other words, Elkanah was from Ephratah, a suburb of Bethlehem in *Judah*, and he was a Levite (1 Chron. 6:16,34).

1 Sam. 1:2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah, and the implication is that there was a problem, a conflict, for Hannah was barren and Peninnah had children. Elkanah’s having two wives is not a startling fact in the Old Testament, for Abraham, David, Jacob, etc., all had more than one wife. No prohibition was given against having multiple wives until the New Testament, which has a higher standard with the marital relationship prefiguring Christ and his Bride. Multiple wives were permitted in Old Testament times so that the population would increase more rapidly, although most men had only one wife at the time 1 Samuel was written. Later, when the Period of the Kings was ending and Zedekiah was about to be dethroned and Jerusalem destroyed, the Lord counseled the Israelites to be sure that children were raised up for a deceased brother who had no lineage, or seed. In Babylonian captivity, the Israelites tried to somewhat make up for the loss of life, but it is interesting that only a small portion of them returned to Israel at the end of the 70 years. Nevertheless, the number was more significant than it would have been without multiple wives.

1 Sam. 1:3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

Elkanah went three times a year to worship and sacrifice at Shiloh—for Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles—as was required under the Law for all males (Deut. 16:16). Eli was the high priest at the time, and he had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Eli was important, for he was the next-to-the-last judge in Israel, Samuel being the last.

Hophni, meaning “hollow” or “cup of the hand” in the sense of a clenched fist or an open-handed slap, prefigured the scribes. Phinehas, an Egyptian word signifying “serpent’s mouth,” prefigured the devious and patronizing Pharisees. Eli essentially means “my God.”

1 Sam. 1:4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

1 Sam. 1:5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

The fact that Elkanah gave “portions” to Peninnah and all her sons and daughters and a “worthy portion” to Hannah indicates he had some means. The King James margin and the NIV state that Hannah got a “double portion” because Elkanah loved her and God had closed

up her womb. He gave these portions each time they went to Shiloh. In other words, part of the animal that was sacrificed was eaten by the offerer, and Elkanah shared the animal with his family. In the distribution, he gave Hannah an extra piece. The same principle applied with a meal (or cereal) offering.

1 Sam. 1:6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

1 Sam. 1:7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

Hannah's "adversary," or rival in the household, was Peninnah, who provoked and vexed Hannah for being barren. A similar rivalry existed between Leah and Rachel and between Hagar and Sarah.

The suggestion is that the family accompanied Elkanah each year on his trip to Shiloh. While it was customary for a family to go occasionally, the Law did not have such a mandatory requirement. Both in transit and at Shiloh, Peninnah kept needling Hannah. As a result, Hannah grieved and did not eat, but she did not reciprocate.

1 Sam. 1:8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

On this particular occasion, Elkanah asked Hannah why she was so sad and did not eat. He tenderly inquired, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?"

1 Sam. 1:9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

1 Sam. 1:10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

1 Sam. 1:11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

Hannah rose up after eating and went to the Tabernacle to offer a prayer and make a lifetime Nazarite vow for a son if God would grant her one. She was "in bitterness of soul" and weeping as she prayed. Under the Nazarite vow, no razor would come upon the child's head. (We are reminded of Samson, who was a Nazarite from birth.) Hannah made the dedication, and evidently, the Lord blessed the relationship, for the child was obedient by disposition yet strong in character. Sometimes a domineering mother suppresses the development of the child, adversely affecting his character, but not in this case, as shown by the temperament, deeds, and actions of Samuel in later life.

Q: Would the Nazarite vow still hold when Samuel matured?

A: From Hannah's standpoint, the vow was perpetual. However, when Samuel came of age, it was his choice or decision to comply. For one who had a tender conscience and knew the circumstances of his birth—his mother's prayer in regard to being barren and her promise to the Lord—it was natural to voluntarily continue the vow.

Q: If Samuel let his hair grow continually, was it extremely long?

A: Yes, he had a long, bushy head of hair that grew until his death and extended down his back. By the nature of his hair and his character and deeds, the people would have known that the length was the result of a Nazarite vow.

Eli sat on a seat in the Court near a post of the Tabernacle. His posture by the post indicated he was a judge. While he was seated there, anyone with a problem could come to him. The post became very significant later, when the Temple was built, the usual practice being to anoint the king by the front pillar in the courtyard.

The word “temple” was used because the Tabernacle had remained stationary in Shiloh for 440 years when this incident occurred, as opposed to the frequent transportation and setting up during the 40 years of the wilderness wanderings. The term “tabernacle” implies a temporary and a journeying state, but now the structure was considered a “temple.”

1 Sam. 1:12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

1 Sam. 1:13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

1 Sam. 1:14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

1 Sam. 1:15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

1 Sam. 1:16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

1 Sam. 1:17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

For Hannah to come into the Court on this occasion was not only proper but customary. A congregation of women customarily came for prayer that was usually ceremonial and more perfunctory, but Hannah’s prayer was sincere and heartfelt. The women were expected to show an act of obeisance to the Lord in their prayers, so Hannah’s agonizing seemed to be out of place. If we put ourselves in Eli’s place, we can understand why he assumed she was drunk. He started to castigate her, but when Hannah explained, Eli replied in effect, “Whatever you have prayed for, the LORD give you peace. May you have that prayer answered.”

“Belial” is a reference to Satan. The word implies an orgy with music, sex, and lust. It is interesting that Eli was ready to reprimand Hannah but could not reprimand his own two sons.

1 Sam. 1:18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Notice Hannah’s response. She cheered up *by faith*, believing her prayer would be answered in the affirmative because Eli, God’s representative, had so indicated. She now had peace of heart and was able to eat. “Her countenance was no more sad.”

1 Sam. 1:19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

“They rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD.” In other words, Elkanah and his family were in a sacred precinct at Shiloh. They got up early in the morning, but before they departed, they went to the Tabernacle and prayed, showing respect and reverence in saying good-by to the LORD of hosts as represented in that sanctuary. Thus the family revered God. Even though there were personal problems and friction, they could reverence Jehovah and love Him, for there are different degrees of honor and obedience.

Notice that their house was in Ramah. Verse 1 said Elkanah was of the side-by-side twin cities of Ramathaim and Zophim. Probably one was the older section of the city, and the other, Ramah, was the newer section. Then “Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her”; that is, Hannah conceived.

1 Sam. 1:20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

With a different pronunciation, the name Samuel can be a play on words. However, Hannah’s giving that name to her son probably signified something like “asked of the LORD,” referring to her agonizing prayer that was answered. Later, as Samuel developed, his name had a different signification.

1 Sam. 1:21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

Verse 21 probably refers to the Passover, the beginning of the sacred year. “Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.” Similarly, we say, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7,8). In other words, the Memorial observance is a time for rededication. Of course in viewing the Passover, the Israelites did not see Christ, but they could see a new life, for they had been in bondage in Egypt when the Lord rescued them in a period of national deliverance. Therefore, they used the occasion of the Passover to feel the start of a new year.

It is likely that the annual vow was a resolution according to a need Elkanah felt from year to year. The vow could vary, but in essence it was a rededication, even if he was trying to brush up on a weakness or a lack. He was showing his intention for the forthcoming year.

Now a new component was added. Hannah, who had been barren, had a child, and evidently, Elkanah made a vow with regard to Samuel. Hannah had dedicated the child, a Nazarite, to the Lord “all the days of his life” (verse 11). The fact that Elkanah did not nullify her vow indicates he was in harmony with it.

1 Sam. 1:22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.

1 Sam. 1:23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

Elkanah went to Shiloh without Hannah on this occasion. Hannah said she would bring the young child to the residence of the Tabernacle in northern Israel after she had weaned him. Depending on the nature of the child and whether the family lived a bedouin type of existence, the length of time to wean a child was much longer than in present-day society. In some cases, the weaning took five years, but it was a *minimum* of three years. As the mother, Hannah would have had a tremendous influence on Samuel during those tender years, and the mode of life was conducive to taking that amount of time for family care. Under the circumstances, it is likely that Hannah took at least five years to wean Samuel so that he would be old enough to be of some service in the Tabernacle when she took him to Shiloh in fulfillment of her vow.

1 Sam. 1:24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young.

When Samuel was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. She also took a three-year-old bullock (according to the RSV), one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine. However, she may have taken three bullocks, which would have been an unusual and costly offering. The King James may be correct, for a full ephah was enough flour for three bullocks, the requirement being a third of an ephah for each bullock.

1 Sam. 1:25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

1 Sam. 1:26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

1 Sam. 1:27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

A bullock was slain—one of the three bullocks? If Hannah took three bullocks, perhaps she was trying to give Eli “child support” or was donating for his keep, for in either case, *old* Eli would be willing or would feel obligated to keep *young* Samuel and break him in for doing little chores in connection with the Tabernacle service.

Comment: It would have been very traumatic for Hannah to leave Samuel with Eli after wanting a son for so long.

Reply: Yes, and we can imagine the affection poured out on that child before he was separated from his mother. Nevertheless, she lived up to her promise. “For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition.”

1 Sam. 1:28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

The words “lent” and “borrowed” had different meanings in the year 1611, when the King James translation was done. For example, at the time of the Exodus, the Israelites *permanently* “borrowed” trinkets and jewelry of silver and gold from the Egyptians. There was no intention to return the items, nor did the Egyptians expect them back. Hannah had promised that Samuel would be the Lord’s from birth to death. Since believing Jews looked forward to the resurrection, she felt she could have more rapport and communion with Samuel in the Kingdom (as vaguely understood by the Israelites prior to Christ).

Q: Did Hannah have more children subsequently?

A: Yes, she had three sons and two daughters (1 Sam. 2:21).

1 Sam. 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

Hannah's prayer reminds us of the Virgin Mary's Magnificat and the inspired prayer of Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Hannah's heart, horn, and mouth were all involved in her rejoicing. She exulted in her joy with Samuel, for her patience and prayer had been rewarded with his birth and childhood through weaning, which took several years.

"My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies." This statement can be viewed in two ways: personally with regard to Hannah and prophetically. All who live righteously in any age, whether prior to or during the Gospel Age, have enemies and encounter opposition in trying to live a godly life. Enemies reproach those who are trying to do the Lord's will. For example, when righteous Noah preached righteousness and prophesied of a future flood, his adversaries reproached and ridiculed him. They scoffed at his warnings of a day of wrath and at his admonitions to prepare themselves, and none repented or heeded his message.

"Mine horn is exalted in the LORD." It was the custom in the Middle East and in Asia for women of high birth to have a headdress with a large horn over their forehead. The slant of the horn indicated their status: married, single, childless, or a bearer of children. A horn slanted downward signified a woman either not yet married or married but in a barren state. An exalted horn meant that the woman was married with children; that is, she was favored.

1 Sam. 2:2 There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

"Neither is there any rock like our God." A "rock" was a firm foundation on which to stand, as opposed to shifting sands. It also provided shade, rest, and refuge in the desert wilderness. Bedouins usually traveled for many miles without finding any shade, so a rock was welcome. To find a large rock with an overhang that cast a shadow was like having an oasis in the desert with relief from the heat. A rock was also a means of defense in warfare and a refuge from the onslaught of the enemy. Thus a rock, which became a symbol of strength, help, comfort, consolation, stability, etc., was meaningful to people who lived back there.

1 Sam. 2:3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

Hannah was thinking of Peninnah: "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth." On different occasions, she had mocked Hannah for her barrenness.

"The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Hannah called attention to God's omniscience, for He knew all that Peninnah had done and in time had rewarded her with Samuel for her suffering. God rewards the contrite and heeds the sparrow's fall (Matt. 10:29-31). Figuratively speaking, the very hairs of the Christian's head are numbered. Thus, whether the application is to the Church now or was to Hannah's situation back there, God was and is aware of the circumstance.

"By him [God] actions are weighed." All actions, good and evil, are weighed. God is aware of things that are happening and properly evaluates them. Some people are very alert and observing, but they are not concerned about others. Not only was Jehovah a God of

knowledge, but He was concerned with the problem of Hannah, who pictures the Church and its hopes. Likewise, God is concerned for the Christian.

1 Sam. 2:4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

Hannah continued, “The war implements of the mighty are destroyed, and the weak are strengthened.” One who is overjoyed is prone to a little exaggeration, as was Hannah in her prayer, and such exaggeration was quite acceptable under that type of emotion. Hannah was referring to her personal experience. Now she, who had been weak and sorrowful, having been humbled, was contrite and having the opposite experience. The Apostle Paul said, “I know both how to be abased, and ... how to abound” (Phil. 4:12).

Of course in the larger picture, verse 4 is prophetic. Ultimately the bows of the evil ones and those who are trying to oppose God’s cause in the earth, angelic or human, will be broken. They will have their day of reckoning.

1 Sam. 2:5 They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

Hannah began to describe a reversal of circumstances. In later life, those who were related to Eli (not his two sons) had to come back and beg for bread. At one time, the revenue received through tithing was proportionately greater. Not only were the priests benefited by the contributions but also their families and relatives who came to them for favors. However, the fortunes would be reversed.

Ultimately the reversal will be true of the Church class too. We usually think of the Church from our current standpoint, but there was much persecution in the Dark Ages. Christians who did not follow in harmony with the Roman Catholic Church were either excommunicated and persecuted or at least had problems with employment and procuring food for their families. Back there the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” had a meaningful double significance. Both literally and spiritually, Christians lived on meager portions from day to day. In comparison, we live very comfortably today.

“The barren hath born seven.” In the reversal, “the barren” will bear seven. Hannah was barren for a while, and in time she bore a total of six children including Samuel. However, the Church will bear seven-fold, spiritually speaking.

“And she that hath many children [now] is [will be] waxed feeble.” Those who flourish in the present life will experience a reversal of conditions in the next life. To have money or wealth is not inherently wrong, but generally speaking, wealth has the effect of harming its possessors, so that Jesus could say, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24). Therefore, a rich person who is faithful in the Lord will be rewarded with proportionately more than one who is poor. The principle applies to one who is rich in goods, talents, lands, prestige, power, or another category. Nevertheless, even the least one in the Little Flock will be mighty grateful. To be any part of the Little Flock is all that one could ever hope for.

1 Sam. 2:6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

For example, the Pharaoh of Egypt and his army who pursued the Israelites perished in the

Red Sea, while at the same time, the Israelites, who had been in bondage as serfs for many years, had their position reversed and were saved. The class who had previously been humbled was exalted, and the class who had been exalted died. This principle is true, even if it is not discerned at present. In the long-term fulfillment, which embraces the future, beyond the present life, these laws will be inexorable. Some of the true Church have asked, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). This long period of patient endurance while waiting for the manifestation of the Lord’s approval is a hard experience, but the rewards will come.

1 Sam. 2:7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

“He [God] bringeth low, and lifteth up.” That was Hannah’s experience. Also, with regard to lineage, the Solomonic line was debased and Nathan was elevated, so that Messiah came through the latter’s lineage.

1 Sam. 2:8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them.

A *principle* is stated here. A beautiful fulfillment is that the Little Flock will be raised above every name except that of God and Jesus, and the Ancient Worthies will also be elevated. Jesus said of those who are called and faithful, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.... Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:3,5). These are long-term benefits. Jesus and the Little Flock will “inherit the throne of glory” and be “set ... among princes.” Several of the apostles were humble fisherman and uneducated from the world’s standpoint, but they will be highly exalted. Coming from Nazareth, Jesus was despised, but in time every knee will have to bow to him. In the vignette of this chapter, Hannah strongly pictures the Church and its longings.

“The pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them.” The figurative “pillars” may be God’s attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power, which are manifested by earth’s experiences. Earth is the testing ground for the development of Jesus Christ, his Church, and mankind, and the permission of evil on earth will be helpful for future generations on other planets. Thus the earth is an opportunity for Jehovah to manifest the attributes that He inherently had but that could be only partially understood previously. For instance, Power could be more easily understood when He created the heavens and hung the earth on nothing, but His Love was not seen except from the life-giving effect or power of the sun on the earth. These are feeble natural manifestations of God’s attributes, but the creation of this planet, the permission of evil, the development of the Church, and the aspect of a proving ground have a spiritual after-effect. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for mankind (John 3:16). These are opportunities for revealing aspects of God that could never have been possible without the creation of planet Earth with this particular purpose or plan. This planet—this little speck in the universe—is where Jesus came to die. Thus the earth is significant and most outstanding from the long-range standpoint. The four pillars of the earth are established here, where they will manifest this aspect of God’s character as no other physical abode will ever demonstrate. The invisible spiritual realm, of which we know very little, is another matter.

Q: From the literal standpoint, would verse 8 tie in with Psalm 104:5, “[God] ... laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever,” and Psalm 102:25, “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands”?

A: The earth is set on an axis, which is an invisible power or rod that runs through the North and South Poles. On this invisible axis, the earth is tilted and turns. There are five or six motions in connection with planet Earth, yet it is so fixed that it is more durable and less influenced by any other power than if steel were set in concrete down here. The invisible is more real than that which is seen with the natural eye (2 Cor. 4:18). The answer to the question is yes, but we are trying to go in back of the literal aspect to see what the pillars themselves represent. Our thought would be God's attributes, but we are not dogmatic.

1 Sam. 2:9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

God "will keep the feet of his saints [the Church]." The first part of verse 9 hints that Hannah's eulogy has a spiritual application to the Church. Of course there were saints in the Old Testament too, but we can see a beautiful Gospel Age application.

Comment: Psalm 91:11,12 reads, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Reply: Satan quoted this Scripture when he brought Jesus in vision to the Temple Mount (Luke 4:9-12). Seeing right through the temptation, which was along natural and physical lines, Jesus rejected it immediately, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." We are not to deliberately put ourselves in a situation that is precarious to our very life, natural or spiritual, and then expect the Lord to miraculously deliver us. It is another matter when we are forced into a circumstance of danger that we cannot help. God keeps the feet of his saints through spiritual agencies, His Word, and the seven messengers to the Church. From an even more careful examination of verse 9, the "feet" are the feet members down at this end of the age, in the Laodicean period of the Church.

"For by strength shall no man prevail." No one will prevail by his *own* strength. We prevail in the *Lord's* strength, not our own, the principle being, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

1 Sam. 2:10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

Judgments have been rendered in the past (such as lightnings that discomfited the enemies of Israel), and they will occur in the future. Jehovah "shall judge the ends of the earth"; that is, there will be *worldwide* judgment.

"He [God] shall give strength unto his king [Jesus], and exalt the horn of his anointed [the Church]." This statement expands the earlier thought of Hannah's own individual horn being exalted (verse 1). The humbling of Jesus and his Church is to be reversed, and as a result, that horn will be exalted in all the earth. Both applications are good. Hannah was fitting the "horn" into her own circumstance, but the Holy Spirit moved her to use language, exuberance, and profound thoughts that were much more significant than she could possibly understand at that time.

1 Sam. 2:11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

Elkanah, Samuel's father, returned to his house in Ramah. Meanwhile, Samuel ran errands and did chores for the aged Eli. With Eli being infirm and his eyesight failing, the child served a

useful purpose, whereas an adult might consider the chores demeaning and/or frustrating. Eli's rank as high priest should have indicated to anyone who was there, man or child, that it would be an honor and a privilege to so serve, but very few see matters in that light.

1 Sam. 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

Eli's two sons were wicked. Some of the Lord's people have been falsely called Belial, and Jesus was accused of doing miracles by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

1 Sam. 2:13 And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;

1 Sam. 2:14 And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.

The custom of the two evil sons was that a flesh hook was dipped into the boiling pot wherein the flesh of the sacrifice was seething. Whatever meat the hook brought up, they kept. This practice was *added*; it was not part of the Mosaic Law.

Leviticus 7:28-34 reads:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace offerings unto the LORD shall bring his oblation unto the LORD of the sacrifice of his peace offerings.

“His own hands shall bring the offerings of the LORD made by fire, the fat with the breast, it shall he bring, that the breast may be waved for a wave offering before the LORD.

“And the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar: but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'.

“And the right shoulder shall ye give unto the priest for an heave offering of the sacrifices of your peace offerings.

“He among the sons of Aaron, that offereth the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right shoulder for his part.

“For the wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons by a statute for ever from among the children of Israel.”

Let us consider what these two priests, Eli's sons, did that was contrary to the Law. The kind of sacrifice referred to in verses 13 and 14 was not a burnt offering, which would have been wholly burnt, and it was not a meal (or cereal) offering because meat was involved. Here, then, is a practical illustration that peace offerings were another matter.

There were two kinds of peace offerings: (1) a thanksgiving peace offering and (2) a vow or voluntary peace offering (Lev. 7:11-21). In either case, the animal was eaten. However, with the

thanksgiving peace offering, there was a time limit of one day. With the vow, there was a time limit of two days, and on the third day, what remained was to be burnt. Before the bulk of the animal could be eaten by the offerer, portions of the animal were given to the priest and his sons—the fat, the breast, and the right shoulder. How was this offering to be done? The offerer himself was to bring the breast, and on top of the breast was the fat. (According to the Law, the fat and the blood could never be eaten.) The offerer brought the breast and the fat to the altar, where the priest removed the fat and burned it on the altar. Then the priest took the breast from the offerer, but that breast belonged not to the priest personally but to the priesthood—to Aaron and his sons. However, the right shoulder was the property of the priest who did the offering. In other words, whoever personally did the work, assisting the offerer, was rewarded with the right shoulder of the animal. Depending on the size of the individual who was trying to carry the bull's right shoulder, the offerer might need help because of the weight.

Q: Did the offerer first butcher the animal himself and then bring the parts to the priest?

A: Yes. Because the population of Israel was at least 7 million in David's day, there might have been several hundred people bringing peace offerings each day throughout the year. The requirement was that the offerer had to bring the sacrifice. Therefore, in bringing the fat and the breast, the offerer first had to kill the animal and skin and quarter it, etc.

Eli's two sons instituted a new practice. Instead of the offerer bringing the fat and the breast, they sent a servant to take the offering, and other things were involved too. (Incidentally, we are using the peace offering as an illustration, for we do not have time to go into the sin and trespass offerings.) The flesh, the entire animal, was seething (stewing or boiling). Since it had to be eaten in a time limit of one or two days according to the type of peace offering, which was a short time for such a large animal, the family partook of the animal. The part that was cooking in the shallow pan, a deeper kettle, or a large cauldron (depending on the size of the animal) was the offerer's. In butchering the animal, he had to set aside the fat and the breast and take them to the priest. Thus the family boiled their part of the animal in a large cauldron, for example, minus the parts for the priest.

If the offerer was conscientious, he wanted to do things according to God's Law, and he had a problem with the interference of Eli's two sons. The servant of the priests looked into the offerer's pot to select the choicest, biggest part and then dipped a *three*-pronged hook into the pot to spear and remove it. The servant did not take a chance with one or two prongs but used three prongs that were no doubt artfully shaped to securely hold the choice meat. In fact, before the servant lifted the flesh hook, he tried to get an additional piece of meat on any empty prong. This unauthorized seizure of meat was uncalled for—it was like a supertax on a thanksgiving or freewill offering.

This unauthorized practice took place *before* the offerer brought the fat and the breast to the priest at the Tabernacle altar. The offerer needed at least half a day to prepare the offering, heat the pot, and seethe the meat. We presume that meanwhile, during the cooking process, he presented the offering of the fat and the breast to the priest, as required by the Law. Again this took time, for he probably had to stand on line while the priest dealt with others.

What was the effect of the unauthorized practice? The two sons robbed the offerer of the joy and enthusiasm of his sacrifice by coming *in the beginning* to get extra meat. The individual had determined with his own heart to make a thanksgiving offering to the Lord, but before he could do that, the servant showed up, undercutting the joy and enthusiasm. What an obnoxious practice in the sight of the Lord—a real stench in His nostrils! Eli's two sons made void the ordinance of the Law through the added tradition of men. By this unauthorized

custom, they made the commandment of God of none effect (Matt. 15:6).

1 Sam. 2:15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

Before the fat was burned, extra (raw) flesh was demanded. Depending on what kind of animal was being offered and the mood of the two priests on a given day, the servant was sent either while the meat was being cooked or before it was cooked. Suppose 50 people came to the Tabernacle that day with their sacrifices. The servant went to one offerer with his flesh hook and then to another and another, etc. Some of the offerers would have already quartered the animal but not yet have put it in the pot. In that case, the servant took raw flesh, which was preferred so that Eli's sons could roast the meat instead of boiling it.

Notice the tone of the demand: "Give flesh to roast for the priest." In other words, "Give me raw meat!" There was no courtesy at all.

Q: In speaking about the enemies of the Cross of Christ, Paul said, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, ... whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18,19). Would Paul have had the type in mind when he spoke about professing Christians who were too concerned about temporal matters?

A: That was particularly true in later times. Paul did not necessarily mean the literal belly but that which it symbolizes—self-satisfaction and self-aggrandizement rather than honoring and serving the Lord.

Q: What was Eli's responsibility with his two sons?

A: He was old, but age was no excuse. He had a responsibility to reprimand his sons, who should have been immediately removed from the priesthood. Even if their removal meant an alternative plan had to be put into effect because there was no other son of Aaron from a technical standpoint, we think God would have forgiven the expediency under the circumstance. Probably Eli rationalized, "If I debar my two sons, who will do the sacrificing?" Another example was when Uzzah put out his hand to steady the tipping Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:6,7). In other words, there can be a concern for the Lord's work that is not proper. Things have to be done *His way*. God would have provided if Eli had been faithful.

Q: Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were instantly killed for offering "strange fire before the LORD" (Lev. 10:1,2). Shouldn't Eli's sons have been put to death?

A: In that case, *God* caused a fire to come down and devour the two sons. Nadab and Abihu could have offered strange fire without Aaron's knowing about their actions, for the Scriptures do not say they had a habit of being drunk. To the contrary, Eli's two sons were *habitually sinful*. Nevertheless, the misdeed of Nadab and Abihu was of sufficient enormity to warrant the death penalty, and the type had to be kept pure during the 40 years in the wilderness.

Comment: In both cases, the situations were pictures.

Reply: Yes. Eli, whose permissiveness allowed the misdeeds, pictures the Great Company. However, the ones who committed the wrong deeds (Nadab and Abihu and also Hophni and Phinehas) picture those who go into Second Death. Incidentally, there are degrees of permissiveness, for one who is permissive can be just as responsible as the sinner depending on the nature of the misdeed. Under the Law, an accessory to a crime was considered guilty of

the act, generally speaking.

Eli should have seen that his two sons were put to death because of other gross sins. Their acts of adultery merited the death penalty. At any rate, with the unauthorized practice of taking meat, they should have been “excommunicated” from the priesthood.

1 Sam. 2:16 And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.

The toleration of these sins cast reproach on God. Eli’s two sons and their servant brazenly and sacrilegiously intruded on the offerer. In some cases, the offerer would say, “You can have all you want, but let me first present the fat and the breast to the Lord.” When the fat was taken off the breast and put in the fire, it was being consumed by the Lord—God ate first. Next the breast was given to the priesthood in harmony with the Law. Then the offerer could go back to his pot and eat. Thus the servant’s coming in at the beginning undercut the character of the individual who was doing the offering. Imagine making a trip to the Tabernacle with an offering and having this happen! In addition to being dispirited, the offerer was distracted from worshipping the Lord by the Lord’s representative (the two priests and their servant).

Little by little, Eli’s two sons would have started the practice of taking meat in excess, probably using prudence, a genteel manner, and nice words in the beginning. But over time, all of the decorum and flowery language were dropped because a habit had developed. As they seared their conscience, they got coarser and coarser in their attitude. Finally, they felt it was *their right* to take the meat. If the offerer did not cooperate, they took what they wanted by force. Had the two sons suddenly started the practice, the awfulness of the crime would have been so apparent that proper steps would have been taken to stop them.

Q: Couldn’t the people have done something to stop the practice?

A: Some did, but Eli did not act. The common people are like sheep. They may be dissatisfied, but they are not leaders.

Q: Is there a counterpart with the scribes and the Pharisees?

A: In the overall picture, Eli’s two sons represent the scribes and the Pharisees. When all of the pictures are taken together, they are integrated parts of a larger picture with still another meaning. The separate incidents are pictures within a larger picture that is more dispensational pertaining to the true Church as a whole, rather than to a localized principle in action.

1 Sam. 2:17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

We are reminded of some of the practices in the nominal Church. However, men can also abhor “the offering of the LORD” in the true Church, which consists of the Little Flock, the Great Company, the Second Death class, and those who are not consecrated.

1 Sam. 2:18 But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

The young child Samuel wore a linen ephod, which was like a short vest coat.

1 Sam. 2:19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to

year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

The “yearly sacrifice” was probably the Passover. Three times a year the males were required to “appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose” (Deut. 16:16). At the time of Passover, Hannah and other family members accompanied Elkanah, and she brought Samuel a “little coat” that she had made.

1 Sam. 2:20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.

1 Sam. 2:21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

Being grateful for the “loan” of Samuel, Eli asked God to bless Elkanah and Hannah by giving her other children. His prayer was in harmony with her having given the child freely to the Lord following the weaning, which would have been a period of three to five (or even seven) years according to the custom back there. The prayer was answered, and she had five other children, three sons and two daughters. Time passed as Samuel “grew before the LORD.”

1 Sam. 2:22 Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Why was the detail included that “Eli was very old”? Because of his age and infirmity, he might have felt justified in not taking drastic action against his sons. Also, he probably wondered who would take his place if he put his sons out of office. (There may have been a decimation in the ranks of the sons of Aaron at that time.) Thus the burden of office increasingly fell upon him. Whatever his thinking, Eli did not take the steps he should have pursued in spite of his age.

Notice the nature of the sin of the two sons—it could not have been much worse, for they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle. Not only was death the penalty for such fornication, but the indication is that this gross sin was committed on the Tabernacle premises, which was an even worse offense.

1 Sam. 2:23 And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

1 Sam. 2:24 Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD’S people to transgress.

Although we are not told the ages of Hophni and Phinehas, they must have been 40 or 50 years old because Eli was 98 years old when he died a few years later (1 Sam. 4:15). The point is that the two sons were mature adults and hence very responsible and guilty for their *habitual* sins, which had been going on for some time. Also, it probably took considerable time for the people to become sufficiently fed up with the gross sins that they had the courage to inform the aged Eli. Many (“all this people”) eventually told him of the evil dealings of his two sons.

Eli scolded Hophni and Phinehas but not vehemently enough. His rebuke was too mild: “Why do ye such things? ... Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD’S people to transgress.” Eli went through the motions of moving his lips, but he softened the nature of the rebuke and had reserve instead of showing proper righteous indignation. He might have heard about his sons’ sins over a period of time until finally he could not ignore the multiple reports. He was pressured into reprimanding them but was not severe enough.

Comment: Since a little leaven leavens the whole lump, perhaps some of the others began to treat the matter lightly and became careless in their own lives (1 Cor. 5:6).

Reply: Yes, for Eli said, “Ye make the LORD’S people to transgress.” When a practice like this occurs in the religious leadership, it influences others to take great liberties without reverential fear. Back there the reasoning would have been, “We did not see lightning come down from heaven and destroy them as with Nadab and Abihu.” The gross sins went on and on. In addition, as stated earlier, when the people brought an offering to the Lord, the two sons sent a servant with a three-pronged hook to grab choice pieces of meat out of the pot before the offerer had time to take his offering to the altar. Thus there were many flagrant violations.

Certain practices came into the priesthood as time went on. In Moses’ day, the priesthood was inaugurated properly, and the laws were enunciated correctly, for the type had to be kept pure. However, negligence occurred over time. Moses’ life shows the ideal situation and what God’s thinking was. Even if succeeding generations were not properly taught, they were still responsible because of the light of conscience, but they were not quite as culpable. At any rate, as time passed, certain principles were neglected.

1 Sam. 2:25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

God allowed the condition to occur for a while in order to reveal the weakness of Eli, but eventually He would slay the two sons through providential circumstances. Stated another way, God intended that future posterity would draw a lesson about Eli of *what not to do*.

Eli continued to speak: “If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him.” The judge first inquires into a matter to make sure that a man really did sin against another; he needs to know who is guilty and who is not guilty. Then the judge sets the penalty and/or exonerates the individual.

Of course a sin against Jehovah is more serious. “But if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?” There are degrees of sin, and only Jesus could entreat in this case.

Q: Wouldn’t verse 25 be an Old Testament parallel to Matthew 18:15-17, where brother sins against brother? Then other examples are given where the sin is against God, and those situations are handled differently.

A: That is true. As an example, Luke 17:3,4 states, “If thy brother trespass against thee [a case of one brother against another], rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” Nevertheless, we have to use a little common sense. If the trespass were of a grievous nature—murder, adultery, etc.—one could not commit the sin seven times in a day and be forgiven just because he said, “I repent.” The Luke text is referring to a situation where a brother demeans the reputation or character of another brother in a serious way but not in a gross sense, for in the latter case, the individual has to answer to the Lord.

We can forgive one who sins against us if he repents, but one who sins against *God* must be forgiven by *God*—with proper evidence of repentance. We can only forgive a sin that is *directly* against us as an individual and is *confined* to us, for once another party is involved, there are considerations for two people. For example, if a brother’s trespass against another party has something to do with his family, then other individuals are involved, and the party cannot just simply forgive, for the sin has gone beyond the one-on-one basis. In other words, repentance

can be mere lip service. The point is that repentance has to be *proportional* to the nature of the deed. With a grievous sin, the individual cannot just say, "I repent," but must manifest a condition of remorse. Unfortunately, some brethren do not know how to make decisions, for they apply serious decisions to minor transgressions, and minor judgments to serious transgressions. Moreover, sometimes one sins against a brother and against God with the same transgression. All kinds of factors have to be taken into consideration.

Here Eli spoke truth to his sons, inferring that they had transgressed against God, but *action* was needed. Words alone were not enough.

There are degrees of sin. The Law required an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but some matters are not concrete. For instance, a brother may hurt the feelings of another or may damage his reputation. Each problem has to be considered separately, whereas the tendency today is to use the thumbnail description of Matthew 18:15-17 for everything. If the trespass is against God or if the sin is public, what is the purpose of going to the brother? The purpose of the Matthew 18 text is to discuss the matter so that it might be corrected and not have to be taken to the Church. Thus the sin is serious enough that if the brother does not respond, then presumably the one who goes to him will see it through. If the brother does not listen to a one-on-one basis, then hopefully, he will listen to a one-on-three basis. If he still does not listen, then the matter should be taken before the ecclesia. However, some matters are so serious and/or public that Matthew 18 is not the solution. A public transgression must be publicly renounced. David was forgiven because he confessed his sin to the whole nation.

Comment: The sins of Hophni and Phinehas were public because Eli heard about them either directly or indirectly from "all this people" (verse 23). A comparable situation was the "commonly reported" sin of 1 Corinthians 5:1.

Reply: The fornication of that fifth chapter was so grievous that it was undreamed of by the Gentiles. Paul stated the matter forcefully as if to say, "How much worse could it be?" And how much worse could the sins of Eli's sons be?

1 Sam. 2:26 And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

In the meantime, Samuel grew in favor with God and men and prospered.

1 Sam. 2:27 And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

1 Sam. 2:28 And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

1 Sam. 2:29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

A "man of God" came to tell Eli of God's attitude toward him for being permissive with his sons. Neither the name nor the origin of this man was given. An unknown personage, he was simply seen as a man of God, and of course his message is what attracts our attention. He came with the spirit of a prophet and, without any flowery introduction, gave his message.

This prophet began to review the history of the priesthood starting with the calling of Aaron, the first high priest. He showed that being high priest under the Mosaic arrangement was an honored position and that anyone who occupied the position should feel thankfulness, respect, devotion, and obedience to the requirements of that particular function of authority. The ephod was the robe, or symbol, of office. Incidentally, Samuel's ephod (verse 18) could have had some kind of ornamentation, but it would not have been too similar, as shown by the principle with the incense; namely, God indicated that there could not be counterfeit incense lest the authority of the priesthood be vitiated.

Comment: Since Eli pictures the Great Company, it is interesting that he is accused of honoring his sons above God. Jesus said that his disciples must love *God* above all earthly relationships (Matt. 10:37).

Reply: Jesus concluded his remarks by saying that if we do not have respect for God and Jesus—if we do not love them with that authority—we are not worthy to be called a disciple. It is understandable that many of us make a covenant of consecration without realizing the depth of that covenant. However, as time goes by and we grow older and are longer in the way of the Lord, we see the significance of the consecration vow and realize that diligence is necessary. God looks for this progression in us until we reach the mark of perfect love and maturity, at which point we have to *stand* against all odds. But to get to that state takes time.

What is the thought of “wherefore [why] kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering”? When large animals such as the bull and the horse get annoyed, they impulsively kick. Neglect or refusing to do something can be considered aggression or disobedience. Resistance, “kicking,” is activity in the wrong direction. Eli's neglect was kicking at God's sacrifice. By his neglect, by his silence, by his not doing anything about his sons' transgressions, he was kicking against God's regulations.

Comment: When Paul was blinded by the bright light on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, a voice said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to *kick* against the pricks” (Acts 9:5).

The man of God asked, “Wherefore ... [do you] make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” We are reminded of Deuteronomy 32:15, “Jeshurun [the nation of Israel] waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he [Jeshurun, Israel] forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” Israel was called “a stiffnecked people” because the majority resisted God (Exod. 32:9). Since God has been dealing with the Israelites, they have higher requirements and better rewards. Those who act accordingly and obey are proportionately more blessed.

“Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, ... and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” The two sons had their servant take the cream of the sacrifices for themselves. Not satisfied with the tithing set forth under the Law, they pursued the practice of *exorbitant* tithing and, consequently, got rich. The implication is that Eli shared in that wealth, for it was in the family. Instead, he should have put his sons out of office. By neglecting to take this action, he honored his sons more than God. Eli probably rationalized his lack of action and did not think he was honoring them above God. When Hannah was agonizing in prayer for a son, Eli readily reprimanded her, thinking she was drunk (1 Sam. 1:14). However, he could not reprimand his own sons, who were committing *habitual and much more serious sins*. Sometimes people can act with strength when there is no cost to themselves, but like Eli, they fail to act when there is personal cost.

With regard to the worship of the golden calf, Moses asked, “Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me” (Exod. 32:26). Because all of the Levites went over to him, Moses said God would give them the office of the priesthood and take it away from the firstborn. In other words, the Levites were substituted for the firstborn of Israel. Moses instructed the Levites who came to him to slay every man who was involved in sacrificing to the golden calf, even if those individuals were their brothers, their best friend, or a relative. Because they loved God in spite of the cost, the Levites were honored.

Q: Is there a class at this end of the age comparable to those who worshipped the golden calf, indicating we should speak up against them?

A: There is not necessarily a specific application to the end of the age, for the picture has applied to the antitypical priesthood throughout the Gospel Age. Many Christians have this test. Somewhere in the Christian’s life, when he is more mature, he will have to take such a stand against an individual close to him, in or out of the brotherhood. Or perhaps an idol of some kind has to be cut off. We must love God supremely. We are weak in the flesh because many things distract us from thinking about God, but we need this theme of purpose so that if something should arise between God and us, we will obey God first. All of the Little Flock will have this test, but not necessarily those who do not measure up to this degree of worthiness. Putty is not tested, so the degree of development indicates whether this test will come. For each step faithfully taken under such conditions, a commensurate reward is given, even in the present life in most cases. However, we should act *on faith* and not on the thought of reward.

1 Sam. 2:30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Because of disobedience, God said He would remove Eli and his posterity from the priesthood.

Q: Initially Eli, and probably even his sons in their younger days, must have been obedient. Otherwise, why would Hannah have committed Samuel to Eli? Did conditions get progressively worse after Samuel came on the scene?

A: God’s office is another matter. For instance, we aspire to the spiritual priesthood of God—not only that we might be considered as such in the present life but also that we might prove to be faithful kings and priests to God in the future. However, if we went by the failures or the practices of other people, every one of us would see discouraging examples. Our dedication is to the *Lord*, so even if the whole world goes astray, we want to make our calling and election sure. Therefore, we cannot use the poor examples of others as an excuse in our desire to attain that high goal.

Comment: Since Hannah went to Shiloh only once a year, she may not have been fully aware of the sins of the sons. Uppermost in her mind was how she could serve the Lord.

Comment: Eli pictures the Great Company, who do not start out with that destiny in mind. Therefore, initially they must have had the ability to make their calling and election sure.

Reply: That is true, but the instruction one receives is a factor. An individual can be well-intentioned, but if he does not have the proper principles, which should get clearer as he grows, he will not attain the Little Flock. In proportion as one desires to grow, if he does not hear right doctrine, which shows the proper way, his consecration will be affected—unless he personally prays to God for help and direction. He must want to know God’s Word and will

more clearly. He must be determined that whatever God's will is, he will do it. In answer to prayer, he will find out that obedience is difficult, but if he follows through, that is to his credit. Some brethren want to obey until they come to a trial that they consider to be too difficult.

Consider Hannah. She prayed to God for a child, saying, "If I get this man child, I will give him wholly to you" (1 Sam. 1:11 paraphrase). After weaning Samuel, she sacrificed him. Since she lived in southern Israel and the Tabernacle was in northern Israel, she was away from her son all year until she went up to Shiloh to give him a coat and to have some fellowship with him. She kept her word, but what would normally happen? A woman would pray and get the child and then forget her promise or find excuses to delay fulfilling it—and the longer the delay, the less apt she would be to ever fulfill the promise. At the time Hannah made the commitment, she would not have realized the full tugging of the heart that she would experience. But to her credit, she kept her word. This is the type of character that will make the Little Flock. Abraham was fully willing to slay Isaac, in whom the promise was. Therefore, whether or not one makes his calling and election sure may have nothing to do with the individual himself but with a diversionary goal, practice, or idol apart from what God's will is for him. Frequently the test that comes pertains to personalities.

God had said, through the "man of God," that indeed Eli's house and the house of his father would walk before Him forever, but now, "Be it far from me." How do we harmonize the promise with its withdrawal? The priesthood would be forever *based on obedience*. The spiritual priesthood is not necessarily selected according to the flesh, for individuals are called from all different peoples with varying backgrounds, Gentiles as well as Jews. Eli and his two sons were debarred from the priesthood, but in addition, those who despise God will be lightly esteemed. Eli and his two sons will have an opportunity for life in the future, even though they picture the Great Company and Second Death, respectively.

This portrayal applies to the *true* Church, for there is another system entirely in the nominal Church. Surely not every priest and minister in the nominal Church will go into Second Death. For one thing, most of the religious leaders never made a consecration to do God's will. Rather, they promised to do the will of the denomination. A million people may be in the nominal Church in a certain area. Of that number, perhaps only 10,000 are Spirit-begotten, having made a sincere consecration to the Lord and knowing what they did at the time. We cannot set an example for consecration any lower than to do God's will with *all* our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Although we cannot perform perfectly, that is our intention.

The representation, then, is as follows:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Antitype</u>
Samuel	Little Flock
Eli	Great Company
Hophni	An obvious Second Death class
Phinehas	A Second Death class that is not obvious

Thus the picture must be brought up to the level of the true Church. To try to apply this picture to the nominal Church would be to lower it, and we would fail to get the lesson intended for the house of sons, who are striving for the goal of the Little Flock.

Q: If the two sons represent *two classes* of Second Death, is the representation comparable to Nadab and Abihu? And if so, does the word etymology likewise indicate that one class is more obvious than the other?

A: Yes. The Hophni ("hollow") class is obvious, whereas the Phinehas ("serpent's mouth") class, being less obvious, masquerades as, and is in with and among, the consecrated, as

described in the Book of Jude.

1 Sam. 2:31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

The man of God, sent to rebuke Eli, continued to speak through verse 36. “Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm [Eli would be cut off], and the arm of thy father's house [the branch of the priesthood that Eli came from], that there shall not be an old man in thine house [because Hophni and Phinehas would die early].”

1 Sam. 2:32 And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.

“And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation.” Several translations use the word “rival” instead of “enemy.” In this prophecy, the rival would be Samuel, who eventually succeeded Eli and performed the duties of the priest.

“And thou shalt see an enemy [a rival, that is, Samuel] in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine [Eli's] house for ever.” There would be no successors in Eli's branch. When his two sons died, no one could carry on the priesthood in his name.

1 Sam. 2:33 And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

Samuel, “the man of thine [Eli's],” would not be cut off from God's altar, but how would he “consume” Eli's eyes and grieve his heart? (A subsequent chapter shows that Samuel got a message from the Lord of the same nature as this one.) A prophet, a man of God, came along and informed Eli that he would be cut off and have no posterity, for the priesthood would be removed, and that one before him would be not only a daily reminder of that fact but also his successor. The little boy Samuel was growing up, and in time he would replace Eli. Therefore, every day that Eli saw good Samuel (as opposed to his own two wicked sons) was a constant reminder of the change to come. Samuel's every act of kindness showed that God's favor was on him and that he was a proper choice. And all the evil committed by Hophni and Phinehas was a constant reminder of their being unfit for office. Samuel's faithfulness was a stark contrast to the unfaithfulness of Eli's own sons, who were still in the priesthood. Thus the daily beholding of Samuel's conduct and how it gnawed away at Eli internally, as well as the prophecy concerning the removal of the priesthood, tended to weaken him in many respects. This “thorn in his flesh” was to Eli's grief. “And all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age,” that is, before the two sons reached old age.

1 Sam. 2:34 And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.

A sign would come unto Eli; namely, both sons would die in one day. When their death occurred, he would know that the enactment of the prophetic judgment had come to pass. How would we like to receive advance notice that both of our sons would die in one day—and that the priesthood would be cut off not only from us but also from our posterity?

1 Sam. 2:35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

“I [Jehovah] will raise me up a faithful priest.” Verse 35 has a twofold significance. (1) Samuel would be discerned as the immediate successor, and (2) later on, the priesthood would be traced through Zadok (2 Sam. 8:17). “I will raise me up a faithful priest [Samuel first, Zadok yet future], ... and I will build him [the faithful priest] a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed [The Christ] for ever.”

God would have a faithful priest replace Eli, and the house of the faithful priest would be suretied. From a prophetic standpoint with regard to the Kingdom, the Zadok priesthood down here will be subservient to The Christ in glory, and the Ancient Worthies will be the civil servants. At the end of the Millennial Age, when all of the saved world of mankind become kings, the Ancient Worthies, the “princes in all the earth,” will vacate the “camp of the saints” and receive their spiritual inheritance (Psa. 45:16; Rev. 20:9). All that will be left is the emblematic representation of the Third Temple, and the services in that structure will change somewhat to be just a memorial. During the Kingdom, it will be fitting to have a capital and a Temple in Jerusalem to which the people can go, but when all are made kings in the earth, they will not need laws on what they can and cannot do, for the Law of God will be written in their hearts. Having been tried and proven true, mankind will be perfect, so the Temple will be a place (1) for singing praises to God for His acts in past ages, (2) for occasions like the Memorial, and (3) particularly for celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, which will be preserved forever.

Q: Did Samuel become the next high priest?

A: He acted as priest, seer, prophet, and judge. He fulfilled the office of king but not in the way it was later ordained in a more ceremonial fashion, for the time setting here was the Period of the Judges. Samuel was the last of the judges, and there had never been a king in Israel up to this time. Samuel also acted as priest and officiated at the offerings. In addition, he anointed Saul and David. Samuel was probably a Levite by birth in order to become a priest. However, since the Bible does not give Samuel’s lineage, we have to take his heritage on faith.

1 Sam. 2:36 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests’ offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

All who would be left in Eli’s house—his relatives—would “come and crouch” to Samuel, begging for food. They would entreat, “Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests’ offices, that I may eat a piece of bread”; that is, they would beg to share in the priests’ revenue, for members of the priests’ household were supplied with sustenance. The thought is not that those who were left in Eli’s house would ask to be priests but that they would desire some cognizance in order to have a morsel of bread from the successor. Stated another way, they would have to humble their pride in order to survive. We can see the problem, for since the Levites had no inheritance in the land, they would be lacking in food and necessities if they could not partake of the tithing. Moreover, Eli’s relatives would have no “employment,” for they would be cut off from the Tabernacle services and be misfits. In their “outcast” condition, they would be forced to recognize the wrong that had been done by their predecessors (Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas).

One of the promises in the Book of Revelation is that those who persecute the true Church in the present age will one day have the opposite experience. They will have to acknowledge and recognize God’s choice of the Little Flock and bow to them, asking for forgiveness.

1 Sam. 3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

“There was no open vision” in those days because “the word of the LORD was precious [scarce].” Because of a carelessness in connection with the practices of the priesthood, every man did what seemed right in his own eyes (Judg. 17:6). As a result, neither the people nor the priesthood had clarity of vision on the things of the Lord. As the people got out of touch with the Lord by their negligent practices and were departing from Him, He did not communicate as closely. Eli was reprimanded for not properly fulfilling his responsibility.

Comment: A *Reprint* article suggests that the Urim and Thummim could not be used at this point and that possibly the last direct, open vision was in the days of Samson.

Reply: Yes, that explanation would be a part of the picture.

1 Sam. 3:2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

1 Sam. 3:3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

1 Sam. 3:4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

Eli and Samuel had retired for the night in proximity to the Tabernacle when suddenly Samuel heard the voice of the Lord God calling him. Samuel answered, “Here am I” (or “Here I am,” as we would say).

In the Tabernacle arrangement, a responsibility of the priesthood was to keep the lamps on the Candlestick constantly lit, so that they burned 24 hours a day. (Similarly, the coals of fire were not allowed to burn out or be extinguished.) However, when the Tabernacle was up in Shiloh, it was not set up quite the same way as in the wilderness. During those 40 years, the Levites were distributed immediately around the Tabernacle, and the rest of the nation of Israel encamped beyond them. When the Tabernacle was brought to Shiloh, the tribes were no longer around the structure but were scattered throughout Israel in lots as apportioned by Joshua. Thus the physical setup was different.

Also, while the Tabernacle still had boards and sockets and was set up as in the wilderness, there were some changes because the structure was boxed in with a protective exterior framework. During the 40 years in the wilderness, no storm came on the Tabernacle, and it was shielded from the sun by the cloud (Isa. 4:5,6). The Lord miraculously protected the Israelites, so that no sandstorm, wadi flood, sirocco, or monsoon of any kind occurred. Following the 40 years in the wilderness and the six years of dividing the land under Joshua, there came the 450-year Period of the Judges. Samuel and Eli lived at the end of those 450 years. Since the Tabernacle had now been in existence for about 500 years and the cloud had ceased at the end of the 40 years, some aging had taken place. Without the cloud protection it once had, the wood and the skins of the Tabernacle had aged and storms came. Evidently, some repairs had been made, and a protective barrier was built to fence in the structure and protect it. In addition, because of disobedience during the Period of the Judges, the Israelites were under periods of distress, and God periodically raised up a judge to rescue them following a period of captivity.

“Ere [before] the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD.” At nighttime, the oil in the lamps of the Candlestick was replenished so that the light would last until the next morning, at which time the oil was again replenished to last for the day. Apparently, instead of at 3 p.m., the proper time for replenishing the oil, the priesthood took some liberality or laxity and

waited until later, probably using the degree of outside light as the determining factor. In fact, several infractions occurred in both the Law and the Tabernacle services. Once Moses died, the whole setup in the desert of Sinai—the idealistic picture—ceased in that it was no longer followed exactly. For many centuries, a lot of things happened without the strict enforcement of prior years. These centuries were a trial period to see what the people would do. For example, the Israelites were slack in capital punishment, and at night they moved the stakes of land boundaries with impunity, whereas under Moses, the Law was strictly enforced. Thus the desert wilderness experience was an idealistic picture of what God intended His people to do. Then, later on, when they were in the land, came the test as to how well they would live up to that idealistic picture.

Spiritually speaking, we have the same test today in the Gospel Age. Jesus gave a pure gospel message at his First Advent, and the early Church was relatively pure, especially in the days of the apostles. But in the early Church was a little seed of the mystery of iniquity. Subsequently, down through the Gospel Age, a great deflection occurred from the original institution of what the Church should do—just as with natural Israel, there was a great deflection from what had happened in the days of Moses. As a test and a development, God *permitted* the evil that followed in Israel as well as in the Church during the Christian Age. Meanwhile, time has not been wasted, for He has been selecting the spiritual ministers, the kings and priests of the next age, and also the earthly ministers, the Ancient Worthies.

Back to the thought of “ere the lamp of God went out in the temple,” the point is that at the time this regular action took place on that particular night, Samuel had visions in which God called his name. The term “before the lamp of God went out” was being used like “cockcrow” in the New Testament. The rooster did not literally crow at such and such a time. Rather, a certain hour of the day was known as “cockcrow.” And the lamp of God was not literally flickering, ready to go out. Verse 3 is saying that it was time for the replenishing of the oil to take place. At that juncture, after the oil was added, the priest retired for the night.

Eli’s “eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see.” Eli was not completely blind, but his eyesight was poor, so he needed Samuel’s help. As darkness came, Eli had even more problems with his eyesight. Being obedient, Samuel retired at the same time as Eli, who went to bed a little early because his weak eyesight handicapped him. However, he still performed the duties of high priest.

Q: Why was the word “temple” used when the construction of the Temple would not occur until Solomon’s reign?

A: The Tabernacle was now housed in a temporary building at Shiloh. The word “temple” was not used in the sense of measurements being given by God, for the temporary building, or outer framework, was man-made. As the Tabernacle aged, the Israelites felt it was propitious to provide protection. Samuel had a duty to perform in regard to this outer structure, in which the Tabernacle was housed; that is, he was the keeper of the doors (1 Sam. 3:15). These were actual doors, not curtains of the Court, the Holy, or the Most Holy.

1 Sam. 3:5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

1 Sam. 3:6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

1 Sam. 3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet

revealed unto him.

1 Sam. 3:8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

Up to the time of this incident, Samuel had had no prior miraculous communication with God in any fashion. Samuel was sure he had heard a voice, but Eli was equally sure he had not called Samuel. Then God called Samuel the second time, and the boy went to Eli again. But Eli told him to go back to sleep. When God called Samuel the third time, Eli perceived it was the Lord.

1 Sam. 3:9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

1 Sam. 3:10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

The first time that God called and Samuel went to Eli, the boy said, “Here am I; for thou calledst me.” Eli replied, “I called not; lie down again.” The second time God called, Samuel told Eli with a little more emphasis, “Here am I; for thou *didst* call me.” Eli answered, “I called not, my son; lie down again.” The third time God called, Samuel said even more emphatically, “Here am I; for *thou didst call me.*” This time Eli got the point. In other words, Samuel got more insistent each time he was called, and no longer could Eli doubt the veracity. Now he told Samuel, “Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee [the fourth time], that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.”

Comment: No doubt Eli felt set aside. He would have sensed that a message damaging to him was forthcoming.

Reply: Yes, especially since Eli had never had that experience himself.

“The LORD came, and *stood*, and called as at [the] other [three] times.” However, on this fourth occasion, there was a materialization because God knew Samuel would hearken. As his name was called, Samuel obediently responded, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.”

1 Sam. 3:11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

God said to Samuel, “Behold, I will do a thing in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears it tingle.” This was a reference to the taking of the Ark of the Covenant into captivity by the Philistines. The capture of the Ark would startle everyone in Israel. The scandal about Eli’s sons was bad enough, but now God’s Ark would be in the camp of the enemy.

1 Sam. 3:12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

When the retribution started, it would be completed quickly. *In the same day* that the Ark would be taken, Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli would die. Therefore, the retribution would begin and end in the same day.

1 Sam. 3:13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he

knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

The punishment would come because Eli did not remove his two sons from the priesthood. A tongue-lashing was not enough.

1 Sam. 3:14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

Since the iniquity of Eli's house could not be purged with sacrifice, the sins had to be expiated. The punishment, or expiation, was Eli's removal from office. He could not just say, "I am sorry," and have the sins forgiven so that he could start fresh, for he had gone beyond the point of no return as far as the restoration of the priesthood was concerned. (His personal judgment in the future is a separate subject.)

Earlier we suggested that Samuel represents the Little Flock, Eli pictures the Great Company, and Hophni and Phinehas, who were directly involved in the grievous sins, represent two Second Death classes. As the parent, Eli was demoted for his involvement in the sins in a secondhand fashion. He was removed from the priesthood, which in antitype will be filled only by the Little Flock. Thus the destinies of all the consecrated of the Gospel Age are shown in this picture.

1 Sam. 3:15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.

1 Sam. 3:16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.

1 Sam. 3:17 And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

Samuel was in a sensitive situation. As a little boy, he had started under the tutelage of Eli, and he respected and obeyed Eli as God's representative on earth. The bond of affection between the old man and young Samuel is shown in Eli's expression "my son." Earlier the man of God had prophesied the cutting off of Eli and his house, and now Eli would surmise that Samuel was the one to replace him (1 Sam. 2:27-36).

Samuel lay in bed until morning and then performed his duty of opening the "doors of the house of the LORD," the man-made protective shelter, or framework, that housed the Tabernacle. Being sensitive and not wanting to hurt Eli's feelings, he "feared to show Eli the vision." Then Eli called Samuel and asked, "What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee?" and ordered him to tell the *whole* message. In fact, Eli threatened Samuel if any of the message was withheld.

1 Sam. 3:18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

Samuel then told Eli the entire message. He told "every whit, and hid nothing from him." Eli responded, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good." Of course this was the proper spirit, but because Eli had *failed to act* earlier, he was not redeemed in God's eyes. In fact, God had said that sacrifice would not take away Eli's sin (verse 14). Therefore, since Eli did give the right answer here, his response shows that if the Great Company class, who sin, have Eli's tender attitude of remorse, there is hope of salvation. Had Eli hardened himself, there would be no hope as regards the class he typifies.

Comment: *Reprint* No. 5615, “The Voice of the Lord,” is a good article. A spiritual lesson is that Samuel represents the Lord’s people, and sometimes duty necessitates the telling of a matter that we might prefer to hide, but it has to be told.

Reply: Yes, if such a matter was not told, then Samuel would have incurred responsibility.

Q: How old was Samuel at this time?

A: There is no clue as to his age, but he was probably around 18, for time had been passing.

1 Sam. 3:19 **And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.**

Samuel grew physically in stature and matured in character, responsibility, and wisdom. From the time of the night appearance and personal message to Samuel, God began to deal with him. If word of that materialization and message had initially gotten out, the people would have marveled and said, “This type of thing has not happened for ages,” and they would have studied Samuel very astutely and come to him. But Eli was still alive, so it was not as if Samuel were taking over. The message was merely a prediction of what would come to pass.

Normally speaking, the age at which one succeeded to the priesthood was 30, and the age of maturity for battle was 20. In other words, more maturity was needed to be a priest than to go to war. However, when Eli and his sons died, it was logical that Samuel would take over whether or not he was 30 years old, for God had already recognized him.

Samuel “did let none of his [God’s] words fall to the ground.” He diligently did God’s will, and any advice he gave was sound. Samuel spoke with wisdom and was later known as a seer who mechanically prophesied events with almost infallible accuracy.

1 Sam. 3:20 **And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.**

In time all Israel knew that God was dealing with Samuel. They knew that God had spoken to him, and they saw his faithful behavior. When news got out and spread like wildfire about the prophecy of Eli’s being cut off, the people knew it was just a matter of time until Samuel was fully established in the role of priest.

“From Dan even to Beer-sheba” was like saying, “From north to south.” In other words, to the minority of righteous individuals of the nation who were longing for a closer communion with the Lord as in the days of old, the news about Eli and Samuel was electrifying.

1 Sam. 3:21 **And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.**

God appeared again to Samuel in Shiloh, but no details of the vision are provided. In both experiences, God “appeared” through the materialized Logos.

Q: Were the duties of the high priest at this time the same as they were in the wilderness? Were there underpriests?

A: When Samuel later became the priest, the people reviewed the record of his forbears to see which Levites in his branch could fulfill and replace the responsibilities of the underpriests.

Q: Were there continual burnt offerings every day, for example?

A: The account does not necessarily say that there were burnt offerings. Another problem was that Samuel journeyed throughout Israel. The Tabernacle arrangement was temporary, and the Israelites were confined to that arrangement in the wilderness as they moved from place to place. Now, many years later, the people were spread out, so the situation was different. They probably came to the Tabernacle for the main festivals, and underpriests accommodated them. In the wilderness, the people were only 500 or 1,000 feet away from the Tabernacle, so it was convenient for the people to bring their offerings. But now, if someone lived down in Beersheba, for example, he had to think twice because of the great distance. Under those circumstances, it was understood that the Lord would make allowances along certain lines. Nominally, therefore, some services were being performed all the time by the underpriests.

Comment: When the Tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, the people had to go there to sacrifice.

Reply: That is correct, but some changes were made when they entered the land, as recorded by Moses in the Pentateuch. The people did have to go to the Tabernacle for the special feasts, but in this new circumstance, allowances were made so that their daily offerings could be made wherever they were.

Q: Where is Shiloh?

A: Shiloh is north of Jerusalem about halfway to Nablus (Shechem).

1 Sam. 4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

1 Sam. 4:2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

Verse 1 starts a historical account of a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. The Israelites pitched beside a place called Eben-ezer, and the Philistines were in Aphek. It is hard to identify these places today because no one knows their exact location. However, the place names are used in various other places in Scripture, so we can generalize as to where they were located. The battle site was probably not very far north of Jerusalem in the vicinity of Ramah.

Samuel named the place Eben-ezer after the battle; that is, the place was not called Eben-ezer at this time, for Samuel gave it that name later. "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (1 Sam. 7:12). Incidentally, it seems quite likely that Samuel was responsible for writing his own two books, 1 and 2 Samuel. In reviewing his life, he looked back on these places and said the battle took place in the vicinity of Eben-ezer, for the place was known by that name in the latter part of his life.

In the accounts in 1 and 2 Samuel and in 1 and 2 Kings, the number who were slain in battle is characteristically given. The Philistines killed about 4,000 Israelites in this particular battle.

1 Sam. 4:3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the

covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

Verse 3 starts to tell about another confrontation in the same battle. Realizing they had suffered a defeat, the elders of Israel suggested that the Ark of the Covenant be fetched out of the Tabernacle at Shiloh and taken into battle. They thought that with the presence of the Ark, they would be victorious.

Comment: A *Reprint* article suggested that the elders might have thought back on, and considered as a precedent, how the Ark was with the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai and also when the Jordan River dried up and the nation went over dry-shod, but those situations were different. Now they were in a battle, whereas previously God had directed the Israelites to have the Ark with them. Here they were being presumptuous.

Reply: While the Israelites lost 4,000 men, that number was nothing compared with the losses in some of their other battles.

Q: In this case, the Israelites were ripe for punishment, so they had to lose the battle. However, if they had been obedient yet taken the Ark, wouldn't the act still be wrong and presumptuous because they did not have God's permission to move the Ark?

A: Yes, because the Ark was in a place of rest at Shiloh. The matter would have been different if the Israelites had been marching with the Ark and were suddenly confronted by an enemy, that is, if a surprise attack occurred while they were in transit caravan-fashion. To the contrary, there was preparation before regular battles, so that when the enemy began to approach, the Israelites then aligned themselves for a battle.

Comment: The Israelites should have inquired of the Lord before trying to take the Ark into battle.

Q: Would the Israelites also have thought of the Ark of the Covenant as a fetish? The elders of Israel said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."

A: It is possible that in addition to knowing the Ark represented God's presence, the people could have had that thought.

Comment: The Ark had been stationary now for many years, and as stated in 1 Samuel 3:1, there had not been any recent vision.

Reply: Yes, we would concur, but certainly the people did not have real faith, for they said, "It [the Ark] *may* save us."

1 Sam. 4:4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

"The ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims" is an enlightening expression signifying that the Ark was symbolic of God's presence. (The two cherubim did not represent God Himself, for based on the suggestion the Pastor made in *Tabernacle Shadows*, they represent Love and Power, two of God's *attributes*, two of the principles upon which His government is founded.) Not only did the Ark represent God's presence, but it was like a portable throne, a seat. "The LORD reigneth; ... he *sitteth* between

the cherubims” (Psa. 99:1). The Shekinah light above actually represented Jehovah’s presence, but symbolically speaking, God was seated on the Ark and carried into battle on a portable chair. Now we can see the blasphemy of the pope’s being carried through the throngs on the *Sedia Gestatoria* to be worshipped in St. Peter’s square. What a mockery! He is placing himself not only in Christ’s stead but, worse yet, in God’s stead because the throne represents Jehovah. The Ark was Israel’s most sacred emblem.

Q: The word “between” in the phrase “between the cherubims” is italicized both in the Psalms and here in verse 4. Is the word supplied?

A: Yes. The thought is “above [and between]” the cherubim.

The visions in chapters 1 and 10 of Ezekiel are a picture of the cherubim in God’s presence. There the cherubim support a frozen crystal pavilion upon which is a throne, and on that throne the presence of God Almighty is symbolically represented. The cherubim underneath support the throne, and between them and the throne is a space resembling frozen ice or crystal. The setting is like an enlarged picture of the Ark of the Covenant. Moreover, the cherubim have wheels showing that the Ark is the chariot of God. “This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD [Jehovah]” (Ezek. 1:28). In other words, that whole arrangement is representative of God’s presence and His throne, which is not so static that He has to operate from one strategic place. Rather, His throne can move anywhere. In fact, chapter 10 shows God seated upon the Temple. He left the chariot, as it were, and sat on the Temple. His train, or robes, more or less covered the Temple so that the whole structure was representative of His presence in the midst of the people of Israel.

Hophni and Phinehas accompanied the Ark as it was being moved. Their silence indicates they did not remonstrate or urge that the Lord be consulted in prayer. Hence they approved and were in agreement with taking the Ark to the scene of the battle.

1 Sam. 4:5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

1 Sam. 4:6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

1 Sam. 4:7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

1 Sam. 4:8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

For the Israelites to see the Ark of the Covenant come into the camp must have been quite an encouragement. Arrayed in battle, they gave a “great shout” that was so loud it frightened the Philistines, especially when they realized what the Ark signified. The Philistines began to tremble in fear, crying, “Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.” It was something new—a new precedent—for the Ark to be taken into battle.

The Philistines recognized that the Ark was emblematic of God’s presence. Not only was Jehovah in the Israelites’ presence, but all the forces, or agencies, in the heavenly realm were at His command. This idea was quite popular not only among the Philistines but also among the Hebrews.

1 Sam. 4:9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

The account does not state who gave this message, but the Philistines were ready to surrender when this urgent message came to them. Later, when the fighting resumed, the Philistines were successful against what seemed to be hopeless odds, for they thought the God of Israel, who had visited the plagues upon the Egyptians, would fight for His people.

In another incident, a heathen king was guided of the Lord to speak a true message through his own religion and technique. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had purposed to eventually besiege Jerusalem, but for military reasons, he felt that Ammon was the logical first target. After subjugating Ammon, he would go up through Jericho to Jerusalem. However, when the king instructed his soothsayers to examine the entrails of animals to see if this order of battle should be pursued, the entrails repeatedly indicated he should go first to Jerusalem. He accepted the omen and went to Jerusalem. Thus God directed and overruled the superstitious symbols that were used for judgment to indicate that Nebuchadnezzar should go down and punish Jerusalem. The intention was the same here; namely, God wanted to visit judgment on the Hebrews. However, instead of destroying the Ark, the Philistines took it into captivity, which was like subjugating the Temple of God.

Although the account does not tell the source of the encouraging message of verse 9, which counteracted the great fear of the Philistines, the suggestion is that God originated it. Ostensibly, the Lord suffered a defeat in the battle because the most sacred emblem of the nation was captured and the Israelites were defeated, but subsequent events were a victory for the Lord.

Comment: The technique will be similar when God puts hooks in the jaws of Gog and brings the forces down to Israel (Ezek. 38:4).

Reply: Yes, several other pictures show a similar principle. For example, in the Micaiah account, God put a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets.

Comment: For the expression “quit yourselves like men,” the RSV has, “Acquit yourselves like men.”

Reply: Yes, it means, “Be like men!” Spoken in an imperative sense, the words are forceful. “Allay your fears! Go forth in strength!”

In summary, then, a message came, telling the Philistines to fight courageously like men lest they be defeated and become Israelite slaves. God wanted to visit judgment on the Hebrews, so He overruled to have this message counteract the fear of the Philistines.

1 Sam. 4:10 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

1 Sam. 4:11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

Previously 4,000 Israelites were slain. This time 30,000 footmen died—a significantly larger number—so by taking the Ark into battle, the Israelites experienced a much greater loss of life. Moreover, the Ark was captured, and Eli’s two sons, underpriests Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. At this point, Israel was almost completely demoralized. It was unprecedented that they

had taken the Ark into battle, and it was also unprecedented that the Ark was captured. The capture of the Ark gave a great foreboding of evil and judgment with possibly more to come.

Why did God allow the Ark to be taken and Eli's two sons to be slain? As prophesied earlier, Hophni and Phinehas received a judgment for their past lifestyles of immorality and greed. These two representatives of the priesthood accompanied the Ark into battle. Thus this judgment was on the *present priesthood*. The point is emphasized that the Ark was captured, not destroyed. While the people had been disturbed and had brought the two sons' sins to the attention of Eli, they were obligated to put far more pressure on Eli as the evil practices continued. Failing to do this, they incurred responsibility. In other words, since Eli was too weak to remove his sons from the priesthood, the nation had a responsibility to make sure that they were put out and that another arrangement was made. The chief responsibility lay with Eli and his two sons, but the people were somewhat to blame too. The two sons incurred responsibility because they were committing the sins, and Eli was responsible because he was too lenient. In decision making, it is harder to take a stand toward one's own flesh and blood, but when the Lord's will is known, the right decision should be carried out quickly, without procrastination. The people suffered in the removal of the Ark because it was their national treasure. They went to the Tabernacle to pray and offer sacrifices because the Ark was there. In short, most of the responsibility lay with the priesthood, but the people were responsible too.

1 Sam. 4:12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

A man with his clothes torn and earth upon his head ran from the battle scene to Shiloh, where Eli was. Why does the account state specifically that the messenger was from the tribe of Benjamin? Eben-ezer, mentioned in verse 1, was in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. The Ark had been removed from Shiloh, which was north of Jerusalem, to the locale of Eben-ezer in Benjamin, where the battle was being fought. Then the Ark was taken by the Philistines.

The messenger was in mourning. While we may regard some Old Testament instances of tearing the clothes and wearing sackcloth and ashes as show and as not being as meaningful as the repentance and remorse of the Christian in the New Testament, yet to rend the clothes cost the individual something. Moreover, to either make the head bald or rub ashes or dirt in the hair showed that the individual was humbling himself. This demonstrativeness is a very good picture of repentance, mourning, and remorse. If we spiritualize the forceful literal picture and recognize it as a symbol of repentance, we can see how far-reaching real remorse and repentance should be when a matter is serious and a mere statement is not enough.

1 Sam. 4:13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out.

The messenger found Eli sitting "upon a seat by the wayside watching." What was his purpose?

Comment: A *Reprint* article states that Eli was sitting on a high seat as a judge at the gate.

Reply: At this time in Israel's history, the priesthood seemed to mingle more with the civil affairs of the people than in Moses' day, when "church and state" were kept separate, although both were under the Lord. As time went on, God did not communicate with His people as in days of old because of their deflection, so they began to use judgment on their own. With Eli now acting as a judge, as well as being the high priest, the two offices were coming together. Therefore, it is possible that instead of being seated with the Tabernacle arrangement, he was

sitting by the city gate. Since the roads of that day went through the city gates, it was convenient for Eli to be on the outskirts of Shiloh. In other words, the “wayside” was the road.

Meanwhile, Eli’s “heart trembled [with anxiety] for the ark of God” as he watched and waited for news. Apparently, he anticipated bad news from the time the Ark was taken from Shiloh, and he certainly incurred responsibility if he knew about the plan to take the Ark to battle and did not stop its removal. Eli was “watching” even though his eyesight was poor (verse 15).

“All the city cried out.” The people probably saw the messenger running toward their city and surmised that he was bearing sad tidings. When the messenger related the bad news, the people raised a clamor.

1 Sam. 4:14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

When Eli heard the cries and the mourning of the people, he inquired as to the meaning. The messenger came in hastily and told Eli what had happened to the Ark and his two sons. The word “hastily” indicates that the urgency of his mission was to inform Eli. Therefore, the implication is that he did not linger to tell the people, but said quickly when some inquired, “The Ark has been taken, and Israel has been defeated.” Then those individuals informed others, and as the word spread, the people picked up the refrain and mourned.

The situation would have been similar in Egypt when the destroying angel went through and the firstborn were slain. In the morning, the Israelites could hear the refrain in the houses of the Egyptians. Even though the destroying angel went through at midnight, we can be sure that during that night, for one reason or another, a parent would find his son dead and start to mourn. Then next door, or two doors down, the same discovery was made, followed by mourning. Eventually all the people woke up and found that in every Egyptian household, figuratively speaking, there was a death. Before long, a refrain of mourning went throughout Egypt. When Pharaoh woke up in the middle of the night, he wanted to get an urgent message through to Moses, even before morning.

Q: If Eli was sitting at the gate, why didn’t the messenger first tell him the news, that is, before telling the people?

A: Eli would have been at the east gate of the city. Going from the battle scene to Shiloh in the north, the messenger would have approached from the south and thus entered a different gate.

1 Sam. 4:15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

1 Sam. 4:16 And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled today out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

1 Sam. 4:17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

1 Sam. 4:18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

The prophecy was that *in one day*, Eli and his sons would die (1 Sam. 3:12). Therefore, when Eli heard that both sons were dead, he knew the judgment predicted had come to pass. Even though Eli was 98 years old, his age did not deter judgment. In other words, he did not receive pity because of his old age or his poor eyesight. The judgment was predicated upon *years of disobedience*. During those years, he was given many reminders that he was weak and failed to take action.

Comment: Throughout his walk, right up to his death, Eli was made aware that he could not make strong decisions. He stood trembling at the gate, knowing he had lacked the courage to stop the removal of the Ark.

Reply: That assumption might very well have been the case. However, since the account is silent on that point, he may not have known about the Ark until after it had been taken. However, his judgment was irrevocable because it was prophesied twice, once by the appearance of an angel of God and also by a man of God on another occasion.

Verses 16-18 give the order in which the news was revealed to Eli. (1) There was a great slaughter, (2) his two sons were slain, and (3) the Ark of God was taken. The news got increasingly worse, so it was the last item that caused Eli to lose his balance, fall backward, break his neck, and die. The slaughter of the people was a great tragedy, the death of his sons came into his own family, but the capture of the Ark was unbelievable.

Comment: It was to Eli's credit that the news of the Ark was the greatest shock. Since he represents the Great Company, his reaction shows that he was an overcomer but not a more-than-overcomer.

Reply: Evidently, Eli had a pleasing personality and demeanor, but that was part of his weakness, for he lacked sufficient backbone. For instance, when informed that he and his sons would be removed from the priesthood forever, he replied, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Sam. 3:18). There was a tenderness in the way he addressed Samuel, and when the messenger came from the battle scene, Eli asked, "What is there done, *my son?*"

Those who end up in the Great Company originally ran for the high calling. They were in good standing when first accepted, but they lose out and thus, like Eli, are removed from the priesthood because of not being faithful to the calling. In the final analysis, the Great Company are only messengers, go-betweeners, in the Kingdom. They will not even have the jurisdictional or executive authority of the Ancient Worthies. However, they will be overcomers, for in order to get life on any plane, one has to be an overcomer.

Eli's neck being broken may indicate he realized his shortcoming and lack to the fullest extent. Just as the Great Company will experience the feeling of alienation from God when they go into the wilderness at the end of the age, so Eli felt alienation when the Ark, symbolizing God's presence, was taken. The most munificent judgment we can attribute to Eli is that he pictures the Great Company. However, he was in a dangerous situation, because he was only one step removed from the sins of his sons. Hophni and Phinehas were the guilty ones, but when a person is that close to gross sin, he can incur the same guilt by too much sympathy and the failure to take a stand.

Comment: For the same reason, Jude was very stern in his epistle. His admonition was to hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

1 Sam. 4:19 And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and

her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

1 Sam. 4:20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.

1 Sam. 4:21 And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

1 Sam. 4:22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

The incident of the capture of the Ark had far-reaching ramifications in the nation of Israel, especially in the priesthood. The wife of Phinehas gave birth immediately when she heard the news. She gave her son the unfavorable name of Ichabod, which signified, “The glory [of Israel] is departed,” and then she died. From an emotional standpoint as a woman, the news of her husband’s death very much affected her, but in summing up the matter, she realized that the captivity of the Ark was the worst news.

The fact that Samuel is not mentioned in this whole incident probably indicates he was not aware of what was happening.

1 Sam. 5:1 And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod.

1 Sam. 5:2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

After the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, they brought it from Eben-ezer to Ashdod, one of their principal cities and the site of the Temple of Dagon. The Ark was set down by Dagon, the fish god, which had the *body* of a fish. Other Philistine cities were Gaza, Gath, Ashkelon, and Ekron.

1 Sam. 5:3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

The next morning Dagon had fallen on its face before the Ark—as if to bow to the Ark. The Philistines set up Dagon in its place again.

1 Sam. 5:4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

On the following morning, when the Philistines opened the temple door, they found that the same thing had occurred. However, this time the head was separated from the trunk of the body, and both hands were severed from the wrists and lay on the threshold of the temple. “Only the stump of Dagon was left.” Since the word *Dagon* means “fish” (just like *Nin* of Ninevah), the thought is that the “fish” stump (or trunk) of the body, remained. Several nationalities worshipped the same god, using other names. In falling twice, Dagon, the main idol, prostrated twice before the Ark of the Covenant, which was evidently situated near the entrance.

1 Sam. 5:5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon’s house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

Henceforth neither the priests nor any of the people would step on the threshold of Dagon's house but stepped over it. What is the significance of this incident with its somewhat odd setting? Based on several identifying factors, the antitypical Dagon is Papacy. The severed head and palms of the hands remind us of Jezebel, whose skull, hands, and feet remained when she was accosted by Jehu (2 Kings 9:31-36). When Jehu called up to the eunuchs, they threw her out of the window, and dogs ate her.

Early Christians used the fish as a symbol of Christianity because Jesus called disciples to be "fishers of men" and preached in the area of the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:19). In fact, fish are prominently used in the mosaic tiles of that area. In time, Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church absorbed both the name of Christianity and the symbol of the fish, which is seen in the cardinals' pointed split "fish" hats, portraying the head of a fish. As the Catholic Church rose in power and influence and was recognized by the Roman Empire, the pagan priesthood, seeing which way the wind was blowing, very conveniently converted to supposedly become consecrated Christian priests. They brought with them a lot of their symbols, one of which was the symbol of Dagon. Cardinal Newman tried to explain the compromise and absorption of pagan customs into the Catholic Church in past centuries and how they became sanctified. An influential Protestant at one time, he converted to Roman Catholicism and wrote a book, trying to explain and justify the pagan idiosyncrasies. Incidentally, the word "nun" is an adaptation of "nin," meaning the female aspect of a fish.

The idol fell twice. In antitype, the two falls are (1) Papacy's fall at the end of the 1,260 years of power and (2) the utter destruction yet to come, when the entire system will go into perdition (Rev. 17:8,11).

1 Sam. 5:6 But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

"Emerods" afflicted those in the city of Ashdod and its suburbs. This mysterious illness was fatal, for some died quickly, that is, in the first two mornings that the Ark was in Ashdod. In addition, others were smitten with emerods.

Comment: The RSV has "tumors" instead of "emerods."

Reply: Some translations use the word "hemorrhoids." In other words, "emerods" were growths, tumors, hemorrhoids, and lumps (especially in male and female organs and in related sensitive areas such as the rectum—see verse 9). Some tumorous growths are very painful.

1 Sam. 5:7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

The Philistines recognized, at least temporarily, that the God of Israel was superior to their own god, Dagon. They realized the plague was a judgment, yet they did not convert or give up their false religion. How strange! The same was true of the people in Egypt and Babylon. Instead of becoming worshippers of Jehovah, they kept worshipping their own god(s).

1 Sam. 5:8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

1 Sam. 5:9 And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was

against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

The lords of the Philistines decided to move the Ark to the city of Gath, but the distressing plague continued. “The hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction” so that “the men of the city, both small and great, ... had emerods in their secret parts.” The plague became increasingly severe.

1 Sam. 5:10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

1 Sam. 5:11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

1 Sam. 5:12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

Meanwhile, the people in Ekron, a third Philistine city, had heard what was happening, so when the Ark was sent to their city, they felt that the God of Israel wanted to slay them. The plague hit Ekron even harder, “for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.” Many died, and the others “were smitten with emerods.” The cry of the people “went up to heaven.” This experience was like the third strike, and the people, fearing, gathered the lords of the Philistines, demanding that the Ark be sent back to its “own place.”

Incidentally, knowing Biblical city and place names and their location helps to unlock Old Testament prophecies by identifying whom they are against—whether they pertain to Babylon, the Philistines, Edom, the Amalekites, etc. For example, Edom has multiple names such as Idumea, Teman, and Esau.

1 Sam. 6:1 And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

The Ark was with the Philistines for seven months. Not only is the number seven a sacred symbol of fullness or completeness, but the Hebrew sacred year consisted of the first seven months.

1 Sam. 6:2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

1 Sam. 6:3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

1 Sam. 6:4 Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

1 Sam. 6:5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

Verses 2-7 are an interesting sidelight of history, for in spite of their animosity toward the Israelites, the Philistines were familiar with Jewish history and background and had a fear and respect lest they incur the wrath of the God of Israel. The Philistines followed the advice of their priests and diviners by making five gold likenesses of two of their afflictions: mice and emerods. Heathen religions thought that the gods had to be pacified with offerings, and even the Old Testament tells about trespass and guilt offerings in the Hebrew arrangement.

In addition to the emerods, there was apparently an unrelated problem with mice. Therefore, the Philistines probably thought they would kill two birds with one stone, as the saying goes. Sending the Ark back to show respect to the God of Israel would indicate they had learned the lesson. But they would make solid-gold symbols of not only (1) emerods, the physical malady that had plagued them in connection with capturing the Ark, but also (2) mice, which were habitually marring the land. In other words, while the Philistines were making this trespass or guilt offering to pacify the God of Israel and stop His wrath, they would also make an offering for the mice that had been plaguing them for some time. Actually, their strategy of tacking the mice onto the situation with the Ark is rather humorous.

“Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, [are] according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.” Five Philistine lords and five cities (one for each lord) comprised Philistia. All five cities represent Christendom, the apostate Church. However, Ashdod, the first city, which had the statue of Dagon, their national god that fell twice, was a complete picture in itself.

As indicated in the commentary for verse 1, which stated that the Ark was with the Philistines for seven months, the number seven shows completeness. Therefore, the seven months correspond to the seven stages of the apostate Church during the Gospel Age, which are contemporaneous with the seven stages of the true Church. Although the Papacy did not come into real power until AD 539, the seeds of Antichrist existed even in the days of the apostles; that is, the papal seed in embryonic form, the Nicolaitan spirit, was present even in the early Church. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7). This alien power was in with the true Church. Not until the Gospel Age is complete will the true Church be liberated from all unclean situations and be born in the beauty of the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6).

To state the matter again, the Philistine priests and diviners advised sending the Ark back with a trespass offering to pacify the God of the Israelites. They hoped that by having a worthwhile offering of five golden mice and five golden emerods accompany the Ark, they would be freed from their ills.

1 Sam. 6:6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

Verse 6 indicates the Philistines knew about the plagues that had afflicted Egypt and how Pharaoh had hardened his heart. They did not want still severer judgments as had happened to Pharaoh.

1 Sam. 6:7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

1 Sam. 6:8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.

1 Sam. 6:9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

The advice of the Philistine priests and diviners continued. Still testing to see if the Philistines were really being punished by the God of Israel, they set the stage. Two nursing cows would be taken away from their calves and tied to a new cart. With the strong maternal instinct and the earnest desire of the calves for milk, the test was to see if the cows would act contrary to nature, ignore their young, and go *voluntarily* to Israel. If the cart did not go by the way of Beth-shemesh, the Philistines would take back the golden emerods and mice.

1 Sam. 6:10 And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

1 Sam. 6:11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

1 Sam. 6:12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

1 Sam. 6:13 And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

1 Sam. 6:14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.

In spite of maternal instincts, the bovine animals left their calves and pulled the cart with the Ark up the highway that was the best approach to the border city of Beth-shemesh just inside Israel. Notice that the animals were lowing, indicating they were feeling the emotional trauma of not obeying natural instincts to return to their young. In other words, they were yearning for their calves. Hence a *supernatural* power overrode their instincts and energized them to go to Israel, not deviating or turning the least bit either to the right or to the left. The lords of the Philistines followed the cart to make sure there was no change of status. At the border, the cows pulled the cart inside the territory of Israel to the field of a man named Joshua, and there they stopped, having performed their task. The Philistines were convinced that the Ark had caused the plagues in three of their chief cities.

The people of Beth-shemesh rejoiced to see the Ark as they were reaping wheat at the time of harvest. Providentially, the cows brought the cart to a “great stone,” which would serve as a landmark for future reference. There in Joshua’s field on that large stone, the people offered the kine, the two female animals, unto God as a burnt offering.

It is interesting that the five golden mice and the five golden emerods were put in a coffer. Thus there were two coffers on the cart: the Ark was an Israelite coffer, and the trespass offerings were put in a Philistine coffer.

1 Sam. 6:15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

1 Sam. 6:16 And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

1 Sam. 6:17 And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

1 Sam. 6:18 And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite.

When the Levites saw that the Ark had been returned, they made offerings right then and there in gratitude to the Lord. The Ark was set down on the “great stone of Abel,” a prominent landmark that “remaineth unto this day.” What is meant by the term “this day”? Certainly the stone remained at least until the day of Samuel’s death, at which time the Book of 1 Samuel was completed and available. However, there is the possibility that this reference is to the time when Ezra collected the books from Babylon. Under Cyrus the Persian, a search was made, and a Hebrew scroll was found in a particular treasure house. The books were in disarray, but Ezra codified them into the Old Testament. Therefore, Ezra may have inserted this note, meaning “to *this* day” around 500 BC, which was about 600 years after this incident with the Ark of the Covenant had occurred.

Q: Did Ezra codify the entire Old Testament starting with Genesis?

A: Yes. Of course the very ancient records, such as those Noah had carried on the Ark during the Flood, were written on some form of stone. The Old Testament contains evidence of certain other records, and Ezra pieced together several scrolls.

1 Sam. 6:19 And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

1 Sam. 6:20 And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

1 Sam. 6:21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

Because the men of Beth-shemesh were careless and disobeyed the specific instruction in the Law not to look into the Ark, 50,070 people died. Therefore, those who remained wanted to get the Ark out of their territory as fast as possible—much as the Philistines had done earlier. Inside the Ark were Aaron’s rod that budded, the golden pot of manna, and the tables of the Law. Once the contents were inside, the lid was put on the Ark, and it was kept shut. By faith, the priests realized that the items were in the Ark, and the Ark was guarded like a sacred shrine in the Most Holy.

Q: How did the Levites happen to be on hand?

A: Some of the Levites lived nearby, so when word spread that the Ark had been returned, they came to Beth-shemesh.

Comment: It is interesting that Levites took the Ark out of the cart, yet Uzzah died for touching

the Ark to steady it while in transit (2 Sam. 6:1-7). Also, the more knowledgeable Levites should have prevented the men of Beth-shemesh from looking into the Ark.

Reply: Some of the Levites may also have looked in the Ark and been among those who died for disobedience. The account does not go into those details.

The men of Beth-shemesh wanted the Ark to be taken to Kirjath-jearim, so they sent messengers to that city, asking the inhabitants to come get that article of furniture. Kirjath-jearim was in western Israel, more specifically southwest of Jerusalem in Judah.

There is a spiritual lesson here. The Philistines' capture of the Ark pictures Papacy's holding the Lord's people "captive" in the wilderness for 1,260 years. True Christians were isolated from one standpoint and held in bondage in mystic Babylon from another standpoint.

1 Sam. 7:1 And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

1 Sam. 7:2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

Verses 1 and 2 cover a period of 20 years. When the Philistines returned the Ark to the border town of Beth-shemesh, the inhabitants of the town were in a quandary as to what to do with it, for a total of 50,070 people died when they looked into the Ark. The men of Kirjath-jearim came and took the Ark to the private home of Abinadab, where it rested for 20 years. His son, Eleazar, was sanctified to keep the Ark.

Q: Can we assume that this Eleazar and his father were Levites?

A: Yes.

"All the house of Israel lamented after the LORD" for 20 years. After Eli and his two sons died, conditions were in a state of flux, and the people lamented because there was not a proper priesthood. We believe Samuel was a Levite, although most Bibles do not so state. At any rate, Samuel was very different from an ordinary Levite, for he had other duties and journeyed throughout the land, judging the nation of Israel, whereas the normal practice was to abide by the Tabernacle.

1 Sam. 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Samuel promised that if the people truly repented, they would be delivered out of the hands of the Philistines, and the mournful conditions would change. The Israelites' experience had started with the capture of the Ark, followed by the death of many people when it was returned. Then for 20 years, it was housed in Kirjath-jearim instead of in Shiloh, and all this time Samuel was the recognized leader of Israel. Meanwhile, the worship of the male god Baal, represented in the plural, and the female goddess Ashtoreth had proliferated. These two false deities, which pertained to sexuality as the statuary shows, had an attraction for the Israelites.

1 Sam. 7:4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

1 Sam. 7:5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

The name Mizpeh means “watchtower.” There are many “mizpehs” in the Bible. This Mizpeh would have been a significant isolated watch point, one that provided a far-reaching view.

1 Sam. 7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

When the Israelites gathered together at Mizpeh for a day of mourning and fasting, water was drawn and poured out before Jehovah to demonstrate the sincerity of their repentance, the water being symbolic of their tears, collectively speaking. In addition, repentance signified a condition in which the people desired purification.

Comment: A *Reprint* article suggests that the water, which came from deep within the earth, was analogous to their repentance, which came from deep within their hearts.

Reply: The Jewish people had customs that were taught in the Law. Thus by nature and by their training, they were given to demonstrations such as wearing sackcloth and ashes. Pouring out the water was another type of demonstration. Sackcloth and ashes more or less showed self-infliction, self-punishment, self-demotion, and self-degradation, whereas pouring out the water was a collective demonstration.

Normally a drink offering, as recorded in the Book of Leviticus as a statutory custom, accompanied other offerings such as a burnt offering or a peace offering; that is, it was a *supplementary* offering. The pouring out of water here was not a drink offering, for no other offerings are mentioned.

The people said, “We have sinned against the LORD,” but how would these words have been spoken? This historical account in 1 Samuel took what the people were saying and boiled the words down to a statement where they collectively admitted they had sinned as a people. Their words suggest that the Israelites did not blame their leadership. As terrible as the leadership of Eli and his two sons had been, adversely affecting reverence for Jehovah, the people were admitting *personal* responsibility for their actions in tolerating the situation. The fallen human instinct is to blame others, so the admission that they themselves had gone astray was a good lesson. The people probably made this statement in a repetitive, singsong fashion accompanied with movement, for when the Jews prayed, they bobbed back and forth.

1 Sam. 7:7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

Incidentally, verses 1 and 2 of chapter 7 were inserted later, for Samuel’s narration in this first book went from 6:21 to 7:2. Therefore, this experience about the Philistines occurred during the 20 years, not at the termination.

The Philistines were opportunists. When they heard that the Israelites were fasting, they prepared to attack them. Similarly, in more recent times, Syria and Egypt took advantage of Yom Kippur to spring a surprise attack on the nation of Israel.

Q: Were the Philistines in the area of the Gaza Strip?

A: The Philistines occupied territory along the coast and to a considerable depth inland. At this time, there was not a hard-and-fast boundary line with regard to the 12 tribes, for in many cases, the Israelites occupied mountains and hills. They were on the spine of the mountain range running north and south, and the Philistines were nearby, down in many of the valleys, occupying the lowlands for the most part. Thus there was a mixture of Israelites and Philistines in much of the land. The Philistines were thorns to the Israelites, keeping them from the fertile plains that were conducive to agriculture.

1 Sam. 7:8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

1 Sam. 7:9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

1 Sam. 7:10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

Samuel petitioned God on behalf of Israel and offered as a burnt offering a young lamb that was still nursing. In addition, he rendered an anguished prayer for Jehovah to lead the Israelites to victory. God answered the prayer in the affirmative but brought victory in His own way. He “thundered with a great thunder ... upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten.” How would this probably have taken place?

Comment: A *Reprint* article suggests that the storm in front of the Philistines was so severe that they turned their backs. Then the Israelites pursued and killed them.

Reply: The tremendous thunderstorm disrupted the Philistines’ battle plans, adversely affecting their reasoning and drowning out the commands of their captains. Lack of communication and complete disarray were the result. The Philistines knew the Israelites had been fasting to their God in a religious service of mourning. Now it seemed to the Philistines that the God of the heavens and the mountains was thundering down upon them, answering and helping the Israelites. Thus they experienced moral trepidations, as well as physical disorientation.

Q: Was Samuel’s offering the suckling lamb part of his plea to the Lord for help?

A: Yes. The very fact that he offered the lamb and that the burnt offering was a simple offering suggests the urgency of the matter. The attack was nearby, and Samuel did not have time to prepare an elaborate offering.

Q: Under the Law, a kid was not to be boiled in his mother’s milk. Therefore, was a nursing lamb a proper offering (Exod. 23:19)?

A: That was true for a period of seven days (Exod. 22:30). Although the account does not state how old the lamb was, Samuel took what was at hand, and the sacrifice was offered hastily, urgently, and simply, along with a hurried prayer. Similarly, as Christians, we are sometimes confronted with serious, sudden decision making, so that a prayer to the Lord has to be done in one or two seconds. The intent of the prayer is given quickly as we ask God what to do.

1 Sam. 7:11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.

The term “under Beth-car” suggests that the town was elevated. The Israelites would have been down on a plain or in a valley or ravine that was below a high place known as Beth-car.

1 Sam. 7:12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

Samuel set a stone between Mizpeh and Shen and called it “Eben-ezer,” meaning “the stone of help.” “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.”

1 Sam. 7:13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

1 Sam. 7:14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Q: Why does verse 14 state that there was peace between Israel and the Amorites when the Israelites were fighting the Philistines?

A: Apparently, the victory over the Philistines was known by the Amorites, who realized the thunderstorm was the answer of Jehovah to Samuel’s prayer. From their perspective, the God of heaven had manifested His wrath against the enemy. Hence the Amorites, as well as the Philistines, were afraid to attack Israel for years. The thunderstorm was an encouragement to Israel and a discouragement to the Philistines and the Amorites. The principle was somewhat the same with the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea. The miraculous cloud that came between the pursuing Egyptians and the fleeing Israelites was a curtain of darkness to the Egyptians and a light to the Israelites.

The Amorites were one of the traditional enemies that the Israelites greatly feared. The Amalekites were even more treacherous. However, the Lord spoke about the iniquity of the Amorites coming to the full (Gen. 15:16). In other words, Israel would not occupy the Promised Land until the iniquity of the Amorites had reached a full term from the divine standpoint. When that point came, they would be expelled. People who settle uncontested in an area for a long period of time have what is inherently recognized by many as “squatter’s rights.” That very possession gives them a certain legality of occupation. Therefore, it was as though God recognized that principle, but a greater principle was that when the iniquity of the Amorites reached such a particular condition, a higher law took over—the law of indignation and justice. From that time forward, the Amorites were unable to confront the Israelites with their former ardor and success in warfare.

Israel got back the Philistine cities of Ekron and Gath, two of the five major cities presided over by Philistine lords (Josh. 13:3; 1 Sam. 5:8,10; 6:4,12,16). As a result, the Philistines no longer had complete domination of the coastline, and Israel now had an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea. We will recall that earlier the Philistines had taken the Ark to Ekron and Gath, and their inhabitants were afflicted with emerods.

“So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.” The Israelites should have increasingly appreciated Samuel’s role in connection with their experience, for they were now getting blessings and the restoration of properties previously lost. Also, they were at peace with two of their worst enemies.

1 Sam. 7:15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

1 Sam. 7:16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

1 Sam. 7:17 And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

Samuel judged Israel by making a circuit of four places that were close to each other: Beth-el, Gilgal, Mizpeh, and Ramah, his hometown. Evidently, Ramah was recognized as the chief of the four places because there the altar to the Lord was built. Samuel “went from year to year in circuit,” that is, in sequential order. He did not excessively backtrack but proceeded in an orderly fashion.

The situation was unusual, for the Ark of the Covenant, the chief object of worship, was in Abinadab’s house, a private home, in Kirjath-jearim, but the altar was in Ramah, Samuel’s hometown. Thus the people were sort of discombobulated in connection with the Ark having been taken and now being housed at a temporary location apart from the Tabernacle for want of knowing what to do with it.

Q: Since another altar was built, is the implication that the people did not use the Brazen Altar of the Tabernacle at this time?

A: Since Samuel judged in Beth-el, Gilgal, Mizpeh, and Ramah, he was not judging where the Ark was, and he used the altar at Ramah, not the Brazen Altar. Inferentially, the account is telling of the strange situation that existed in Israel at this time. The Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh, but there was disarray in the nation with the Ark in one place, the altar at another, and no high priest. Divine Providence seemed to be thwarting a unity that the people felt was necessary, but they did not know what to do about the situation. In fact, Israel was in such constant flux at this time that accurate maps cannot be drawn of the nation during that period of history. Cities were being lost, gained, and added.

Q: With Samuel offering sacrifices at the altar in Ramah, he was acting as a priest. Was he both a priest and a judge?

A: He was a Levite, but there is no indication he was directly of Aaron. For another example, consider what happened during the 70-year Babylonian captivity. The Jews had no Temple, so on the Day of Atonement, they did the best they could. In many periods of Israel’s history, the people were in such a quandary. When the feast days came, the devout of the nation tried to do the best they could under the circumstances. In the days before the conquest of Jerusalem, they took the place where it was recognized that God was dealing with them—Shiloh, Ramah, or some other place—and accommodated themselves accordingly. Similarly, the Lord’s truest, staunchest, most fearless Christians were in mystic Babylon during the Dark Ages, but they were not responsible for the problem. They tried to do their best, having fellowship on an individual basis. The same principle applies to us today. As we read, we try to get the spirit of the Lord’s Word, and then we follow it as much as we are able according to the flesh. Responsibilities are proportionate to what we are able to do.

1 Sam. 8:1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

1 Sam. 8:2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beer-sheba.

1 Sam. 8:3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Like Eli's sons, Samuel's two sons were errant. However, Samuel was not charged with negligence, the difference being that his sons were not immediately under his jurisdiction, and no doubt, although the account does not so state, he did all he could under the circumstances. Samuel may even have been incapacitated in his old age when he made his sons judges. And they were in another locale, Beersheba, which was some distance away. Later we find that Samuel was not just merely recognized and acceptable to the Lord but was singled out with Moses as being one of the top ten in the Old Testament (Jer. 15:1). The point is that we cannot blame Samuel for the sins of his two sons if God did not find fault. There had to be extenuating circumstances. Perhaps he was too old and did not know what was happening (see verse 5).

The two sons took bribes and perverted judgment. Evidently, they gave biased judgment according to the amount of the bribe. When King Saul was anointed shortly thereafter, Samuel's two sons were displaced.

Jesus is the High Priest of the Church, and he is pictured by Aaron, who had four sons. Two of those sons were disobedient, representing Second Death classes. The other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, represent the Little Flock and the Great Company, respectively. In antitype, Jesus is not held responsible for the two who went into Second Death. They were put to death; they died. In this case, Jesus is pictured by Samuel. With regard to Samuel's two sons going astray, we cannot charge him with the responsibility, for the account is silent, whereas Eli was clearly considered to be negligent. The very silence in Scripture infers that Samuel was exonerated, for certainly if he had done wrong, the account would have so stated.

The names of the two sons were Joel and Abiah. Joel means "Jah is God," and Abiah signifies "Jah is Father." Ostensibly, their names were not bad, but they were both evil in the Lord's sight. If we pair them as types with Nadab and Abihu, we would follow the same sequence. Joel is equated with Nadab, and Abiah with Abihu.

Beersheba, located in the southernmost boundary of Judah, has an interesting history based on Abraham, Elijah, and others who went there. In ancient times, Beersheba was a caravan center of commerce, a place where bedouins and nomads went with their camels, the ships of the desert. Spices and other goods were purchased there and then distributed to Jerusalem and elsewhere.

In contradistinction, Beth-el, Gilgal, Mizpeh, and Ramah were in northern Judah, and just that one tribe covered about half the nation of Israel. Speaking in general terms, for its boundaries fluctuated, Judah occupied a tremendous territory. The tribes were distributed in the days of Joshua, the first judge, and Samuel was the last judge. By now, a period of 450 years had elapsed from the time the land was apportioned to the 12 tribes.

1 Sam. 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

1 Sam. 8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Evidently, Samuel did not know what his sons were doing until all the elders of Israel brought the matter to his attention. They used the evil of the two sons and Samuel's old age as a wedge to have a king over them and thus be like the other nations. In other words, they were

inferring that Samuel's sons were not fit judges and that Samuel was too old. Wanting a king to judge them instead of being under judges, the elders respected Samuel as having authority of the Lord and being able to exert his influence in that direction.

Q: Did kings do much judging back there?

A: Yes, but of course kings did not have to travel like Samuel. They delegated authority, and the most serious cases were brought to the attention of the king. Honors, emoluments, dress, decorum, etc., went with that position of leadership. In contrast, Samuel would have dressed very humbly and had no special throne or house.

1 Sam. 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

1 Sam. 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

1 Sam. 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

1 Sam. 8:9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

Samuel felt hurt, which was a natural reaction. He had been used of the Lord in a mighty sense, and then all of a sudden, his service was not appreciated despite his loyalty. He was a Nazarite, so a number of qualities were favorable, but now he felt rejected—until God said it was He the people were rejecting.

Comment: We should remember that principle, for we may feel hurt if our witnessing is rebuffed. We should not take the rejection personally but should remember it is *God's* truth that is being refused.

Reply: Samuel was not criticized for his feelings. His focus of attention just needed redirection. Even Jesus, the greatest of all prophets, was not recognized by some in his own household, by those in his own city, and by his own people as a nation. Shortly before his death, he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37). Thus Jesus had emotional reactions, but he knew how to direct the attention, for it was really the Heavenly Father who was being rejected. Nevertheless, feeling the rejection was part of Jesus' suffering. Therefore, it was proper that Samuel was not a stoic in this experience.

Comment: To Samuel's credit, he did not try to defend his two sons when the evil was brought to his attention.

Reply: Once a king was installed in office, the whole picture changed, for the king became the supreme authority and did the judging and had his own appointees. Thus when Saul came into power, Samuel's sons were automatically out of power.

Probably the very day the elders came to him, or maybe the next day, Samuel prayed about the matter, and God told him what to do. Thus the matter of the king took place quite quickly.

God said to Samuel, “Now therefore hearken unto their [the elders’] voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.” The elders were to be given a scolding, and Samuel was to prophesy what would happen when Israel had a king.

In the beginning, Samuel and the people admired Saul. Even though the desire for the office of king was wrong, Saul was tall and most attractive as a person and seemed to have just the right temperament. But the prophecy was really saying that Israel’s first king would change in time. The name Saul means “little one,” and this one who initially was little in his own estimation would become quite proud later on. Stated another way, Saul would seem like the perfect king, but God hinted that the humble one would become proud.

1 Sam. 8:10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

1 Sam. 8:11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

1 Sam. 8:12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

1 Sam. 8:13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

1 Sam. 8:14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

1 Sam. 8:15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

1 Sam. 8:16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

1 Sam. 8:17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

Samuel predicted the price of a king. What would be so onerous with regard to this situation? Having a king would concentrate a lot of power in the hand of one individual, resulting in oppression. Family life would be broken up. If the people were already giving a tenth (their tithe) to the priesthood, they would also have to give a tenth to the king. Based on the condition of the human race, even if the first king was faithful, the greater number of his successors would be unfaithful. The fact that the king would have liberty to choose whoever he wanted would lead to autocratic power.

Comment: Naboth and his vineyard were an example. King Ahab was covetous of that vineyard, and Naboth lost his life for refusing to give it to the king (1 Kings 21:1-16).

Reply: Yes. Jezebel prodded Ahab to exercise his liberty. At her suggestion, a lot of falsehoods were uttered against Naboth so that he was slain and the king could seize the property.

“Confectionaries” are “perfumers.” For the benefit of the queen—for her whims and fancies—

the king made sure she was well taken care of.

1 Sam. 8:18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

Samuel warned the people that when they would cry out in the future in regard to their king, God would not hearken to them.

1 Sam. 8:19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

1 Sam. 8:20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

In spite of all that Samuel said, the people still wanted a king. Samuel would have emphasized the repeated word “his” in verses 11-17, meaning the king’s: *his* horsemen, *his* chariots, *his* ground, *his* harvest, *his* instruments of war, *his* officers, *his* servants, and *his* work. Not only would the king exercise autocratic power, but that power would be selfishly employed for the king’s personal satisfaction.

1 Sam. 8:21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

1 Sam. 8:22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

Samuel heard all the words of the people and repeated them to God, who told Samuel to “make them a king.” Samuel then instructed the men of Israel to go back to their homes, and of course they would hear later as to what was to be done.

Amendment for Antitype of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas

Earlier we felt that Eli, the high priest, represents the Great Company class and that Hophni and Phinehas, his two unfaithful sons, represent the Second Death element. However, after discussing a question that arose and giving considerable deliberation, we now believe that perhaps Eli represents a class who have a severer fate. Not only does the account say that he fell *backward* when he heard the news of the Ark being taken by the Philistines, but both he and his seed were *entirely removed* from the priesthood. In regard to all other Scriptures that contain an expression about falling backward or a similar expression—and where the application is to a *spiritual* class—we feel the reference is to Second Death. If the falling backward refers to a *worldly* class, the matter is less serious, for it just shows regression. If a lesson or comparison can be drawn with regard to Eli and his two sons and the nominal Church, then Eli would represent the Great Company class. However, this latter interpretation is not likely to be the case. Therefore, all three—Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas—would represent Second Death classes.

Several Scriptures show that falling backward is unfavorable. One text pertains to those who apprehended Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. When he said, “I am he,” they all fell backward (John 18:6). A persuasive picture is where Lot’s wife looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah. Her longing for the sinful conditions left behind represents a Second Death characteristic. In addition, the Apostle Paul said, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but [are] of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39). Thus falling backward seems to indicate a very serious condition.

We would like to draw a comparison between two of Aaron's sons in the Levitical priesthood, Eli's two sons, and Samuel's two sons, all of whom picture Second Death classes.

1. Aaron's two sons were Nadab and Abihu. The Nadab element have a more aggressive nature that is displeasing to the Lord; they are willful to an extreme. Because the Abihu element lacks development along the lines of principles, they also merit Second Death. They appear pleasant and fatherlike and have a tender disposition, but they fail to act on principles.
2. Eli's two sons were Hophni and Phinehas. The Hophni element, corresponding with Nadab, is aggressive and pugilistic. In Egyptian, the root meaning of Phinehas is "serpent's mouth," pertaining to doctrine in antitype and a slyer mannerism.
3. The two sons of Samuel were Joel and Abiah. Joel means "a mighty one" in an unfavorable sense, hence again showing an aggressive nature. Abiah signifies an element who appear pleasant and fatherlike, much like Abihu.

In the *Reprints*, the Pastor said that Eli represents the characteristics of the Great Company class because he had a good spirit. For instance, when Samuel was a boy, Eli manifested a humble, meek disposition in his statement "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Sam. 3:18). It is true that he had a pleasant manner, but the Second Death class is not all thorns and thistles. Of course a great number of the Second Death class have an aggressive disposition that, when developed to a large extent, becomes so manifest that it is not hard to conceive of their reaping a destiny of Second Death. However, if we heard of other individuals who did not have that outward aggressive nature but went into Second Death, we would perhaps be surprised unless we learned the details that caused such a decision.

Eli was faulted for not dealing with the sins of his two sons in the priesthood, and all three died on the same day in connection with the taking of the Ark. Although Eli was not outwardly aggressive like the Nadab class, he failed to deal sternly with his two sons and thus pictures a Second Death class in antitype. Eli was mild-mannered but weak and deficient in moral strength and firmness of character.

Many pictures in the Old Testament show that a lenient attitude toward sin is obnoxious in the sight of the Lord. For example, when a child cursed God, the parents could not just coddle that child or try to reason with him and instruct him in the right way. Under the Law, they were forced not only to remand such a child over to justice but to cast the first stone. Thus in the overall picture, when we reason on Eli's course and conduct, we believe he represents a class that merits a severer judgment than the Great Company.

Eli's death occurred when he heard the news that the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant. When the details are considered, it is more harmonious to say that Eli is a type of Second Death, for he was *entirely* rejected. Many Christians have the false concept that a pleasant manner represents goodness per se and that a disposition which rubs fur the wrong way is unfavorable, yet most of the prophets in the Old Testament, who represented the Lord, spoke in strong terms. We do not think that the people who listened to the prophets were impressed with them as being sweet-natured, for the content of their messages was unpleasant. In fact today, even when one is scolded in the most polite or indirect manner, he is usually offended. But sometimes a rebuke given in a roundabout way does not get the point across, and a proper rebuke should be forceful enough to achieve the desired correction. Brethren who speak strongly against sin are not thought of as serene, peaceful, and sweet-tempered in the normal sense. The point is that as Christians, we can speak *strongly* against sin.

1 Sam. 9:1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the

son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

1 Sam. 9:2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

1 Sam. 9:3 And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

1 Sam. 9:4 And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not.

By seeking in various places for his father's lost asses, Saul was providentially drawn to a location where he would come to Samuel's attention. In going from place to place, Saul and his servant got farther and farther away from his father's habitat.

Comment: Saul was literally the tallest man in Israel, and he was handsome. From a physical standpoint, he was exactly what the people hoped for in a king.

Reply: Both literally and figuratively, Saul was head and shoulders over all the others. He would be admired by the people of other nations as a fit representative of Israel.

Comment: It was as if God were rubbing in the lesson. Saul seemed so ideal, yet he turned out poorly.

Reply: Yes, Saul looked good outwardly from the beginning. All signs seemed favorable.

1 Sam. 9:5 And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us.

1 Sam. 9:6 And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.

1 Sam. 9:7 Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

1 Sam. 9:8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

Step by step Saul and his servant were led to the very village where Samuel was staying. The suggestion came to the servant, probably by divine power, to go to Samuel, who had been a seer for many years. (A seer could forecast situations, almost like a mystic.) It was favorable that Saul felt they should compensate Samuel with a present, but he had nothing to give him. The servant offered to give his quarter of a shekel to the "man of God" as a token of their appreciation for telling them the way.

Q: Was it normal to pay a prophet of the Lord for his services? Why would a prophet charge for what God gave him?

A: With Samuel's dedication, he would not be looking for a reward. However, for Saul and his servant to want to give him a token offering showed respect and gratitude.

Comment: Also, Saul and his servant may have felt that Samuel could use a little gift.

Comment: With the priesthood somewhat in disarray at this point, Samuel was acting as a priest. Therefore, in lieu of the normal tithing, it would seem right to give him something.

Comment: Saul was humble when first chosen.

Reply: Yes, he had the Lord's approval in the beginning.

1 Sam. 9:9 (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)

1 Sam. 9:10 Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was.

1 Sam. 9:11 And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?

1 Sam. 9:12 And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came today to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people today in the high place:

1 Sam. 9:13 As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.

Q: Usually a "high place" had a bad connotation. Was an altar there for offering the sacrifice?

A: Yes. The Brazen Altar was at Shiloh when the Philistines captured the Ark, but whether the Brazen Altar had been moved to this location by this time we do not know. If the religious activity was now in other centers such as Beth-el and Gilgal, the Tabernacle was probably not being used, and some of the articles may have been moved and brought to this city. Samuel's residence was at Ramah, and this city was one of the places he visited on his circuit.

Q: Why was a "high place" being used for the altar?

A: There were several reasons. According to the Law, an altar in the desert or on a level plain was in a raised situation, for when the priest walked up to the altar, he stood on a platform halfway up the altar and was above the people where he could be seen at a greater distance. Had the priest been at ground level, the people would have had difficulty seeing him. In principle, this arrangement would not be necessary under other circumstances, for an altar in an elevated place was more prominently before the people. In the Wilderness of Sinai, the Tabernacle was in the center of the camp, but because the cities had hills and were not built in a mathematical way, the people properly put the altar on the highest peak to make it the center of attention. In the Third Temple of the future, the altar will be at the top of the mountain. From a negative standpoint, if an unsanctified altar of idolatry was built on a high, prominent location, its influence would be that much more far-reaching.

At this time, Jerusalem was occupied by a warlike tribe called the Jebusites. Not until David's

day did the Israelites capture Jerusalem. For the Tabernacle, this period of history was a time of transition and flux. The structure had been in Shiloh for hundreds of years, but now the Ark of the Covenant was in one place and the articles of furniture were in another place. Thus David later saw the advisability of choosing Jerusalem as the site.

A “sacrifice of the people” was taking place. They had set aside this day, knowing that Samuel was coming. He went in succession to the four cities, with Ramah, the chief city of the four, being his home base. Probably the sacrifices were peace offerings, which the people supplied, giving part of the animal to Samuel, who was serving as high priest while the priesthood was in disarray, and eating the rest themselves.

Comment: The timing was perfect for Saul and his servant to arrive and find Samuel.

Reply: Yes, the maidens said in essence, “Hurry and you will catch him.” There were probably two different levels on this hill, for Samuel had to go up the hill to get into the city proper and then up another elevation to where the altar was situated. The maidens were saying, “Intercept Samuel before he goes up the second part of the ascent. Then maybe he will satisfy your need.”

1 Sam. 9:14 And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

1 Sam. 9:15 Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

1 Sam. 9:16 Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

1 Sam. 9:17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

1 Sam. 9:18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

Saul and his servant went up into the city. Meanwhile, God had apprised Samuel in advance about Saul's coming, so the prophet was not caught by surprise. As in the example here with Samuel, the account indicates how the Lord communicated with His prophets in many cases; namely, they heard a voice in their ear. Thus Samuel actually heard God's instruction by voice. Depending on the circumstance, sometimes a vision accompanied the voice, or the voice came from the distance—from the sky or out of a cloud. In many instances, a voice in the inner ear was the “normal” mode of communication because the communication during the Period of the Kings was usually very specific, in contradistinction to the indirect communication with the Urim and the Thummim, which usually took place in the Most Holy. Moreover, in certain cases, God communicated not with the high priest but with a general such as David.

Q: Is there an antitype here in a general sense? Saul represents the nominal Church, and part of the reason the nominal Church developed is that Christians with the Nicolaitan spirit wanted to have an organization with a hierarchy and a clerical setup as they had seen in some of the pagan priesthoods. If those involved had wanted to know the mind of the Lord on the matter, they would have realized that the clerical spirit would lead to oppression and all kinds of problems.

A: Yes, the antitype is explained in several *Reprint* articles. The first three successive kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—each represented something different.

Saul, a Benjamite, was the son of Kish. Samuel was providentially instructed of the Lord that Saul was to be the first king of Israel. Although the people had made the request for a king, Saul was appointed by God. The Lord indicated to Samuel and to those who had requested a king that the answer would be favorable. But the Lord also said that once the people had a king and the king used oppressive power, they were not to expect a removal of the king just because they found the situation discomfoting.

God had told Samuel about Saul the day before, so the prophet was on the lookout the next day to see who the individual was. By putting ourselves in Samuel's place, we can appreciate how impressed he was with Saul's tall and handsome appearance. Saul seemed to look the part of a king. God had said He would point out the man to Samuel. "When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said ... [in his ear], Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people."

Samuel saw Saul at a distance, and Saul was unaware that he would be king. "Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and [not recognizing the prophet] said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is." Samuel was right there in front of him!

1 Sam. 9:19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

1 Sam. 9:20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

1 Sam. 9:21 And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

1 Sam. 9:22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.

Imagine Saul's surprise! He had spent three days looking for his father's asses, and then the seer met him and as much as said, "I have been waiting for you. Aren't you aware that something is going to happen to you and your father's house?" Then Saul was told to go to the high place and was invited into Samuel's parlor, or inner chamber, which was a symbol of favor. There he was made to sit in the chief seat among 30 dignitaries and given a meal.

Notice Saul's humility: "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" We are reminded of Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul after his conversion. Paul was bothered during his ministry, even many years later, for having given approval for the stoning of Stephen. Of course the offset was that Jesus appeared to Saul as a brilliant light on the road to Damascus, but his treatment of Stephen troubled him, nevertheless. On the one hand, Paul said that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5). On the other hand, he said, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). From the standpoint of worthiness, both Sauls felt insignificant. The language used is somewhat similar. Paul had done atrocious things,

but he realized that the Lord had blessed him in spite of his feeling of unworthiness. Humility and meekness are interesting subjects. As one brother said, “Humility is not a rug on which others can wipe their feet.”

Comment: God had said the people were rejecting Him, not Samuel, yet in giving them Saul, God seemed to be giving the best that Israel had to offer.

Reply: Yes. Certain circumstances subsequently arose to give insight into Saul’s character, but everything seemed favorable at first. It wasn’t until Saul had been in office for some time that problems developed. Lessons in the life of Saul are helpful to the Christian in seeing the signs and evidences of a proud spirit developing in one who was very meek and humble in the beginning. Both David and Saul were meek and came from humble backgrounds, but their lives were two contrasts, as we will see.

Comment: It is interesting to see that the servant, as well as Saul, was given the chief place to sit. He had been a faithful companion to Saul in this whole incident.

Reply: Yes. Samuel knew, without being told by Saul, that the two had been searching for three days for the lost animals. However, he said in effect, “I will not answer your question now. You will have to wait until tomorrow when more important information will be forthcoming about you and your father’s house.” Something of national prominence was inferred.

1 Sam. 9:23 And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

1 Sam. 9:24 And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

Samuel gave special instructions to the cook to set aside a choice portion of the meat for Saul. Since Samuel functioned as a priest, if someone gave him an animal, it was usually a choice part (the shoulder or the breast). Evidently, therefore, this shoulder was intended for Samuel, but the prophet had something else in mind, for he knew that Saul would be made king. All of these actions—the chief seat, the choice meat, etc.—were to impress Saul with Samuel’s closeness to the God of Israel. The information and the preparation showed not only that Samuel was a seer but also that Saul would be used for some purpose that was still a mystery to him. No doubt Saul wondered what was going on.

1 Sam. 9:25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

The secret about Saul’s coming kingship was still being kept at this point. Earlier Samuel had told Saul that more information would be given the next day.

1 Sam. 9:26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

1 Sam. 9:27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.

Very early the next morning, at daybreak, Samuel called Saul to the housetop to give instruction and send him away. In those days, the roof of many houses, as in this case, was level with the road, for the houses were built into the side of hilly terrain. Biblical archaeological magazines sometimes contain pictures of ruins of cities built in steps and stairs on the hill, especially in northern Israel, where Zuph was.

Samuel and Saul went out and down to the end of the city. There Samuel sent the servant on ahead and detained Saul for instruction, for he wanted to show him the “word of God.”

1 Sam. 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

1 Sam. 10:2 When thou art departed from me today, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

Samuel anointed Saul to be king by taking a vial of oil, pouring it on his head, and kissing him. This anointing was done more or less secretly, and in many instances, anointings were done privately. For example, at Elisha’s instruction, a son of the prophets privately anointed Jehu to be king over Israel (2 Kings 9:1-6). David, too, was anointed secretly, being only in the midst of his natural brothers (1 Sam. 16:13). Why were private anointings a relatively common practice?

Comment: Even with us, the anointing happens in the present life, but that does not mean we will get the crown later and participate in the inauguration process.

Saul and David were types, picturing two classes. Both individuals were quietly anointed to be kings. One proved to be unfaithful, and the other proved to be faithful—but both became kings. Saul, picturing Papacy, the false Church, took a wrong course. David, picturing the true Church beyond the veil in this picture, took a right course. Incidentally, Saul and David were contemporaries.

Notice the proper order in which information was revealed to Saul. Samuel did not begin by disclosing details of a more trivial nature. First, he said that Saul was anointed to be captain over the Lord’s inheritance. Then Samuel revealed the whereabouts of the lost animals and said that Kish, Saul’s father, was concerned about him, for by now four days had passed.

1 Sam. 10:3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

1 Sam. 10:4 And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.

Starting in verse 3, Samuel next prophesied of two experiences that Saul would have in addition to being king. Again Samuel showed his ability as a seer. Saul would go forth and come to the plain of Tabor, where he would meet three men going up to God to Beth-el. One would be carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread, and the third a bottle of wine—a total of seven items. The three men would salute Saul and give him two loaves of bread, retaining one loaf to offer in sacrifice at Beth-el.

1 Sam. 10:5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the

Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:

1 Sam. 10:6 And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

1 Sam. 10:7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.

To reassure Saul, Samuel continued to give evidences that the prospective king had the Lord's blessing at this time. In other words, the miraculous information was intended to encourage Saul, for it was a confirmation of God's favor. Apparently, Saul needed the manifestations, for he was an unusual person—and humble—at this time.

After being given the two loaves of bread, Saul probably accompanied the three men to the hill of God, where he met a company of prophets (that is, sons of the prophets) who were singing with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp and also prophesying. Then, as another sign of God's favor, the spirit of God would come upon Saul, and he would prophesy and be a changed man.

If there is an antitypical significance, it would be in principle that Babylon was formerly a golden cup in the hand of Jehovah. The nominal Church had custody of the Scriptures but kept them locked in the dead Latin language, the Vulgate tongue, the language of the learned. The Roman Catholic Church purposely kept the Scriptures out of the vulgar tongue of the common people.

Samuel continued to speak to Saul: "And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee." Samuel was saying, "The sum and substance of all these events is to show you that, while I have anointed you, indeed God is with you." How reassuring for Saul!

1 Sam. 10:8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do.

Saul was to go to Gilgal, which was not too far away, and wait seven days for Samuel to come. The seven days were a test for Saul at the very beginning, prior to being installed as king. Later in life he had a similar test of waiting, which he failed miserably when he refused to wait for Samuel and sacrificed himself. This information is helpful, for it shows that a person can change. He can be inherently good, but under certain conditions and influences, if he does not maintain a proper attitude, there can be a radical change in his life and behavior.

1 Sam. 10:9 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

1 Sam. 10:10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

1 Sam. 10:11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

1 Sam. 10:12 And one of the same place answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?

1 Sam. 10:13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

Saul prophesied mightily—more than the sons of the prophets. With regard to the antitype, Papacy had a teaching role in the professed Church of Christ.

Saul's prophesying had a twofold effect. Not only was the Lord giving assurances of His favor to Saul, but others noticed these manifestations. The prophesying was preparing the way, for this capability indicated there was something very unusual about Saul. Consider Samuel. When he began his career, he was a seer (1 Sam. 9:9). He was a young boy when the Lord appeared to him by voice at night, calling, "Samuel! Samuel!" There were some indications in his early manhood that the Lord was using him. Others could see that Samuel had marvelous wisdom, for they noticed the Lord's spirit rested on him. These were the days when he was a seer. As time went on, it became very apparent that not only was he given to seeing visions and having communication with God, but also he had authority as a prophet. When he received commandments, he could say, "Do this!" or "Do that!" and not merely make suggestions.

Q: Was being a prophet a higher step than being a seer?

A: Yes. Sometimes people show signs of great promise or potential, but quite frequently the capabilities do not materialize. With Saul, the prophesying indicated that he had some superior quality, for he was even more outstanding than the sons of the prophets. He and the others probably foretold events that were about to transpire. In connection with the prophesying, perhaps Saul's declaration was more specific than that of the others, showing, as a sign, that he had the Lord's spirit in a superior fashion, at least temporarily. When Saul finished prophesying, he came to the "high place," which was Gilgal.

Saul's prophesying was an assurance and a consolation to Samuel, for as time went on, this handsome individual would be getting more and more adulation from the people. Although Samuel was phasing out, it was encouraging to him that, in the final analysis, he had more information than Saul.

Evidently, Samuel had an affection for Saul because God had appointed him, his appearance was pleasing, and his character was very tender in the beginning. In fact, Samuel's strong bond of friendship and fellowship for Saul remained until God almost had to reprove him for not breaking that bond. Such tests often come to the greatest ones in God's sight, and Samuel was one of the ten greatest Ancient Worthies.

Comment: To be faithful to a principle, we sometimes have to break our friendship with one who has been very close to us. Those experiences are crushing but necessary for obedience.

Reply: Often such trials are not appreciated by others because they cannot read the heart and know all the circumstances that are involved. However, as with Samuel, who was being set aside, the Lord gives strength for each experience. Samuel was consecrated from the womb to serve the Lord, and he faithfully performed that consecration for many years. Now he was gently put aside, as it were, and Saul appeared on the scene. The experience was hard for Samuel because he would wonder if he had not been sufficiently faithful.

1 Sam. 10:14 And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.

1 Sam. 10:15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.

1 Sam. 10:16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

Saul's character was humble to start with. Notice that he told his uncle the truth, but it was a half truth. Sometimes, as here, this technique is quite permissible. Saul did not tell about Samuel's saying he would be king.

Comment: Two proverbs are helpful. "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards" (Prov. 29:11). "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Prov. 17:28).

1 Sam. 10:17 And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh;

1 Sam. 10:18 And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

1 Sam. 10:19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.

1 Sam. 10:20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

Samuel rehearsed the people's attitude in desiring a king. Their words showed they were not fully satisfied with the way God had been dealing with them through judges.

Comment: Samuel knew that Saul would be the king, but he acted out the selection almost like a charade so that the people would be convinced of the choice.

Reply: The situation was similar when the Israelites left Egypt to worship an invisible God, who was not dwelling in a beautiful house made with hands. The same principle applies to Christians in regard to their initial calling in the present life. In the future, God will honor the Church and grant them many privileges and gifts, but the present life is the testing ground for faithfulness. Just as Christians are called out to this unknown God and have no visible image now but will see Him in the future if they are faithful, so He called the Israelites out of Egypt and later appeared to them with a voice on Mount Sinai. However, until the Israelites came to that mountain, they had to exercise faith. There was plenty of evidence of His leadings—the plagues, the dividing of the Red Sea, the manna, the defeat of the Amalekites, etc.—but they needed still more convincing. Similarly, the Christian in the Gospel Age looks for leadership in some visible, viable form. Of course the Lord's Word teaches that God has prophets, or mouthpieces, who assist the brethren, but one's trust is to be in the *invisible* God Himself. We are to hearken to others only in proportion as we feel they properly echo the sentiments of God and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Thus the powerful leadings of the invisible God were not satisfactory to the Israelites, for like us sometimes, they forgot. That is why, in developing and increasing our faith, we need to review the Lord's past leadings in our lives. We need to take stock every once in a while in order to reassure ourselves that God has done great things on our behalf. At times, we go through dark waters in our experiences.

Notice the method Samuel used. All of the tribes were to be represented. As they came near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen, but how? Probably the Urim and the Thummim of the breastplate were used, even though the account does not so state. The tribes were whittled down until Benjamin was selected, showing that the king would come from that tribe.

1 Sam. 10:21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.

1 Sam. 10:22 Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

1 Sam. 10:23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

1 Sam. 10:24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

The selection was narrowed down to Saul, but since he was hiding and not present, the implication is that the selection was done in an indirect fashion. The names were read followed by no response until the name Saul was mentioned. The questions were suited to the breastplate through the Urim and Thummim.

The people would have been waiting with anticipation as each male hoped he would be selected. When Saul could not be found, the people reasoned, "Should he be king?" as if his absence was a negative factor. They needed further assurance that he really was to be the king. God then indicated where Saul was hiding. He was discovered and brought to the fore, and when he stood among the people, they saw that he was a remarkable and unique man of great stature. The people voiced their approval: "God save the king."

The account states that Saul was "higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward." (We would say he was head and shoulders above everyone else.) Then Samuel said to all the people, "See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" Even Samuel was impressed with Saul, who appeared grand and meek. Also, since it was God who had chosen Saul, Samuel had reason to think the choice was a good one. Here is where the saying "God save the king" originated. "Long live the king" is a variation.

Q: Why was Saul anointed previously and privately rather than at this point?

A: Of those who are called to be future kings and priests, Saul is a picture of some who will not prove faithful. David, who was chosen in a similar fashion, represents that portion of the called who will make their calling and election sure. From this standpoint, David and Saul represent the Church in the flesh from two different perspectives. Some prove to be nominal and are entirely rejected, and others are certified as the proper class. David can also be considered to represent the church of the firstborn, which includes both the Little Flock and the Great Company (Heb. 12:23).

Saul pictures those who lose both their anointing and their Spirit begettal and hence go into Second Death. When just two classes are considered, that would be the representation, but there are different ways of looking at this picture. For more information, we will have to wait for future chapters when Saul and David are both on the scene at the same time. Then we will be able to make some analogies.

Comment: Saul's behavior was eventually more reprehensible than Eli's, so it would seem that he pictures a class who lose all life.

Reply: Saul represents a class that is ultimately rejected entirely, but the analogy is not that easy to see at this point, for only two personalities, Samuel and Saul, are involved thus far. In the initial calling, Saul was fit to be king. Hence in antitype, all who are called could make their calling and election sure if they were faithful. Saul pictures those who are fit when originally called and are truly consecrated, but they turn into a disreputable character and go into Second Death. In contrast, David, even with his faults, became a man after God's own heart. Both David and Saul were humble in the beginning and represent the consecrated, but characters can change. A person's character can be good at one time, but through environment and other circumstances of disobedience, his character can change for the worse. In the present life, we are in a development period, which can be for either good or evil.

1 Sam. 10:25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

1 Sam. 10:26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

Samuel wrote "the manner of the kingdom ... in a book, and laid it up before the LORD." When the people first desired a king, Samuel told them God's words about what the king would do (1 Sam. 8:11-18). For instance, many sons and daughters would be inducted, contrary to free will, into his household. Samuel was now recording (and warning) in advance the bad results that would come from having a king. Then he sent all the people away to their homes, and there being no special place for the king at this time, Saul went to his home in Gibeah.

Q: How was the book "laid up" before God?

A: After writing a description of the ceremony and the prophecy uttered earlier, Samuel put the book in safe custody as a historical record, although not necessarily at that moment. The book was probably stored near the Tabernacle, the archive being near the Ark.

1 Sam. 10:27 But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

Saul held his peace when the children of Belial despised him and showed their displeasure by not giving him any presents. In initially desiring a king, the people manifested a wrong attitude, but when God agreed to the arrangement, suffering it to be so, and was responsible for choosing Saul, they should have obeyed according to the changed circumstances of the hour. Like Samuel, all of the Israelites should have accepted the arrangement of having a king.

1 Sam. 11:1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

1 Sam. 11:2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.

1 Sam. 11:3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will

come out to thee.

What a dreadful reply—Nahash, the Ammonite, agreed to make a covenant with the Israelites of Jabesh-gilead on the condition that he could thrust out all their right eyes and “lay it for a reproach upon all Israel”! Ammon and Moab were the two sons of Lot, so the Ammonites and the Moabites were derived from them.

Gilead, on the far side of the Jordan River, was adjacent to Ammon and was thus on a frontier post, as it were. (Two and a half tribes of Israel were east of Jordan, and the other 9 1/2 were west of Jordan.) For those of Jabesh-gilead to want to serve Nahash indicates that the Ammonites were not a small faction. The elders of Jabesh-gilead stalled for time, saying, “Give us seven days’ respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee.”

1 Sam. 11:4 Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

1 Sam. 11:5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

1 Sam. 11:6 And the spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

1 Sam. 11:7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

1 Sam. 11:8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

An army of 330,000 was raised by Saul when he hewed a yoke of oxen in pieces and sent the pieces throughout Israel posthaste. This action was based on a precedent; namely, when the concubine of a Levite was abused unto death by men of the tribe of Benjamin, he cut her body into 12 pieces and sent a piece to each of the 12 tribes (Judges 19). Subsequently men from the other tribes fought against Benjamin and almost wiped out that tribe.

Comment: Apparently, the Lord permitted this incident with the Ammonites to show the ability that Saul had.

Reply: Yes, this incident solidified Saul as a real leader, which is what the people wanted. Of course the power came from God, for “the spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.” In a much earlier time period according to tradition, Shem did the same thing when he slew Nimrod in connection with false worship in Egypt. To make sure Nimrod had no sympathizers, Shem sent out pieces of the body of this man, whom the people revered even more than God because of his physical prowess. By this method, Shem was saying, “Here is your idol, and this is the fate of those whose sentiments are in that direction.” Thus Shem was a stabilizing force. To shield his identity as Melchizedek, not much was written about him in the Old Testament (Gen. 14:18-20; Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,15,17).

Comment: We are reminded of the instruction to love righteousness and hate iniquity. Saul showed righteous indignation by sending pieces of the two oxen to the tribes and saying,

“Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.”

Reply: He distributed the pieces as a symbolic lesson to instill in the Israelites the desire to get revenge on the Ammonites for the condition they had attached to the covenant offered by the men of Jabesh-gilead.

1 Sam. 11:9 And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, Tomorrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and showed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.

1 Sam. 11:10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, Tomorrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.

1 Sam. 11:11 And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

The men of Jabesh-gilead were pleased that the army of Israelites was coming and again stalled for time. Originally those of Jabesh-gilead had wanted to make a peaceful covenant with the Ammonites, but when they found out the terms of the covenant and saw the character of Nahash, they sent out messengers to the rest of Israel for help. Saul properly came to their rescue—and so much so that the ranks of the Ammonites were so thoroughly decimated that the survivors were few and far between.

Comment: Saul’s dividing the Israelite army into three companies for the attack on the Ammonites reminds us of the three groups of 100 each with Gideon.

Reply: Yes, Gideon made the division under the Lord’s instruction. Under this circumstance with Jabesh-gilead, we can be sure that God’s blessing attended the Israelites in the battle because His spirit had entered Saul (verse 6). The king had been out in the field with a herd of oxen—a manifestation of his humble origin—when the messenger arrived from Jabesh-gilead with news about the Ammonite threat. The oxen Saul slew were probably his own.

1 Sam. 11:12 And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.

1 Sam. 11:13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

Again, Saul showed a favorable attitude, even though the opposers were “the children of Belial” (1 Sam. 10:27). Because the *Lord* had wrought such a great victory, an amnesty was declared. Under other circumstances, the enemies of Israel could be killed, but to have done so right then and there would have marred the victory of that day. The opposers could be dealt with on a subsequent day, however.

1 Sam. 11:14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

1 Sam. 11:15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

The people went to Gilgal for this particular celebration because it was centrally located on the border of Israel and thus was convenient to Israelites on both sides of the Jordan River. There were altars for sacrifice in Ramah, Samuel's hometown, and also in Beth-el, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, which the prophet visited on his yearly circuit. Incidentally, Ammon is the present-day Amman, the capital of Jordan.

The people made Saul king before Jehovah in Gilgal and offered sacrifices of peace offerings. Saul and those of Israel rejoiced greatly.

1 Sam. 12:1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

1 Sam. 12:2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

1 Sam. 12:3 Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

1 Sam. 12:4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

As Samuel felt his days of usefulness and service were drawing to a close, he gave the people an opportunity to witness against him, for he felt he had been blameless in his ministry. The people replied, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand."

Q: Why did Samuel mention his two sons, who were guilty of much evil?

A: For their disobedience, he was remanding his sons over to the people for judgment.

1 Sam. 12:5 And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

1 Sam. 12:6 And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

1 Sam. 12:7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

1 Sam. 12:8 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

1 Sam. 12:9 And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

1 Sam. 12:10 And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

In verses 6-13, Samuel reviewed the history of how God had led the nation of Israel. The specifics of these incidents are covered in prior books of the Bible, especially Judges. The 450 years of the Period of the Judges were a time of obedience for a while followed by disobedience, then chastisement through captivity and servitude until God raised up a judge and brought deliverance, again obedience for a while followed by a lapse back into disobedience, etc. It was periodically necessary for God to raise up some individual as a judge and empower him to save the Israelites from servitude.

1 Sam. 12:11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

Jerubbaal (Gideon), Bedan (probably Barak), Jephthah, and Samuel were all judges. However, some feel that Samuel was actually Samson in this listing, the justification being Hebrews 11:32, which enumerates some of the Ancient Worthies: “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon [Gideon], and of Barak, and of *Samson*, and of Jephthae [Jephthah]; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.” Moreover, it seems unlikely that Samuel would have listed his own name in writing the historical Book of 1 Samuel, even though he was the last of the judges and was certainly faithful in trying to minister as a judge underneath Jehovah as King.

Occasional mistakes do occur in historical books. There are perhaps a half dozen mistakes in the Old Testament, but they were overruled, for internal evidence self-corrects the errors.

Samuel was prone to be self-effacing in some of his remarks but not when he spoke to God. When the Israelites wanted a king, he was grieved that he was not appreciated more fully—that is, until he found out that Jehovah was the One not being properly recognized. Similarly, in our own experiences, there are periods in our life when we need to be taken down a peg or two to make us properly evaluate our circumstance.

Comment: It seems that all of chapter 12 was reprimanding the people for wanting a king.

Reply: Yes, although God favored the Israelites in spite of that improper request—perhaps because He realized that with a king, they would have other problems, and there would be an increased burden on them to be faithful.

1 Sam. 12:12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.

1 Sam. 12:13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

Samuel continued his last public discourse, which was a review of Israel’s history. When Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against the Israelites, the people said, “Nay; but a king shall reign over us.” Here we get an insight into one of the primary reasons the Israelites audibly expressed their desire to have a king; namely, a king was leading the host that came against them. Perhaps Samuel’s disposition and character were not that of a general, so the people wanted someone who could be out in front leading them in battle.

Samuel rebuked the Israelites for desiring a king, for *Jehovah* was their King. Nevertheless, God acquiesced and set Saul as king over the nation.

1 Sam. 12:14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

Even though it was wrong for the people to want a king, God would continue to favor both the king and the people *if they were faithful*. Both had a responsibility. It was as though God separated the people and the king into two different divisions of responsibility.

1 Sam. 12:15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

If not faithful, they would be conquered as had happened repeatedly during the 450-year Period of the Judges. The Book of Joshua deals mostly with the acquisition of the land and dividing it into territories and boundaries for the 12 tribes. Then the Book of Judges tells of various captivities that occurred, and in due time, the Lord raised up a judge to deliver the Israelites from each circumstance. In other words, there was a history of Israel's past delinquency.

1 Sam. 12:16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

A sign would be presented to the nation to confirm Samuel's words. Similarly, Gabriel told Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined ... to seal up the vision and prophecy [or prophet, that is, Daniel]" (Dan. 9:24). Particularly in Old Testament times, when a sign or prophecy was fulfilled, that fulfillment verified the authenticity of the prophet.

1 Sam. 12:17 Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

What was so peculiar about sending thunder and rain during wheat harvest? *Rarely* did it rain in those months, especially not in a storm of this caliber. Not only would such rain be most unusual in June or July, but it would be somewhat of a catastrophe.

If the sign (the rain) came to pass, it would verify that the people merited a rebuke and punishment from God for their great wickedness in asking for a king. He had already criticized them for their wrong attitude, but to now get a providential confirmation would have a striking effect on the nation.

Comment: Saying that the people's "wickedness is great" for desiring a king was a strong statement.

Reply: While Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked and also Samuel's two sons, Joel and Abiah, the people's motives in resenting the evil may not have been pure. For example, some relatives might have been debauched by the priesthood. Those people had a gripe, but the griping was not necessarily an indication of a righteous character, for faultfinding in itself, even if the fault is correctly exposed, is not an indicator that the person is right. Other factors are needed to verify whether the motive is proper or improper. When the people called Eli's attention to the sins of his sons and Eli failed to remove them from the priesthood, that did not necessarily mean the people themselves were exonerated, although no doubt some of them were genuine in their criticism because they felt the sins were an affront to God. In other words, the guilt is not always confined to the leadership. The congregation can be at fault too.

1 Sam. 12:18 So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Samuel called to the Lord, and God sent thunder and rain that very day. As a result, all of the people “greatly feared” God and Samuel.

1 Sam. 12:19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

Samuel’s rebuke had the intended effect. The people reacted properly by asking him to pray for them. Had Samuel not made his speech, there would have been no repentance. The people had had a wrong attitude for some time, so if Samuel had simply given a “swan song” speech and smooth talk—had he spoken of the greatness of the nation without calling attention to their *present* circumstance—they would not have repented. It was not as though he was warning a justified, purified people about the future, for their *present* condition was wrong. Therefore, to merely state that the good and evil of the future depended upon their obedience was not sufficient. Rather, as a faithful prophet, he called attention to something unpopular—he exposed their *current* condition. In the “Elias Shall First Come” chapter of the *Second Volume*, the Pastor showed that the Lord’s people who are faithful receive persecution because they expose popular error and advocate unpopular truths. This quality should be a part of their character in life as it was for all of God’s faithful prophets in the Old Testament.

1 Sam. 12:20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

1 Sam. 12:21 And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.

1 Sam. 12:22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

Samuel’s behavior here somewhat reminds us of Moses with regard to God’s not utterly forsaking the people called by His name.

1 Sam. 12:23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

1 Sam. 12:24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

1 Sam. 12:25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Samuel faded into the background from this point, for Saul, in the new office of king, came to the forefront after his inauguration. Temporarily Samuel continued in the priestly function, but preparations were being made for even that to phase out shortly into a new arrangement. The king was a prominent figure before the nation in everyday commercial and business life.

Comment: Samuel was an unusual person with great humility to give up all he had worked for and get behind Saul, a *younger* man.

Reply: Yes. Samuel saw immediately that the people erred in asking for a king, but he had to be corrected to see that the wrong was done chiefly to God and only secondarily to himself.

However, upon seeing that the Lord acquiesced to the people's request by choosing Saul to be king, Samuel wholeheartedly recognized the arrangement. In fact, God told Samuel to anoint Saul, and then, seeing that Saul was to be king in spite of what had gone before, Samuel accepted the new situation and was humble enough to step back. He told the people, "The least I can do now is to pray for you constantly."

Samuel would come on the scene later but in a different and personalized way. Whereas he was judge and priest before, he would now assume an advisory role, teaching the people "the good and the right way." He continued, "Consider how great things he [God] hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

1 Sam. 13:1 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

The first clause "Saul reigned one year" should end chapter 12 because the activities of the first year of his reign were covered in chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 13 begins a new phase in Saul's life. "When he had reigned two years over Israel, he chose three thousand men of Israel," etc.

1 Sam. 13:2 Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

In Saul's second year as king, he chose 3,000 men of Israel. Earlier he had recruited 330,000 men to fight the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:8). He sent the bulk of that number back to their homes and kept a select few for a standing army. Samuel had predicted that when the people had a king, he would choose captains over militia and have bodyguards in attendance and maid service. The people would be conscripted for national duty. The bureaucracy was starting, and it was only Saul's *second* year. The government was beginning to expand and get more and more into the private lives of individuals. Moreover, Saul had to tax the people to support the army.

The word "mishmash," which is similar to Michmash, means "confusion." The situation would become a real mess as time went on.

Of the 3,000 men, 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and Mount Beth-el, and 1,000 were with Jonathan, his son, in Gibeah. The three places were close together.

1 Sam. 13:3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, which was near Gibeah and Beth-el. Verse 3 shows that the Philistines were mixed in among the Israelites. They occupied mostly the plains, whereas the Israelites were more in towns and villages on the hilltops. Roads ran along the spine of the hills and mountains, and the towns radiated right and left off that spine. The Philistines were sprinkled throughout many places in the nation of Israel.

A "garrison" was an outpost (like sentry duty). Thus it was a very small contingent, as opposed to a fortress, for example. The Philistines constantly provoked the Israelites by erecting signs, statues, or monuments to indicate that the Israelites were under their subjugation. Such "signs" were a stench to the Israelites. Jonathan probably destroyed this garrison because it was particularly odious.

"Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear." How would Saul have blown the trumpet throughout the whole land? First, one person blew a trumpet on

top of a hill, and then a sentry in each adjacent village blew a trumpet to indicate he had heard the sound. Those sentries, in turn, blew a trumpet in the other direction to the next village. By this method, it did not take long for the message to go from hill to hill to hill until the entire nation knew. The *length* of the blast constituted the message—a long blast or a short blast, for example—to indicate war, to call the nation to congregate, etc. Thus there was a signal system based on the blowing of the horn from hill to hill.

1 Sam. 13:4 And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

1 Sam. 13:5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

1 Sam. 13:6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

When Philistines in the area heard about the destruction of the garrison, they mustered forces to fight Israel. Notice that Saul gathered the people together in Gilgal, one of the places Samuel had visited on his judging circuit. The Philistine forces consisted of 3,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen. The custom was to have two men to a chariot. One man drove the horses, and the other was armed with a spear. The Philistines actually had many more chariots, but the nature of the land could not hold them all. Therefore, they took only a sufficient number for maneuvering in the plain below. The footmen who followed the chariots were so numerous that they were described as being like “the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude.”

Incidentally, the number 30,000 was a copyist’s error in the ending of the Hebrew word. With the topography in this part of Israel being mountainous with narrow defiles, the land was not conducive to having 30,000 chariots.

As the Philistine forces and chariots came into the valleys, the Israelites were terrified. In distress, the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, behind rocks, in high places, and in pits. In other words, they experienced a helter-skelter type of fright, running in all directions to hide wherever they could, high or low. Consider how Saul felt. He had gathered the Israelites together, but as the large Philistine host was about to confront them, most became deserters.

1 Sam. 13:7 And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

Some of the Israelites even fled over the Jordan River into the land of Gad and Gilead. The translators should have added another word to the last sentence. “As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people [who] followed him trembled.” The account had just stated that there were a number of deserters—in fact, so many that Saul was alarmed. He was left in Gilgal with the trembling remainder.

1 Sam. 13:8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

“And the people were scattered from him [Saul].” This statement confirms the thought that the majority of the people had deserted Saul and were not following him.

Samuel had told Saul to wait for him at Gilgal for seven days. (Evidently, Samuel had given this instruction when the trouble was just starting to threaten, telling Saul to do nothing for seven days.) Saul did wait for seven days “according to the set time that Samuel had appointed,” but since the day was ticking by and Samuel had not appeared, Saul felt he had to act.

As the Lord’s people, we have similar tests. We sometimes do things strictly forbidden by the Lord’s Word, but we rationalize that they are for expediency’s sake. Instead, we should wait and *have faith* if there is a delay.

Having waited the seven days, Saul probably felt he was justified in acting. The problem is that he did not have sufficient faith in what Samuel had said, and even more important, he, as the king of Israel, did not have faith in *God*, for whom Samuel was the mouthpiece. Thus a lack of faith in Jehovah led Saul to perform an act of disobedience. The circumstances seemed to justify his action, and the people would probably have supported his decision. Saul reasoned, “If I continue to wait for Samuel and do not make an offering to the Lord, even more people will desert, and my chances of victory in armed conflict will be zilch.” Thus Saul began to swerve *only two years* after beginning his reign. Already his true colors were showing.

We can see the force of the temptation, but Samuel had been very explicit. We are reminded of the temptation in the Garden of Eden. God said, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16,17). Despite this specific instruction, Adam willfully transgressed under temptation.

1 Sam. 13:9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

1 Sam. 13:10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

Burnt offerings were usually followed by peace offerings. Saul offered the burnt offering, and as soon as he had finished, Samuel arrived—before Saul could offer the peace offerings. In other words, Samuel caught Saul in the act of performing a priestly function, which he had no right to do. Had Saul been of the tribe of Levi, he at least would have had an excuse.

Incidentally, both Sauls (the king here and the Apostle Paul in the New Testament) were of the little tribe of Benjamin. They were completely different people, yet both were potential “giants.” King Saul was a physical giant but a miserable failure in character. The apostle was little in physical stature but a giant in integrity throughout his life.

“Saul went out to meet him [Samuel], that he might salute him.” Not only did Saul not seem ashamed, but instead of continuing with the peace offerings, he went out to meet Samuel. This incident reveals some interesting things about character. Saul would have “saluted” Samuel by bowing before him and giving some token of respect.

1 Sam. 13:11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

1 Sam. 13:12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

Samuel's reaction was, "What hast thou done?" (Again we are reminded of the Garden of Eden when "the voice" of Jehovah, the Logos, called to Adam and Eve, who were hiding behind a tree, "Where art thou?"—Gen. 3:8,9.) Saul tried to justify his course, saying, "The people were scattered from me when you did not come within the days appointed, and the Philistines were gathered together at Michmash. Therefore, I thought they would come against me at Gilgal, and since I had not made supplication unto the LORD, I *forced* myself to offer a burnt offering." What an elaborate attempt at justification, especially in saying, "I forced myself"! In other words, Saul was saying, "I did not want to disobey, but under these circumstances, I reluctantly started the offerings."

1 Sam. 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

1 Sam. 13:14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly." When Samuel instructed Saul with regard to the seven days and Saul did not wait the full length of time but acted precipitously in offering a burnt offering, the Gospel Age equivalent, or antitype, would be the nominal Church's not waiting for Jesus to return but setting up their own kingdom instead. In several places in Scripture, Saul is a representation of nominal spiritual Israel. The seven days picture the seven stages of the Church in the Gospel Age. To see the antitype clearly, we have to read the entire account of Saul's life, plus all of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, and then reflect on what has been read. Certain highlights will then begin to manifest themselves. Saul, David, and Solomon were all types, and each reigned 40 years. When we think back on Saul's life, it becomes obvious that he was a type.

The same principle is true from another standpoint as well. While Saul was a type of the nominal Church, the principle also applies to the Lord's people as individuals. Samuel's telling Saul what to do is equivalent to the Lord's giving instruction from His Word. If God's Word instructs us to do something, we would be foolish to ignore the pronouncement. Perhaps a brother calls attention to a particular instruction or example rather than our finding the information on our own. When the instruction is clearly expounded, we should accept it as *God's Word*, not as the teaching of the individual. It is true that many who quote Scripture misapply it and are offended when we do not obey, for they think they understand the text and make it a mandatory requirement. However, it is up to the individual who is given the admonition to try to studiously discern whether it is really the Lord's Word. If the instruction is truly in the Scriptures, then the personality presenting the admonition is to be disregarded, and the instruction is to be accepted as coming from God. That is where Saul failed. While Saul may have felt that Samuel was a servant of the Lord, he did not have a sufficiency of respect for Samuel to consider his words as the equivalent of the Lord's saying them.

Why was the seven-day time period set aside for Saul? The seven days were a *test*, and the antitype teaches the unfitness of Papacy and the clergy of the nominal Church down through the Gospel Age. They were the custodians of the Bible, but they abused that privilege. When they are pushed aside in the Kingdom Age and see others seated on the 12 thrones of Israel, they should realize their unfitness and render proper obedience to The Christ.

Comment: God was making pictures and types, so He must have known the character of Saul in advance and how the king would react. From the point of Saul's disobedience in not waiting for Samuel, it was determined that David would be established as king in due time.

Reply: Yes, David was being schooled while Saul was going downhill. However, we should keep in mind that Saul had a good heart condition in the very beginning. Incidentally, even Satan was obedient in the beginning—until he deflected. God said of him, “Thou wast *perfect* in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:15). Thus the idea of “once in grace, always in grace” is a serious fallacy.

Samuel continued, “But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart ... to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.” Just *two years* into Saul’s reign, God determined that David would succeed him, yet Saul was permitted to reign for *38 more years* for a total of 40 years. Even though God was taking steps to choose someone as successor, Saul tarried. This delay is very much like the *long reign* of the nominal Church. The true Christian was told in effect, “Suffer it to be so.” As the Apostle Paul said in principle, “Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it” (1 Cor. 4:12). And thus it has been during the *long Gospel Age*. To the Israelites living back there, Saul’s reign seemed interminably long, but God had reasons for permitting it.

Comment: Similarly, Babylon was cast off from favor in 1878, but the nominal system is still around.

Reply: Yes, and prior to 1878, the Lord gave opportunities to repent that were of no avail.

1 Sam. 13:15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.

Out of the original 3,000, Saul now numbered only 600 men, for the majority had deserted, fearing the Philistines.

1 Sam. 13:16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

1 Sam. 13:17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual:

1 Sam. 13:18 And another company turned the way to Beth-horon: and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Saul had a small host of only 600 with him, for many had fled in fear. Divided into three companies, the Philistines had the strategy in mind to surround and confront the Israelite army. One company was in front, and the second and third companies were on the right and left sides to meet in the back. The situation looked bleak indeed for Israel.

1 Sam. 13:19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears:

1 Sam. 13:20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

1 Sam. 13:21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

1 Sam. 13:22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear

found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

1 Sam. 13:23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Verses 19-23 tell of the circumstances that existed in Israel at the time the battle with the Philistines was about to take place. No blacksmith was permitted in the land, meaning there was no foundry with an anvil, furnace, or related equipment. By occupying the valleys, the Philistines were in a position to enforce this ban. The situation looked hopeless for Israel with only 600 men, no weapons of war, and their inability to manufacture weapons. In this little host, Saul and Jonathan, his son, were the only two individuals who had swords and spears.

The Israelites had only small agricultural implements such as pitchforks, hoes, and sickles. In addition, they had small files, but the files could sharpen only the smaller tools. To sharpen larger implements such as plowshares, the Israelites had to rely on the Philistines. While there was somewhat of a status quo between the Philistines and the Israelites in that they were not always fighting in open warfare, the Philistines, being in the lowlands, were in the dominant position. In the battle that was about to take place, the Philistines wanted to get even for the garrison, or outpost, that Israel had defiled.

1 Sam. 14:1 Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father.

1 Sam. 14:2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men;

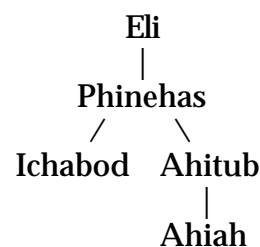
The main camp of Israel was with Saul and the 600 men in Migron at a lower elevation. The Philistine garrison was on higher ground so that any enemy activity could be spotted. If a problem occurred, those in the garrison alerted the Philistine forces down below.

Since the armor bearer was a young man, Jonathan, as the superior, would have been slightly older. Also, the age difference was appropriate for the king's son. One duty of the armor bearer was to carry the heavy weaponry and armor prior to the confrontation so that Jonathan could conserve his energy for the actual battle. The armor would be handed over when the proper moment came.

A little drama was about to ensue. Without telling his father, Jonathan and his armor bearer went toward the Philistine garrison to make a sortie. Meanwhile, Saul, as king and leader of the small band of 600, had a convenient place in the shade of a pomegranate tree. That position served as a little temporary throne and headquarters, for he knew that a problem was arising.

1 Sam. 14:3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD'S priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

Ahiah, a relative of Eli, the deceased high priest in Shiloh, was wearing the ephod at this time. Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had all died at the same time. The lineage in verse 3 is traced through Phinehas, whose son was Ichabod. Ichabod, who was born when the Ark of the Covenant was taken, had an older brother named Ahitub (1 Sam. 4:19-21). Thus Ahiah was Ichabod's nephew and Eli's great grandson.



A question now arises: If Eli and his posterity were to be cut off from the priesthood, how could Ahiah wear the ephod? *Eventually* Eli and his posterity would be *entirely* cut off from the priesthood, but meanwhile, the posterity lasted a little while, for part of the curse was that none of the children who survived would reach *old age*. In other words, there would be a little time delay before the complete cutting off of Eli's posterity from the priesthood.

“And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.” Saul and the 600 men did not know what Jonathan was planning to do.

1 Sam. 14:4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.

1 Sam. 14:5 The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

This account, which was recorded a considerable time after the incident took place, enumerates various landmarks and the topography of the land. The suggestion is that one day in the future, this event will be dramatized by the resuscitated participants in the very location that is so accurately described here. Thus the veracity of the Bible will be seen in the Kingdom as a history book for the world. In other words, the Bible is a witness not only in the present life but also in the next life. Therefore, all this detail has a value and a purpose. In addition, the angels probably recorded these events on film at the time of their occurrence. The people in the Kingdom will say of the Bible, “What a startling book to look back upon!” God intends to do wonderful things in the future. Even the measurements for the future Third Temple were given thousands of years in advance.

1 Sam. 14:6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

1 Sam. 14:7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.

With a garrison up on a crag, the enemy was going out in three prongs to surround the Israelites, whose main army was in Gibeah. Jonathan revealed his intent to his armor bearer, who gave an unusual response considering the circumstances and the odds: “Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart,” that is, “I am with you 100 percent.” Jonathan had the faith, courage, and confidence that numbers were not important when the battle was for the Lord. A saying is that one with the Lord is a majority.

Comment: With this insight into Jonathan's character, we can see why his subsequent intimate acquaintance with David resulted in such mutual respect for one another.

Reply: When David and Jonathan are considered together, David represents Christ and Jonathan pictures the Church. Of course that analogy does not follow through with the whole picture, but it is applicable in little episodes. The point is that the same spirit motivated both David and Jonathan, the kindred relationship being that of The Christ, Head and body members. A lesson could perhaps also be drawn between Jonathan and his armor bearer, Jonathan representing Christ and the armor bearer being the Church.

Jonathan's faith probably came from knowing about Joshua and Caleb and the courage they

had manifested. Their testimony was, “So what if the fortresses go up to heaven and the people are giants, let’s go up, for God will give us the victory.” Gideon with the 300, reduced from the original 32,000, was another good example. Somewhat similarly, Saul’s force of 3,000 dwindled down to 600. Out of fear, Saul’s army began to melt before his eyes.

1 Sam. 14:8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

1 Sam. 14:9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

1 Sam. 14:10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us.

Jonathan’s plan was to boldly make himself known to the enemy—a tactic that seemed contrary to common sense. From the human standpoint, when an enemy has great numbers, a person does not stand out in the open and reveal himself. However, like Gideon, Jonathan wanted a convincing sign from the Lord, so he gave two propositions. If the Philistines said, “Tarry until we come [down] to you,” Jonathan and his armor bearer would stand still. But if the Philistines said, “Come up unto us,” then he and his armor bearer would do so, for God would give the victory to Jonathan (and the Israelites). Even the sign was contrary to normal human logic because in their braggadocio attitude, the Philistines would be more likely to say, “Wait until we get down to you.” Moreover, who would scramble up a hill to confront such odds? Thus the sign would be if Jonathan was asked to go up to the Philistines.

Notice that Jonathan did not say he would run away if the Philistines came down to him. In other words, he would stand still and fight, even if the battle would be lost. Jonathan’s great character was a blend of tenderness and courage.

1 Sam. 14:11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

1 Sam. 14:12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

When Jonathan and his armor bearer boldly exposed themselves, the Philistines said sarcastically, “Behold, the Hebrews are coming forth out of the holes where they have hidden themselves.” In today’s jargon, their reply to Jonathan was like saying, “You come up here, and we will show you a thing or two!”

1 Sam. 14:13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

1 Sam. 14:14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow.

The garrison on the top of the hill was a very small plateau only a half acre in size. As Jonathan and his armor bearer scrambled up the hill on their hands and knees, the Philistines could have kicked them in the face, but instead, the first slaughter resulted in the death of 20 Philistines.

1 Sam. 14:15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the

garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

1 Sam. 14:16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.

Comment: We are reminded of the end of the age when the little handful of the Holy Remnant will start to fight against Gog and Magog, and all of a sudden, God will cause cataclysmic things in nature to happen.

Reply: With Gideon and the 300, there was confusion in the large host of the Midianites. In their haste to get away, they walked over one another, killing each other in the panic.

When the watchmen of Saul saw the commotion in the enemy camp, they alerted the king and the 600. And when the Philistines down below saw the slaughter taking place up above in the garrison, they were demoralized. Suddenly a tremendous earthquake started, indicating that something ominous was happening. In panic, the Philistines ran pell-mell over one another.

1 Sam. 14:17 Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer were not there.

By commanding that the host be numbered, Saul found out that Jonathan and his armor bearer were missing and hence knew they were the fighters.

1 Sam. 14:18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.

With the Ark of the Covenant being at Gibeah at this time, Saul told Ahiah to bring the covered Ark into his presence, for he intended to find out whether it was God's will for him and the 600 to pursue the fleeing and panicking Philistines. However, Saul did not follow through, as will be seen.

1 Sam. 14:19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.

1 Sam. 14:20 And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture.

Saul was going to inquire of the Lord, but he cut the matter short because the noise of the Philistine host got louder and louder. Evidently, he felt it was not necessary to proceed with the inquiry, for the enemy camp was in obvious utter confusion. Saul ordered his men into the fray, and as they approached the enemy, they saw that "every man's sword was against his fellow." Again we are reminded of Gog and Magog at the end of the age. As was stated earlier, the Israelites had no swords, so they entered the battle armed with clubs, maces, and stones. They got weapons from the falling Philistines.

Comment: Saul was disobedient in going ahead and entering the battle without waiting for an answer from the Lord.

1 Sam. 14:21 Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which

went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan.

1 Sam. 14:22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.

1 Sam. 14:23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

These verses also remind us of the account of Gideon and the 300. After the 300, picturing the Little Flock, started a rout of the Midianites, the previously eliminated 9,700, representing the Great Company, joined in the fray. Not properly appreciating the fact that *God* had chosen the 300, they had complained about not being part of the original battle. Not only is the Great Company too forward at times, but they are far more confident at times than the Little Flock.

Thus the Israelites who had deserted, as well as those who had even gone into the Philistine camp, wanting to be in the enemy's good graces by submitting quickly, now conveniently joined in the battle when they saw the tide turning. Meanwhile, when the Israelites who, out of fear, had hidden themselves in the more distant hill country looked down and saw the Philistines retreating, they also joined in the battle. Thus there was a rallying cry, and Saul now had a more cohesive force for his kingdom and the northern ten tribes.

1 Sam. 14:24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.

1 Sam. 14:25 And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.

1 Sam. 14:26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

1 Sam. 14:27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

Jonathan's "eyes were enlightened" when he ate the honey; that is, his eyes began to sparkle and he was reanimated. In other words, the honey gave him energy. He had not heard his father's oath with regard to not eating any food until evening because he was off with his armor bearer.

Comment: Saul was disobedient here as well, for *he* wanted to be avenged rather than to have a victory for God.

1 Sam. 14:28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint.

1 Sam. 14:29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

1 Sam. 14:30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

1 Sam. 14:31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

The people were faint for lack of food. When told of the oath, Jonathan gave a rational answer: “My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.” In other words, he felt the oath was foolish, for it hindered the people from obtaining a much greater victory. Food would have given the people energy to fight even more effectively. Many of the Philistines were slaughtered, but the rest retreated back to their headquarters. Had the opportunity for flight been cut off, more would have been killed, and fewer Philistine incursions would have occurred later.

1 Sam. 14:32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood.

1 Sam. 14:33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

1 Sam. 14:34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there.

1 Sam. 14:35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

It takes a number of these incidents to get more of a background with regard to Saul’s strategy and character, but notice, the people were so famished that they could not wait to cook the animals but ate the meat raw with the blood. This was a circumstance of *great* hunger, for tremendous energy had just been expended in battle. When adrenaline is pumping in the body system and a person is performing unusual feats, he feels the aftereffects—a complete draining followed by a great need for energy. Thus the people needed strengthening, and being desperate for food, they ate the meat on the ground—like brute beasts themselves.

When Saul was informed about what was happening, he ordered the remaining animals to be brought into his presence and the blood to be drained. Ostensibly, Saul was pursuing a proper course, for under the Law, the Jews could not eat flesh that contained blood. For the slaughter of these animals, Saul built an altar to Jehovah. This was his first such altar. To be a proper altar, unhewn stone had to be used.

Saul had said that the curse would be in effect until evening. Therefore, it is possible the people ate after that deadline, for they had such fear and respect for the oath that they did not take the honey earlier. We can make this surmise because nothing is said in the account about their being charged with disobedience under the curse. The problem was that they ate animals in which there was blood.

1 Sam. 14:36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

1 Sam. 14:37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.

1 Sam. 14:38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

1 Sam. 14:39 For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him.

1 Sam. 14:40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.

After the meal, Saul wanted to continue the battle throughout the night until morning, hoping to kill all of the Philistines. When the priest initiated an inquiry to the Lord as to whether to further pursue the Philistines, God did not answer. To receive no response either negative or positive indicated that Saul was losing favor with God. Realizing that his purpose was being thwarted, he wanted to determine where the fault lay—with the people or with Jonathan and him. He may have thought that the sin was eating the flesh with the blood or possibly that some of the people had violated the oath by eating before the deadline. At any rate, he knew that something was interfering with the communication between him and the Lord.

Saul set up a division with the people on one side and royalty (Jonathan and himself) on the other side. Not one of the people snitched on Jonathan.

Comment: The Lord was bringing to light Saul's foolhardiness in making such an unwise oath that prevented the people from eating.

Reply: It was not necessary for him to make the oath. Those in leadership positions sometimes do a lot of foolish things. Public oaths, vows, or decisions made hastily, without due consideration, often become a snare on the Lord's people. Saul's foolishness was revealed in the type. The antitype shows the presumptuousness of Papacy, which Saul represents.

1 Sam. 14:41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.

1 Sam. 14:42 And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.

1 Sam. 14:43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die.

1 Sam. 14:44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

1 Sam. 14:45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

The lot showed Jonathan to be the guilty party. He would have replied in question form: "I did but taste a *little* honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die?" We do not think he was resigned to dying, for he thought the oath was entirely unreasonable. A question shows the absurdity of Saul's oath. The people would not permit Saul to kill Jonathan. They said, "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as

the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground.” They would not tolerate his slaying.

Q: Jephthah also made a rash vow, but he carried it out to his daughter’s harm (Judg. 11:30-40). What is the difference? If a vow is made, shouldn’t it be kept?

A: Stated briefly, Jephthah made the vow, and she was a minor under her father’s roof. We have to know more about what Saul did before starting to sum up the problems in his case.

1 Sam. 14:46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

The Israelites left the Philistines alone, and the Philistines retreated back to their own homes.

1 Sam. 14:47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.

1 Sam. 14:48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

Comment: Saul had many military victories, even though he was losing God’s favor.

Q: Verses 47 and 48 list those whom Saul “vexed” and “smote.” Wasn’t he supposed to completely destroy Israel’s enemies?

A: That was true with regard to the Amalekites, but Saul could not completely destroy them for several reasons. The Philistines continually harassed Israel for hundreds of years, so it was not easy to rid the land of them. Both in battle and in the nature of the terrain they occupied, the Philistines were different from some of the other enemies. Ammon, Moab, and Edom were east of the Jordan River. Half of Moab was already occupied by the Israelites—by Reuben, Gad, and one half of Manasseh. The Amalekites were interspersed on the east side of Jordan, and of course the Philistines were west of Jordan.

The details of the smiting of the Amalekites will be given later. The writer who subsequently compiled these records, probably Ezra, inserted the summary in verses 47-52. He did not change the records that were handed down to posterity but merely compiled them from various sources into a coherent form. All of Saul’s military conflicts are summarized here to show that he was very successful.

1 Sam. 14:49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melch-ishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:

1 Sam. 14:50 And the name of Saul’s wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul’s uncle.

1 Sam. 14:51 And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

Saul had three sons, of whom Jonathan was the most famous. Either Saul had another son later on, or Ishui is Ish-bosheth (2 Sam. 2:8). The king had two daughters, Michal being the one

whom David married. Kish was Saul's father, and Abner, the captain of the host, was the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. This lineage will be of value at some future date, for the lineage has been unknown since the Diaspora.

1 Sam. 14:52 **And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.**

When Saul saw any strong or courageous young man with promise, he conscripted him, as Samuel had foretold would happen when Israel had a king. Many parents of these young men would have found Saul's arbitrary conscription onerous and distressing. Papacy also followed this practice, forcing artists, soldiers, young male sopranos, etc., to serve the nominal Church.

Some of the incidents in Saul's life are types with spiritual lessons. In contrast, almost all of Elijah's life, as recorded in Holy Writ, is an authorized type. There is enough evidence in the Scriptures to substantiate this thought. Nevertheless, with Saul and others, many general lessons are applicable to the Gospel Age. Saul is a lesson not only in morals and character but also as a type, and one proof is the fact that Saul and David were rivals. Since David is a type of Jesus alone, The Christ, and the true Church, depending on the particular picture, we can reason that Saul represents Papacy, the false Church system.

We can clearly see that David, a man of war, pictures the true Church in the present life, in the flesh, and that Solomon, a man of peace, pictures the true Church in glory, in the Temple condition. By extension, then, we can conclude that Saul is also a type. One prominent clue or strong indication is that Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned for 40 years.

Saul's disobedience and/or unwisdom can be summed up as follows. (1) He assumed a priestly function by offering sacrifices. (2) He fought the Philistines without waiting for an answer from God. (3) He made a foolish oath for the people to enter battle but not to eat for strength. (4) He wanted to be avenged personally instead of achieving the victory for God.

Antitype and Spiritual Lessons

Saul made a rash, presumptuous, foolish vow that his soldiers could not eat. "And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food" (1 Sam. 14:24). What was wrong with this vow, and what does it picture? The vow was of Saul's own thinking, for he did not ask the Lord before making it. His disposition was that of an autocratic king instead of a shepherd.

Comment: In antitype, Saul, picturing Papacy, denied the people spiritual food during the Dark Ages. Papacy expected the people to serve the Roman Catholic system but deprived them of the real sustenance they needed. Jonathan, representing the true Church, came along and ate the honey, which enlightened his eyes, showing that the few who were truly consecrated had strength from the oil and the wine to go on with the battle in fighting the good fight of faith (Rev. 6:6; 1 Tim. 6:12).

Reply: Yes. The Papacy denied spiritual understanding yet organized Crusades and persecuted Protestants and those who differed with the system. It more or less conscripted the best forces available to fight its enemy. In other words, the nominal Church was more interested in its own prosperity than in the prosperity, comfort, and welfare of the people of the land. The curse represents Papacy's disposition in issuing bulls and anathemas against what it regarded as the enemy. Consider Saul's words again: "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies." Papacy had its own interest at heart.

One of the people said to Jonathan, “Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day” (1 Sam. 14:28). When confronted with breaking the vow, Jonathan used common-sense reasoning. “My father hath troubled the land: see ... how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?” (1 Sam. 14:29,30). Jonathan took opposition to his father’s rash and unreasonable vow. In antitype, in trying to change the character of the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformers (pictured by Jonathan) called attention to papal abuses. The unconsecrated sympathetically sided with the Reformers but did not actively participate in the battle for the Lord, for they had not partaken of the spiritual food (the honey). Just as those underneath Saul felt the oath was incumbent upon them, so those underneath papal influence, even though they might see abnormalities in the system, do not leave the system but continue to perfunctorily carry out its dictates.

Q: Wouldn’t Jonathan have obeyed the oath if he had heard it?

A: If Jonathan had been there, it would have been his duty, as a son of the king, to interrupt the oath. The unreasonableness of the oath could have been immediately challenged before it went into effect. Even though Saul probably would not have hearkened, Jonathan would have discharged his responsibility and preserved his conscience. Jonathan’s countermanding his father’s oath was much like Luther’s, Wycliffe’s, and other Reformers’ ignoring the papal bulls that were issued against them and using reason. Later Jonathan showed his integrity in manifesting a friendship and sympathy for David under very unusual circumstances, for he was the legal heir to the throne. Daniel prophesied of the little horn that would wax great and speak presumptuous words (Dan. 7:8).

While there was a great slaughter of the Philistines, some fled to their home territory. In the meantime, Israelites who had not participated in the actual battle harassed the rear element of those Philistines and slaughtered many but did not wholly conquer them. Jonathan felt that if Saul had not made the oath, the Israelites would have had strength to gain an even greater victory.

The honey pictured spiritual food. Although under the Law, honey was forbidden with a sacrifice because it represented flattery, hypocrisy, and lip service, it was permissible as a food. We are reminded of John the Revelator’s eating the little book, which was “sweet as honey” in the mouth and “bitter” in the belly (Rev. 10:10). In that symbology, honey represents truth, which strengthens the Lord’s people. The angel who gave John the book is Jesus.

Samson’s riddle also mentioned honey: “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judg. 14:14). The answer to the riddle was that Samson extracted honey from a beehive in the carcass of a lion. In antitype, the lion is Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah. As a result of Christ’s death (shown by the carcass), God’s promises and blessings (pictured by the honey) come forth for both the Church and the world.

Still another picture is the miraculous manna in the wilderness. Called “angels’ food,” the manna from heaven had a honey flavor (Psa. 78:25). And John the Baptist ate locusts and honey, again showing that honey was acceptable as a food.

When David and Jonathan are considered together, David represents Jesus and the Jonathan class is the Church. An unusual tender love existed between the two, a love exceeding that of a brother in that it was higher. Jonathan was willing to forfeit his kingship and defer to David, taking second place if David were king. Accordingly, Jesus is not ashamed to call the Little

Flock “brethren,” even though there is a vast difference (Heb. 2:11,12). This statement is remarkable when we consider the high station of Jesus, his prehuman background, and his being raised to the divine nature. To speak thus of a class here on earth, having human nature in the present life, shows how much respect he has for his Church. Moreover, Jesus said, “The Father himself loveth you” (John 16:27). The Scriptures show the awesome possibility of an affection between this tremendous spirit being with authority, power, and honor and a lowly but obedient class down here.

“And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood” (1 Sam. 14:32). It is immaterial that the account does not state whether the animals were cooked, for the real point is that the animals were eaten with the blood. Normally, the blood had to be drained, a process that took some time. The animal was hung by its feet to facilitate the draining, the flaying, and the cutting. The fact that the people “flew upon” the animals and did not bother to drain the blood shows they were famished.

“Then they [the people] told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood” (1 Sam. 14:33). No doubt the people felt they had met the requirement of the oath, for they did not eat until the close of day. Notice Saul’s self-righteous attitude in his reaction. Assuming the people had been disobedient, he said, “Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.... Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there. And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD” (1 Sam. 14:33-35).

Q: What was the purpose of the “great stone”?

A: A rock can be used as a witness. For example, when Joshua entered the Promised Land, he made certain pronouncements in the audience of a rock, an inanimate material. He spoke to the rock as if it were a recording (Josh. 24:26,27). This technique can be true, for ruby chips and other semiprecious stones are used with computers to store information. Thus a stone can be a witness. When Jesus came into the Holy City on a colt, the foal of an ass, the children cried, “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Luke 19:35-40). When the Pharisees told Jesus to silence the people, he replied, “If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out [audibly].”

A rock could also serve as an altar. Hence Saul called for the animals to be slain on the rock and the blood to be drained, feeling that the people would then be justified in continuing to eat. The “altar” pictured the relationship of church and state that began under Constantine and was cemented under Justinian in 539, when the man of sin was set up.

Q: Under the circumstances, were the people really in such great sin by eating the blood?

A: Probably they were not, although the account does not say one way or the other. Saul’s attitude was the problem. Just as *hungry* David could eat the shewbread, so the *famished* people could eat the blood here (Matt. 12:3,4). A higher principle took over, for both cases were a matter of necessity, of life and death. David and the people ate purely for survival; they had no ulterior or disrespectful motives for God’s Law. Thus there can be extenuating circumstances. By being obedient to Saul, the king, the people disobeyed God. Down through history, people who obeyed Papacy often ended up disobeying God.

And in Biblical history, rash oaths were sometimes made. In Jephthah’s case, the Lord did not

express disapproval. Incidentally, his vow, which backfired on his daughter, was different from Saul's (Judg. 11:30-36). According to the vow, whoever first came out of his household would be offered as a burnt offering. That individual was his daughter. Exactly what was meant by a "burnt offering" has caused some debate. However, when Jephthah made his vow, he probably had in mind a *figurative* burnt offering. Just as a literal burnt offering was to be *fully* consumed on the altar in the Lord's service, so one could be *wholly* consumed in spiritual service or dedication to the Lord. Jesus said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up [fully consumed me]" (John 2:17). When Jephthah made the vow, he never dreamed his daughter would be the first to come forth, and keeping the vow was a real test on him.

Q: Was the daughter's age a factor? Being young, she was still under his roof or charge.

A: Yes. Also, Jephthah might have thought a servant would be first, not his daughter.

Comment: As Christians, we might have to give up a family relationship in order to keep our consecration vow. Even if such a sacrifice is not required, we must have that willingness. However, that would be *our* sacrifice, whereas Jephthah was sacrificing a second party.

Reply: However, that second party was under his charge. If a male servant had been first to come forth from the household, Jephthah would have released him from his own service and wholly committed him, with all his talent, to the service of the Tabernacle. Hebrews 11:32 shows that Jephthah is an Ancient Worthy.

Comment: It is interesting that the people prevailed against Saul in defense of Jonathan. They would not permit his death.

Reply: A man of brash actions, Saul would have carried out the penalty if the people had not intervened. *Pride* on his part would have caused him to carry out his foolish vow.

Q: How could the people have so quickly been in such dire straits without eating?

A: It is known that a person who is lost in a forest can die in three days or less out of fear, for fear acts on adrenaline and exhausts the body system. The Israelites had been fighting strenuously all day with implements of war and rapidly burned up calories. Also, they had to contend with irregularities in the terrain. When a person is fatigued, his personality can change. Rash actions and statements are made, and memory is adversely affected. When all these factors are considered, it would seem that the Israelites were excused in this instance, for no special reprimand was given.

1 Sam. 15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

1 Sam. 15:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

1 Sam. 15:3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Chapter 15 backtracks to give the details of 1 Samuel 14:48, which merely states that the event occurred. "And he [Saul] gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them." This principle of a flashback is often employed in Scripture. Even though the accounts were recorded by men, the same Divine Author was behind every book of Holy Writ, and the events and their details are not always in perfect

sequence.

Samuel said, “Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD,” thus indicating he realized Saul had previously fallen several times. In speaking these words to Saul, he probably used a little inflection. He was saying, “Here is another opportunity for obedience. Follow God’s command *explicitly*, and *do not botch* this opportunity.” The Amalekites were to receive a severe judgment. The following is a review of what happened with them earlier.

“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

“And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

“So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

“And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

“But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

“And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

“And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi:

“For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” (Exod. 17:8-16)

When Moses stood on the top of the hill, he raised *both* hands. The use of “hand” (singular) is a figure of speech. Proof that both hands were raised is given in the subsequent details of the account. Notice that *two* other men, Aaron and Hur, accompanied Moses to the top of that hill. When Moses raised his hands, the Israelites were strong and victorious, but when he got tired and his hands dropped, the Amalekites prevailed. Then Aaron and Hur stood on either side of Moses and assisted by each holding up one of his hands (plural). To not see the plural aspect obscures what the hands really signified; that is, Moses raised his hands in the sign of a cross, for they extended outward, horizontal to the ground. This event was a symbolic picture. Rephidim was one of the stops in the Wilderness of Sin not too long after the Exodus from Egypt. On their journey toward Mount Sinai, the Israelites encountered this foe. We might wonder why the denunciation of Amalek and his children was so severe, especially when Israel had so many enemies. It was as though the Lord had a special animosity toward this people, and the account in Deuteronomy 25:17-19 is needed to understand the reason.

“Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;

“How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were

feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.

“Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.” (Deut. 25:17-19)

The same denunciation was repeated. What was so reprehensible about the Amalekites? At the time of the Exodus, they had observed Israel from the other side of the Red Sea (the east side) and thus had *witnessed* the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptians. However, this *momentous* event, which showed the *great power* of Israel’s God, did not have a lasting impression on the Amalekites. Rather than confront the Israelites openly as an enemy, they acted very cowardly by following them and waiting until the people were tired from walking all day. At that psychological moment, when the Israelites needed rest and refreshment, Amalek struck from the rear. Verse 2 states this fact: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he *laid wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.” Amalek perceived the motion and the march of the Israelites and then waited until the opportune moment to attack. As warriors, the Amalekites were severe and cruel—characteristics that particularly displease Jehovah.

A principle is involved here with regard to the enemies of God’s children. The characteristic of the Dan class is to bite the horse’s heels (that is, from the rear) so that the rider falls off backward (Gen. 49:17). In a stealthy, mean, cowardly way, at little cost to themselves, they detract from the merit of God’s dealings with others, and this particular characteristic of an enlightened class is especially displeasing to the Lord. Guilt is incurred, as shown by the fact that the Amalekites, who were not Israelites, were to be exterminated.

This brief review of the history of the Amalekites and their treatment of the Israelites many years earlier is necessary in order to understand the judgment that Samuel pronounced during the reign of King Saul more than 500 years later. At the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, God had determined that this judgment would eventually take place. Now, through Samuel, He told the Israelites as a people that the time for judgment had come. They had had rest in the land, and now they were to carry out the command to utterly destroy the Amalekites. The background information shows the responsibility of Saul and the Israelites. They were to “go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (verse 3).

1 Sam. 15:4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

Saul dutifully gathered a sizable host of 200,000 footmen and 10,000 men of Judah, for all of the Amalekites and their beasts were to be slain. Saul was of the small tribe of Benjamin, so he got additional men from Judah.

1 Sam. 15:5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

Since the purpose was to destroy the Amalekite race, this city remained unnamed so that its memory would not be a constant reminder of Amalek. With Jezebel, who also was an enemy of God, there was no grave site or tombstone. Dogs ate her, leaving only her skull, feet, and the palms of her hands (2 Kings 9:35). The reason many individuals wanted a sepulcher was to perpetuate their memory after their decease when their remains were crumbling into ashes.

1 Sam. 15:6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the

Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

Comment: Saul's warning to the Kenites to separate from the Amalekites reminds us of the warning to the Lord's people to get out of Babylon lest they suffer its plagues.

Reply: That comment is excellent.

Saul had some good points, as shown here by the warning to the Kenites, who were kind to the Israelites when the latter left Egypt. The Kenites were related to Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who also had the name Hobab. Jethro was like a priest and a leader of the Midianites, and out of respect for him, the Kenite people followed his example and showed kindness to the Israelites. For that kindness, they were to be spared in this destruction of the Amalekites. Jethro served as Moses' "eyes" in the wilderness (Num. 10:29-31). No doubt Moses was quite familiar with the terrain and the dangers of Sinai, since he had lived there for 40 years, but the land of Midian was a large territory. The Lord remembers both wicked deeds, which eventually require retribution, and kindnesses, which are rewarded sooner or later. The smiting of the Amalekites was delayed for more than 500 years because the Israelites had to develop to a point where they were capable of pursuing the widely dispersed enemy in the large territory.

Comment: On certain occasions, God allowed the Israelites to take some of the animals and booty. At other times, such as here, everything was to be destroyed. A *Reprint* article suggested that since the Amalekites were like bandits, their destruction was to be a witness to the surrounding peoples not to act likewise.

Reply: Each time there was a purpose, sometimes along natural lines and sometimes along spiritual lines. Selectivity was permitted in certain cases.

1 Sam. 15:7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

The Scriptures do not give lengthy details of this battle with the Amalekites. However, the "city of Amalek," although unnamed, was important because there the crucial battle was fought and Agag died (1 Sam. 15:5,32,33).

Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah, a territory in Turkey, unto the Wilderness of Shur in Sinai, a fairly long territory that bordered Egypt on the other side of the Red Sea (Exod. 15:22). With regard to Havilah, Genesis 2:11 states, "The name of the first [river coming out of the Garden of Eden] is Pison: ... it ... compasseth [embraces with its tributaries] the whole land of *Havilah*, where there is gold." In other words, wherever the Pison river flowed, the adjoining property on both sides, throughout its length, was called the "land of Havilah." The expression "from Havilah to Shur" was used the same way in principle as the term "from Dan even to Beer-sheba," which indicated the land of Israel from north to south (Judg. 20:1). Therefore, to smite the Amalekites was a huge undertaking because they were sprinkled throughout the large territory extending from Havilah to Shur. Part of the reason the Amalekites were not previously destroyed is that a concerted effort and a lot of military planning would be required, plus considerable cost. However, now that Saul was Israel's first king and he had the respect of many in the nation, God said it was time to smite the Amalekites. This *enormous* enterprise consisted of *multiple* battles, yet the smiting is described in just one verse.

1 Sam. 15:8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

1 Sam. 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

By mutual consent, Saul and the people disobeyed God's command and spared Agag and the best animals. However, *all* were to be destroyed—there was not to be a selective sparing. Agag, the king or leader of the Amalekites, was kept alive because Saul and the people wanted a trophy to exhibit as the *pride* of their conquest. Incidentally, Agag represents Gog; that is, Agag is a type of Gog—the Hebrew word is the same.

1 Sam. 15:10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

1 Sam. 15:11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

Saul was returning with the trophies of war—Agag and the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs, etc. In the meantime, God advised Samuel, who had not accompanied Saul, “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.” Saul had fought many battles and reaped a tremendous destruction, but he had *disobeyed* God's commandment. In other words, Saul's disobedience in taking booty *nullified* what he had done correctly, so in the final analysis, his efforts were worthless. Saul had “turned back from following” God. He was given a special injunction, but he disobeyed.

“Turning back” can occur in the Gospel Age as well. Sometimes brethren seem to be doing the Lord's will and obeying His commandments quite comprehensively, but they can be turned back from following the Lord by doing something they were clearly instructed not to do.

“And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night”; that is, he petitioned for Saul's reinstatement. Samuel was disturbed initially when the people wanted a king, for he had faithfully served, but God comforted him in saying, “Samuel, the people rejected me, not you.” Evidently, Samuel saw several admirable qualities in Saul at first, but as time went on, he perceived some unfavorable qualities and realized the king was in jeopardy. Of course on this occasion, God said plainly, “Saul has turned back from following me.” Thus this current disobedience was the point of no return, the unpardonable sin, and it was just a matter of time until Saul would be removed as king and replaced.

1 Sam. 15:12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

1 Sam. 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

1 Sam. 15:14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

For a short time, Saul and the people with him settled in Carmel. (This Carmel was a small village in Judah and was not the Carmel up near Haifa in northern Israel.) Then the king went on down to Gilgal, which was nearby, and Samuel came to him there. The conversation that ensued between the two illustrated a practical principle in everyday living.

Saul greeted Samuel enthusiastically, no doubt believing he had been obedient: “Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.” Moreover, he showed respect for Samuel, considering him to be particularly well versed in the will and knowledge of God’s instructions. Samuel replied, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” This was like a psychological setting. As Saul was greeting Samuel, the animals—perhaps hundreds of them—could be heard bleating and lowing in the distance. The evidence belied what Saul had just said.

1 Sam. 15:15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Saul’s excuse was that the people had put pressure on him to spare the best animals and that the spoil was to be sacrificed unto the Lord. A token sacrifice might have been given, but the statement was basically not true. Samuel said that Saul “didst fly upon the spoil,” meaning that he and the people took the spoil for their own aggrandizement and benefit (verse 19). Then Saul emphasized that after selecting out the best animals, all of the others were destroyed. He told a half truth in blaming the people, for he, too, had wanted the animals.

1 Sam. 15:16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

In recognizing his responsibility to speak what God had said, Samuel followed decorum and asked Saul to stay, for there was more to tell the king; that is, Samuel gave Saul opportunity to make the decision. Saul responded by granting Samuel the privilege to speak further.

1 Sam. 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

1 Sam. 15:18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

1 Sam. 15:19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

Samuel repeated the original commandment with regard to the Amalekites. “The LORD sent you on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.” However, we know from history that Saul and his forces did not go all the way up to Havilah and destroy all the Amalekites. Rather, *of those whom they confronted*, they killed everyone except for Agag, for once the spoil was secured, they did not go up and down the land utterly destroying the Amalekites.

Saul’s beginning had been promising. When he was “little” in his own sight, he was made the head of all the tribes and anointed to be king over Israel.

1 Sam. 15:20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

Saul insisted that he had obeyed the command. He was saying, “An evidence I destroyed the Amalekites is that I have their king here.” But he was supposed to go throughout the territory, from Havilah to Shur, and did not.

1 Sam. 15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

Again Saul blamed the people, but they were only partly at fault. There was a *mutual* desire on the part of Saul and the people to take a spoil. The plan was to sacrifice some of the animals at Gilgal, the first place in the Promised Land where the Tabernacle was set up (Josh. 4:20; 5:9,10).

1 Sam. 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

This verse is frequently quoted in condensed form: “To obey is better than sacrifice.” God delights in sacrifices, but *obedience is better*, for obedience to God is a *freewill* offering wherein the offerer can say yes or no. The person can choose to obey or disobey. To obey (or hearken) of one’s own volition is far more important than a multitude of sacrifices.

1 Sam. 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Verse 23 is equally important as an additional explanation of obedience to the Lord. “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” Saul’s disobedience was not due to Adamic weakness, for he *willfully* disobeyed. He was instructed what to do, and he could have pursued the Amalekites until he had carried out the Lord’s commandment, but instead, he gave up after getting the spoil and the king and offering sacrifices. Saul obeyed perhaps 90 percent of what God had said, but because he rejected the final ± 10 percent, he was rejected as king. In other words, Samuel had given adequate instruction, and Saul did not really hearken. The command was to be *strictly* followed.

1 Sam. 15:24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

Saul admitted that he had sinned, for he had transgressed God’s commandment and Samuel’s words. The reason Saul gave was that he had “feared the people, and obeyed their voice.” However, the chief responsibility lay with him, for he had not feared *God* sufficiently.

1 Sam. 15:25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

Saul asked for forgiveness: “I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.”

1 Sam. 15:26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

Now we see Samuel’s true quality. He had previously cried unto the Lord all night on behalf of Saul. What Saul had done and the consequent loss of favor grieved Samuel, for he had love in his heart. However, an onlooker might think the reverse—that Saul had love because he asked for forgiveness and that Samuel lacked love because he refused to grant forgiveness. And isn’t that true with us? We can often make bad judgments because “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Nevertheless, what Saul *did not*

do revealed his heart condition, and Samuel saw the truth—that Saul had committed a very *grievous sin* in light of the instruction he had received. Thus external facts of disobedience sometimes show the true facts of the case.

Samuel would not return with Saul, so the two close friends parted ways. Their relationship was severed because of Saul's disobedience. Incidentally, there are many such examples in the Bible, but the sad commentary is that few people really know the Scriptures. Many use and magnify clichés and platitudes, and people conclude they know a great deal about Holy Writ and its principles—but how can one learn those principles except through personal study?

1 Sam. 15:27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

1 Sam. 15:28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

As Samuel turned about to leave, Saul grabbed his cloak to try to detain him. However, the mantle ripped. The Holy Spirit instantly operated through Samuel, causing him to say mechanically, “The LORD has rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor who is better than you.” Of course the neighbor was David.

1 Sam. 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.

“The Strength of Israel [a title referring to Jehovah] will not lie nor repent,” yet verses 11 and 35 say that God “repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.” How do we harmonize these seeming contradictory statements?

There are two definitions of the word “repent.” One type of repentance has nothing to do with a state of emotion, for it is simply to change one's mind or action (to do something another way). The other type of repentance has the connotation of saying, “I'm sorry I did such and such.” As humans, we often repent for having made a mistake, knowing we were responsible.

Therefore, verse 29 means that God “is not a man, that he should repent” as a fallible human being would. Saul had committed a *grievous sin* in disobeying the specific instructions of the Lord. In the English language, it is hard for us to realize there are two kinds of repentance. We give only the one connotation of saying, “I am sorry.”

Let us consider the circumstances when Saul became king. The people wanted a king, not God. At first, He gave them a tongue-lashing, but then He deferred to their demand. However, God did not yield from the standpoint that *He* felt they should have a king.

With regard to the fallen angels who materialized and took wives of the daughters of men in Noah's day, the account states, “And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:6). Man, with free will, had the capability of sinning or not sinning. Therefore, it was mankind who inclined to evil and performed the evil deeds. The seed thought is that in both cases—with the people wanting a king in Samuel's day and with the sin of Noah's day—God did not institute the action. God made Adam perfect, but when Adam sinned, the act was done willfully and willingly.

We are trying to give a historical background where God repented from a condition in which He did not initiate the original circumstance but merely consented to it. Another example is in the account of the smiting of the image, where Nebuchadnezzar was told, “The God of heaven

hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Dan. 2:37). The image was *man’s* concept of glorious empires. The Pastor explained in the *First Volume* that the empires were not of divine sanction; rather, they were divinely *permitted*. Thus there is a distinction between God’s sanctioning something and His permitting it. That kernel thought is in back of this repentance. When something occurs that did not originally have God’s sanction and He makes a change, that is quite different from something He did sanction and changed. For example, God showed wisdom in permitting the Gentiles to govern themselves, but He does not sanction, or approve, their rule. Also, the divine plan purposed that different time periods would be allocated to the Jewish Age, the Gospel Age, and the Millennial Age. These purposed transitions do not involve any repentance, but something that originates with others and is subsequently changed can be spoken of as repentance. Stated another way, God does not repent over what *He* sanctions and initiates.

1 Sam. 15:30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

1 Sam. 15:31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

1 Sam. 15:32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

1 Sam. 15:33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

Samuel turned back again to Saul but only because of Agag. In anger, Samuel said, “Bring Agag here,” and then hewed him to pieces. As an afterthought, Samuel realized that Agag had to be slain.

1 Sam. 15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

1 Sam. 15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

After departing from Saul, Samuel never saw him again.

Review and Further Clarification of Verses 30-35

Samuel gave specific instructions to Saul to pursue the Amalekites and to utterly slay them and destroy their cities and cattle. After Saul returned from this mission, Samuel was instructed of the Lord to go and meet the king. As Samuel approached, Saul addressed him with a cheerful demeanor because of victory, saying, “Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD” (verse 13). However, at this auspicious moment, Samuel heard lowing and bleating in the distance and asked, “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” (verse 14). He realized that Saul had disobeyed by bringing back Agag, king of the Amalekites, and some of the booty, which should have been destroyed. Samuel condemned Saul for his acts of disobedience and said in effect, “The Lord has rejected you.”

Then Samuel turned away from Saul, preparing to depart. However, Saul grabbed Samuel’s raiment, and the clothing tore. Samuel replied, “The LORD has rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day and given it to a better man.” Saul acknowledged that he had sinned and was sorry and wanted reconciliation.

Verse 31 then states, “So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.” However, verse 35 tells that after Saul worshipped—from that day until the time he died—Samuel had no further dealings with him on a personal basis.

To understand Samuel’s “turning again,” we have to put ourselves back in that experience. Samuel was very angry when he said the kingdom had departed from Saul. In the heat of his anger, Samuel remembered that Agag was still alive. Therefore, in his consent to return and go with Saul to the altar of worship the king had prepared, Samuel asked for Agag to be brought into his presence (verse 32). When Agag appeared, Samuel hewed him to pieces. Thus Samuel’s anger continued, just as Moses’ anger was continuous when he descended the mountain with the two tables of the Law in his hands and heard the sound of the people making revelry. In his anger, Moses not only broke the tablets but subsequently beat the golden calf to powder and made the people drink the powdered gold with water. Moses acted with real fury in righteous indignation. Samuel, who was normally of a peaceful disposition, turned back in great anger. Disturbed that Agag had been brought back as a trophy of war, Samuel personally killed him. Hence the “turning again” was not to make amends with Saul but to dispose of Agag. Moreover, Saul alone worshipped God—Samuel was not involved in that worship. Based on his words of repentance, Saul was probably going through a ceremonial act of giving reverence to God, whereas he had actually passed the point of no return, especially in his disobedience with Agag, who had been one of God’s greatest enemies for more than 500 years. Therefore, neither God nor Samuel forgave Saul.

Q: In turning back, was Samuel honoring the office of king rather than Saul?

A: Samuel knew that with Agag alive, *no sacrifice* would be acceptable to God. Otherwise, a sacrifice would be like offering a dead dog.

Saul never thoroughly pursued or conquered the Amalekites, for they cropped up again in David’s day (2 Sam. 1:1). It is true that Saul thoroughly conquered the Amalekites *he confronted*, but he was more interested in the spoils than in obediently following through with a *complete* destruction. Thus Saul’s victory over the Amalekites was only half-hearted. He was at fault and his words of repentance were uttered through expediency rather than real sincerity. Similarly, a politician may say he is sorry when a wrong act adversely affects the political party or his reputation, but he is sorry he was caught and not sorry about the violation of moral principle. The lesson is to be *truly sorry* for any infringement of a moral principle.

Q: How far into Saul’s 40-year reign did this disobedience occur?

A: No exact date is given, but some time had expired.

Q: Where was the Ark at this time?

A: The Tabernacle at Shiloh was an empty structure, for the Ark was still in a private home about 50 miles away. Meanwhile, Samuel acted like a “walking tabernacle.” In this transition period, he performed sacrifices that were normally done in the Court of the Tabernacle. Samuel acted as the high priest and as adviser to the king. Prior to Israel’s having a king, he was somewhat like a prince and a priest. Similarly, the Lord tells us to do certain things, but sometimes we are in a peculiar circumstance where we are forced to try to obey just the “spirit of the law” because it is impossible to obey the “letter.”

Comment: The Scripture that God does not repent or lie is like the Scripture that nothing comes back to Him void (1 Sam. 15:29; Isa. 55:11). In killing Agag, Samuel accomplished what God had

told Saul to do.

Reply: Yes. There comes a time when a sin cannot be prayed for—a “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). When a person has committed the type of sin that goes beyond the point of no return, we, as an observer, a confidant, etc., no longer pray for him. An example would be for one, after consecration, to curse Jehovah or to deny Jesus and claim he is Antichrist. Of course Judas is another example. Judas even repented with tears, but he had gone too far. Such cases have to be analyzed without emotion and not according to our feelings. With lesser transgressions, where the circumstances are nebulous, we can be more merciful and give the party the benefit of the doubt if we see reasonable evidence of a change of heart.

To summarize: There are two types of repenting. (1) Man’s repentance is where a person is sorry for having done something through unwisdom or a lack of foresight, or for having done something that is morally wrong. (2) God’s repentance pertains to something that is not of His origination. For example, the people wanted a king, but God did not sanction kingship for Israel in the present life, for it was a symbol of their rejecting Him.

1 Sam. 16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

1 Sam. 16:2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

1 Sam. 16:3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

Samuel was to go down to Bethlehem and anoint a king. Jerusalem was in enemy hands, being under the control of the Jebusites. Not until David came along later were the Jebusites defeated and Jerusalem made the capital of his kingdom. At this time in history, therefore, Samuel could offer an animal in sacrifice almost anywhere. Two hundred years earlier, one would have gone to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. In Solomon’s day, the people went to the Temple at Jerusalem. The current in-between period was a time of confusion. Previously Samuel followed a circuit, a route, that covered four towns, where he offered sacrifices. Thus for Samuel to say he was “come [to Bethlehem] to sacrifice to the LORD” did not seem strange. Incidentally, this incident occurred soon after the events of the previous chapter. David did not actually become king until a number of years in the future.

Comment: For Saul to kill Samuel if he heard about David’s anointing shows how much his character had deteriorated.

Reply: In addition to being a seer, Samuel knew Saul well enough to be able to anticipate his character. Saul’s “repentance” lacked sincerity in the final analysis, and he had already displayed anger in slaying a yoke of oxen. When “his anger was kindled greatly ... he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers” (1 Sam. 11:6,7). Saul had a volatile disposition that came more and more to the surface when fretful circumstances arose in regard to his jealousy over David.

God told Samuel what to say if he was questioned. The statement “I am come to sacrifice to the LORD” was a half truth, but that partial truth was acceptable in this case. Samuel was also to call Jesse to the sacrifice, and God would show Samuel which son to anoint.

God gave Samuel a certain level of information and then left him to guess for a while which

son of Jesse would be king. This method taught Samuel the lesson that “the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (verse 7).

Comment: God did not want others to know about the anointing at this time.

Reply: Sometimes it is permissible to withhold information to keep from unnecessarily hurting someone.

1 Sam. 16:4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

Samuel walked with the heifer. He arrived in the suburbs of Bethlehem, and when the elders recognized him, they were frightened. Perhaps they thought he was bringing bad news from the long battle with the Amalekites. Also, they knew that he had rebuked Saul and hacked Agag to pieces. Therefore, wondering if Samuel was coming to rebuke them also, they asked, “Comest thou peaceably?”

1 Sam. 16:5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Samuel answered, “Peaceably,” and told the elders to sanctify themselves—a process that would take several hours—and then come to the sacrifice. Meanwhile, Samuel “sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.” The instruction may have been a strategy to sidetrack the elders so that he could secretly anoint David.

1 Sam. 16:6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD’S anointed is before him.

Eventually Jesse’s sons were made to pass before Samuel. As the oldest of the eight sons, Eliab was the first to pass before Samuel. The implication is that Eliab had the appearance of a king. Accordingly, Samuel’s reaction was, “Surely he is the LORD’s anointed,” but God had not chosen Eliab.

1 Sam. 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

God told Samuel that countenance and height were not factors in choosing the king. A selectivity was being pursued, for it had been determined that Messiah would eventually come of the seed, or lineage, of Jesse. Normally speaking, the logical choice for king would be the firstborn. The Lord’s words “I have refused him” indicate that Eliab was under consideration at least momentarily, but he made unfavorable remarks to David later on, thus revealing his wrong heart condition as a reason for his rejection (1 Sam. 17:28). Incidentally, the other sons did not look too favorably on David either. Their attitude reminds us of Joseph’s brothers, who were jealous.

1 Sam. 16:8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

1 Sam. 16:9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

1 Sam. 16:10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

Abinadab, Shammah, and the other sons passed before Samuel, but God had not chosen any of them.

1 Sam. 16:11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

Samuel asked Jesse, “Do you have any more sons?” The reply was, “There is David, the youngest, and he keeps the sheep.” Being a shepherd was part of David’s training, just as the fishing business was good training for the apostles. Fishing requires patience, tact, knowledge, and savvy—and so does spiritual fishing. And Moses received training in the courts of Egypt, as well as in the terrain of Sinai, to prepare him to lead the Israelites. Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and fetch him [David].”

1 Sam. 16:12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

David might not have been sophisticated and proud in bearing like his brothers, but he was a very promising young man. He was ruddy and had a beautiful countenance. God said to Samuel, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.”

Comment: The Revised Standard says that David “had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.”

1 Sam. 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brethren, “and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.”

David was the youngest and the last of Jesse’s eight sons to pass before Samuel. Subsequently God said of David, “I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel” (2 Sam. 7:8). While serving as a shepherd, David looked at the stars at night and considered the heavens (Psa. 8:3). He meditated a lot about God and drank deeply of nature and history. As a result, the faith that was in him at this age was prodigious compared to the faith of others in Israel. David’s training was conducive to the experiences that were to come shortly, for example, his response to Goliath.

Q: Would David’s brothers have known what the anointing signified?

A: Yes. Since it was customary to anoint a king in advance, they would have drawn the conclusion. And in the anointing, Samuel would have made some kind of verbal expression.

Comment: The older brothers were jealous of their youngest brother, whereas the “spirit of the LORD” coming on David would have been apparent and should have made them respect him.

Reply: Later on, the brothers were forced to concede David’s anointing and kingship, but initially there was a lack of respect for what was being done.

After leaving Saul, Samuel had gone to Ramah (1 Sam. 15:34). Now, after anointing David, Samuel again went to Ramah.

1 Sam. 16:14 But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

Q: Was the change with David and Saul almost simultaneous? As David was anointed and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, did Saul experience a loss of the Spirit?

A: Yes. There was a notable increase of God's Spirit in David at the same time that Saul had a notable decrease (verse 13).

Q: In what way did an "evil spirit" trouble Saul?

A: The Lord *permitted* an evil spirit to come over Saul. Similarly, God raised up a particular Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus so that He might visit upon him all the plagues. Stated another way, of the various sons who were born, God overruled that the one who got on the throne had stubborn characteristics. God tempts no man with evil. When He tempted Abraham, the experience was for Abraham's good. In other words, there is a tempting from the standpoint of testing a person to help him qualify for an office or position or for an advancement of some kind. The Lord uses the same method with us. Here the word "troubled" has the thought of "disturbed" or "tormented." A fretful spirit overcame Saul.

Comment: A *Reprint* article states that the "evil spirit from the LORD" was a spirit *opposite to or contrary to God*. It was a spirit *away from God*.

1 Sam. 16:15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

It is interesting that Saul's servants made the same comment: "Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee." Why does the account include the phrase "from God"? With regard to Israel's land, crops, wealth, health, etc., the principle was, "Shall evil enter the land and I the LORD not have done it?" God *permitted* frustrations to come upon Israel as punishments for wrongdoing, and that was true of Saul as well. This "evil" was a judgment, and not an act involving a moral principle. Under the Law with natural Israel, any lack of prosperity physically, mentally, or morally was a measure of displeasure from the Lord. We think Saul's servants were so well acquainted with the Law that they were expressing this principle to him. They probably conveyed the thought that the experience was a test on Saul, and they wanted to help him (verse 16).

1 Sam. 16:16 Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

1 Sam. 16:17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me.

1 Sam. 16:18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

Saul's servants suggested David as the ideal one to play the harp to help the king from his evil spirit. "A son of Jesse ... is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and

prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.” Not only did David have physical strength and athletic capabilities, but also he was skilled in using the slingshot as an implement of warfare. In addition, he was tactful, respectful, and handsome.

Comment: If playing the harp could counteract the evil spirit that was troubling Saul, it sounds as if he was experiencing an emotional disturbance. The music comforted him.

Reply: Yes, music has a therapeutic effect on the nervous system. The playing of the harp would distract him in a pleasant way.

1 Sam. 16:19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.

Saul agreed and sent messengers to Jesse, saying, “Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.”

1 Sam. 16:20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

Jesse sent David to Saul with a donkey carrying many loaves of bread, a large wineskin, and a kid, which was a typical offering of friendship and greeting.

1 Sam. 16:21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

Saul was immediately impressed with David and “loved him greatly.” We are reminded of Jonathan’s love for David. As Saul’s armor bearer, David stood next to the king in battle. Thus he was Saul’s personal bodyguard, as well as a musician.

1 Sam. 16:22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

1 Sam. 16:23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Whenever David played the harp, Saul felt refreshed, and the evil spirit departed from him. In antitype, Saul represents the nominal Church, David pictures the true Church, and the harp would be the Scriptures. There are times when true Christians provide scriptural comfort and help to nominal Christians.

1 Sam. 17:1 Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.

1 Sam. 17:2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

1 Sam. 17:3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them.

1 Sam. 17:4 And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

Not only do the place names and locations show historical accuracy, but the account is designed for future use and education in the Kingdom. When the history of Israel is reviewed in the next age, these places will have great significance and force. Moreover, with all this accurate and truthful detail available, the world will be shamed for their lack of interest in the Bible in the present life.

The Philistines were on one mountain, and the Israelites were on the other mountain with a valley in between. The two forces were gathering their respective armies together and lining up for battle. In the meantime, out from the ranks of the Philistines and down into the valley came a man called Goliath, who was 9 feet 9 inches tall. (One span was 9 inches; two spans equaled a cubit, or 18 inches.)

1 Sam. 17:5 And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass.

1 Sam. 17:6 And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.

1 Sam. 17:7 And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

Goliath was covered with armor, and a helmet of brass protected his head. His coat of mail, which was something like an ephod, provided protection front and back. In other words, it went over the head and was then chained together like a double apron. The weight—5,000 shekels of brass—was like wearing two bags of cement, one in front and the other in back. In addition, Goliath wore armor on his legs and a “target of brass” on his shoulders, and just the head, or end, of his spear weighed 600 shekels of iron, or 20 pounds. The main staff of Goliath's spear “was like a weaver's beam,” meaning it was like a large bar that was used in weaving heavy rugs. Imagine the *combined* weight of the armor and the spear! The appearance of this overdressed giant would have been somewhat ludicrous.

The coat of mail consisted of links of chain, so to prevent a spear from penetrating the armor, a target that acted like a shield was fastened to Goliath's body. For still further protection, an armor bearer with a shield accompanied him.

1 Sam. 17:8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

1 Sam. 17:9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

1 Sam. 17:10 And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

1 Sam. 17:11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

How generous Goliath was in his offer! Being confident of victory because of his size, he told the Israelites to choose a man to come down and fight with him. Since Saul was the tallest man in Israel, being head and shoulders over the other Israelites, he was the logical one to answer the giant's challenge (1 Sam. 9:2). However, Saul was “dismayed, and greatly afraid,” feeling he

would not do justice in battle for Israel's cause. No doubt Goliath had a very powerful voice, which would have added to the drama.

Obviously, the whole setup was providential. To see this incident in the chronicles of history replayed in the future will be striking indeed! The valley between the two mountains was like a stage that the forces of both the Philistines and the Israelites could watch. Goliath marched up and down in the valley, repeatedly calling out a challenge in his powerful voice and even addressing Saul by name. How embarrassing for the king, for Goliath was saying in effect, "Am I not a Philistine, your archenemy? What is wrong with you? Can't you send someone out to fight with me? Don't continue to array yourselves for battle. Here is your opportunity to settle the matter once and for all on a one-to-one basis." From a natural standpoint, it seemed hopeless for anyone to try to stand up to this man. Saul and all Israel were terrified.

Comment: Saul did not have the inner strength to accept the challenge because the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him.

1 Sam. 17:12 Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul.

1 Sam. 17:13 And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

1 Sam. 17:14 And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul.

Verses 12-14 give background information about David and tell what was happening at his home. As an old man, Jesse was excused from military battle because of his age. Of his eight sons, the three oldest went to battle: Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah. David, the youngest son, was not of military age under the Law.

1 Sam. 17:15 But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

David had been with Saul, serving as armor bearer, but because of his age, he was excused from Saul's service to go back home and tend his father's sheep. Had he been older, he would have been Saul's armor bearer at the battle site.

1 Sam. 17:16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.

For 40 days, Goliath issued the challenge twice a day, morning and evening, for a total of 80 times before David arrived.

1 Sam. 17:17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren;

1 Sam. 17:18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

Food had to be brought to the men at the battle site. Accordingly, Jesse sent David with an ephah of parched corn, ten loaves of bread, and ten cheeses. Jesse used tact by instructing David to take the provisions not only to the three sons but also to the commander of their unit. Jesse also said, "Look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge." In other words, "Find out

what your brothers need in addition to food so that I can send it to them later.”

1 Sam. 17:19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

1 Sam. 17:20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

Battle skirmishes, with lulls in between, had been taking place during the 40 days that Goliath kept repeating the challenge. Now, leaving his sheep with a keeper, David rose up early in the morning and went to the battle scene to greet his brothers and give them food.

1 Sam. 17:21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

1 Sam. 17:22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

1 Sam. 17:23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them.

1 Sam. 17:24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.

1 Sam. 17:25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

1 Sam. 17:26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

1 Sam. 17:27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

1 Sam. 17:28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

1 Sam. 17:29 And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?

1 Sam. 17:30 And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

1 Sam. 17:31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him.

When David appeared on the scene, he dropped his burden somewhere near the battle site and hastened to greet his brothers. While conversing with them, lo and behold Goliath came out onto the valley floor. Evidently, incidental skirmishes had occurred because the account states

that when Goliath came out, the people “fled from him, and were sore afraid”; that is, they fled from their battle skirmishes when the giant again issued his challenge. David had left very early that morning with the bread and cheese, and he arrived just in time to hear Goliath’s customary morning pronouncement while he was conversing with his brothers.

David could hardly believe what he was hearing, and he reacted with righteous indignation. He wondered how such words could come out of the mouth of this uncircumcised Philistine, who was defying the living God of Israel. (One of God’s titles is “LORD of hosts,” meaning ruler of the universe—of all planets and solar systems.) Not only was this challenge to Israel very offensive to David, but he asked for more information. He was told that anyone who could defeat Goliath would be given great riches and Saul’s daughter in marriage. David got verification that Saul had truly set this condition.

The reactions of David and the people were opposite extremes—David’s righteous indignation continued, and so did Israel’s fear. David was a tall and strong young *man*, not a child as many think. However, because of his age, he was not officially old enough for battle. News of David’s reaction reached Saul, who sent for him.

1 Sam. 17:32 And David said to Saul, Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

1 Sam. 17:33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

1 Sam. 17:34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

1 Sam. 17:35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

1 Sam. 17:36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

1 Sam. 17:37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

When Saul questioned David’s ability to fight Goliath, David replied that while he was keeping his father’s sheep, God had endued him with the spirit of power on two separate occasions whereby he killed a lion and a bear with his own bare hands. A bear has immense strength, as do the jaws of a lion. Therefore, while David was unskilled from the standpoint of not being a veteran of actual warfare, he had dexterity, adroitness, and physical capabilities. David was not about to be discouraged, and based on *his faith in God*—that God would take care of Goliath—he accepted the challenge. Apparently, David spoke *with such confidence* that Saul authorized him to go against Goliath. The challenge was a serious one, for if the Israelites lost, they would become servants of the Philistines. The very fact David was brought to the king’s attention indicates that the people were awed by his spirit. Saul, in turn, was also impressed, saying to David, “Go, and the LORD be with thee.”

1 Sam. 17:38 And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

1 Sam. 17:39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had

not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

1 Sam. 17:40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

1 Sam. 17:41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.

1 Sam. 17:42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

Had David been of just average stature, he could not have worn Saul's armor, for the king was head and shoulders above everyone else. However, after putting on the armor, David removed it because he felt the armor was too cumbersome. He preferred to go out and fight the battle in his own way in the strength of the Lord, unencumbered by exterior armament. Taking his staff and a slingshot, he selected five smooth stones and put them in his shepherd's bag.

Goliath, who was wearing impressive armor, watched this handsome young man approach him without a helmet, a coat of mail, or a shield but merely with a staff and a slingshot. What was this Philistine's reaction? He was *insulted*. He disdained this "youth," who was "ruddy, and of a fair countenance." From Goliath's standpoint, the contest was a mismatch.

1 Sam. 17:43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

1 Sam. 17:44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

1 Sam. 17:45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

1 Sam. 17:46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

1 Sam. 17:47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.

What an eloquent and God-honoring statement to be uttered on the spur of the moment! David said not only that he would personally slay Goliath but that the Philistines as a whole would be defeated—all in the name and strength of Jehovah and not by superior weaponry. Because David had the courage, God loosed his tongue and gave him the words to speak.

Comment: The feet members at the end of the age will similarly be given the words to speak.

Reply: Yes. Moreover, some who are not adept at speaking have testified that on certain occasions, God has helped them speak in a very remarkable way that was above and beyond their normal capabilities.

1 Sam. 17:48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

1 Sam. 17:49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

1 Sam. 17:50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

1 Sam. 17:51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

1 Sam. 17:52 And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

When Goliath arose and started toward David, David “hasted” toward the giant. Obviously, a little distance was involved for David to run. As is usually depicted, when Goliath laughed, the visor that protected his head was slung back in the open position, and he neglected to close it again. Knights in armor characteristically have a visor with bars that goes over their forehead. For visibility purposes, the knights kept the visor up, in the open position, until they got close to the enemy. In his braggadocio attitude, Goliath did not close the visor, and the Lord directed the stone into that little space, or chink. When the stone hit Goliath’s forehead, the giant was knocked unconscious, allowing sufficient time for David to slay him, as he had prophesied.

Comment: After hitting Goliath with the stone, David *ran* to him and cut off his head.

Reply: Yes, and seeing their champion defeated, the Philistines fled.

1 Sam. 17:53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

1 Sam. 17:54 And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

1 Sam. 17:55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

1 Sam. 17:56 And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is.

1 Sam. 17:57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

1 Sam. 17:58 And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

Notice David’s tactful response when Saul asked, “Whose son art thou, thou young man?” David honored his father by saying, “I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.”

Q: Why did Saul have to ask David's identity? David had even played the harp before the king.

A: We do not know. Perhaps Saul was forgetful when fits of madness came on him, for it is not uncommon in times of mental illness to have lapses of memory. Not only was he blinded with prejudice, anger, and jealousy, but the "evil spirit" may have prevented him from recognition.

Earlier, when David brought gifts from Jesse for his audience with the king, he would have been dressed and prepared for the occasion. David made a great impression on Saul, who appointed him for service as armor bearer and had him play the harp to counteract the evil spirit. Now, coming from tending the sheep to the battle scene, David was probably unkempt in appearance and dressed in shepherd's garb. Perhaps that is why Saul did not recognize him.

Comment: Another possibility is that the scene with the defeat of Goliath was so impressive and dramatic that Saul thought David was a prophet, just as the people at the First Advent wanted to know whether John the Baptist was Elijah.

Comment: It is hard to understand why Saul could not recognize David here, especially when the king had thought so much of David earlier and "loved him greatly" (1 Sam. 16:21).

Reply: At times we do not understand something in Scripture, and then later the understanding clarifies. That may be the case here. We do not know the motive of Saul in this experience. Perhaps the spirit of jealousy and envy was already working in him, for from this time forward, that spirit began to fill his heart. David's defeat of Goliath made him a national hero in one day, and we find out subsequently that his popularity was galling to Saul. The king's motives may have been pure here, but we do not know.

When God abandoned Saul, an "evil spirit," the fruit of his wrongdoing, came on him (1 Sam. 16:14). The Lord's Prayer contains the petition "Lead [abandon] us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). If the Lord temporarily abandons us in a certain experience, He might then allow the fruit of our wrongdoing, "an evil spirit," to come on us. God allowed evil thoughts to intrude on Saul's mind and enter his heart: jealousy, envy, pride, anger, etc.

Q: Isn't the faithful Christian given the spirit of a sound mind? When Saul disobeyed, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, permitting his old ways to surface.

A: This subject is so complex that no simple definition can be given. The Lord has reasons that we cannot fully answer for allowing certain experiences and not allowing other experiences. Sometimes things happen just as a test of faith. For example, at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was allowed to be tempted of the devil with *mechanical* intrusions of thought into his own mind that had nothing to do with whether or not he was obedient. In a vision and through conversation, he was tempted to compromise with Satan and thus gain success in his ministry. Satan offered him the kingdoms of this world. Jesus was also tempted to cast himself from the Temple. Such thoughts would not ordinarily come into a perfect man's mind of his own origination. The thoughts were an intrusion by Satan, and they had nothing to do with Jesus' responsibility or irresponsibility. Of course Jesus was not troubled this way throughout his ministry, but the Gospel accounts seem to indicate that he had at least two other tempting experiences as well.

Therefore, some of the Lord's obedient people could have experiences in which temptations enter their mind, and even a conversation, yet they might not be at all responsible. In other cases, there is responsibility. Because the subject is so complex, one definition or rule may cover most situations, but it does not cover all situations. From that standpoint, mechanical intrusions may be allowed to come into our minds of certain thoughts that are not our own responsibility

or are not due to imperfections of our mind, character, past environment, or other factors. If this happens, we should not automatically draw wrong conclusions and assume we have done something amiss, for that may or may not be the case. Self-examination is advisable, however. Wrong thoughts may be permitted to come upon the Lord's people whether or not they are at fault. And even when one is at fault, he may not be fully rejected. Sometimes the Lord only momentarily hides His face. Many of the Lord's people have testified about having this experience after doing something wrong. However, following the anguish of heart and spirit that resulted from this blockage, a restoration of the Lord's favor reinvigorated them into serving Him with even more zeal than previously.

Comment: David was very unhappy when he realized God had withdrawn His favor after the sin with Bathsheba, and he struggled to have that relationship return, whereas Saul did not.

Reply: We do not read about Saul's repentance. He just kept drifting away more and more, and there was no apparent real effort to be reinstated. Jealousy, envy, pride, etc., entered and were obvious in his behavior.

Q: When David took a harp and played with his hand, "Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam. 16:23). How did this occur?

A: Two contrary atmospheres were in the same room. Since the Lord's Spirit had departed from Saul, only David had the Spirit of the Lord. It is not surprising that the influence surrounding David offset the influence surrounding Saul so that the latter felt some measure of relief when David played the music and no doubt also sang. Saul's relief was not permanent, however, for he got worse and worse in his behavior until he was fully in the sin of jealousy and a murderous spirit entered him.

If the Lord's Spirit departs from an individual, the spirit of the Adversary automatically enters in. The god of this world has blinded the minds of men lest they see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). Thus the whole human race is blinded except a certain segment who are under the Lord's particular tutelage and care. If that care is removed, the other spirit seeps in right away, although it could be momentary from the standpoint of testing faith and obedience in an individual.

In regard to the failure of Saul and Abner to recognize David after he killed Goliath, there are several possible explanations. The fits that came on Saul could have caused some type of amnesia or mental block. Perhaps, too, David was several years younger when he played the harp before Saul, for the account does not state how long he was Saul's armor bearer. Also, some time intervened when he went to tend his father's sheep prior to the battle with Goliath. Not only could David's facial features have somewhat changed during the time interval, but his attire as a shepherd was different from his proper attire as a musician in Saul's court. In addition, there is a helpful clue in 1 Samuel 19:24, where Saul exhibited radical behavior. "And he [Saul] stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?" It is a known fact that anger can literally affect one's eyesight so that vision is somewhat impaired momentarily. Moreover, jealousy and/or anger can figuratively blind one to misunderstand and misinterpret a situation or person(s). For instance, some of the scribes and Pharisees may have really thought they were in the right. Having heard reports about Jesus and then hearing his words and seeing his youth, his imposing and noble bearing, and his assumed superior attitude—for as Messiah, he spoke and taught with the authority of God—they felt justified in attributing evil to him. Thus people can look on the best behavior of another individual and misjudge it. Because of prejudice, a person's great truth and/or pure actions can be completely misjudged as signs of evil. An evil eye can distort the appearance of a

person. At any rate, Saul's condition worsened as time passed.

Perhaps Saul's eyesight was actually impaired. If so, there would be no contradiction between Saul's earlier recognition of David and his later inquiry as to whose son this stripling was.

Antitype and Review of David and Goliath

In this end-of-the-age picture, Saul represents the nominal Church, David pictures the true Church, Goliath is Satan, and the stone is truth. The question would be, Why did David have five stones?

Comment: It may be that five particular truths will be pertinent to the end of the Gospel Age.

Reply: The significance of the five stones may clarify in the future. One stone of truth, which was slung with faith and the right spirit, killed Goliath.

Q: Earlier the harp, which has ten strings, was defined as the Scriptures. What are those strings?

A: Psalm 33:2, "Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings," is the clue that the harp is related to God's Word, and the ten strings are ten major doctrines of the Bible (see also Psalms 92:3; 71:22; 144:9). Discourses have been given on the ten strings, but we can only guess which doctrines they are.

Comment: David's youth prevented him from being officially in the battle. In antitype, the nominal Church considers anyone who has not graduated from a seminary as incapable of a theological debate.

Reply: Such individuals are not considered sufficiently schooled.

In the future, at the end of the age, the challenge will affect *both* Saul (the nominal Church) and David (the true Church). Both are *professedly* the true Church. When Israel and Saul heard Goliath defying God, he was their enemy. They were greatly disturbed by what he was doing, but they did not feel capable of confronting him. David was also disturbed at the words of Goliath, so the giant will be a *common foe to both Saul*, the rejected but ostensible and recognized king of Israel, *and David*, the truly anointed but unrecognized king of Israel. Both will look at the common enemy. In the future, this mutuality will temporarily coexist under a peculiar circumstance but will be very short-lived, for right after David's defeat of Goliath, he became very popular with the people, and Saul could see that this national hero was a threat to his leadership. And when our Lord went into Jerusalem during the last week of his earthly ministry, and the scribes and Pharisees saw his popularity with the masses and heard their cry, "Hosanna to the son of David," they could see that Jesus was a potential threat to their leadership. His cleansing the Temple and chasing out the money changers made the situation even worse in their eyes, and they plotted his death.

Comment: Likewise, after the general witness of the future and the smiting message, the feet members will be considered a threat, and the nominal religious leadership will put them to death. Subsequently, when it becomes apparent that the destruction of the nominal systems is imminent, the religious leadership will ask, "Who are the real Church? What is the identity of those who were put to death?" Having heard the final, fatal witness, they will know about the feet members, yet the truth of the matter will not register right away—in fact, not until the names of the Little Flock are published in Zion (Psa. 87:5). The feet members seem to fit the antitype of David's youth preventing him from being officially in the battle, but just as he

fought with Goliath, so the feet members will give a smiting message.

Comment: In addition to King Saul, Abner, the captain of his host, did not know David (1 Sam. 17:55-58). Saul seems to picture Papacy, and Abner would be Protestantism. Just as David brought spiritual food to the people, so the true Church, particularly the feet members, will bring spiritual food to professed Christians during the general popular witness.

Comment: The stage was set in the type. God overruled so that the typography of the land provided a natural stage. Accordingly, God will set the stage for the end-of-the-age witness.

Of the five stones David selected from the brook, what would the one stone that he used to kill Goliath represent? Are there any suggestions?

The stone cannot represent the smiting of the image because David was in the flesh, and the complete Church in glory, endued with power from on high, will do the smiting. The “brook” is life’s brook, that is, the brook of life’s experiences down here (Psa. 110:7). David represents the Church in the flesh, and Solomon represents the Church in glory. Moreover, the stone hit Goliath in the forehead, not in the feet.

Of course we cannot force an answer, but perhaps one will unfold in due time. We do think this incident is a picture because the event was so unusual. The picture would have to take place on this side of the veil at the end of the age, for David’s triumph over Goliath was a glorious victory.

Of the five smooth stones that were taken out of the brook, only one stone was used. The stone would certainly be a truth of some kind that smites the “giant” on his forehead, which is a symbol of intellect or mental faculties. The particular truth will center or focus in upon the forehead of the enemy, so it is a truth against a falsehood. It is a smiting of some false doctrine, false thought, or evil motive.

Perhaps the stone David used represents the doctrine of the Trinity, which will be the touchstone to distinguish between cults and “orthodoxy” at the end of the age. As a rule, Bible Students are familiar with the proper scriptural understanding of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, notwithstanding this knowledge, we suggest that in the antitypical David and Goliath setting, the numbers, influence, learning, and education will weigh so heavily on the other side that there will be a strong test on the brotherhood to confront the issue of the Trinity head-on. Of late, Trinitarians are circulating many doctrines among their own communicants—arguments that the Bible Students as a whole are not familiar with. Our own pet explanations are very good, but the surprise element, fear, and the weightiness on the other side can have an adverse psychological effect. In moments of fear and trepidation, thoughts that we might otherwise have can abandon us. Many brethren have had witnessing experiences where on a particular occasion, they cannot seem to get going on a subject that is very simple, yet on another occasion, where a subject is difficult, the words just pour out. A lot depends on how the Spirit moves the individual at that particular juncture. Therefore, possibly this will be the psychological situation.

David selected five smooth stones from a brook for his slingshot and put them in a bag. When he went forth to meet the giant, he took one stone out of the bag. His action seems to suggest that one doctrine will fell the giant. This doctrine is unknown—and will be unknown—but it will be one of five doctrines from the stream of life’s experiences that have been indoctrinating us over the years. A good *Reprint* article is No. 2935, “Drinking at the Brook.”

If the interpretation is along this line, the David and Goliath picture would not conflict with any

other type, such as the smiting of the Jordan, the smiting of the image, and John the Baptist's reprimand of Herod and Herodias. We suggest that David is not an individual but a class of the faithful at the end of the age. Each one in the David class will, in his or her own particular circumstance, be used of the Lord in connection with the coming battle.

The death of Goliath does not mean that the nominal Church will collapse immediately but that the doctrine of the Trinity is so woven into the fabric of the nominal Church, both Catholic and Protestant, that public realization of the utter falseness of this chief doctrine would lead to the downfall of the nominal system. That system, which has been revered, has claimed one must believe the Trinity because everyone else does, but no one can really defend the doctrine with sense. Showing this doctrine to be a bluff would arouse the antitypical Saul's enmity. Almost immediately after Goliath was killed, Saul saw that David was a threat to his authority over the people. If nothing were done, David would succeed him in the throne. Similarly, if Jesus had not been crucified at the end of his ministry, the Pharisees could see the possibility of his supplanting the orthodox priesthood. We are not dogmatic on this interpretation but simply put the above thoughts on the table for consideration.

Q: When David fought Goliath, a shield bearer was supposed to protect the giant. Who would the shield bearer be in antitype? Not only was David accurate with the slingshot, but neither Goliath's armor nor his armor bearer was of any help.

A: We do not have a definitive thought in regard to the armor bearer. What an imposing situation for a man to come out twice a day for 40 days to curse God and challenge the Israelites, who considered a response to be suicide for both the individual and the nation! The Israelites lacked the confidence to accept the challenge in the strength and power of the Lord. David alone trusted that God would give him the needed grace.

In speaking about his youth, David said that God had taught his hands to battle (Psa. 18:34). Such strength was in his hands that he could rip apart the jaws of a lion. David defended the sheep by laying down his life for them, and that was a requirement for a true shepherd. Under the Law, when a wild animal attacked the sheep, a shepherd had to bring back a piece of torn flesh to his master to prove he had tried to defend them. In other words, the shepherd was expected to risk his life in defense of his master's sheep. The spiritual lesson is that elders, as undershepherds of the flock, have the responsibility to defend the truth and must give some "evidence" to their Master, Jesus Christ.

Q: Is the thought that the five smooth stones represent five doctrines?

A: Yes, but we will not know in advance exactly which doctrine will be used. David chose five stones from the brook, but which of the five the David class will use will not be known until the event takes place at the end of the age. Possibly the "stone" will speak out against the doctrine of the Trinity.

1 Sam. 18:1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

1 Sam. 18:2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

1 Sam. 18:3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

1 Sam. 18:4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to

David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

“When he [David] had made an end of speaking unto Saul, ... the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” Jonathan’s great love for David was based on *principle*—on David’s courage and faith in the Lord. Jonathan also loved the Lord and had shown himself to be a warrior earlier when he fought in the Lord’s strength at Michmash. Nevertheless, during the 40 days, morning and evening, that Goliath issued his challenges, Jonathan had not responded. Probably Jonathan had not lacked bravery, based on his former exploits, but in humility, he may have felt he did not want to jeopardize the outcome. His attitude may have been, “Who am I to take that responsibility into my hands?” Similarly, many of the Lord’s people do not act in certain situations because they do not feel they are sufficiently favored of the Lord to assume such a responsibility. In other words, because of their natural humility, they are not that forward. Fortunately, with those who have the merit, Providence sometimes forces them into the situation. Jonathan felt heartsick to hear the challenges of Goliath, whereas others felt fear.

Then David heard the challenge and came very convincingly to Saul, saying in effect, “Do not worry about the outcome. This is Jehovah’s battle, and He will give the victory.” David’s faith and confidence in the Lord were persuasive. No doubt Jonathan was present and saw David’s confidence and then witnessed the victory over Goliath. That very day, based on principle, Jonathan’s soul was knit to David, for he realized that God was with him. Giving his robe, garments, and armor to David was like saying, “I, Jonathan, the son of Saul, am the heir apparent, but you are more worthy of that office than I am.” Incidentally, some have almost blasphemously distorted Jonathan’s love for David by using it to justify homosexuality.

Comment: Jonathan’s humility reminds us of John the Baptist’s attitude toward Jesus, for he recognized his cousin as superior.

From that day, Saul took David into the royal household. Since David was a national hero, it would not have been appropriate to let him go back to tending sheep. Moreover, Saul had promised that he would give great riches and his daughter in marriage to whoever defeated Goliath (1 Sam. 17:25). However, as time went on, Saul was given to lies, even making a solemn contract with God’s oath and then not keeping it.

In his responsiveness and respect for David, who represents the Little Flock, Jonathan pictures the Great Company—but in the finalized picture, after both classes are complete and have received their spiritual reward. The Great Company will *not* have this respect previously, that is, in the present life. In fact, they may have the opposite viewpoint, feeling that they are the superior ones. Thus Jonathan and David picture the condition of the consecrated *after* their respective victories. It was after the slaying of Goliath that Jonathan felt David was more worthy and loved him greatly based on principle. Just as Jonathan, as the son of Saul, was in line for rulership, so all of the consecrated have the hope of rulership, but only David (the Little Flock) will get that honor in the final analysis. Jonathan’s giving his garments and armor to David—the regalia of an heir apparent—represents that ultimately the Great Company will honor and acknowledge the Little Flock, admitting the latter are more worthy. Stated another way, Jonathan’s relinquishing his garments and armor show that the Great Company will realize they lost the hope of obtaining joint-heirship with Christ on the throne. (Obviously, Jonathan was on the battlefield when Goliath issued his challenges but failed to act.) And another factor—namely, that Jonathan had a sad ending, a sad death—has to be considered.

Consider what happened to Jesus. When he went into the city, the people laid down their garments in front of him so that the animal, the foal of an ass, would walk on them. In addition, the apostles put their garments on the foal so that Jesus could sit comfortably, and

they put garments on the ass, the mother, as well. These acts were done in deference to Jesus.

Jonathan and David made a mutual covenant of peace and friendship because Jonathan loved David “as his own soul.” Admitting David’s superiority was an act of friendship on Jonathan’s part. The normal procedure with kings was to eliminate rivals, but Jonathan was saying, “Should you become king, remember me. This is a covenant between us that you will spare me, and if I should rule in Saul’s stead, I promise that no harm will ever come to you.” By giving his outer raiment and his armor to David, Jonathan showed humble recognition that David was more worthy. He was saying in effect, “In view of your defeat of Goliath, I will not stand in your way. If you should prosper, you need not worry about me as Saul’s son.”

Comment: Later, when David was king, Jonathan’s only son, Mephibosheth, a cripple, was spared because of this covenant (2 Sam. 4:4; 9:6-13).

Reply: Yes. The covenant of peace was an agreement that there would never be any rivalry or threat between David and Jonathan, and apparently, the covenant included the seed of each.

After the glorious victory at the end of the age, the Jonathan class will recognize that the Lord’s favor is on the David class. In other words, the Great Company will recognize with surety that their own hope of attaining to the throne has been eliminated.

1 Sam. 18:5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.

David’s victory over Goliath made a great impression on the nation, for one who was an unskilled warrior had had the courage, the bravery, and the Spirit of the Lord to defeat the giant. As a result, David was highly respected by the people, from the lowest level up into the king’s court. Because of public opinion, Saul was more or less forced to appoint David head of the army. Regardless of his immaturity as an untrained soldier, the people accepted him and benefited from his leadership. They felt that if he could defeat Goliath in the power and Spirit of the Lord, he did not need formal training. Not only were they confident that God would lead him, but they saw his behavior—he acted with decorum, wisdom, and tact.

1 Sam. 18:6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

1 Sam. 18:7 And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

1 Sam. 18:8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

1 Sam. 18:9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

If we put ourselves in Saul’s place, we can see how difficult it was for him to remain humble in that situation. Jealousy seized him, for he feared that David would be his future antagonist. If David’s popularity kept increasing, where would the king stand? However, if Saul had recognized the fact that God was blessing David, he would have rested in the Lord and taken the attitude, “Thy will be done. If David supersedes me, so be it, and if things remain as they are now, that is all right too.” We can see the change that took place in the one who hid when

Samuel first anointed him as king. Now, years later, his disposition had changed to one of jealousy and pride. The change came gradually through a series of improper and disobedient acts. Although Saul was still nominally the king at this time, he had actually fallen from the Lord's grace in that category.

The slaying of Goliath triggered the Philistine defeat. After chasing the disheartened Philistines, the Israelite army returned. How dramatic! The women "came out of all [the] cities of Israel, singing and dancing" with uninhibited joy and enthusiasm. They "answered one another as they played"; that is, they sang chorus refrains as well as questions and answers. "Tabrets," which were like tambourines, manifested their great joy. We are reminded of the great victory when Pharaoh and host were covered by the waters of the Red Sea and Miriam and the other women sang on the far shore.

Saul was "very wroth" as he heard the words "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." His reaction was, "They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?" From that time forward, Saul's hatred was triggered against David, and he "eyed" him. The implication is that Saul had spies watch David to see if any faults could be found. If David showed any aspirations of wanting to assume the throne, Saul would have a seemingly legitimate cause to deal harshly with him in front of the nation.

Comment: Hence we see the wisdom of the Lord in having David's anointing done secretly by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:11-13).

Reply: Yes. David had a humble demeanor and was not grasping for leadership.

1 Sam. 18:10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.

1 Sam. 18:11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

"And it came to pass on the morrow [that is, on the day after hearing the saying that David had killed his ten thousands and Saul only his thousands], that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul." That next day David resumed playing music for Saul as on previous days. In what way did the "evil spirit" come on Saul so that he "prophesied in the midst of the house"? Some translators understand the Hebrew to mean that Saul played, or feigned, the part of a prophet. At other times, he was mechanically moved *of the Lord*, but on this occasion, it was an *evil spirit*. As David was playing, Saul was prophesying.

Comment: The Revised Standard Version reads, "And on the morrow an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day."

Reply: Of course the word "prophecy" has several connotations in both the Old and the New Testaments. It can mean to predict a future event or to publicly exclaim or teach.

Not only might David have had some type of premonition of what would happen, but the fact Saul missed with the javelin may give some credence to the thought his eyesight was impaired. Under normal conditions, it would be very difficult to avoid being speared by a javelin thrust at close range. Saul's intention was to pin David to the wall, but David evaded the javelin twice. The implication is that after Saul threw the javelin the first time and missed, David did not flee.

He stayed there and may even have continued to play, but after the second attempt, he left. A javelin, which is a long metallic bar with an end like a large arrowhead, is designed not only to pierce something but to stay embedded when it enters. Thus if an embedded javelin were twisted, it could disembowel someone and do a lot of damage. A very effective weapon, it was better than hand-to-hand combat from the standpoint of survival by the one who wielded it.

Since David had already been anointed to be king, supernatural power may have helped him. A guardian angel could easily have prevented the javelin from hitting the mark if Saul's throws were accurate.

Comment: The word rendered “prophesied” is the Hebrew *naba*, which has alternate meanings, two of which are “belch out” and “pour out,” as used in the following Scriptures. “Behold, they belch out [Hebrew *naba*] with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?” (Psa. 59:7). “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out [*naba*] foolishness” (Prov. 15:2). “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out [*naba*] evil things” (Prov. 15:28). These Scriptures seem to support the rendering of “raved” in the RSV.

Reply: Saul's reaction was a warning to David to be wary while playing. When prophesying occurred, it frequently came in a sudden, loud outburst. For example, Ezekiel's tongue was tied for a long period of time except when the Lord spoke through him. He could not communicate with others until the day the news came that Jerusalem was destroyed, and then his tongue was loosed. And whenever he prophesied throughout his ministry, the words came suddenly. That way the people knew he was speaking mechanically by a good superior power. The evil spirits also communicated suddenly and mechanically. The quality and content of the message, as well as the circumstance, determined whether the prophecy was of the Lord or of the evil spirits through false prophets. In either case, the prophesying was done mechanically, suddenly, and impulsively as the individual was moved. Thus there is the possibility that Saul “raved” here, although the word “prophesied” is basically correct. The question would be how to adapt the Hebrew *naba* for each circumstance. We are not giving a definitive answer here and will talk more along this line later in 1 Samuel, where it is more important to get the proper thought lest wrong moral understanding adversely affect one's character.

1 Sam. 18:12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

Saul had a sense of foreboding after hearing the singing about David's exploits, and now he sensed that a stronger power was protecting David. In the favorable sense earlier, if the stone from David's slingshot was the least bit off course, we can be sure that the Lord guided it to sink into Goliath's forehead. However, another account tells that David had a corps of left-handed “slingers” who could hit a hair from a distance of a hundred yards. If David was one of these, with a similar degree of accuracy, Divine Providence did not have to interfere. In both cases, however—with David's killing of Goliath and with Saul's javelin missing twice—Divine Providence was ready to assist if necessary. After missing twice, Saul feared David and knew the Lord had departed from him.

Q: Would Saul have actually felt at this point that the Lord's Spirit had departed from him?

A: The thought is an “evil spirit *apart* from the LORD.” When God withdrew His Spirit, an evil spirit entered Saul. Stated another way, when the Lord withdrew His protection from Saul, an evil spirit naturally took over.

We are speculating on these subtleties. However, to make any progress in understanding, we

have to exercise our minds and analyze the account. Eventually, through prayer and the desire to know, details often clarify.

1 Sam. 18:13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

Saul may have removed David out of prudence, feeling that if the fits of anger were repeated, others would see them and conclude he was mad with jealousy and David was innocent. David would thereby be enhanced, and his ascendancy would be hastened.

Moreover, with Saul being in a fit of anger and David being composed, acting wisely, and not striking back, the king got more and more a sense of guilt. Saul's intention was manifested by a murderous outward act, not just an inner thought. He failed twice, yet David did not try to defend himself. The sense of guilt contributed to Saul's feeling that the Lord's favor had departed from him.

1 Sam. 18:14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.

1 Sam. 18:15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

1 Sam. 18:16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

Saul had put David out of the household and made him captain over a thousand, hoping to find fault with him. Instead, reports came back of David's outstanding conduct, and the king could not lay a finger of suspicion on him. Saul grew increasingly fearful.

"All Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them." In other words, David humbly fraternized with the people, treating them with respect as individuals. He was interested in them. To the contrary, Saul was probably aloof and so reserved that he had no rapport or camaraderie with his army.

1 Sam. 18:17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD'S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

1 Sam. 18:18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?

1 Sam. 18:19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

1 Sam. 18:20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

1 Sam. 18:21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain.

The situation with Saul's two daughters reminds us of Jacob with Leah and Rachel. Saul promised Merab to David, and having Saul's oldest daughter would have been a higher honor

than getting Michal, the younger daughter. Saul's strategy of sending David out to fight the Philistines, thinking he would be killed, reminds us of David's subsequent treatment of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. Although David felt it would be an honor to go on the "suicide" mission and fight the Philistines, Saul reneged on his promise by giving Merab to another. Meanwhile, Michal loved David, and Saul was pleased, for he felt he could use her love as a snare for David.

1 Sam. 18:22 And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son-in-law.

1 Sam. 18:23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

1 Sam. 18:24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David.

It is known in history that when men get to very high positions of honor such as king or general, they usually have confidants to whom they can tell their innermost secrets without being betrayed. Some of the cruelest kings had such confidants.

David was certainly not aspiring to advance himself except as God would open the way. He did not push providence. The only explanation that seems to fit the entire experience of David is that he had great respect for the office of king. The appointment to that station was to be highly respected and revered at all costs, so no matter what Saul's actions were, David did not want to touch the Lord's anointed. Today the opposite spirit prevails, and the office of the President is continually deprecated. The denigration of authority shows the smallness of the individuals who are making the utterances. The social structure is radically changed from the mood and thinking of the Bible on many issues, yet the people are high-minded. In fact, even some of the consecrated have to watch themselves along this line, for they do not realize they are going contrary to principles taught in the Old Testament. With their smattering of understanding of the New Testament, they subvert the principles of the Old Testament.

Q: Did David think Saul had genuinely changed his thinking? The king had just tried to murder him a short time previously and then reneged on his promise in regard to the older daughter. Did David truly think Saul would give him Michal?

A: Saul had instructed his servants to pretend to tell David intimate information, namely, that the king would like to give Michal to him to wife. Saul was trying to give the impression that his periods of anger were merely fits of madness and not a true indicator of his feelings, but enough of his past actions are recorded in Holy Writ to know that they were not the exception to the rule but part of his character.

In what way did Saul intend to use Michal's love for David as a snare? As a pretense for David's winning Michal, Saul planned to get him into a dangerous battle, thinking he would be killed.

Q: Could David have refused to marry Michal?

A: In those days, a person would not want to insult the king. David expressed that he was unworthy but that he would comply, considering it an honor to be the king's son-in-law. Jesse probably had an influence on David to respect those in authority. Similarly, the influence of Elisabeth can be seen on her son, John the Baptist. Although the Scriptures say little about Jesse, he is honored. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1).

1 Sam. 18:25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

1 Sam. 18:26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law: and the days were not expired.

1 Sam. 18:27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

David came out of the battle with *double* the amount of Philistine foreskins that Saul had requested as a dowry for Michal. With this method of showing foreskins, there could be no fabrication or exaggeration of the results of a battle. Furthermore, the foreskins proved that those who were slain were males. What a cunning strategy Saul used in his madness!

The expression "and the days were not expired" indicates that Saul had probably set a time limit. He thought that with limited time, David could not devise a well-thought-out plan and the chances of his being killed were greater. However, "it pleased David well" that this arrangement was made, and he went eagerly and fearlessly into the battle.

1 Sam. 18:28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

1 Sam. 18:29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

1 Sam. 18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

With this string of events and David's proper behavior, Saul was even more disappointed, frustrated, angry, and deeply embittered. As a result, he "became David's enemy *continually*," and manifested outward animosity.

Comment: The statement "Saul was yet the more afraid of David" shows progression in the king's wrong attitude.

Verse 30 is good in the RSV: "Then the princes of the Philistines came out to battle, and as often as they came out David had more success than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was highly esteemed." Whenever there was a battle with the Philistines, David was victorious. The Philistines were a thorn in Israel's flesh. They were on the scene in the days of Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David.

Comment: Two of Saul's children, Jonathan and Michal, loved David dearly. For the sake of the happiness and pleasure of his own children, Saul could not put aside his animosity and evil feelings for David.

Reply: Very few individuals in history were truly qualified character-wise to be kings. Sudden exaltation to power, riches, and popularity often brings out the worst in an individual. When a person is entrenched in a situation of authority, his true disposition and character come out. The same is true with political and religious offices. Constantine, for example, was highly

admired in his early days, but after becoming emperor, he changed radically and brutally killed relatives, friends, and children.

After consecration, the Christian has to fight battles all his life, both in the mind and in daily experiences. Spiritually speaking, the Canaanites in the flesh must be driven out if one is to get life.

1 Sam. 19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

Saul was jealous of David, who had slain Goliath with a sling stone and become a national hero in Israel. As a result of that victory and David's courage in going out and slaying that giant, Jonathan had a reverence for him. As the son of King Saul, Jonathan was the heir apparent to the throne. Therefore, for him to befriend David was to jeopardize his own interests. In the eyes of the nation, he favored what appeared to be a rival of his father.

1 Sam. 19:2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:

Jonathan gave David advance notice that Saul had issued orders to have him killed. Otherwise, David would have been unprepared and could have been victimized by a sudden attack from Saul's servants.

1 Sam. 19:3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

1 Sam. 19:4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

Comment: Jonathan must have been aware of his father's mood swings. Saul had wanted to kill David the day before, but now Jonathan wanted to sound him out again, probably hoping his father had changed his mind.

Reply: Yes, Saul was fickle, and his moods changed suddenly. There would be no need for David to go into hiding, perhaps for years, if Saul's thinking had changed.

Jonathan said to his father, "You have no justification whatever for killing David. Not only has he not sinned, but he has served the nation well." It would not look good in the eyes of the people for the king to slay the national hero. In fact, it would be both shameful and wicked. Therefore, Jonathan made the arrangement for David to hide in the field that was used for archery practice, knowing that he and his father would be there the next day. If the news was bad, Jonathan would warn David. If the news was good, he would apprise David that it was safe for him to return to the palace.

1 Sam. 19:5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

1 Sam. 19:6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

1 Sam. 19:7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

Saul intended to kill David, but this time he listened to Jonathan's common-sense, forthright reasoning: "Father, why do you intend to kill David? You saw what he did to that Philistine giant, and you were even happy with the great victory for Israel." The king hearkened to his son's reasoning and even impulsively made an oath that he would not, under any circumstance, try to kill David again. David returned to Saul's presence and played the harp, and things seemed to be normal for a while.

1 Sam. 19:8 And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.

Some time had elapsed, and then there was another war with the Philistines, who were a troublesome enemy to the Israelites. The Philistines dwelled in the valleys and the plains, whereas the Israelites lived mostly in the hill region of Judea. David effected a great slaughter in the battle. How remarkable that the slaughter was accomplished by this young shepherd! True, he was of strong stature, but he was not skilled in warfare and hand-to-hand combat like the other soldiers. David was not a practiced warrior, but evidently, he had a brilliant mind for planning the warfare. In fact, whatever David did—whether he was a musician, fought wild animals, used a slingshot, or was a general—he did well.

1 Sam. 19:9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand.

1 Sam. 19:10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

Every time David prospered in warfare, each time he was victorious, Saul looked on him as a potential rival. The king became more and more jealous of David's popularity with the people. Meanwhile, David was discreet and wise and did not aspire to the throne, so Saul could not find a legitimate excuse to justify having him slain. To the onlooker, it was apparent that God was blessing David.

As David played the harp, Saul had a javelin in his hand, probably resting on it. Suddenly, in a rage and fit of temper, the king threw the javelin with such force that although David slipped aside just in time and the weapon missed him, it stuck in the wall. David then fled for his life, for he realized Saul was once again overcome with hatred. Twice before Saul had tried to kill David with the javelin, but by the Lord's overruling providence, he kept missing (1 Sam. 18:11).

1 Sam. 19:11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain.

1 Sam. 19:12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

Michal was not only David's wife but also Saul's daughter. Just like Jonathan, the king's son, Michal got wind of Saul's evil intent to kill David. Her advice was to leave that night, for if David remained, he would be slain in the morning. Accordingly, she let him down through a window, and he escaped.

1 Sam. 19:13 And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.

Then Michal placed a three-dimensional idol, which had somewhat the form of a human, in David's bed. She covered the idol with clothes and placed a goats' hair pillow under its head.

Comment: Based on a righteous principle, Michal and Jonathan opposed their own father. Sometimes the Christian has to take a similar stand against a family member.

Reply: Yes, Saul was in the wrong, so they correctly opposed him.

1 Sam. 19:14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick.

To protect David and give him more time to flee and put distance between himself and Saul, Michal lied to the king's messengers, saying that David was sick. The messengers returned to Saul with this message.

Comment: Here is a case where a lie was countenanced by the Lord. Lying was permissible for the *higher* principle of saving David's life.

Reply: Yes. Likewise, Rahab lied to protect the two Israelite spies, not wanting them to be slain by her countrymen. Meanwhile, the two spies were hiding underneath straw up on her roof. A lie is justified if the life of an innocent person of good character is in jeopardy. Most people tell lies for wrong ulterior motives, but Rahab's motives were pure.

1 Sam. 19:15 And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

Saul sent the messengers back again to apprehend David. His attitude was, "I do not care if he is sick. Bring him to me so that I may slay him."

1 Sam. 19:16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster.

The messengers returned, intending, if necessary, to carry David back to Saul, but they found a dummy in the bed instead. The trips back and forth took time, and David was getting farther and farther away into safety.

1 Sam. 19:17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

Now Michal told a second lie, but this time the purpose was to save her own life. (Even though she was the king's daughter, Saul may have killed her in his rage.) She said that David had threatened to kill her, so she let him go. The inference was, "What could I do? I could not stop him, for he threatened my life." This second lie was wrong, for it blackened David's character at the expense of her own safety.

This second lie was not justifiable, for it is permissible to save another's life but not our own. Michal should have told her father, "David is a good person, so I helped him escape." Jonathan was more noble than Michal, for he asked Saul, "Why do you want to slay David when he has not done anything against you?" Evidently, Michal was fearful and of a weaker character than her brother, for he certainly stuck out his neck to defend David and his character. Incidentally,

in the history of those times, it was not at all unusual for a king of a foreign nation to kill a member of his own family if he felt his throne was threatened in any way. The Caesars were notorious for slaying their wives, mother, or children to protect their throne. With Saul being susceptible to fits of temper, he could have turned on his own son or daughter. Nevertheless, Michal should have said, “David is an innocent man. You have no right to slay him.”

1 Sam. 19:18 So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

It was natural for David to flee to what he felt would be a good refuge and hiding place, and that was with the Prophet Samuel at Ramah. David knew Samuel had a soft spot for him. The two went and dwelled in Naioth.

1 Sam. 19:19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.

1 Sam. 19:20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

1 Sam. 19:21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

When Saul was informed that David had fled to Naioth in Ramah, he sent messengers to Samuel and the school of the prophets to apprehend David, but as the messengers approached, they came under the power of the Holy Spirit, which had been prophesying through the prophets. The Holy Spirit hindered Saul’s messengers by influencing their minds and causing them to prophesy, thus frustrating their purpose. Saul sent a second group and then a third group of messengers. Again they prophesied and became powerless to apprehend David. As far as we know, the three groups of messengers did not return to Saul after being influenced by the Holy Spirit.

We are reminded of the time King Ahaziah sent a captain with 50 men to apprehend Elijah, but the prophet said, “If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty” (2 Kings 1:9-15). And fire did come down and consume them. The king sent another captain and 50 men, but they also were destroyed. When the king sent the third group, the captain fell on his knees and said to Elijah, “Have mercy, O man of God. Do not slay us like the others.” Elijah was then instructed of the Lord not to be afraid and to go peaceably with the captain to the king.

The same power that came over Saul’s messengers was manifested in another way in the incident with Lot. The male residents of Sodom surrounded Lot’s house, intending to do evil to the two angels inside. However, the two angels used their power to render the men powerless, striking them with blindness so that they could not find the door.

1 Sam. 19:22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah.

When the three companies Saul sent out did not accomplish his purpose, he determined to apprehend David himself. What a tremendous temper he had for him not to realize the protective providence around David! An “evil spirit from [that is, *apart from*] the LORD” kept coming upon Saul (1 Sam. 19:9). That spirit was opposite to the Holy Spirit, which came on Samuel and David.

Q: The Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus acted similarly. After nine successive plagues, how could he think he could deny the power of the God of the Israelites and keep them bottled up in Egypt?

A: Not until the death of the firstborn did he finally let the Israelites go, but even then, he decided to pursue them when they seemed to take the wrong course.

Comment: What a sad deterioration of character in Saul, for he was favored by the Lord at one time and knew the power of His Spirit! Now he was an enemy of the Lord. The same fall from favor could happen to any one of us if we set our will in the wrong direction.

Reply: Yes, when one is diverted from his devotion to the Lord, he manifests a contrary spirit. The Scriptures tell us, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). We must be careful to search out our motives and put on the whole armor of God, which will protect us from the darts and influence of the Adversary.

1 Sam. 19:23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

1 Sam. 19:24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

The word “naked” is to be understood in a figurative sense, for Saul was not literally naked. Like his three groups of messengers, he went to apprehend David. He was armed, wore vestments of authority, and was ready to kill David. However, the “spirit of God” came upon Saul, causing him to strip off his outer garments. In other words, the Holy Spirit caused him to *defrock* himself of his outer garments of authority.

The “prophesying” was *mechanical* speaking. Perhaps Saul and his messengers were made to mechanically sing hymns or quote from the Law. The speaking distracted them from their mission. Of course Saul and his messengers were not of the stature of faithful Samuel. In regard to *holy* men of old, “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved” by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). Holy men prophesied of certain events or instructed the people.

At the First Advent, the scribes and Pharisees sent out spies to listen to Jesus and to apprehend him. However, Jesus spoke in such a marvelous manner that they sometimes forgot their evil purpose. When the officers returned empty-handed on one occasion, they replied, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). Jesus had an extraordinary influence in both his appearance and his words.

Saul represents the nominal system, which hates true Christians. Similarly, the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders who had the esteem of the people, feared Jesus’ popularity, thinking that if he became too great, the people would listen to him and not to them. Just as Saul wanted to kill David, so the scribes and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus, and the Roman Catholic Church put true Christians to death during the Inquisition.

Comment: The seven messengers to the Church down through the Gospel Age were also miraculously preserved until their respective ministries were complete. Otherwise, the nominal system, at the behest of Satan, would have expunged them prematurely.

Reply: Yes, Jesus held them in his right hand (Rev. 2:1).

Comment: Saul was controlled by an evil spirit in his desire to kill David, but as he got closer, the Lord's power overruled the evil influence so that Saul was overtaken by the Holy Spirit.

1 Sam. 20:1 And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

David fled from Naioth and disclosed to Jonathan his knowledge that Saul purposed to kill him.

1 Sam. 20:2 And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.

Jonathan did not think that Saul purposed to kill David, for he said his father disclosed all things to him. If it were true, Jonathan would tell David. Jonathan, the heir apparent, did not know about David's prior anointing to supplant Saul. However, being an observant young man, he saw character traits and leadership qualities in David that were superior to his own. Later he even said that perhaps David would be king and he would be second in command.

"It is not so." Evidently, Jonathan felt his father's impetuous nature could result in a rash action, but he did not want to believe that Saul would premeditate David's death.

1 Sam. 20:3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

David informed Jonathan that he had specific knowledge of Saul's murderous intent but that the king did not want his son to get wind of it. Then David took an oath that this information was the truth.

1 Sam. 20:4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.

Jonathan was subservient, recognizing that David should take the lead and he would comply. His attitude was, "Whatever you say, that I will do."

1 Sam. 20:5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.

Why did David propose this situation? The first day of the month, at the new moon, was a special day with the blowing of trumpets. Usually this was a day of gladness, feasting, and celebration to mark a new start, a new month. Not only was there a feast in the king's household when the new moon came, but Saul had established the custom of discussing with his subordinates his goals, purposes, and instructions for the new month. Therefore, to not come would be insubordination and disobedience to the king. With the new moon occurring the next day, David wanted to use the opportunity of the monthly gathering to test Saul's thinking. Because of Saul's temperamental nature, his intentions would become apparent. He would be piqued at David's absence, and in that moment of anger, his emotionalism would reveal his true feelings for either good or evil.

David planned to hide in the field until the third afternoon. There was wisdom in waiting until the third day, for by then the king's true feelings would be exposed. If Saul saw that David was missing right away and had a fit of temper, the feeling might pass, especially if Jonathan reasoned with his father. Thus the emotional outburst might not be a true indicator of Saul's feelings. Saul would definitely be angry at David's absence the first day, but how far that anger would go would be revealed subsequently. If Saul's intentions toward David were evil, his feelings would persist the second day and into the third day. The waiting period would be sufficient to disclose whether Saul was harboring an abiding and murderous hatred toward David. If so, it would be totally unwise for David to come back to the king's household.

1 Sam. 20:6 If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

1 Sam. 20:7 If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him.

This private conversation between Jonathan and David reveals interesting and helpful details. David presented a proposition: "When the king notices my absence at the table, tell him that I asked permission from you to go to Bethlehem to observe an annual sacrifice with my family." Then Jonathan was to observe his father's reaction to this excuse. Of course David's excuse was a fabrication, for he intended to hide in the field until the third day. Was David's lie proper?

Comment: Having already experienced some of Saul's temper tantrums, David used wisdom.

Reply: Yes. Even in our own lives, there are occasions when we tell fibs. Some fibs are not justified, and others might be justified under certain circumstances. David, a man after God's own heart, set this proposition (1 Sam. 13:14). The first point is that it was a matter of *life and death*. If the king was out to kill David, an irrevocable death sentence had been issued, and David would have to take desperate steps to escape Saul's wrath. David had said, "There is but a [one] step between me and death" (verse 3). He really felt Saul intended to kill him, whereas Jonathan was not so sure. David's strategy was clever for revealing to Jonathan his father's true intent.

Comment: It would be to Jonathan's benefit to truly know his father's evil character. Similarly, with the consecrated, sometimes a truth has to be revealed that is unpleasant and will hurt someone, but in the final analysis, if the truth is rightly received, it will work to the good of that individual.

Comment: David had already been anointed by Samuel, so he knew he would be the next king, not Jonathan. Therefore, it was to Jonathan's benefit to see the justice of the matter, especially since he had such a good character. It was better that Saul's evil character be revealed so that whenever the Lord's time came, Jonathan could say, "Amen."

1 Sam. 20:8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?

David was saying to Jonathan, "I do not know how you feel about the matter, but you can certainly see the potential for murder, for I am like a rival claimant to your father's throne." Jonathan was wise enough to realize that at Saul's death, many in Israel would be sympathetic to David's ascending the throne. Then David added, "If you do not think this strategy is wise, and if you think I have sinned, why don't you slay me yourself? You do not have to wait for your father to act." And David would have allowed Jonathan to kill him. Having been anointed

and putting his complete trust in God, David was just waiting for the moment when the Lord would put him in office as king.

Jonathan certainly knew of Saul's previous attempts to kill David, for when a spear was thrown at a national hero in an effort to pin him to the wall, the incident would have been noised abroad. However, Jonathan rationalized the attempts as a *temporary* mood and did not consider them a *planned* intention. There were times in Saul's life when he was very pleasant, so it would seem that the periods of anger were conflicting characteristics. However, Saul's good side was not a true indicator of his character. When originally chosen, he was small in his own sight. A large man, he humbly hid, but he changed radically during his life (1 Sam. 10:22). Not only is Saul's life a prophetic picture of the development of Papacy, but also it provides an insight into how a person's nature can change. A person might have good characteristics, but as time goes on, he can become the opposite because of not reacting favorably to certain circumstances in his life. When we look back after many years of consecration, we can see turning points of behavioral changes in certain individuals. Gray hair is a symbol of wisdom in the sense that normally speaking, those who have lived for many years observe things they would have been oblivious to in their younger years (Prov. 16:31; 20:29). During a person's lifetime, he learns, observes character, and accumulates in the library of his mind good and bad incidents and the knowledge of good and evil as seen in the affairs of life. Here Jonathan was giving the benefit of the doubt in regard to his father's real character, but David knew better. In fact, we will find out in coming chapters that David could sense a person's character.

"Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant." How wonderful that David would liken himself to a "servant" of Jonathan, the heir apparent. David gave deference to Jonathan.

1 Sam. 20:9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

When David said in verse 8, "If there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself," Jonathan replied, "Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?" If Jonathan knew that Saul planned to kill David, he would declare it.

1 Sam. 20:10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?

David asked for a way to know Saul's reaction. If the king's purpose was to slay David, then anyone who conveyed this information to David, thus giving him an opportunity to escape, would be liable to death himself. Therefore, David could not trust anyone in the king's household to be this messenger to him except Jonathan. Nevertheless, David did not lay this burden upon Jonathan but asked, "Who shall tell me? Who shall give me this information whether for good or for evil?"

1 Sam. 20:11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

1 Sam. 20:12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee;

1 Sam. 20:13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

Now we are afforded the privilege of observing Jonathan's good character. Making a discretionary move, he suggested to David, "Let us go out into the field to discuss this matter privately." If someone inadvertently saw them together and brought the news to Saul, that would not bode well for either of them.

Notice the way Jonathan broached the subject to David. He said in effect, "As the LORD God liveth, I am now making a promise to you." Jonathan's attitude was, "If I renege on my promise, let God do to me what He deemeth good." His promise was like putting a hand on the Bible and taking an oath. Jonathan may even have raised his face to heaven and addressed God audibly so that David would realize he was saying, "As there are two witnesses, God in heaven and you, I now make a promise to you."

The promise had two conditions. Whether the king responded (1) favorably or (2) unfavorably, Jonathan would tell David. In other words, Jonathan would respond with definiteness in either case. Some people are a little wobbly in their promises, but Jonathan was forthright. He had a plan in mind, as will be seen in verses 20-22.

Jonathan said, "If it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father." There was a time when goodness was in Saul. Jonathan was now asking a blessing to be on David as it had been when his father was originally chosen to be king over Israel; that is, "The LORD bless you as he blessed my father in the past." If Saul was evil-intentioned against David, then Jonathan would be more loyal to David than to his own father.

1 Sam. 20:14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:

1 Sam. 20:15 But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

Jonathan sensed that David was the real heir apparent because of his inherent qualities. Not only did Jonathan want David's blessing, but he realized God would so favor David that eventually all who would oppose him were doomed. Notice Jonathan's foresight. While the two talked in the field, he said, "If my father manifests this evil characteristic, I will inform you. I will not betray you but will allow you to go in peace and wish the Lord's blessing upon you. In spite of your being hunted, I know that God will prosper your way and that all who oppose you will be struck down. Should I be yet alive, I expect you to spare my life and also to extend clemency and kindness to my house, to my posterity, forever." It would be natural for the new king to make sure there was no claimant to the throne who would jeopardize a peaceful reign. Sores festering in the body politic of the nation might break out at any time and cause disunity in the national government. Thus Jonathan, with his foresight, asked clemency of David. We can see his thorough recognition that David was the one to succeed his father.

Q: Did Jonathan also see that his own life was in danger? His father would be angry if he found out that Jonathan had just communed with David.

A: The continuing account will provide further insight into the character of both Saul and David.

Comment: The Revised Standard implies that Jonathan thought he might be killed. "If I am still alive, show me the loyal love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your loyalty from my house for ever."

Reply: Jonathan knew someone might spot him in the field talking to David and report the matter to Saul. Their posture and mien indicated they were engaged in earnest conversation.

Although Jonathan did not think his father purposed to kill David, David's insistence now made the accusation a definite possibility in Jonathan's mind. Also, David had friends who disclosed to him the intent of the king. Some right in Saul's household were more favorable to David, but for the sake of their families, they did not want to lose their jobs by disassociating themselves from the king and joining David outright.

Jonathan knew his father was impetuous and could kill David in a fit of anger. However, a planned intent to kill was another matter. Many people are mercurial in temperament and nature so that it is hard to discern their real thinking.

Comment: Jonathan's attitude in making the proposition to David was, "If you are right about my father and I am still alive when you come to the throne, you will have a right to slay all of your enemies, but please do not slay me. If I am dead, at least remember my posterity."

1 Sam. 20:16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

1 Sam. 20:17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, and of course he wished David to, in turn, make a covenant with the posterity of the house of Saul so that they would not be entirely cut off. The mutual covenant was made, reaffirming a prior covenant.

1 Sam. 20:18 Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

1 Sam. 20:19 And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the day of the new moon, and your seat will be empty. On the third day, I will come to the appointed place." Jonathan did not expect David to stay in that place for 72 hours without moving, but he had to know where David would be in the field. Otherwise, when he shot the arrows, he might inadvertently hit David or shoot so close that the young man with him would see David and get wind of the plot. Jonathan needed to be able to intelligently shoot the arrows with accuracy, and his words would then indicate Saul's intent. Thus David was to go "to the place where thou didst hide thyself ... and ... remain by the stone Ezel," which was a little distance out into the field.

Apparently, this rock of distinction still exists in Israel today. In ancient times, it was a well-known landmark in the wilderness where, for instance, people agreed to meet. This stone, Ezel, will also be a significant landmark in the near future, for it will indicate the earthquake fissure that lifts up the land from Geba to Rimmon (Zech. 14:5,10). The earthquake will open up a plain, or a valley, through which the Holy Remnant will flee from Jerusalem. When they see the convulsions of nature, they will naturally gravitate into that valley to flee as far as possible from the trouble and strife in the city. The Prophet Zechariah wrote, "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains ... [which] shall reach unto Azal [Ezel]." In other words, when the Mount of Olives is split by an earthquake that divides the land to the north and to the south and opens

up a valley from east to west, the people will flee to this particular rock, Ezel. (Similarly, Gibraltar is a particular rock in a particular location.)

Let us consider Zechariah 14:3-5,10 with regard to God's deliverance of the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble. "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto [the rock] Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.... All the land shall be turned [lifted up] as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses." Azal is not a city but the rock Ezel, and the Holy Remnant will flee to this particular rock.

Zechariah chapter 14 speaks about a future earthquake, but there was also an earthquake in the days of King Uzziah. Zechariah was saying, "In this future earthquake, you will flee to the rock Azal [Ezel] as the people fled previously in the earthquake during the days of King Uzziah [also called Azariah]." However, in the future earthquake, the valley will be deeper.

Comment: According to Young's *Analytical Concordance*, Ezel has the thought of "division" or "separation." The King James margin has an alternate reading for Azal in Zechariah 14:5 as follows: "When he [God] shall touch the valley of the mountains to the place he separated." This latter rendering favors the thought of a landmark, a rock.

Reply: Yes. This rock has a record prior to David, during David's lifetime, and in the future, which is the most important, for the account defines exactly what will happen. The Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem, will be split in twain by the earthquake. In the *Volumes*, the Pastor considered this mountain figurative, but later, in 1913, he wrote an article entitled "The Mount of Olives the Kingdom of Blessing" (*Reprint No. 5437*), in which he said it now appears that this prophecy will probably have a literal fulfillment. In addition to a spiritual fulfillment, there has to be a literal fulfillment, for not only does the prophecy tell about the mountain being split, but it gives other details that cannot be spiritualized.

In the spiritual picture, the mountain to the north represents the heavenly Kingdom, and the mountain to the south pictures the earthly Kingdom, which will be under the Ancient Worthies. As the people pass between the heavenly and earthly phases of the Kingdom, they will progress up the highway of holiness, being in (or between) the custodial care of these two agencies (Isa. 35:8). Thus the Zechariah prophecy of fleeing between the two mountains not only tells of a physical act that will take place but also represents what will happen in the Millennial Kingdom. At the end of that Kingdom, God's purpose of saving the human race will have been accomplished.

The Jews' fleeing through the earthquake-opened valley at the time of Jacob's Trouble is likened to the fleeing of the Israelites through the Red Sea in the Exodus. Their going through the Red Sea is a symbol of baptism. The nation was baptized under the cloud as they went dry-shod through the sea. In other words, the dividing of the Mount of Olives will be like the dividing of the Red Sea. In both cases, a great miracle takes place at a strategic moment of time, and the people go through safely on dry land.

1 Sam. 20:20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark.

Having a young man with him to retrieve the arrows, Jonathan would have to be careful that the lad did not realize what was going on. Therefore, Jonathan would aim as though he were shooting at a target and utter a coded answer.

1 Sam. 20:21 And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth.

1 Sam. 20:22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away.

1 Sam. 20:23 And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.

Stated succinctly, the key words to David's understanding Jonathan's answer would be as follows. If the situation boded well for David, Jonathan would say, "Come." If Saul wanted to kill David, Jonathan would say, "Go." Stated another way, "Come" was favorable, indicating peace, and "Go" was unfavorable, indicating flight, "for the LORD hath sent thee away," that is, "God bless you in your flight." In addition, for an unfavorable response, Jonathan would shoot the arrows beyond where David was hiding.

1 Sam. 20:24 So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

1 Sam. 20:25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

1 Sam. 20:26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean.

On the first day, Saul said nothing when David's seat was empty. He assumed that David was absent for a day because he was ceremoniously unclean and that he would be present the next day. If a person touched something dead, he became defiled and had to wash and then wait for an evening to pass before he could be considered clean again.

Abner, the general or chief of Saul's army, sat by the king's side. Jonathan sat opposite Saul, and if present, David would have been close to Saul.

1 Sam. 20:27 And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor today?

1 Sam. 20:28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem:

1 Sam. 20:29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

When David was absent the second day, Saul knew there was another reason and inquired of Jonathan. As prearranged with David, Jonathan repeated the fabrication, taking responsibility

for giving David permission to go and sacrifice with his family. He said, “David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem.” Thus Jonathan risked the displeasure of his father.

1 Sam. 20:30 Then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness?

1 Sam. 20:31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

Saul reacted *with fury* that was almost like cursing, blaming his wife, Jonathan’s mother. He said in effect, “You numskull! Don’t you realize that by granting permission, you are helping David to be the successor to the throne? David is your enemy, and he will be the next king if you are not careful. By your act, you have cast your lot with the house of Jesse instead of with your own house.” Then Saul quoted the Law to try to justify his fit of anger and to condemn Jonathan, but in doing so, he misinterpreted the Law. He said, “Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness.” However, Leviticus 18:7 pertains to a *moral issue*: “The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.”

In the Book of 1 Samuel, we are seeing a character portrayal of Saul, David, and Jonathan. These three were not just famous, unique individuals in history but a portrayal of what we can see in human nature. For instance, we see the humility of David, the fitfulness of Saul, and Jonathan’s humble recognition of superiority in the Lord. We live in such a democratic society that many think everybody is equal. Even though Abraham Lincoln, a very noble President, said that all are born equal, that is not true in the present life, in the next life, or in eternity. There are gradations of recognition and favor by Jehovah.

1 Sam. 20:32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

1 Sam. 20:33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

1 Sam. 20:34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Jonathan certainly got a definite answer to pass along to David, who was in hiding. Again Saul had an outburst of temper. This time he cast the javelin at his own son instead of David and asked Jonathan to betray David.

Comment: The depth of Jonathan’s sincerity of feeling for David was shown in his abstaining from food the second day of the feast of the new moon. He “was grieved for David.”

Reply: In *righteous* indignation toward his father, as well as his concern for David and his own humility before the Lord in wanting to know how to handle the situation, Jonathan ate no food. In addition, Saul had shamed Jonathan by publicly throwing a javelin at his son. The incident was humiliating to both Saul and Jonathan.

In review, a celebration at the beginning of each month was identified with the appearance of the new moon. On that occasion, it was the custom of the king to have a council in which his officers gave reports of the prior month and told what was planned for the coming month. It

was customary for David and Jonathan to be seated close to Saul on that occasion.

1 Sam. 20:35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

1 Sam. 20:36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

1 Sam. 20:37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?

1 Sam. 20:38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

1 Sam. 20:39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

1 Sam. 20:40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city.

In the morning of the "time appointed," that is, the third day, Jonathan went out to the field with a young lad. Instructing the lad to run, Jonathan shot an arrow over his head quite a distance. As the lad approached the place where the arrow had fallen, Jonathan used the code language he and David had agreed upon by ostensibly yelling to the lad but really talking to the hiding David. Because of Jonathan's negative experience with his father, his words were, "Make speed, haste, stay not." Hence David knew he was to flee in haste.

Jonathan told the lad to go ahead with his "artillery," which was probably his shoulder strap and quiver of arrows. In spite of the danger, Jonathan sent the lad away so that he could have a last meeting with David.

1 Sam. 20:41 And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

1 Sam. 20:42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Why did David fall on his face to the ground and bow three times? He had great respect for the kingdom as being representative of the throne of Jehovah and for whoever was on that throne in spite of Saul's behavior. David did not want to hasten Saul's departure, for he trusted that if God did not want Saul as king, He would remove him. Therefore, David regarded Saul as the proper heir until the Lord would remove him, and Jonathan would be next in line as the heir apparent, normally speaking. However, Samuel had secretly anointed David sometime previous. This incident shows David's humility, breeding, and respect for the office of king. We should similarly respect the office of the President but not necessarily his behavior.

David and Jonathan kissed each other cheek to cheek and wept "until David exceeded [gained control]." In other words, finally David controlled himself. This experience was emotional, for they felt they would probably not be able to communicate again in any intimate fashion.

Comment: Jonathan and David were both warriors, men of war, but they had tender hearts and wept.

Reply: Yes, David tore the jaws of a lion apart, killed a bear, and slew Goliath, yet he could weep. Jesus also wept on certain occasions.

Q: Is there an antitype for the third day of the feast? On the third (thousand-year) day from the First Advent, the Little Flock and the Great Company will be separated. Both are overcomers, but as David was superior to Jonathan, so the Little Flock is superior to the Great Company. Like Elisha, Jonathan stayed behind and did not flee (smite the Jordan initially like Elijah) and thus further risk his life.

A: If there is an antitype, that thinking sounds reasonable.

1 Sam. 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

David fled from Saul and came to Ahimelech, the high priest. Being fearful, Ahimelech asked David, “Why are you alone, and no man with thee?” yet others (“young men”) were with him (see verses 4 and 5).

Nob was a Levitical city in the tribe of Benjamin about two miles northeast of Jerusalem. Although Bible maps have discrepancies, it was probably on a ridge of Mount Scopus, from which one had a marvelous view of the city of Jerusalem. The Tabernacle was at Nob at this time. The days of Samuel and Saul were a troublesome period of time with a lot of shifting of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.

1 Sam. 21:2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.

1 Sam. 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

1 Sam. 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

1 Sam. 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

Q: Timewise, did this incident take place rather quickly after David left Jonathan?

A: Yes, because of the nearness of Nob to Jerusalem.

Comment: David was very hungry, so he must not have eaten during the three days of the feast while he was waiting for Jonathan’s answer.

Reply: Yes. Since he was hiding, he had to be very circumspect that no one observed where he was, and he probably did not eat.

When David departed from Jonathan, he evidently picked up several close companions who

were sympathetic to him. We can surmise that four trustworthy companions were with him, for David requested five loaves of bread, one for himself and one for each of the other men. Apparently, some reverential individuals realized what was happening between David and Saul and had perhaps seen the king's javelin throwing. They no doubt felt that the Lord's blessing would attend David rather than the king. While they would respect the office of the king, they had witnessed Saul's behavior and thus wanted to cast their lot with the uncertainty of David's welfare because they saw that the Lord was with him. They were willing to risk their lives and reputations for David.

We can begin to piece together what probably happened. When David approached Ahimelech, he was alone, but Ahimelech noticed that others, who had been with him, were holding back fearfully or furtively. Moreover, it seemed strange that a personality like David would ask for bread, especially being so close to Jerusalem.

It is true that David told a fib, but this was a matter of life and death, so the lie was permissible. We, too, sometimes tell fibs, an example being when we humor someone with a mental problem who has certain fantasies. Or perhaps we enter into an imaginary world in playing with a child. The circumstances have to be weighed.

The loaves of bread were shewbread, which was changed, or replaced, with new bread once a week on the sabbath, and the old bread could be eaten by the priests. Evidently, therefore, David asked for the old bread at the time of the changing, when it was about to be replenished with fresh dedicated bread. No doubt Ahimelech thought of David's past actions as a champion of Israel, and while he would have sensed that something was not quite right between the king and David, he was swayed in his judgment to be sympathetic to David. (The rumor of the relationship between Saul and David had probably been noised abroad in the nation.)

Q: Were the loaves of shewbread like pita bread?

A: Yes, it was unleavened bread in the pita form.

Jesus spoke of this incident in Matthew 12:3,4. "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" Although it was not lawful for David to eat the shewbread because he was not a priest, his request apparently came at a juncture of time when the old bread was available to the priesthood. The incident with Jesus took place on the sabbath (Matt. 12:2,5). He was trying to reason with the Pharisees, for when he healed a man on the sabbath, they criticized him. Jesus did not use the example of David's going into the Holy per se but called attention to what he had done in the extremity of his hunger on the sabbath—and God did not criticize David for that act. It was permissible for David to eat the shewbread because of his necessity, although the eating was normally authorized only for the priests.

Q: Is the thought that David actually entered the Holy? If so, couldn't the bread have been brought out to him?

A: It helps to put ourselves in David's situation. Since he was fleeing from Saul, he could not talk very long to Ahimelech. Therefore, he probably went right into the tent, a place of safety, while the men associated with him waited outside. None of them wanted to be exposed to public view for any length of time. (In spite of these precautionary measures, David was seen by Doeg, as verse 7 will tell.) It is possible that David entered the dressing area under the tent flaps. A storage area was on one side and a dressing room for the priests on the other.

Ahimelech was inclined to listen to David but felt the minimum requirement for partaking of the “hallowed bread” was that “the young men [must] have kept themselves at least from women.” This stipulation was based on Exodus 19:15, when at Mount Sinai Moses sanctified the people and they washed their clothes in preparation for meeting God and receiving the Ten Commandments: “Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.” This practice was followed on other occasions—in the days of Nehemiah and good King Josiah, for example.

After Jonathan and David embraced and parted, David’s fleeing from Saul had to be done mostly at night, under cover of darkness. Being in a populated area, he had to be careful lest someone with a wrong motivation spot him and betray him to Saul for a handsome ransom. Nob was probably only three to five miles from where David and Jonathan had separated. Moreover, David had to speak to Ahimelech in an auspicious moment when worshippers were not present, that is, outside of “business hours.”

The three days that David and the men were without women was while David fasted and was waiting for the answer from Jonathan. They had been without food and the fellowship of home life during that time. The account suggests that David and those with him were in the same situation together. Then, with Nob being relatively nearby, they could have gotten there in a short time while exercising caution not to be exposed.

1 Sam. 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

“There was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD.” This statement shows that David requested the bread on a sabbath day, when the bread was changed. Ahimelech gave the old bread to David and his companions for their sustenance.

1 Sam. 21:7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.

1 Sam. 21:8 And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.

1 Sam. 21:9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.

Ahimelech gave David the sword he had previously used to cut off Goliath’s head. The sword had been kept in the dressing area under the side flaps. David now had food and a large, heavy weapon. For David to take this sword indicates that he was a big-framed, strong young man. In fact, Saul, who stood head and shoulders over the nation of Israel, had offered David his own armor to fight Goliath, and that armor would not fit a person of average stature.

Doeg, an Edomite loyal to Saul, being his chief herdsman, was “detained before the LORD.” The reason for his detainment is not given, but evidently, at the moment David chose to have the interview with Ahimelech and thought no one was around, Doeg was still there and witnessed the meeting. David saw him and feared (1 Sam. 22:22).

The “ephod” was the robe of office of the high priest. The breastplate of jewels, also considered

a symbol of office, was worn on the ephod. With the Tabernacle being in disarray at that time, the high priest wore the ephod but not the breastplate. The Ark of the Covenant, the breastplate, and the priesthood were scattered and divided, so the Tabernacle and Court were probably not set up in an orderly way as in the 40 years in the wilderness. It was a period of flux and instability.

The priesthood kept a number of items under the side flaps of the Tabernacle: the incense, the priests' garments, the holy anointing oil, relics of war, etc. The area was like a storeroom. The Tabernacle "roof" was flat on top, but the coverings of rams' skins and seals' skins were tied with cords to the ground at an angle from the 15-foot-high sides of the Tabernacle, forming good-sized side tents. The Tabernacle embraced the Holy and the Most Holy in addition to these side parts.

Comment: Ahimelech is wrongly called Abiathar in Mark 2:26. Abiathar was the son of the high priest (1 Sam. 22:20).

1 Sam. 21:10 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

David arose and fled about 30 miles away to Gath, a Philistine city, and King Achish.

1 Sam. 21:11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

1 Sam. 21:12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

1 Sam. 21:13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

1 Sam. 21:14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?

1 Sam. 21:15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

When David was recognized by the king's servants, he feared that Achish might regard him, an Israelite warrior, as a threat or consider him a spy and kill him. Therefore, David resorted to radical subterfuge by feigning madness. "He changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." Evidently, he was quite an actor to be able to allay the suspicions of the Philistine king and his servants. For a *prominent national hero* to conduct himself in such a demeaning manner seemed genuine to them, for surely, they thought, a *sane* hero would not act that way. It is harder for one to grovel who is accustomed to public respect and deference.

Here we learn that David had a beard. In many of the ancient drawings, the Semitic tribes (posterity of Shem) are discerned by their beards, for the Egyptians (descendants of Ham) were clean-shaven.

Q: Some have criticized David for pretending to be a madman and for experiencing fear, saying that since he had been anointed of the Lord, he should have had more trust. But aren't these judgments improper, for God did not criticize him?

A: Who are we to render such judgments? A sufficiency of scriptural evidence would be needed to draw that conclusion. David was not yet king but had simply been anointed to be the future king of Israel. Therefore, in view of the promise of the anointing and knowing that somehow he would fill that office, he would have been wrong to jeopardize his life. In other words, he had respect for the office. Similarly, during the First Advent, Jesus avoided being taken a number of times, for his hour had not yet come (John 7:30; 8:20). He either darted, thus evading danger by an adroit maneuver of his body, or hid himself as, for instance, when he went in another direction upon hearing that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Had Jesus exposed himself unnecessarily, he might have incurred his Father's displeasure, but when his hour came for crucifixion, he threw all caution to the wind, even rebuking Peter for advice not to go to Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21-23).

Goliath was from Gath, yet David now brought the sword back to this very place, having only a few men with him. Of course the sword could have been hidden. The small number of men continued with David and began to multiply as time went on.

It is also possible that news of Saul's enmity toward David had reached the Philistines, so that when he went to Gath, even though he had the sword of Goliath, he was regarded as an outcast and a refugee. Moreover, the Philistines might have liked the thought that David had come over to the enemy. From that standpoint, David would have gone boldly to the Philistines. On the other hand, the Philistines might have considered the news to be a plot, thinking that David was a spy. Realizing the distrust, David devised the strategy of pretending to be a madman. In any event, with his seeming madness, the Philistines did not consider him dangerous at this point.

The Lord's Word includes this incident, unadorned, and lets us draw our own conclusions. We can either find fault or try to understand the circumstances. God does not lead us by the hand but permits us to have faith and confidence in His judgments. We must weigh the facts to decide how much or how little allowance should be given to David under these circumstances. God did not criticize David for eating the shewbread or for feigning madness, and Jesus excused the eating of the bread in the New Testament. However, in regard to other matters, such as his sin with Bathsheba, David was punished severely. The account will reveal how and where retribution was placed on David. Incidentally, Jonathan is probably an Ancient Worthy.

1 Sam. 22:1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.

1 Sam. 22:2 And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

David had only four companions previously, when he was fed with the old shewbread of the Holy. He then went to the Philistine city of Gath and escaped by subterfuge from the Gaza Strip. Next he fled to the cave of Adullam (meaning "resting place"). David's seven brothers and "all his father's house" joined him, and others rallied to him as well, namely, the misfits of society—those in distress, those in debt, and those who were discontented because of Saul's erratic, unjust course. Similarly, in the Gospel Age, the majority of those who espouse the cause of Christ were formerly "publicans and sinners." Now about 400 men were with David, and he was their captain.

Q: Did David's family join him out of fear of reprisal by Saul?

A: That was probably the case, for how could the king be trusted? David's family realized that the perpetuation of their lives depended on his eventually succeeding to the kingship.

1 Sam. 22:3 And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.

1 Sam. 22:4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.

David's father and mother, who were now quite aged, also came with him. For safe custody, he made arrangements for them to stay in the care of the king of Moab. With Moab being one of the two sons of Lot through his daughters after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the king was like a half-kinsman of the Israelites. Of course Mizpeh, which was on the other side of the Jordan River and near the Mount Nebo area, was quite a distance from Gath.

1 Sam. 22:5 And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

Gad, a prophet or seer, told David to flee from the cave to Judah (2 Sam. 24:11). While the chief prophet at this time was Samuel, the Lord had subsidiary prophets in different areas.

1 Sam. 22:6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him;)

1 Sam. 22:7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

1 Sam. 22:8 That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

With Saul as his father, Jonathan's life was hanging on a thread. As a Benjamite himself, Saul had given all of the chief political and military offices to Benjamites. Now he reminded them that if he were deposed as king and David installed, radical changes in the government and the army would jeopardize their positions.

Somehow Saul had learned about the covenant between Jonathan and David. Perhaps Jonathan had disclosed this information, for he was very forthright, speaking with openness and honesty. Saul asked, "Will anyone here snitch on David's whereabouts?" Thus he slyly put out a feeler, the implication being that the one who did so would receive a handsome reward.

Comment: Saul said that David was lying in wait to kill him, thus labeling David as the troublemaker. Actually the reverse was true.

Reply: Yes, and the account will reveal Saul's tenacity of purpose in trying to slay David.

1 Sam. 22:9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

1 Sam. 22:10 And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.

Doeg, the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants in this entourage, told Saul that he had seen David with Ahimelech, the high priest, and that the latter had given David food and the sword of Goliath. The evil character of Saul will come out more and more, for his frustrations in apprehending and slaying David precipitated a mean streak. He could not rest until David was dispatched.

1 Sam. 22:11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

1 Sam. 22:12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord.

1 Sam. 22:13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

1 Sam. 22:14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?

Ahimelech's nice answer to Saul about David took courage: "Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?" Even though the answer was worded as tactfully as possible, the high priest stood up for David, nevertheless. To remind Saul of David's virtues, no matter how politely stated, was an embarrassing rebuke. Saul accused Ahimelech of giving Goliath's sword to David for the purpose of mutiny, whereas David did not want to touch God's anointed (1 Sam. 24:6).

1 Sam. 22:15 Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

1 Sam. 22:16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

1 Sam. 22:17 And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

1 Sam. 22:18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

1 Sam. 22:19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

Saul's footmen, or guards, would not lift a finger against the high priest and his family, even though they were under the king's direct charge. However, Doeg's cruelty was manifested, for

he killed Ahimelech and 85 priests with the sword. Then he went to their locale and exterminated Ahimelech's entire house—men, women, children, and animals.

Q: Did Doeg act single-handedly?

A: That might have been the case. Apparently, the priests and their families willingly submitted to the slaying. Anciently, the people had such respect for the authority of the king that they would have taken Saul's command as the Lord's will.

Comment: To be faithful as antitypical priests, we would likewise have to willingly submit if we were put in such a position.

Reply: Yes, the priests had a proper spirit in the face of such butchery. However, for Doeg to side with Saul, whose evil character was so manifest, shows the depravity of the Edomite.

This incident involved the Levites at Nob, but there were 47 other Levitical cities scattered throughout Israel, including six cities of refuge. However, the priests at Nob were on a higher echelon of recognition, for the Tabernacle was located there at this particular time. Of course to be a priest, one had to be not only a Levite but also a descendant of Aaron, that is, of the lineages of both Levi and Aaron.

1 Sam. 22:20 And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

1 Sam. 22:21 And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests.

1 Sam. 22:22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.

1 Sam. 22:23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

One son of Ahimelech escaped and fled to David, who must have felt sick when he heard the news. Because of Doeg's informing Saul, David considered himself responsible for the deaths of Abiathar's family. If Abiathar stayed with David, protection was promised.

1 Sam. 23:1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

1 Sam. 23:2 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

1 Sam. 23:3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

1 Sam. 23:4 Then David inquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

Comment: David was fleeing for his own life, yet he still wanted to help the Israelites by fighting the Philistines.

Reply: Yes, knowing the character of Saul, David realized the king would probably not risk his

own position by going out and encountering the Philistines, especially in the threshing-floor area, which was not as convenient for the Israelites in battle.

David inquired of the Lord twice as to whether he should go and smite the Philistines. He probably used Abiathar's ephod for the inquiries (verse 6). Both times God responded in the affirmative. The answers were a confirmation of David's prior anointing and eventual kingship. Like Moses, David had the instinct to go into battle to remedy an injustice.

1 Sam. 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

1 Sam. 23:6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

Verse 6 is a flashback to Abiathar's initial coming to David, for at that time, when he cast his lot with David, he brought the ephod with him (1 Sam. 22:20-23). And now, instead of staying behind, he came with David to the battle with the Philistines, having the ephod in his hand. David's victory was a "great slaughter."

1 Sam. 23:7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

1 Sam. 23:8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

1 Sam. 23:9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

1 Sam. 23:10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

1 Sam. 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.

How would David have learned that Saul contemplated taking advantage of him in this situation of jeopardy, even though he had done this good deed to fellow Israelites? Either Jonathan or one of Saul's guards informed David of the king's plans. In other words, several in Saul's entourage were far more sympathetic to David than to Saul.

David's being "shut in" reminds us of Pharaoh's saying that the Israelites, as led by Moses, were "entangled in the land, ... shut ... in" against the Red Sea (Exod. 14:3). Consequently, Pharaoh pursued the Israelites, thinking they were trapped. Based on the contour of the land, this was the true situation, for who would have dreamed that the Red Sea would open up for the Israelites? Moses had intentionally led the Israelites in between two large mountain ranges so that Pharaoh would consider the situation overwhelmingly in his favor.

Similarly, with Saul's wanting to slay David, the current situation seemed ideal. Moreover, David could see that Saul was so intent on destroying him that, if necessary, he would think nothing of slaughtering all of the inhabitants of the city. Saul acted as if the Israelites had premeditated and plotted to cast their lot with David, whereas the circumstance was the other

way around—David had come to rescue them from the Philistines.

Comment: How sad that Saul, who had *lost* the Lord's favor, was so deluded as to think God was favoring him with a providence! We, too, could be so misguided if we grieved the Holy Spirit with gross unrepented-of sin.

To David's credit, he was concerned with the safety of the inhabitants of Keilah. Earlier his questions of the Lord showed that he had great natural qualities of anticipation and perception. These qualities helped him subsequently when he became king.

David again inquired of Jehovah. Sure enough, Saul was planning to come down and, if necessary, kill all the inhabitants.

1 Sam. 23:12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.

1 Sam. 23:13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth.

1 Sam. 23:14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

1 Sam. 23:15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

David did not merely want to know whether Saul was coming down and would kill the inhabitants of the city. In addition, he asked if the men of Keilah would deliver him and his men to Saul as a ransom. The answer was yes. Imagine—the *very individuals that David had saved* would be willing to turn him in to Saul to save their own necks!

Comment: David had wrought a great deliverance on their behalf, but they lacked loyalty to principle.

Notice that David now had 600 men with him, an increase from the 400. They departed from Keilah and remained in the mountain complex of the wilderness. Meanwhile, Saul was so bold and unashamed in his desire to kill David that he hunted him daily. His preoccupation with ferreting out the prey was like an obsession.

1 Sam. 23:16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

1 Sam. 23:17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

1 Sam. 23:18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Earlier, at the time of the shooting of the arrows, Jonathan and David thought they might not see each other again, but here Jonathan found a means of contacting David and renewing the former covenant between them. Jonathan recognized that David would ultimately be king,

feeling that God would spare him. In humility and respect, Jonathan said, “I shall be next [second] unto thee.” And he added, “That also Saul my father knoweth.” Jonathan had an admirable quality of openness; he did not employ subterfuge.

1 Sam. 23:19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?

1 Sam. 23:20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand.

1 Sam. 23:21 And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

1 Sam. 23:22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtly.

1 Sam. 23:23 See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

The Ziphites were willing to betray David. The inhabitants of Keilah would turn David over to Saul in their *extremity*—that is, to prevent their butchering—but the Ziphites actually *initiated* the offer of betrayal. They were familiar with the caves and holes in the mountains of this area of Judah. All 600 of David’s men could not fit in one cave (except perhaps for Adullam), so David would have to distribute his men in several caves. To find him and the others would take time, but the Ziphites were willing to search the area little by little.

Notice Saul’s enthusiastic greeting to the Ziphites: “Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.” He also said, “I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.” Here we see Saul’s tenacity of purpose with regard to apprehending David—to the neglect of the welfare of Israel. He could not rest until he got David. Everything else became relatively unimportant.

1 Sam. 23:24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

1 Sam. 23:25 Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

1 Sam. 23:26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

Saul was trying to establish a cordon. Since he was familiar with the wilderness of Maon, all he had to do was spread out his forces to completely envelop the land and then tighten the noose, as it were. Thus Saul felt it was just a matter of time until he would get his prey.

1 Sam. 23:27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

1 Sam. 23:28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahlekoth.

1 Sam. 23:29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi.

God's providence intervened at this point to remove Saul from the scene. The Philistines could see that with Saul concentrating his forces to apprehend and kill David, he had left the northern flank of Israel completely exposed. The Philistines took advantage of the situation to invade the land. Saul realized that if he continued to pursue David, he would lose the throne because the Philistines would occupy the homeland. Therefore, with the Philistines ready to fight, Saul left his pursuit and went to fight. The place was appropriately named Sela-hammahlekoth, which means "rock of divisions" in the Hebrew. David then left for En-gedi.

1 Sam. 24:1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.

Chapter 24 does not state what Saul did with the Philistines. When the news reached Saul that they had invaded the land, he quickly backtracked to guard the strategic part of Israel that was north of Jerusalem. Meanwhile, he evidently relaxed the siege that had been put around the area where David was. The account does not give the details, for the next thing we know is that David was at En-gedi. Gaps in the history were not considered sufficiently important to record.

1 Sam. 24:2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

1 Sam. 24:3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

1 Sam. 24:4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

1 Sam. 24:5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

1 Sam. 24:6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

1 Sam. 24:7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

David and his men could have killed Saul, but David did not run ahead of the Lord, for he respected the office of king. He could have interpreted Saul's vulnerable position as the Lord's providence and seized the opportunity to dispatch him. From the sides of the cave, he and his men saw the king making his bed and preparing for the night. David's men were gently pushing him to act, but he was compassionate at heart, for Saul was still God's anointed. The animosity between Saul and David was more of a *personal* confrontation, so David would not kill the king. Under other circumstances, David would have been happy and quick to take advantage of the Lord's providence, but here he acted correctly.

Comment: The account states, "Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats." Not only is the description picturesque, but David had only 600 men, hidden in various caves, versus Saul's 3,000.

Reply: Yes, and Saul came into the very cave in En-gedi where David, the ringleader of the malcontents, had his headquarters. Of course David's "bodyguards," perhaps his own brothers, were with him.

"David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt." David regretted that he had caused this indignity to the king. His intention was to take evidence, which he later showed, to prove he could have slain Saul. While taking a piece of Saul's garment showed his willingness not to slay the king, David felt he had committed an indignity, for the king occupied the office of the Lord.

Some may draw wrong principles from this incident. For instance, when Judge Rutherford took over the Society in the early days, there was definite evidence by many brethren that he had committed some atrocious acts. However, rather than leave the Society, they felt, "The Lord will remove him." Instead of exiting, as they should have done, they remained, kept giving excuses for the abuses and doctrinal errors, and waited for God to do something. They did not want to have a legal battle, and the only way to remove the head of the Society was to take the matter before a court of law. However, David's circumstance was quite different, for Saul occupied an *office*. God had anointed Saul, whereas the Judge *usurped* his position. The Judge, as an *individual*, should have been removed. A lesson improperly drawn can, and has, put many brethren in bondage.

1 Sam. 24:8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

1 Sam. 24:9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

1 Sam. 24:10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.

1 Sam. 24:11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

David did not cry after Saul until Saul had exited the cave and was perhaps going downhill. Probably from above the cave, David called down to Saul, who turned around to look behind him. David willingly submitted to Saul, stooping with his face to the ground and bowing himself. Saul could have slain David at that point. David asked, "Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?" and then showed Saul the evidence that such was not the intent—a piece of the king's garment. If Saul had not already noticed that his garment was torn, he certainly now realized that a piece was missing.

Because this was a *personal one-on-one* matter between David and Saul, David did not dispatch the king. However, had Saul done evil in certain other matters, it might have been proper for David to dispatch him according to the Law in the Old Testament.

Q: Since David represents the true Church in the flesh and Saul pictures the professed Church, or Papacy, would the antitype of this personal matter be as follows? If David had killed Saul, it would show that the true Church was trying to seize power (the Kingdom) ahead of the Lord's due time.

A: Yes, that would be the antitype.

1 Sam. 24:12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

1 Sam. 24:13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

1 Sam. 24:14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

1 Sam. 24:15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

1 Sam. 24:16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

1 Sam. 24:17 And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

Saul could not misunderstand what David was saying here. David's honesty and pure thinking were manifest in his exposing himself to the wrath of the king to plead the Lord's cause. David struck a responsive chord in Saul's heart, whereby the latter admitted that David was more righteous than he. If this confession was done in the presence of those who were with Saul, peer pressure could have been involved. In any event, Saul wept at this point.

1 Sam. 24:18 And thou hast shown this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

1 Sam. 24:19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

1 Sam. 24:20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

1 Sam. 24:21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

1 Sam. 24:22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Comment: Even the wicked-minded Saul was temporarily moved by David's compassion and relinquished his pursuit.

Reply: However, David still did not trust Saul. When Saul returned home, David and his men went up to the stronghold and maintained their guard. Although Saul admitted that David would be his successor as king, he did not say when and certainly did not intend to just hand over the kingdom.

David showed wisdom in cutting off a piece of Saul's garment. He was a man with much foresight, as will also be seen in some of the coming battles. We believe that Solomon inherited much of his wisdom from David, his father.

1 Sam. 25:1 And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

After Samuel died, David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran, but why? In that location to the south, his whereabouts would be less apt to be discovered. David did not attend the funeral in Ramah, for to do so would risk his being apprehended and slain. The wilderness of Paran was in Sinai, just south of the border of Israel.

1 Sam. 25:2 And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

1 Sam. 25:3 Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb.

This Carmel, located in Judah, was in southern Israel and thus was not the usual Carmel up on the Mediterranean. Maon was nearby. Earlier David was in the wilderness of Ziph. Carmel, Maon, and Ziph were all in the southeastern part of Judah in southern Israel in a wilderness area (Josh. 15:55). In these mountainous areas, David and his men could hole up in caves and not be readily spotted by Saul.

The name of this wealthy but evil and churlish man was Nabal, and his wife was Abigail, a “woman of good understanding” and “beautiful countenance,” whom David later married. Nabal was of the house of Caleb, who was with Joshua during the 40 years in the wilderness. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Caleb had asked for and received Hebron, which not only was in the same area but was very fertile land for growing crops or pasturing sheep and goats. Since Nabal was a descendant of Caleb, it was logical that he lived in the same area. Nabal had great possessions: 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats.

Some of this detail might seem unnecessary, but the fact it was included suggests the events have been filmed with narration to be shown to the world in the Kingdom. Nabal and the towns of Maon, Carmel, etc., will be seen on film, thus proving the veracity of the Bible as God’s Word. The Bible is a witness even today, but who heeds it except perhaps one in 100,000 people?

1 Sam. 25:4 And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.

1 Sam. 25:5 And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:

1 Sam. 25:6 And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

1 Sam. 25:7 And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

1 Sam. 25:8 Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.

David was in need of provisions, so he sent ten young men to Nabal, who was shearing his sheep, and instructed them what to say. As a fugitive from Saul, David was dependent upon the good wishes of those who were sympathetic to him and his cause. When Jesus sent out his disciples without money or extra raiment, he said, “Whatsoever house you enter, say first, ‘Peace be unto his house.’ If the owner of the house welcomes you as a guest, the peace you expressed will rest on that house. If the owner does not welcome you, then shake off the dust of your feet, and the opposite will come to that house” (Matt. 10:11-14 paraphrase). David had a right to follow that custom because he had done several things on behalf of the nation of Israel—he had fought wars, slain Goliath, and delivered a city from the Philistines. Moreover, he was requesting provisions not only for himself but also for the 600 men who were with him.

In verse 7, David was saying that he and his men could easily have taken some of the 3,000 sheep and the 1,000 goats, but they stole nothing and did not hurt Nabal’s shepherds. They had been to this area before, for the Ziphites were here. The ragtag “discontents” with David were honest and trustworthy under his leadership. They looked to him as a man God had raised up to be a deliverer who would somehow solve their problems. Thus they were willing to cast their lot with him while he was in a period of ill fortune, trusting that God would reward them for espousing His cause under conditions of hardship. David had control over them in spite of their past, and the suggestion is that he had commanded them to refrain from stealing. Moreover, they had obeyed David in not killing Saul in En-ge-di when David cut off the skirt of the king’s raiment. David exhibited qualifications of leadership that his men respected.

Part of the message to Nabal was to be, “Ask thy young men, and they will show thee.” In other words, Nabal’s shepherds could testify to the honesty of David and his men. The message continued, “Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.” Stated another way, “Give us whatever you feel inclined to give.”

1 Sam. 25:9 And when David’s young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

David’s men obeyed, speaking exactly as instructed with no additional words. Again their respect for David was manifested. Trusting that he had his own reasons for doing what he did, they did not allow their own judgment to override his judgment.

1 Sam. 25:10 And Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

1 Sam. 25:11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

1 Sam. 25:12 So David’s young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

David’s men reported how Nabal had answered them with an insult. “Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.” Nabal had lied, for he knew who David was. An “evil” man, Nabal would not give him anything (verse 3). The implication is that he knew David had a sense of justice, so he might have thought that if David were king, restrictive but just measures would be enacted which would infringe upon the malpractices. Nabal preferred Saul’s reign because it allowed him to prosper. Thus he recognized Saul as the master and considered David a deviate from the kingdom.

1 Sam. 25:13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

1 Sam. 25:14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

1 Sam. 25:15 But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:

1 Sam. 25:16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

1 Sam. 25:17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

One of Nabal's men told Abigail what was happening because he saw the handwriting on the wall. He testified to the good character of David's men, but after Nabal addressed the ten young men in such a rude manner, it was just a matter of time until David and his men would return to avenge themselves, boding ill for himself, Abigail, Nabal, and Nabal's household unless she did something. He did not fear to speak this way to Abigail because he knew she was not in sympathy with her husband's past evil deeds.

Nabal was called "such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him." In other words, he was so headstrong that no one could reason with him on certain matters.

Q: Does verse 16 mean that David's men not only did not take any of Nabal's possessions but also helped protect his possessions? They were "a wall ... both by night and day, all the while we [Nabal's shepherds] were ... keeping the sheep."

A: Yes, David's men prevented other people who were living a bedouin existence from making incursions into Nabal's domain and stealing sheep and goats. None dared to steal from Nabal while David's men were there. This protection was observed by Nabal's shepherds.

Q: Verse 14 states that Nabal "railed on" David's messengers. What is the thought? The King James margin has "flew upon" instead of "railed."

A: The conversation is abbreviated, for more would have been said than was recorded. Nabal probably added expletives, had an angry tone, and threatened the ten men, perhaps even raising his fist. With 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats, Nabal no doubt had more than ten shepherds whom he could call on to physically remove the messengers. Evidently, his words and manner indicated that if they did not leave posthaste, mischief would come upon them. "Railing" is an accusation that is more than just a strong dissent. Clearly, Nabal was saying, "No, I do not intend to give anything."

Comment: Another marginal reference is "spoke abusively."

Reply: David's messengers could not reason with Nabal, and if they stayed long enough, they would get physical abuse in addition to verbal abuse.

1 Sam. 25:18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred

clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.

1 Sam. 25:19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

1 Sam. 25:20 And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.

1 Sam. 25:21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.

1 Sam. 25:22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

Abigail *hasted* and took a peace offering to David and his men unbeknownst to her husband. The raisins would have been large clusters. Incidentally, Hebron and the Eshcol area, which was a little farther north, were known for clusters of grapes that were so large and heavy they had to be carried on poles between two men. The five sheep were “ready dressed,” that is, prepared. Meanwhile, after the messengers reported Nabal’s attitude, David was angry, and he and his men had girded on their swords. Abigail was entering a valley at the foot of a hill, while David and his men were coming up over the hill, and they met.

1 Sam. 25:23 And when Abigail saw David, she *hasted*, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,

1 Sam. 25:24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

1 Sam. 25:25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

1 Sam. 25:26 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

When Abigail saw David, she *hasted* to light off her ass, fell at his feet, bowed before him, and spoke eloquently: “Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.” Without her intervention, David intended to slay Nabal and the men associated with him. Her words and peace offering softened his heart. She recognized Nabal’s true character. For her to say publicly that he was “of Belial” indicates his character was obnoxious to everyone. His name means “fool” depending on pronunciation. Accordingly, Abigail said, “As his name is, so is he.”

“I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.” Calling herself David’s “handmaid” shows Abigail’s humility and her respect for him as a great man. She would have known of his exploits on behalf of the nation of Israel, for the women throughout the realm sang, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). In verse 26, she was saying, “God’s providence permitted me to intercept you lest you have blood on your hands by shedding blood needlessly. You do not want a blot on your conscience for shedding blood without cause.” Her statement may well have been true. She continued, “I

have the food you need right here.” What a touching scene! This incident gives us insight into her character.

1 Sam. 25:27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

1 Sam. 25:28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

1 Sam. 25:29 Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.

1 Sam. 25:30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

1 Sam. 25:31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

Abigail spoke *powerfully* as well as *tactfully*—almost as if she were under the Spirit. Of course she did not know that David had been secretly anointed by Samuel to be king, but with strong assurance, she could see, noting God’s providences, that David was a man of the future. When the Lord raises up a servant, those who are observant can sometimes discern his role considerably in advance of the actual event. In reviewing David’s history and how he had fought against Israel’s enemies and overcome them, she believed that someday he would rule, that he was a man of destiny. She said that Jehovah would cast out David’s enemies like a stone from a slingshot, that is, with the speed of the expulsion of the missile, with force and power. How wonderful that a woman could speak like a man of war! We are reminded of Elisabeth’s speaking under the power of the Holy Spirit and Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:41-55). The Holy Spirit *quickly* brought to remembrance things that Abigail knew.

“Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul.” Abigail knew that Saul was pursuing David. However, she did not dishonor the office of king by mentioning Saul’s name.

Q: Why did Abigail say in verse 31, “Remember thine handmaid”?

A: When David would come into power as king, he would remember Nabal. Abigail was saying, “Do not do anything to Nabal now,” but she realized that when David became king, he would be forced to deal with her husband. David could not have a unified kingdom with avowed enemies. In fact, it would be foolish to be merciful to one whose character was crystallized in an evil direction. Abigail was asking David to remember her at that time.

1 Sam. 25:32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

1 Sam. 25:33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

1 Sam. 25:34 For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been

left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

1 Sam. 25:35 So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

David acknowledged that Abigail had been sent providentially, and he heeded her good advice. Thus he withheld his hand from doing mischief to Nabal and his men. This incident shows that a wife should not obey her husband contrary to conscience. The account also shows David's humility in recognizing her intercepting him as providential.

Some people are wrongly offended by the term "pisseth against the wall," which is in the Hebrew. Blunt talk was sometimes needed in olden times to put people in the proper perspective. God's Word and His prophets used this term.

1 Sam. 25:36 And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

1 Sam. 25:37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.

1 Sam. 25:38 And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

1 Sam. 25:39 And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.

Nabal held a drunken feast in his house, so Abigail said nothing about giving food to David and his men until the next morning. Abigail showed that she was a principled woman by not fabricating a story. She just said nothing until he was sober, hoping that he would react favorably. Upon hearing the news, Nabal had an immediate physical reaction—a stroke or something else that paralyzed him, making him immobile like a stone. Despite her husband's dreadful character, she stood up to him. When Nabal died ten days later, David felt that God had struck him dead. The Lord had answered his cause. David then sent his servants to Abigail to communicate his intention to marry her.

1 Sam. 25:40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.

1 Sam. 25:41 And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.

1 Sam. 25:42 And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

Michal was already David's wife, but in those days, it was permissible to have more than one wife. Hearing David's intention, Abigail *hasted joyously* to him and became his wife.

1 Sam. 25:43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.

David also married Ahinoam.

1 Sam. 25:44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.

Meanwhile, Saul had given Michal, his daughter, David's first wife, to another man.

1 Sam. 26:1 And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

The Ziphites informed Saul at his residence that David was hiding in their territory at Hachilah, which was before Jeshimon. Earlier also, the Ziphites were willing to betray David to Saul. Both times David was hiding in the same place—the same hill and territory (1 Sam. 23:19,20).

1 Sam. 26:2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

Saul arose and journeyed with 3,000 chosen men down to the wilderness of Ziph to apprehend David. The wilderness of Ziph was an outpost of civilization.

1 Sam. 26:3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

1 Sam. 26:4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.

Hearing a report that Saul was approaching the area where he and his men were in hiding, David sent out spies to confirm the report. Indeed Saul was there.

1 Sam. 26:5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

1 Sam. 26:6 Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

1 Sam. 26:7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

When David was told that Saul had come, no doubt the report furnished the exact location where the king pitched for the night. David and Abishai went down to Saul's camp and saw the king asleep with bodyguards stationed around him so that he could sleep in safety. Apparently, as a temporary means of fortification, Saul's men had even dug a trench in which he could sleep.

Saul's spear was stuck in the ground at his bolster, or pillow, for ready use. It was characteristic of Saul to have a spear with him wherever he was. Abner, Saul's acting general, and the rest of the men were all asleep around him.

1 Sam. 26:8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

Abishai noted the situation as being unusual—and thus providential—in that Saul and his army were all asleep. Therefore, he suggested to David that he would pull Saul’s spear out of the ground and thrust the king through. The action would not need to be repeated, for Saul would be dead. This incident reminds us of the previous occasion when David had an opportunity to slay Saul in a cave in En-gedi (1 Sam. 24:1,3,4).

1 Sam. 26:9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD’S anointed, and be guiltless?

1 Sam. 26:10 David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

1 Sam. 26:11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

1 Sam. 26:12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

God caused Saul and his men to be in “a deep sleep” so that David could have Abishai remove the king’s spear and cruse of water. Both times David spared Saul’s life, the principle being, “Who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD’S anointed, and be guiltless?” The first time David took a piece of Saul’s skirt, and that act was even more shameful, for the king had to wear a cut-off garment. The “cruse of water” was like Saul’s personal canteen. While the Lord caused the enemy to be in a deep slumber, it was, nevertheless, a test of courage for Abishai to take Saul’s spear and cruse of water, for not until later, when David and Abishai reflected on the matter, did they realize that God had overruled the sleep.

1 Sam. 26:13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them:

1 Sam. 26:14 And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?

1 Sam. 26:15 And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

1 Sam. 26:16 This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD’S anointed. And now see where the king’s spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.

1 Sam. 26:17 And Saul knew David’s voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.

David reacted somewhat similarly to when he had cut off Saul’s skirt. As Saul exited from the cave, David called out from a respectful distance, alerting the king as to what had happened. This time he chastised Abner for not sufficiently guarding Saul and for allowing the king’s personal items to be taken. The incident was embarrassing to both Abner and Saul.

Comment: Seeing Saul in a vulnerable position was a test for David as to whether or not he

would be loyal to the king.

Reply: Evidently, David was a great rationalist. Normally, a person would consider the fact that the king was sleeping to be God's providence allowing him to be killed, for after all, Saul was the enemy. However, David had such respect for the office of king that his attitude was, "If the Lord wants me to be victorious over my enemy, He will take care of the situation."

It is remarkable that David correctly sized up the situation so quickly and made the right decision when there was not time to inquire of the Lord with the ephod. He had mentioned three ways in which Saul might die: (1) he might have a natural death, (2) he could perish in battle, or (3) he would die a supernatural death if God struck him (verse 10).

When David called to Abner, Saul overheard that his spear and cruse were gone. David's not speaking to Saul direct was a delicate way to handle the matter. Abner did not recognize David's voice, but Saul did. David respectfully replied, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

1 Sam. 26:18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?

1 Sam. 26:19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

1 Sam. 26:20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

Using terms of subserviency, David asked Saul, "Why does *my lord* thus pursue *his servant*? What have I done? What evil is in my hand?" David lined up two possibilities. (1) If indeed he was a traitor, the Lord would make sure that he was slain, and David would submit himself to the slaying. But, first, he wanted a just appraisal by Saul. David was saying, "If God finds me guilty, then I expect to be slain. If He has righteously stirred you up to pursue me, I expect to be an offering." (2) Otherwise, Saul's mind had been poisoned with wrong counsel from evil men, plus his own disposition, in wanting to slay David. Any rumors about David's plotting to take over the throne were false. His innocence was validated by his taking the spear and cruse of water but not slaying the king. In plain talk, David said he was not conspiring to overtake the throne.

And David added another point: "I have been forced to befriend and seek safety from heathen people who are enemies of the Lord in that they serve other gods. I would rather be in Israel with the people of God."

"Let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD." David submitted himself to Saul, as he had done previously when, in the cave at En-gedi, he had cut off Saul's skirt. At that time, he had put himself in jeopardy, going before the king and prostrating himself on the ground, saying, "Does the king of Israel come out after a dead dog and a flea?" (1 Sam. 24:14 paraphrase). Saul was overcome with the goodness of David and his generous spirit and admitted his own meanness of character. Similarly, this time David said, "The king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains."

1 Sam. 26:21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool,

and have erred exceedingly.

1 Sam. 26:22 And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

1 Sam. 26:23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand today, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed.

1 Sam. 26:24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

1 Sam. 26:25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

As previously, Saul repented and implied that David was more righteous than he. Moreover, he could see God's hand in David's affairs by preserving his life and indicated that David had a great future ahead of him. At En-gedi, Saul had made a covenant with David; namely, when David came into power, he was not to destroy Saul's seed.

Even though Saul said, "Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly," David wisely did not go with Saul but went his own way. In the prior incident, David and his men "gat them up unto the hold," meaning they went up into the rocks and the caves (1 Sam. 24:22). Here, too, David and those with him stayed in hiding.

Q: Was Saul's repentance sincere at the moment?

A: Yes, his mercurial, unstable personality was very susceptible to extreme changes of mood.

David had talked to the king from a respectful distance, saying in effect, "You will prosper and you will slay me if I am at fault, for the Lord will so arrange the matter." David was willing to die if he was guilty.

1 Sam. 27:1 And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

1 Sam. 27:2 And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.

1 Sam. 27:3 And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.

1 Sam. 27:4 And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.

Not only did each evidence of mercy exercised by David toward Saul heap coals of fire on the king's head, but as Saul reflected on each circumstance, he got boiling mad. At first, he recognized David's nobility of character, but that reaction was only temporary. David realized the condition had progressed to the point where he would have to utterly depart from the land

of Israel. Therefore, he and his 600 men and their households went to the Philistine city of Gath, to King Achish. In other words, David went into the camp of the enemy, for Saul would be afraid to seek him there. The Philistines respected David, even though he had slain Goliath. How interesting—the Philistines respected David’s challenge to and victory over the giant, yet Saul and some of the Israelites did not! Evidently, David knew in advance that if he went over to the Philistines, they would not kill him because they admired him.

Q: Earlier David had played the fool in front of King Achish. Was he now accepted because a sufficiency of time had elapsed?

A: Yes. Not only did the Philistines respect David for his defeat of Goliath, a resident of Gath, but they knew he was an outcast of Israel. They knew that Saul was hunting him as a renegade. Achish seemed to have confidence in David as a person. Later, however, we will find out that a segment of the Philistines mistrusted him.

1 Sam. 27:5 And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?

1 Sam. 27:6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.

1 Sam. 27:7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

In answer to his request, David was given a separate residence in the town of Ziklag in the country. There he remained in relative quietness for 16 months.

1 Sam. 27:8 And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

1 Sam. 27:9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

1 Sam. 27:10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road today? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

1 Sam. 27:11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

1 Sam. 27:12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

For verse 10, the RSV has “raid” instead of “road.” “Against whom have you made a raid today?”

David slew all of the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites but spared the animals and took the apparel as evidence. However, when he spoke to Achish, he did not repeat the names of those he had warred against but said he had made raids against people in the Negev of

Judah, the Jerahmeelites, and the Kenites, who were more or less *confederate* with the nation of Israel. In other words, the ones he utterly destroyed to the south toward Egypt were the *enemies* of Israel and *confederates* of the Philistines. Had the report come back that David had slain these people, Achish would have mistrusted David.

Q: Why did David slay the Amalekites, the Geshurites, and the Gezrites?

A: The Amalekites, the chief enemy of Israel, had lingered on. Earlier Saul had battled against Amalekites in the north, but there were survivors. These Amalekites were way down in the south. All were to be slain when the Israelites entered the Promised Land. In addition, David and his men and their households needed the sheep, oxen, asses, and camels for food, and they used the apparel. The Geshurites and the Gezrites were also avowed enemies of Israel. These three groups were in the Negev of Judah, that is, south of Beersheba and thus were outposts of civilization. News of their slaying did not travel back to Gath because all were slain.

Achish expected David to raid bedouins in the Negev of Judah, the Jerahmeelites, and the Kenites. Probably, also, the people of Ziklag had to be evacuated in order for David and his men to occupy the town. The residents would have taken their animals, so David and those with him needed food and clothing from another source.

King Achish believed David's story that he had attacked the Jerahmeelites, the Kenites, and people in the Negev south of Judah (when, in fact, he had not done so but had utterly slain the Amalekites, the Geshurites, and the Gezrites). Thus Achish trusted David, for he thought, "[Since David did that] he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever." Why was David's lie not disapproved of the Lord? We must consider the circumstances of that day. For one thing, David's life was in jeopardy. Also, he was not consecrated in the sense of the Gospel Age Christian.

1 Sam. 28:1 And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.

1 Sam. 28:2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

The setting was a coming battle between the Philistines and the nation of Israel. This would be Saul's last battle, so the outcome was significant from many perspectives. David had previously sought refuge in the Philistine camp and had gained the confidence of King Achish. Of course this battle was a crucial experience for David because he would be fighting against his own people. Although he did not give any clue as to what he would actually do, he included himself in the march. In studying the account, we find that he was appointed at the rear guard, that is, to bring up the rear. Ultimately, he was excused from battle against the Israelites because some of the Philistines mistrusted him and were fearful he would defect.

1 Sam. 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

By this time, Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and then buried him in Ramah, his hometown. Moreover, Saul had previously put those who had familiar spirits (mediums) and wizards out of the land.

1 Sam. 28:4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in

Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

In preparation for the battle, the Philistines were gathered together on one side in Shunem and its mountain, and the Israelites were on Gilboa, one of the higher mountains in Israel. Thus they were arrayed on opposing mountains deep in the heart of northern Israel.

1 Sam. 28:5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

When Saul saw the size of the Philistine host and how greatly they outnumbered the Israelites, he was afraid. The situation looked ominous for Israel unless the Lord helped the people in some way.

1 Sam. 28:6 And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Saul tried to make contact with Jehovah, using three different methods: dreams, the Urim and Thummim, and prophets. However, Saul got no answer. God did not appear to him in a dream, the priests received no response when they consulted the Urim and Thummim of the breastplate, and Saul could not inquire of a prophet, for Samuel had just died. Thus all of the usual avenues of approach to God were blocked.

1 Sam. 28:7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

Saul felt he needed some supernatural power to give him advice on how to conduct the warfare. Hence he decided to consult a woman from the town of En-dor who had a “familiar spirit,” that is, a witch, to utilize her superior occult clairvoyant powers *ostensibly* for a good reason. He had previously banned witches from the land, but now he was reversing himself and going contrary to God by consulting a medium through whom he hoped to communicate with the next world. How strange, for the Bible teaches that the dead are dead!

What is the thought of a woman having a “familiar spirit”? Such individuals had the ability to communicate with a *particular* fallen angel who could assume the likeness, voice, shape, etc., of a deceased person. Someone—Saul in this case—would go to a woman with a familiar spirit and ask to speak with a named dead party, who was usually a close relative. Supposedly the witch could communicate with that party in the next world, but actually the witch was communicating with a fallen spirit being, who made a facsimile of the departed one. Because fallen angels have lived for thousands of years and are not dying, they have superior knowledge. Also, they have a large range of observation, the vantage point of seeing great distances, and the capability to travel at great speed. They come and go as the wind and look down on the people of earth as an open book. Even top-secret meetings of presidents are exposed to them, for example, so they have a great deal of savvy because of their capabilities.

The “familiar spirit,” then, refers to the ability of a medium to contact a fallen angel. Realizing a superior power is around her (or him), the medium befriends that spirit being. The spirit being, in turn, capitalizes on the friendship and makes use of that individual as a tool to communicate down here with humankind in a way that the spirit being himself cannot do, for generally speaking, he is handicapped by not being able to materialize. However, there are *exceptions* even now, for ever since the French Revolution, materializations have taken place.

1 Sam. 28:8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men

with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

Notice what Saul did. He disguised himself and put on other raiment because he was the very one who had given the order for the witches in Israel to be killed and none to be allowed in the land. Therefore, to communicate with the witch in a seance, he went incognito. Incidentally, darkness facilitates the capability of spirit beings to communicate with an individual because they operate primarily in darkness. The Apostle Peter stated that they were bound in chains of darkness in *tartaroo* in earth's atmosphere (2 Pet. 2:4). Generally speaking, darkness is the limit of spirit beings; that is, they can operate in darkness, but light is a barrier that prevents them from materializing and acting with women as they did prior to the Flood.

Saul said to the witch, "I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee." This statement proves that the one who has the familiar spirit has the capability of (supposedly) communicating with somebody who was previously known down here. Usually the fallen angel does not materialize in a seance, but he does other things such as using the voice of the deceased or telling the living relative something very personal. Fallen spirit beings are very deceptive, for they can observe *everything*. Moreover, because they are invisible, they can be near or far. Since they utilize their superior capabilities to deceive mankind, they are sometimes called "*lying spirits*," meaning they fraudulently posture themselves as someone else.

Those who are troubled by fallen spirits but are not at fault generally fall into one of several categories, as follows:

1. A parent or grandparent delved into spiritism. The weakness, the obsession, is passed on in the genetic code. Many people feel that if a spirit being appeared, his superior intelligence or capabilities would make him "better," but *character* is what is important in God's sight, for He can lift a puny human being to the divine nature. Because many believe that a superior being is wiser and better, they are gullible in hearkening to the advice given by occult powers.
2. An individual played seemingly innocent games and had not been previously warned of the danger. Peer pressure is often a factor leading to involvement.
3. Sickness can cause people to have low physical resistance, making them susceptible to occult powers. Such individuals are not responsible, for Satan and the fallen angels take advantage of that weakened condition. It is known that even little children (age 4 and up) can become obsessed with fallen spirits, and the elderly are especially susceptible as their faculties deteriorate and senility sets in, for example. The fallen angels usually look for a "good" subject, one they can use like a radio antenna. Sometimes superior intelligence makes a person very sensitive, and the fallen angels especially target that individual. In other words, they want a plaything, an outlet from their incarceration in chains of darkness. Getting involved with human beings is their little world over which they are gods. In addition, medications and illegal drugs, especially hallucinatory ones, weaken a person for occult influence and possession.

The point is that those who have problems with fallen spirits may not be responsible at all, but when the problem occurs, it must be fought and overcome. Certainly one should not succumb and cater to the problem.

People who are troubled by fallen spirits and are at fault are those who desire this type of communication and willfully seek occult contact. For instance, they enjoy the activity of psychic fairs and the company of others who feel likewise. Stated another way, people who are lonely sometimes seek this fellowship and thus are good targets of the fallen angels.

The fallen angels are called “lying spirits,” “familiar spirits,” and “seducing spirits.” For example, seduction may occur through games such as the Ouija board, which many people innocently dabble in, but supernatural power is involved. Games are gimmicks to get individuals involved. Many have testified that, much like drugs, there is an initial euphoria and alertness, but as time goes on, a little more and a little more are needed to create the same sensation until the person becomes addicted and horror scenes occur.

Comment: Television brings the occult into the home today through programs, Satanic movies, books, advertisements, talk shows, etc.

Reply: Imagery and words can flash by the screen too fast to be perceived, but the subconscious recognizes them—even in children. Psychic influences and subliminal messages can affect the viewers. Along another line, some rock music includes blasphemous lyrics.

Q: What does Saul’s expression “divine unto me” signify?

A: He was saying to the medium, who had supernatural power, “I would like to speak to Samuel. Communicate with him through the superior spirit.”

1 Sam. 28:9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

1 Sam. 28:10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

1 Sam. 28:11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

At first, the witch did not know that Saul was before her, but she was afraid the three men were setting a trap for her. She knew that Saul had ordered all witches and wizards to be put to death. Now Saul wanted Samuel recalled from the grave so that he could talk to the prophet.

Verse 10 shows how twisted Saul’s mind was. Earlier, in obedience to God’s command, he had ordered the death of all mediums and wizards in the land, and now he was walking contrary to the Law. He even swore by God’s name that no harm would come to the witch.

1 Sam. 28:12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

When the familiar spirit answered the woman, he revealed that Saul was in front of her. She cried out with a loud voice while in a trance under the influence of the fallen angel.

1 Sam. 28:13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

1 Sam. 28:14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

Saul assured the woman, “Be not afraid. Tell me, what did you see?” She saw “gods [Hebrew *elohim*] ascending out of the earth.” In other words, she saw *one* individual arise, a man clothed

in a mantle with a supernatural glory attached to him. As she described his characteristic robe, or mantle, and said the man was old, Saul “perceived that it was Samuel.” Then “Saul ... bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance” (RSV).

Comment: For verse 13, the Revised Standard has, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.”

Elohim in the plural form can mean separate individuals, of which there is a collective number, but the Hebrew word can also mean one personage. There is a wrong concept of Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let us make man in our image.” The plurality of *elohim* is the majesty that belongs to God. He does not have an ordinary voice but the voice of a great multitude—many voices. He is not an ordinary person but a *plurality* of being (but not a trinity). The word “gods” (plural) in verse 13 means “mighty one” (*singular*). Depending on the context, *elohim* can mean one who is not a normal human being. Samuel, who was one of the top ten of the Old Testament, was highly respected during his ministry, and the Lord manifestly used him (Jer. 15:1). Thus the witch of En-dor saw Samuel as a superior being with an aura about him.

1 Sam. 28:15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

Comment: It is interesting how the fallen angels can imitate and impersonate the appearance, talk, and clothing of human beings.

Notice the direct approach: “Samuel” supposedly spoke to Saul. Here, as in several other places in the Bible, the *enemy’s* viewpoint is presented. For example, in the Book of Revelation, some events are presented as viewed by the nominal system. To know whether the information is true or false—to be able to discern whether the enactment, vision, or voice is of God or of Satan—we need the Holy Spirit. Here the account tells of the experience from the standpoint of *Saul*, who thought Samuel was actually speaking to him, but Samuel was dead and had not been called forth from the grave. Those who had a familiar spirit and utilized the capability to delude and give advice to the Israelites were teachers of error. Therefore, witches were to be removed from the land. This instruction under the Law applied to various categories wherein the power came from an occult source—wizards, necromancers, mediums, astrologers, etc.

Sometimes the nature of a lesson is a background parable, ode, story, or allegory in order to give us the mood and drift of the theme of a particular message. For example, the beginning of the Book of Job states that Satan was before God in heaven, but that was impossible because he had been cast out of heaven and put in chains of darkness in *tartaroo* with the other fallen angels. The theme of the book is that Job was being tried by the Adversary, who thought Job was faithful because God had given him riches, a position as a judge, prosperity, children, and respect. Satan reasoned that if Job were deprived of these benefits, he would curse God. Even though this was Satan’s thinking, the conversation related in the book could not have occurred because God’s will has always been done in heaven, as stated in the Lord’s Prayer. In other words, there is no rebellion in God’s throne. Only down here on earth and in its environs, in *tartaroo*, where the demons are incarcerated, has evil been permitted for a time.

The account of Micaiah the prophet is another example. He was called to prophesy before King Ahab of the northern kingdom and King Jehoshaphat of the southern kingdom as to whether they should go to war. All of the hundreds of prophets Ahab called were Jezebel’s prophets of Baal, who were sympathetic to his interests of entering the battle, so Jehoshaphat, who could see that prejudicial advice was being given, asked if a prophet of the Lord was there. Ahab replied that there was Micaiah, who never said anything good about him. Nevertheless,

Micaiah was called to give his testimony. With obvious sarcasm, Micaiah's answer was, "Yes, go to battle." Then he told a story about a conference in heaven, in which God said, "I would like to deceive these two kings to go into battle, but how?" The fact that several angels made suggestions proves the story was fictitious, for Jehovah does not need advice from angels. When the third angel said, "I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets of Baal," God said, "That will do it!" In reality down here, when the two kings consulted 400 false prophets and one true prophet, Micaiah, only the latter was saying in effect, "You should not go to battle in Ramoth-gilead," but his advice was disregarded. Ahab told Micaiah, "I will put you in prison until I return from the battle." Micaiah then indicated that Ahab would be killed. Thus Micaiah's story, or allegory, had a lesson that was of the Lord.

The storytelling method was commonly used in Old Testament times. Hence a story, which contained some truth, was sometimes told to teach a lesson. Jesus used parables for the same reason. The method of telling parables was not peculiar to Jesus, but what was peculiar was the immense depth of the lessons taught in his parables.

Next we will consider Isaiah 8:19. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" For the term "familiar spirits," the margin in some King James Bibles has "the powers of ventriloquism," for a familiar spirit can imitate the voice of any human being. Since even some human ventriloquists can imitate the speech of famous people so well that it is hard to tell the difference, and also assume facial expressions, we can be sure that spirit beings have far more capability along this line. By the accuracy of their voice imitation, familiar spirits convince the person who is having the seance experience that a dead relative is speaking. The indication in the Isaiah text is that the occult—the consulting of spirit powers—will become more pronounced as the world enters troublous times. The Lord's people are advised not to seek those who have familiar spirits, for this influence will affect even the Truth movement, deceiving some along this particular line.

And there is another point. Since the fallen angels were not under a death sentence like Adam, their nature, their organism, does not deteriorate, and they have *perfect* recall of what they put into their memories. Therefore, their ability to remember the habits and characteristics of people is far superior to the memories of fallen man. A wide chasm of difference exists between fallen angels and fallen men because the fallen angels still have perfection of nature, even though their character and morals have deteriorated. Moreover, the fallen Satan was more than a match for the perfect Gabriel, the third personage in the hierarchy of the Logos (or Michael), Lucifer, and Gabriel (Dan. 10:10-13).

Q: If a brother became ensnared in the occult, how would he escape from that influence?

A: 1 Timothy 4:1 states, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times [in the latter days, in which we are living] some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Hebrews 10:25-27 reads, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." One way of combating demonic influence is to meet with other brethren. Conversely, if we neglect meetings with the Lord's people, there is the strong possibility that little by little, we will be weaned away from the protective influence of God. To sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth means that the longer we stay away from some kind of fellowship with the Lord's people, the more likely it is that the spirit of the world and of the Adversary will take hold of us. Prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian, so to survive, we need to continually pray and to daily ask for

forgiveness of sins. Particularly in the *last days*, there is the danger of being weaned away. The prophesied “day” is certainly approaching, drawing near, and conditions are getting more and more like Sodom and Gomorrha. We are living in the “latter times.”

Comment: Brethren should ask for prayer when they are going through a trial and need help. The Apostle James wrote, “Is any[one] sick [sin-sick or weak] among you? let him call for the elders of the church ... [to] pray over him ... And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and *if* he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:14-16).

Reply: Yes, prayer and fellowship are important.

Q: Was James saying we need the prayers of the brethren and cannot just pray by ourselves?

A: Not necessarily. The circumstance determines if we need the prayers of the brethren. For instance, if we delve into something that becomes an addiction we cannot break, we must ask for prayers, for the problem is stronger than we are. We have to humble ourselves and ask for prayers so that we will get additional grace. Normally speaking, if one has circumspectly tried to avoid entrapment and has been faithful to the extent possible in the present imperfect life, he may not need prayer along that line. Of course we all need personal prayer, for the admonition is to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

Incidentally, we are having impromptu studies on subjects that are not usually pursued, so mistakes can occur. The situation is much different when explanations are written down with thought and attention being given to every word. For these studies, we have no book with questions and answers, but that is good, for predetermined questions and answers become a reading lesson instead of reasoning on and analyzing the Scriptures. We try as far as possible to be accurate, but some mistakes will happen. We live in a day when we need to have familiarity with Scripture, so we give advice to study not only the *Volumes* but also the Bible, which is so deep that no one individual has master control over its interpretation.

The messages of the fallen angels contain much truth. However, while they have superhuman knowledge, that knowledge is not infallible. Nevertheless, the fact their knowledge contains considerable accuracy on certain points on certain occasions gives just enough credibility to their messages to attract people to consult with them.

Q: The witch stated, “I saw gods [plural] ascending out of the earth.” Saul asked, “What form is he [singular] of?” The woman replied, “An old man [singular] cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle.” Why were both singular and plural used in verses 13 and 14?

A: We will try to explain the reason again. The Hebrew *elohim*, translated “gods,” can be either singular or plural depending on context. Sometimes the plural is used to indicate that a person (singular) is on a high plane of royalty. Some King James margins even state, “Or a divine being (the plural implies majesty).” Accordingly, the participle “ascending” is plural, even though the being was singular. The spirit medium was saying that a godlike *being* (singular) was arising from the earth—an individual who looked like one of the gods. Meanwhile, Saul saw nothing, for he asked, “What seest thou?” Thus he depended on the witch of En-dor for the description. She reported seeing an old man, a godlike being, arise from the earth, and he was covered with a mantle, which denoted deference to Saul. Immediately, Saul was persuaded that the medium had been successful in bringing up Samuel. Although Saul could not see the supposed Samuel, he could hear the voice, which addressed him.

1 Sam. 28:16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

1 Sam. 28:17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:

1 Sam. 28:18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

1 Sam. 28:19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

Why does verse 16 read, “Then said Samuel” instead of “Then said *the impostor* Samuel”? A similar technique was used in the beginning of the Book of Job, where in a scene in heaven, Satan was speaking with God, yet the Adversary was confined in *tartaroo* at this time. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the three apostles saw Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus about his death, but the scene was a vision. In an allegory, Micaiah said God was asking the holy angels for a plan to deceive the kings of Israel and Judah into going to battle in Ramoth-gilead. When the third angel offered to be a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets of Baal, God said, “That plan will work.” Evidently, Micaiah’s manner of saying, “Go up to the battle,” indicated the battle was a deception, but the account does not so state. Back to the original question: Why did God pursue this policy on occasion? He wants us to use our *reasoning* faculties. On the one hand, those who are deceived will either find fault or misconstrue certain lessons. On the other hand, those who are familiar with the theme of Scripture or the inclination of God’s Spirit, methods, and characteristics will understand.

Here it should have been obvious that Samuel would not come at the bidding of that which was strictly forbidden under the Law. The prophet would not have participated in the occult. There are enough variances in the account, including the wrong prediction that all of Saul’s sons would die, to help us realize the account is describing the impression of Saul and those who were there. We have tried to show that some of the visions in the Book of Revelation are presented from the false viewpoint of the nominal Church. Those who have the wrong spirit see truth as error, and we, by the Lord’s grace, see that error is not truth by recognizing the lack of harmony with the theme of the Word.

When something in Scripture cannot be explained rationally, it should not shake our faith. (That is also true of Providence in God’s dealings with us.) We should just put the matter on the shelf *in faith* and trust that the explanation will come in time if it is due.

Comment: The fallen spirit communicating through the witch of En-dor had considerable information with regard to Amalek.

Reply: Yes, this information was expressed in the past when Saul fought a battle with the Amalekites. Not only did he not pursue them as far to the north as he could have, but he did not dispose of the captured booty in the manner God had instructed. As a result, Samuel criticized Saul on that occasion. The point is that past happenings are an open book to the fallen angels, who have a superior vantage point. By reiterating these past facts, the fallen angel gave credibility to his message as being in harmony with what Saul might have anticipated Samuel to say had he truly been raised from the dead.

Comment: The prognostication was that Saul and all of his sons would die in the battle, but Ish-bosheth did not die (2 Sam. 2:10).

Reply: However, even though the message was not infallible, the fact that Saul and Jonathan were slain gave credibility.

Comment: Also, Samuel's supposed question in verse 16, "Why do you ask of me, seeing that God has departed from you and become your enemy?" gave credibility and was hypocritical.

1 Sam. 28:20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

Q: After the evil spirits made this prediction, did they cooperate to make sure their advice came true and Saul died?

A: Of course Saul's death would not have occurred at that time unless the Lord permitted it. With two individuals anointed to be king at the same time—one actually being the king and the other a fugitive—the suggestion was that the latter would replace the former. As to whether the fallen angels caused Saul's death, the fact that he was sore afraid before he consulted the witch suggests he felt he was in dire straits and would lose the battle. Otherwise, why did he secretly go to En-dor and seek occult advice?

1 Sam. 28:21 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.

1 Sam. 28:22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.

1 Sam. 28:23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

1 Sam. 28:24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:

1 Sam. 28:25 And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

Why did the witch want to feed Saul? Perhaps she felt that if he died, the other Israelites would not punish her but would remember her good deeds. She served him as a sign of hospitality.

Comment: She must have cooked just a portion of the calf because of the time factor.

Reply: Yes, the balance of the animal would have been used later.

"Then they rose up, and went away that night." The entire incident took place at night (see verse 8). Saul and his men had to be careful, for En-dor was just north of where the enemy was, and they had to skirt the Philistine camp to get to the witch. Earlier in his reign, Saul put away from his kingdom those who had familiar spirits, but now he resorted to the very practice God had forbidden. In the beginning, he was a most promising servant of the Lord in every way—in appearance, in humility, etc. Based on his endowments, he had all the earmarks of being a good king. After all, he did not usurp the office but was chosen to be king. Initially

all signs were favorable, but the ending was unfavorable. The spiritual lesson is that down through the Gospel Age, many who became Christians gave such strong evidence of zeal and enthusiasm in the beginning and had such promising traits that it seemed impossible for them to fail, but as time went on and the tests increased, they ultimately failed. The point is that no one is secure. We must continually seek the throne of heavenly grace for the forgiveness of our sins and shortcomings and for guidance in the matters of life.

1 Sam. 29:1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

1 Sam. 29:2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish.

1 Sam. 29:3 Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?

1 Sam. 29:4 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?

The Philistines were marching by the hundreds and the thousands in military formation, going to the battle scene, and David was at the rear of the host. Not trusting David, the Philistine princes objected to a Hebrew being there. But what was really happening? David had probably been *praying mightily* with regard to the dilemma of seemingly having to fight against Israel lest the Philistines kill him. Had he shown his colors earlier, the Philistines would have slain him. As the host was approaching the site where the battle would take place, all was in order, and the princes were reviewing the last contingent. Seeing David and his men, they asked, "What do these Hebrews here?" They overrode the judgment and decision of King Achish, and thus God's providence kept David from fighting and wonderfully answered his prayer.

1 Sam. 29:5 Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

1 Sam. 29:6 Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not.

1 Sam. 29:7 Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.

1 Sam. 29:8 And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?

1 Sam. 29:9 And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.

1 Sam. 29:10 Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.

David's life was in jeopardy, for he was in the enemy camp. Thus he pretended he wanted to fight—not only for that reason but also because he did not want Achish to be blamed for harboring him the past 16 months. Achish had confidence in David and had shielded him and shown kindness. At any rate, David was relieved of his dilemma by being ordered to return to home base.

1 Sam. 29:11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

Jezreel is a valley or plain that adjoins the plain of Esdraelon. The plain of Esdraelon reaches from the Mediterranean Sea to a considerable distance inland, where it converts into the valley of Jezreel. The battle was at this juncture and near Mount Gilboa, which is close to Mount Tabor. Megiddo is a place in the valley of Esdraelon.

1 Sam. 30:1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

1 Sam. 30:2 And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

1 Sam. 30:3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

1 Sam. 30:4 Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

1 Sam. 30:5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

1 Sam. 30:6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

1 Sam. 30:7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.

When David and his men returned from the north back to the land of the Philistines and on to Ziklag, the city Achish had given them to dwell in, they found that in their absence, the Amalekites had burned the city and taken their wives, sons, and daughters. David and his men grieved mightily over their loss. The weeping continued for a while, "until they had no more power to weep." However, as the grief of the men subsided, it changed to anger, and they blamed David, feeling that he was responsible for their being in the enemy Philistine camp and that they were being punished for listening to his advice. David asked Abiathar, the priest, to bring the ephod.

1 Sam. 30:8 And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.

1 Sam. 30:9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

1 Sam. 30:10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

David inquired of Jehovah with the ephod: "Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?" The reply, probably an audible voice, was, "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." Incidentally, the high priest's breastplate would not have been here, just the ephod.

David and his 600 men pursued the Amalekites, but when they reached the brook Besor, 200 of the men were too weak and faint from hunger to continue. Not only had they made a long trip back from northern Israel down to the Gaza area, but the deep grief and weeping had sapped their energy. And their emotions of anger and disappointment had extracted still more energy. Two hundred of the men were so exhausted that they could not cross the brook and continue the pursuit to the main body of the enemy.

1 Sam. 30:11 And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water;

1 Sam. 30:12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights.

1 Sam. 30:13 And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.

1 Sam. 30:14 We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.

1 Sam. 30:15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company.

David and 400 of his men found an Egyptian who had been without food or water for three days. He had been on a raiding party with the Amalekites when he got sick and his master abandoned him. This was the band of Amalekites David wanted to apprehend, for they had burned Ziklag. The Egyptian said he would take David to the Amalekites if David would swear not to kill him or deliver him into the hand of his master.

1 Sam. 30:16 And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

1 Sam. 30:17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

1 Sam. 30:18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.

1 Sam. 30:19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

1 Sam. 30:20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.

David and his men recovered not only all that they had lost but also the booty the Amalekites had taken from the Cherethites and other places. Thus in the final analysis, David ended up with more than he had to start with.

1 Sam. 30:21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

1 Sam. 30:22 Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them aught of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart.

1 Sam. 30:23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

1 Sam. 30:24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

1 Sam. 30:25 And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

What is unusual in these verses?

Comment: We are reminded of the Parable of the Penny, where those who had labored for longer hours expected more pay than those who had labored for one hour, but all got the same reward. However, just as the eleventh-hour workers had wanted to work in the vineyard earlier, so the 200 had probably wanted to participate in the battle against the Amalekites but were physically unable.

Reply: Yes. Moreover, David *permitted* the 200 men to tarry and told them to watch and protect some of the equipment and goods while he and the 400 went on to the battle. Had the 200 been included, their weakness would have slowed down the pursuit and, therefore, been a detriment. When men of Belial in the company of the 400 wanted to keep the spoil all to themselves, David manifested a generous spirit toward the 200, ordering the spoil to be shared. He would not have tolerated wicked men of Belial to be among his men had that characteristic been obvious. However, greed resulted in this old nature surfacing. The men of Belial were willing to return wives and children to the 200 but not even the possessions from their homes, let alone the additional spoil. In other words, they were shortchanging the 200. David reasoned that the success had come from God, not man.

Comment: David made sharing the spoil a law (based on principle): "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."

Comment: David seems to be a picture of Jesus in this incident, for he will share the spoils with the entire Little Flock.

Reply: Yes, and as Jesus said to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). The 200 could not physically participate.

In the Gideon picture, when the 300 were separated out of the 10,000, the 9,700 later grumbled because they did not participate in the victory over the Midianites. Gideon replied, “The victory is not over yet, for some of the enemy are fleeing. You can participate in the pursuit of the remaining Midianites.” Like David, Gideon showed a generosity of spirit; that is, the 9,700 shared in the victory but in a lesser capacity.

1 Sam. 30:26 And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD;

1 Sam. 30:27 To them which were in Beth-el, and to them which were in south Ramoth, and to them which were in Jattir,

1 Sam. 30:28 And to them which were in Aroer, and to them which were in Siphmoth, and to them which were in Eshtemoa,

1 Sam. 30:29 And to them which were in Rachal, and to them which were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them which were in the cities of the Kenites,

1 Sam. 30:30 And to them which were in Hormah, and to them which were in Chor-ashan, and to them which were in Athach,

1 Sam. 30:31 And to them which were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

David sent portions of the spoil to various places in Judah where sympathy and help had previously been offered to him and his cause. The inhabitants of these places had not betrayed his presence to King Saul. The booty must have been significant for such recognition and rewards to be given.

Comment: Portions of the spoil were given to all of the places “where David himself and his men were wont to haunt,” that is, where they had lived off the land.

Reply: Yes. Notice that David did not mention the Ziphites, who had betrayed him on two occasions.

Q: By this method, was David also letting those of Judah know he was still on the scene?

A: Yes, and David was assuring them that his loyalties were truly with them. The people appreciated his generosity of spirit, and before long they anointed him king.

Just as the Philistines heard all about David when he was with Saul and knew of the ditty the women were singing, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,” so those of Judah knew David was in the enemy camp. There were probably raised eyebrows in regard to his conduct, so sharing the Amalekite booty created goodwill and showed he was on their side.

1 Sam. 31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before

the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

Israel was engaged in warfare with the Philistines. Many were slain in Mount Gilboa, which was near Mount Tabor in the northern half of Israel. In review, David and his men had started the march up to the north with the Philistine host, being at the rear with the last contingent, but when the Philistine lords objected to their presence, they returned to Ziklag by God's overruling providence. Finding Ziklag laid waste, booty and herds seized, and their wives and children taken captive by the Amalekites, David pursued the enemy to the south. Thus two battles took place simultaneously—to the north in Mount Gilboa and in the south.

1 Sam. 31:2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons.

When the battle started to favor the Philistines, they pursued after the retreating Israelites. Three of Saul's sons (Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchi-shua) were slain. Ish-bosheth, the fourth son, was still alive (2 Sam. 2:10). Jonathan probably waged valiant warfare before being slain.

1 Sam. 31:3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

Saul was mortally wounded.

1 Sam. 31:4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

If captured alive, Saul feared humiliation before his death, so he asked his armor bearer to slay him. When the armor bearer refused, Saul committed suicide to avoid falling into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines.

1 Sam. 31:5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

Seeing that Saul was dead, the armor bearer also committed suicide.

1 Sam. 31:6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.

Five notable individuals all died the same day: Saul, his armor bearer, and his three sons. Through the power of the fallen angels, the witch of En-dor had predicted the death of Saul and all of his sons. However, with Ish-bosheth still living, David subsequently had an opportunity to honor his promise not to cut off Saul's seed (1 Sam. 24:21).

1 Sam. 31:7 And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

Israelites who saw the defeat, including those across Jordan, fled to safety on the east side of the river. As they vacated the area, the Philistines occupied their cities and dwelled there. Thus the Philistines got entrenched again before David became king.

1 Sam. 31:8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain,

that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

1 Sam. 31:9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people.

1 Sam. 31:10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

1 Sam. 31:11 And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;

1 Sam. 31:12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

1 Sam. 31:13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The Philistines cut off Saul's head and removed his armor, and sent them back to their home territory. They put the armor in the house of Ashtaroth, their leading house of worship, thus attributing the victory to that goddess. Saul's body was fastened to the wall of Beth-shan, which was near Mount Gilboa at the southern end of Galilee.

Jabesh-gilead (the city of Jabesh in Gilead) was across the Jordan River near Ramoth-gilead (the city of Ramoth in Gilead). Valiant men of Jabesh recrossed the river stealthily during the night and took the bodies of Saul and his sons off the wall at Beth-shan and brought them back to Jabesh. There the bodies were burned and given a decent burial. Then the men fasted for seven days.

THE BOOK OF 2 SAMUEL

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1985-1987)

2 Sam. 1:1 Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

2 Sam. 1:2 It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

2 Sam. 1:3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

2 Sam. 1:4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

When David returned with possessions from the slaughter of the Amalekites, he was only in Ziklag for two days. Then early on the third day, a man came from the battle scene in the north with his clothes rent and earth on his head and bowed before David. He probably ran much of the way in order to cover that distance so quickly. In times of great emotional distress, the adrenal gland can function mightily, enabling a person to do extraordinary things for a while but having a taxing effect later on. David inquired of this news bearer the fate of Israel in the battle. Of course he was informed that Israel had been defeated and many were slain including Saul and Jonathan.

2 Sam. 1:5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

2 Sam. 1:6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

2 Sam. 1:7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I.

2 Sam. 1:8 And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite.

2 Sam. 1:9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me.

2 Sam. 1:10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

2 Sam. 1:11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him:

2 Sam. 1:12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

By his own confession, this man was an Amalekite who had been on the battle scene and witnessed Saul's death. Why did he come down to David, especially when David had just slain Amalekites?

Comment: He probably knew of Saul's enmity for David.

Q: Since 1 Samuel 31:4 states that the wounded Saul fell on his own sword, thus committing suicide, why did this Amalekite claim he had killed the king?

A: The man was probably telling the truth. He said that Saul was mortally wounded with no hope of survival. Therefore, even though the king had fallen on his sword, the breath of life had not yet left him when he asked the Amalekite to slay him.

The slaughter of the Amalekites by David following their destruction of Ziklag took place about the same time as the battle between the Philistines and the Israelites in the north. Therefore, this man would not have known of the fate of the Amalekites until he neared the area. Originally, he might have thought that Saul's crown and bracelet would be booty for himself as a spoil of war, easy to carry but very precious. Then, as an afterthought, when he learned that all of the Amalekites had been massacred, he feared the same fate. Therefore, he went to David, the top of the leadership, with his trophies of war and the news that he had slain the king, thinking David would have sympathy for him and spare his life, even though he was an Amalekite.

Hearing of the death of Saul, his enemy, David and his men rent their clothes, mourned, wept, and fasted. What might have been their motivation? David would have had mixed emotions, sorrowing partly for Jonathan's death and partly for the defeat of Israel and the ignominious defeat of the people of Jehovah. Realizing that the northern kingdom was in disarray helps us to understand, to a certain extent, why David was made king of Judah at Hebron rather than king of northern Israel. Not only was northern Israel in confusion, but it was occupied by an enemy in strategic areas.

2 Sam. 1:13 And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

2 Sam. 1:14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?

2 Sam. 1:15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

2 Sam. 1:16 And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed.

In verse 16, David was explaining aloud, addressing either the dying Amalekite or the corpse for the benefit of those who had witnessed the slaying. The man himself had confessed that he was an Amalekite, and God had instructed centuries earlier that none of the Amalekites should be left alive, for their iniquity had come to the full (Gen. 15:16).

Comment: If Saul was lying there dying and wanted to be slain, it seems somewhat harsh to blame this Amalekite for doing what Saul had asked.

Reply: David had such a sacred feeling and reverence for the office of king that he felt "the

LORD'S anointed" should not have been destroyed. Had the Amalekite reasoned with David, saying, "I feared to kill the king, but the LORD'S anointed asked me to perform this task," David might not have slain him.

Q: The chief reason for the slaying of the Amalekite could have been the iniquity of his people, but in addition, why did the Amalekite come to David with rent clothes and earth upon his head? A Jew would have mourned, but why would an Amalekite do this?

A: David may have felt that the Amalekite was using a stratagem; that is, a ruse may have been devised for gaining David's favor so that his life would be spared.

Q: The Amalekite said he had escaped out of the camp of Israel (verse 3). Was he, then, on the Israelite side? If so, he had more knowledge of the situation and hence more responsibility.

A: We could reason either way because there is so little information. The "camp of Israel" could simply mean the battle scene. And when the Amalekite said he was the "son of a stranger," did he mean he came from a mixed marriage, with one parent being an Israelite (verse 13)? Or was he saying that he was born an Amalekite and that he was coming in the role of a friend and a messenger bearing news? The very fact he approached David with Saul's crown and bracelet was an act of friendship. The most reasonable explanation is that David considered the Amalekite to be using a stratagem and he could not parley with it. Accordingly, there would be a twofold justification for David's actions: (1) the man was an Amalekite, and (2) he had slain God's anointed. David was instrumental in fulfilling the centuries-old requirement that this tribe be made extinct.

2 Sam. 1:17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

David lamented over both Saul and Jonathan.

2 Sam. 1:18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.)

2 Sam. 1:19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

2 Sam. 1:20 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

2 Sam. 1:21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

2 Sam. 1:22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

2 Sam. 1:23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

2 Sam. 1:24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

2 Sam. 1:25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

2 Sam. 1:26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

2 Sam. 1:27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

Q: Why were Saul and Jonathan extolled equally, when David had so many hard experiences at Saul's hand? Both were called "lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death ... not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."

A: Sometimes a person's closest friend may turn against him, yet the former happy, pleasant days of that friendship may come to mind. Even though that enemy meets a fate which silences him, the memory remains of what had previously taken place in the more favorable season. David certainly steered clear of Saul in later life, not trusting him, but nevertheless, the earlier victories and valor of the king, who was a giant of a man, merited recall.

Q: How did David's love for Jonathan surpass "the love of women"?

A: David was contrasting the more amorous type of love, which is not wrong in the marriage relationship but is on a different plane. There is a physical attraction in marriage in the years of youth, health, and beauty, but if that relationship endures and both partners come to respect each other on a higher plane, that type of love is superior to the physical aspect. Certainly David was not saying that a woman could not reach this high level. Rather, Jonathan had manifested a kindred spirit with David. Their love was pure, principled, and full of trust, as opposed to carnal love. For Jonathan, who was next in line for succession to kingship, to have such respect and appreciation for David, who was not of his family, was noble and remarkable. Jonathan's willingness to sacrifice his own future in the interest of David, whom he felt was more fit to be the head of Israel, shows a very highly principled type of nobility. Incidentally, the Song of Solomon can similarly be misconstrued unless one sees the spiritual significance, which completely lifts the love song out of the natural realm to a higher spiritual plane.

Comment: It is interesting that Saul's armor bearer did not flee but stayed and killed himself too.

Reply: Normally, a person selected an armor bearer in whom he had complete confidence so that there would be a close bond of kinship. An armor bearer, like a cup bearer, was carefully selected because he would learn a lot of personal information that could be used to arrange an assassination.

Q: Wasn't David the armor bearer for Saul for a short time?

A: Yes, until fits of jealousy seized Saul as part of his unjustifiable wrath against David while he played the harp to soothe Saul's spells when he was under this evil influence. It must have been quite a revelation to the people of Israel to see that David bore no ill feelings toward Saul, even though the king was an ignoble person worthy of death. David did not take the king's actions and words personally.

The language and certain phrases Saul used indicate he had a pleasant temperament during his good spells. The problem was that he could explode into a rage, and during those times, he had a murderous spirit.

2 Sam. 2:1 And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

2 Sam. 2:2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.

2 Sam. 2:3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

Notice that David was not presumptuous. After he heard that Saul and Jonathan had been killed, he inquired of the Lord whether he should go up into any of the cities of Judah, and if so where? The answer was, "Go up unto Hebron." Even from a natural standpoint, the Levitical city of Hebron was the first logical step. Later David would consolidate his rulership in a more centralized location a little farther north.

Thus David and his two wives, plus his men and their households, moved to the vicinity of Hebron in the tribe of Judah. Since David was born in Bethlehem, which was near Hebron, he was more or less returning to his home territory. His 600 men settled in satellite suburbs around Hebron. Incidentally, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah were buried in Hebron in the cave of Machpelah.

Jerusalem was occupied by the Jebusites at this time. Not only were the Jebusites strongly fortified, but they had been entrenched there for almost five centuries, since Joshua's day. Therefore, Jerusalem would have to be captured subsequently.

2 Sam. 2:4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul.

The men of Judah came to Hebron and anointed David king over Judah. In addition, they informed David that the men of Jabesh in Gilead had buried Saul.

2 Sam. 2:5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shown this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

2 Sam. 2:6 And now the LORD show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

2 Sam. 2:7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

David told those of Jabesh in Gilead that he would be kind to them because they had shown kindness to King Saul in burying him. This news was reassuring to the men of Jabesh-gilead, for when David was anointed king of Judah, they would have reasoned as follows: "Since Saul was previously an enemy of David, it is just a matter of time until the new king comes to Jabesh-gilead and takes control, perhaps even punishing us for having been associated with Saul." However, David showed them that he had only a feeling of goodwill toward them and would not take revenge, for their fealty to Saul was proper under the circumstance.

When Saul was originally anointed king of Israel, David may have considered him a hero. Evidently, Saul had a demeanor that was pleasant except when an evil spirit came over him.

2 Sam. 2:8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

2 Sam. 2:9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

2 Sam. 2:10 Ish-bosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

2 Sam. 2:11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Abner, the captain of Saul's host, made Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, king over all Israel (Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin) except Judah, for David reigned over Judah. In other words, the rest of the tribes coalesced around Ish-bosheth as the successor of Saul. Gilead was the territory east of the Jordan River and northward up toward the far side of the Sea of Galilee. Ashur (Asher) was an in-between area, and the remainder of Israel proper was west of the Jordan. Over the years, there was a shifting of boundaries and territories from the time that Joshua had laid out the land to be occupied by each of the tribes. Stated another way, as time went on, the tribal boundary lines became more or less fluid, with some increasing and some diminishing. By the First Advent, the boundaries had become quite distorted.

Although David ruled over only one tribe, Judah was tremendous in size. Therefore, the division of rulership between the two kings, David and Ish-bosheth, was relatively balanced. At this juncture, they had each reigned two years with the kingdom being divided. Of the 40-year reign of David, the capital was Hebron for the 7 1/2 years that he reigned over Judah. Actually his reign was 40 1/2 years long, but the reigns of the kings balanced out over the years so that the number 40 can be used for record-keeping purposes. Manetho and some other historians in Egypt tried to break down the reigns into years and days, but there is no problem in using round numbers in the overall picture. Moreover, round numbers are much easier to remember.

2 Sam. 2:12 And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

2 Sam. 2:13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

2 Sam. 2:14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

2 Sam. 2:15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

2 Sam. 2:16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

2 Sam. 2:17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Why did Abner (the general of the northern kingdom) and Joab (the general of the southern kingdom) meet at different sides of the pool of Gibeon? By having a mini-battle, they hoped to avert a larger battle. Apparently, Abner and Joab had a past relationship and friendship, but

now they found themselves in two opposite camps. Wanting to settle the matter in a somewhat amicable manner by having a contest, they each chose 12 of their ablest men as champions to battle each other. Abner chose all Benjamites, who were tall men of war.

All who were in the contest on *both* sides were mortally wounded in the battle with the result that all died. Their hair was of sufficient length to grab one another and hold on like a bulldog, as they thrust each other with short swords. Because this strange happening resulted in a draw, the two armies had to fight each other with Abner and Joab as the respective heads. The word “play” (verse 14) in 1611 King James English meant to engage in a contest of real significance.

2 Sam. 2:18 And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

2 Sam. 2:19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

2 Sam. 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.

2 Sam. 2:21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

2 Sam. 2:22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

2 Sam. 2:23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

Why did Asahel, who was “as light of foot as a wild roe,” pursue Abner when there was little likelihood of his slaying him? Asahel wanted to distract Abner and slow him down until some of the others, who were not as fleet of foot, could catch up and slay him. Instead, Abner slew Asahel. Like Joab, Abner must have been a mighty man of valor and strong in physical stature to be able to slay Asahel with the “hinder end” of his spear, that is, with the blunt end, so that the spear went right through the man and came out the back side.

“It came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.” In recognition of Asahel’s courage, it became a custom for others to pause respectfully at the place where he was slain. In other words, Asahel knew he would be killed in his attempts to delay Abner and thus willingly laid down his life. Not only was Asahel fleet of foot, but he was probably also slight in build.

2 Sam. 2:24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

Joab, Asahel, and Abishai were brothers (verse 18). Now that Asahel was dead, the other two brothers continued to pursue Abner. Asahel had sufficiently delayed Abner so that Joab and Abishai could continue the pursuit. To slay Abner would deal a deep blow to the northern kingdom and dispirit the enemy, particularly because it was Abner who had taken Saul’s son, Ish-bosheth, and set him on the throne. Abner prepared to make his stand on a hill in the

wilderness of Gibeon.

2 Sam. 2:25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

2 Sam. 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

2 Sam. 2:27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

2 Sam. 2:28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

There was a willingness on the part of both Abner and Joab to cease the bloodshed, so the fray was discontinued. As generals, the two men had respect with regard to what the long-range outcome might be; that is, the battle could continue for a long time with many more lives being sacrificed. And the Philistines could then take over the land.

2 Sam. 2:29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

2 Sam. 2:30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

2 Sam. 2:31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and threescore men died.

How remarkable that the losses for Joab were only 19 men plus Asahel, or 20 men! On Abner's side, 360 men died, the ratio being 18 men of Israel dying for every one man of Judah. This lopsided ratio was like an indicator that Judah would ultimately prevail, as prophesied.

Abner and his men walked all night to cross the Jordan River and get back to Mahanaim, the temporary capital of northern Israel, where Ish-bosheth had been set up as king.

2 Sam. 2:32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

David's servants took the body of Asahel and buried him in his parents' grave in Bethlehem. Joab and his men traveled all night to return to Hebron by morning.

2 Sam. 3:1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

Like a harbinger of things to come, the previous battle was foreboding for the northern kingdom. The two kingdoms waged long war with Saul's house diminishing and growing weaker and David's house waxing stronger and stronger.

2 Sam. 3:2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

2 Sam. 3:3 And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

2 Sam. 3:4 And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

2 Sam. 3:5 And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

During the 7 1/2 years that David reigned in Hebron, six sons were born to him by different wives. The King James margin indicates that Chileab of Abigail is called Daniel in 1 Chronicles 3:1; he was not the individual for whom the Book of Daniel is named.

2 Sam. 3:6 And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

2 Sam. 3:7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

2 Sam. 3:8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do show kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me today with a fault concerning this woman?

2 Sam. 3:9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

2 Sam. 3:10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba.

2 Sam. 3:11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

Comment: Abner threatened to turn to David because he was angry at Ish-bosheth's accusation with regard to Saul's concubine.

Q: What was the position of a concubine? Since Saul was dead, was she free to marry another?

A: Yes. However, by right, Saul's concubine should have become Ish-bosheth's concubine.

Apparently, Abner had ambitions not merely to be the general but also to take over the kingdom. To make himself strong, he felt he needed legalistic cognition of the right to the throne and hence wanted seed by Saul's concubine to cement the relationship and diminish it as far as Ish-bosheth was concerned. With Abner's declaration to "translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah," Ish-bosheth now feared Abner. If the two kingdoms were united, the boundaries would extend as far north as Dan and as far south as Beersheba.

2 Sam. 3:12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

2 Sam. 3:13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when

thou comest to see my face.

2 Sam. 3:14 And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

2 Sam. 3:15 And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

2 Sam. 3:16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

Why did David make this request regarding Michal, Saul's daughter? Did he have more than one reason? Saul had taken her away from being David's wife and given her to Phaltiel, so now David was asking for that which was rightfully his. Also, secondarily, David was testing the sincerity of Abner's offer to consolidate the two kingdoms. Thus the request was a power play, for a lot of intrigue was going on. When a treaty is being made between two hostile parties, a condition (for example, intermarriage) is frequently attached to make sure that the treaty is more than just a piece of paper. Michal was David's first wife, and he had paid a price for her of 100 Philistine foreskins. (In reality, he had paid 200 foreskins—1 Samuel 18:25-27.)

Saul was impulsive and generous in many things, but he was also cruel—a strange combination that sometimes occurs in fallen human nature. The lamentation David wrote at Saul's death called the king and Jonathan “lovely and pleasant in their lives” (2 Sam. 1:23). In other words, they were very amiable in fellowship, but only Jonathan's disposition was not hypocritical.

Q: Our sympathy tends to go out to Michal's second husband, who was weeping and heartbroken, but wouldn't he have known that she belonged to another man? He really had no right to marry her.

A: Yes. When Phaltiel took her, he was pleased because of her status as the king's daughter, even though both he and she knew she belonged to David. However, if he had refused to marry Michal, Saul might have had him killed, for he was not a man who liked to be crossed. Thus Phaltiel was under pressure, but at the same time, the marriage probably suited him. As time went on, he had a deep affection for her. At any rate, David requested that Michal be given back to him before he would discuss Abner's proposition.

2 Sam. 3:17 And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you:

2 Sam. 3:18 Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

2 Sam. 3:19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

2 Sam. 3:20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast.

2 Sam. 3:21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Abner switched sides wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, his motives may not have been pure, for he was probably hoping for an important position in David's reign.

With regard to verse 18, Abner may have just pieced together the Lord's providences on behalf of David to make the statement "The LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." Saul himself had uttered almost a prophecy, saying it was only a matter of time until David prospered, and he made a covenant with David that his seed would not be killed (1 Sam. 24:16-22). David had shown his military prowess on many occasions.

Comment: Abner probably thought, "If I change sides and support David, I stand a good chance of being important."

Reply: Yes, and Abner had leadership qualities. The very fact he had set up Ish-bosheth, Saul's heir, on the throne and could persuade the northern kingdom to rally behind him manifested leadership ability. Even if Abner was lower in rank than, say, Joab, he might have reasoned that he would be third in a much larger and more powerful kingdom, and perhaps he would rise even further in rank. His prestige would be greatly enhanced in a united kingdom. Not only was Abner physically strong and a born leader, but being shrewd, he could see which way the wind was blowing, the principle being, "A living dog is better than a dead lion" (Eccl. 9:4). He saw that his future would be more prosperous if he switched sides at this early juncture.

There was some kind of rapport between Abner and Joab to start with (2 Sam. 2:12-14). They did not deeply hate one another in the early stages but tried to reason out the situation and settle the matter on a friendly basis. Abner seemed to tacitly imply that he would not be totally remiss if Joab were to succeed. If Joab's men had won that day at the pool, Abner probably would have switched sides right away. On the one hand, the very fact they had a discussion first and then a contest that ended in a draw showed Abner was willing to be part of the winning side. On the other hand, it was a good gamble, done on a friendly basis, that Abner could be third in rank in the kingdom if the house of David won, and he would remain second if the house of Saul was victorious. Abner felt, "What do I have to lose?" If they did not have this contest, the battle could last for many years, draining both sides in pursuit of one another. Also, Abner may have had latent fears with regard to David's capability as a leader. And it is possible that rumors had circulated about David's secret anointing by Samuel.

2 Sam. 3:22 And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

2 Sam. 3:23 When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

2 Sam. 3:24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

2 Sam. 3:25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

2 Sam. 3:26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not.

2 Sam. 3:27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to

speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

Verse 27 tells the motivation of Joab in slaying Abner, namely, that Abner had killed his brother Asahel earlier. Thus, because that which would have been settled amicably at the pool was a draw and a larger battle ensued between the two hosts, Joab and his two brothers had pursued Abner. However, Asahel, who was fleet of foot, caught up to Abner and was slain.

Joab had thought well of Abner for a period of time, but now he felt he had a justifiable reason for discontinuing the friendship. He also told David that Abner had ulterior motives in suggesting this league and peace. On the side, without David's awareness, Joab deceitfully sent out messengers to get Abner to return. Then Joab slew Abner. Here we begin to see the character of Joab.

In the accounts of 1 and 2 Samuel, we learn about the characters of David, Saul, Jonathan, Doeg, Abner, and Joab. This incident with Joab was typical of his methodology. In his mind, he felt he had justifiable reasons for what he was doing, but his actions got him in trouble.

Comment: The circumstances were different when Abner slew Asahel. Warfare was a more acceptable type of killing than Joab's slaying of Abner under false pretenses.

Reply: Sometimes one is guilty or has problems either way—whether or not he takes action. Had Abner not slain Asahel, he would have been delayed so that Joab and the other brother could catch up to him and probably slay him. And Abner had told Asahel, "Stop pursuing me, for I do not want to kill you." He did not want to slay Asahel, who was no match for him, but Asahel persisted. Also, Abner admired the bravery of this young man who could run so fast.

2 Sam. 3:28 And afterward when David heard it, he said, **I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:**

2 Sam. 3:29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

2 Sam. 3:30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

Verses 28 and 29 read as follows in the RSV: "Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, 'I and my kingdom are for ever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner the son of Ner. May it fall upon the head of Joab, and upon all his father's house; and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or who is leprous, or who holds a spindle, or who is slain by the sword, or who lacks bread!'" Although David apparently reasoned there were pros and cons on both sides of this issue, he pronounced a prophetic utterance that it was his desire Joab not be considered entirely guiltless. Certainly David was not guilty. He said in effect, "Neither I nor the kingdom had anything to do with the slaying of Abner. This was a private grievance where Joab and Abishai acted on their own." While David did not intend to kill Joab, he felt Joab should receive some punishment. However, he left the matter in the Lord's hand that somehow there would always be a problem in the house of Joab and his seed thereafter, that there would be some mark of disfavor for the slaying of Abner, because the action pertained to breaking a treaty which was being negotiated. David could see that Joab and Abishai had a proper grievance, but they should not have killed Abner. As with David, we are confronted with issues from time to time where there is no clear-cut way of handling them.

2 Sam. 3:31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.

2 Sam. 3:32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

2 Sam. 3:33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

2 Sam. 3:34 Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

2 Sam. 3:35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down.

Abner was slain by Joab, who felt justified because under the Law, the brother of the slain party could take revenge. Earlier, when Joab and his two brothers were pursuing Abner and the fleet-footed young Asahel harassed him, Abner had killed Asahel with a backward thrust of his spear. However, the slaying of Asahel had taken place under conditions of war, which was quite different from Joab's taking revenge. Abner had proposed a peace treaty between the northern kingdom and the kingdom of Judah centered at Hebron, where David was the king. When Abner came down to negotiate the unification, Joab used the pretext of wanting to privately consult with him and then killed him. In view of all the circumstances, David felt that Joab should not have slain Abner.

Now there was a funeral for Abner, who had been the general for the northern kingdom but subsequently seceded over to David's side. When Abner, a man of great influence, proposed the unification, David knew he would be a mighty power to that end, for Abner had organized the northern kingdom under Ish-bosheth, Saul's son.

At the funeral for Abner, David was right behind the casket, as it were, openly mourning. In sympathy for David's actions, the people also wept. In today's language, Abner got a "state burial" at Hebron, where David had his capital at this time. Abner had died by treachery, that is, not in battle but in a useless death. He had been secretly betrayed and wounded to death.

Comment: Even though David felt Joab was wrong, there was nothing he could do about the situation now. Therefore, he left the matter to the Lord for rewarding Joab for his wickedness.

Reply: Yes. Although Joab felt he was acting according to the Law, no doubt he was emotionally involved. Evidently, David understood how Joab could lose his head, even though Abner should not have been killed. Nevertheless, Joab's star would have begun to decline if it were not for something else that happened shortly to reinstate him in full, as will be seen. Of course even later, he committed another act—this time with Absalom—that led to his downfall.

Comment: It is a little perplexing as to why David was now so attached to Abner, who had previously been an enemy.

Reply: Undoubtedly, another factor in the slaying was that Joab felt Abner was a wily rival for his position and could not be trusted. On the one hand, although Abner had used plausible and convincing reasoning in his discussion with David about unification, Joab was wary. On the other hand, there seemed to be some rapport between Abner and Joab when they sat at the pool of Gibeon (2 Sam. 2:13,14).

The people had come together in great anticipation, so if Abner had not been slain, there would have been a feast of joy at the momentous event of the solidifying of the kingdom. It appeared that all 12 tribes would be knit together. The situation had looked very promising because of Abner's proposition, but with his slaying, the gathering became a time of mourning. David refused to eat that day and declined to participate in any festivity. The people empathized with his sincere grief.

2 Sam. 3:36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

2 Sam. 3:37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

2 Sam. 3:38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

2 Sam. 3:39 And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

The people observed and appreciated David's behavior. "All the people [who were present, especially those of the ten tribes] took notice of it, and it pleased them." When Abner was negotiating the treaty, others from the ten tribes who were sympathetic to his line of reasoning were with him, and they now participated in the gathering. If David's behavior had been otherwise—if he had approved the slaying of Abner instead of weeping—they would have assumed David had ordered Joab to do the slaying. The king's genuine remorse proved he was not a party to the killing, and the people realized that Abner had slain Asahel, Joab's brother.

The Law allowed for an emotional factor, for one who killed another had to get to a city of refuge as fast as possible lest he be avenged by the brother of the slain person. (An avenger who caught and killed the fleeing individual was not tried for first-degree murder, regardless of the slain party's guilt or innocence, but for a simple case of manslaughter.) If the one who did the slaying got to a city of refuge, the judges there had to weigh the circumstances under which the death had originally occurred. If they felt some guilt was involved, they returned the person to the locale in which the incident had taken place, and the local people, who were more familiar with the circumstances, held the trial. Thus there was a cooling-down period.

Therefore, in this case, technically speaking, Joab could not be punished under the Law and seemed to be in the right. However, David felt Joab had ulterior motives for wanting Abner dead; that is, Joab considered Abner a potential rival, for the latter was also a general, having led the forces of the northern kingdom. Thus the incident was sticky. Although David could not put Joab to death, he could remove him from office, but such decisions would not be made at the time of the burial. Immediately at hand was a time of sorrowing and of giving Abner a proper, decent burial in Hebron. Moreover, other circumstances subsequently arose that delayed any action David might have taken against Joab. After all, David had pronounced a curse with regard to Joab's posterity, saying in effect, "The LORD requite thee."

Comment: The last part of verse 39 is commendable where David said, "The LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness."

Reply: Yes, David wisely left the judgment of Joab up to God. He realized that not only could the Lord weigh the guilt and judge the degree of wickedness, but also He could exact the penalty. The two remaining brothers, Joab and Abishai, were now a liability to David, for how

to deal with them was a problem. However, he did not do anything drastic.

What did David mean by saying, “These men the sons of Zeruah [a female, hence the mother] be too hard for me”? David was tenderhearted toward Abner and felt that the sons of Zeruah, including Joab, were too hard. Zeruah was a daughter of Jesse, the father of David (1 Chron. 2:16).

2 Sam. 4:1 And when Saul’s son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.

2 Sam. 4:2 And Saul’s son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:

2 Sam. 4:3 And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

2 Sam. 4:4 And Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

Verse 4 is a flashback in time to provide background information. Certainly Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s lame son (and Saul’s grandson), was more than five years old at this time.

When Abner was slain, it appeared that the northern kingdom was without a deputy premier and military leadership underneath Ish-bosheth, the king. Baanah and Rechab tried to fill in the vacuum and step into Abner’s shoes. However, treachery was about to be committed.

2 Sam. 4:5 And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

2 Sam. 4:6 And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

2 Sam. 4:7 For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

2 Sam. 4:8 And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Baanah and Rechab killed Ish-bosheth and took his head to David, thinking David would be pleased that a son of his enemy was dead. Obviously, they had not reflected on David’s attitude toward Saul in not touching God’s anointed. In fact, he had leaned over backward lest he injure the king or his house, even twice making a contract, or promise, to that effect.

On the surface, the killing of Ish-bosheth seemed very wise. The thinking presented to David by Baanah and Rechab would have been, “Now that we have gotten rid of Ish-bosheth, all our problems are solved—both of the northern kingdom and of the kingdom of Judah with its headquarters in Hebron.” Bringing the head of Saul’s son to David was real evidence of their deed.

Comment: David had waited patiently for God to give him the throne, so he must have been devastated to receive the head of Ish-bosheth.

Reply: God accomplished the transfer of the throne in a unique way. Sometimes He works through evil men, and to a certain extent, even Satan is the Lord's executioner under some circumstances. Nevertheless, David was not sympathetic to the action of Baanah and Rechab.

Comment: Similarly, the Amalekite who killed Saul thought David would be happy, but David had the man killed for not respecting the office of king (2 Sam. 1:1-16).

Reply: Yes, that incident happened way down in Ziklag.

2 Sam. 4:9 And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

2 Sam. 4:10 When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

2 Sam. 4:11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

2 Sam. 4:12 And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

With the body a distance away, the head of Ish-bosheth was buried in the sepulcher with Abner in Hebron.

Q: Why wasn't Ish-bosheth's head buried with Saul, his father?

A: According to Jewish custom, the burial was supposed to take place before sundown, so now the head was buried as soon as possible.

Comment: How strange to bury the head with Abner when Abner had deserted Ish-bosheth!

Reply: Yes, the burial was strange.

This whole circumstance was confused. Not only did Joab feel he was justified in killing Abner, for he considered Abner a very wily person, but if David had not mourned the death of Abner, the ten tribes would have blamed him for Abner's death.

Q: What is the signification of cutting off the hands and feet of Baanah and Rechab?

A: The cutting off seemed to say that the two men were connivers. Their hands and feet had contrived and were instruments of mischief. Their hands had cut off the head of Ish-bosheth, and their feet had carried the head to David. The Jews were characteristically given to signs.

2 Sam. 5:1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 Sam. 5:2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

2 Sam. 5:3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

2 Sam. 5:4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

2 Sam. 5:5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

The years of David's reign over all Israel are symbolic numbers: $30 + 3 = 33$. David was a type of Christ, the number 30 being a symbol of the latter's ministry and representative of the Brazen Altar in the Tabernacle arrangement. Jesus was 30 years old when he presented himself for baptism in the river Jordan, and he was 33 years old at the time of his crucifixion.

When the elders of Israel anointed David, the people immediately began to think, "We must seek a capital that is centrally located between the northern and southern kingdoms." (Hebron was farther south in Judah.) Finally David reasoned that Jerusalem would be the ideal place because it was a little more conveniently situated, and the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one half of Manasseh could cross the Jordan at the north end of the Dead Sea and enter Israel proper and get to Jerusalem quite quickly. The problem was that the Jebusites controlled Jerusalem at this time.

Actually David reigned for $40 \frac{1}{2}$ years ($7 \frac{1}{2} + 33$), but the time is reckoned from the regnal standpoint as 40 years. For convenience' sake in recording the chronology of kings, different nations take whole numbers, rounding off the years in the reigns to either the higher or the lower number depending on the fraction. The reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah are stated in whole numbers with the exception of two kings at the end of the Period of the Kings who each reigned for three months and a few days. In those cases, the point was to show that the individuals were not officially on the list of kings per se. When Ezra made up the chronological listing of the various reigns, he took the fractional parts into account so that they balanced out on the whole to a total of 513 years as the length of the Period of the Kings. The Pastor used that reasoning in the *Second Volume*. Since the Bible presents the reigns in whole numbers, we should trust, by faith, that there was a divine overruling in rounding out the numbers.

Q: Verse 2 tells that all of the people started saying God had told David, "You shall feed my people Israel, and you shall be a captain over Israel." Was that prophecy recorded in Scripture?

A: Although the actual prophetic words were not recorded, they can be deduced from other comments. For example, Abner had used this argument with David (2 Sam. 3:17,18), and of course the Scriptures state that Samuel had privately anointed David for the office of king. The people could read the providence.

2 Sam. 5:6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

2 Sam. 5:7 Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.

2 Sam. 5:8 And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the

Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

This account is brief, but other Scriptures provide more information on how David accomplished the capture of Jerusalem. He and his men went to the Jebusites in Jerusalem, who said sarcastically, thinking David would not be able to conquer Jerusalem, "Except you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in hither."

Comment: The blind and the lame were in a protected spot in the inner part of the city, so the Jebusites were saying to David, "You will have to take the city of Jerusalem in battle, for we will not give you anything."

Reply: The Jebusites were certainly using a form of sarcasm. Piecing together the account, as recorded elsewhere, and being a little familiar with the City of David, we see that this Jerusalem was not the modern Jewish sector or the northern part of the Old City, which included Calvary and outside the Damascus Gate. Nor did it include Mount Zion, which belonged to Ornan and was his threshing floor in this period of history. Later on, David purchased that threshing floor. Actually the City of David, as it existed back there, was south of the (future) Temple site and outside the city walls; it was downhill and like the ridge of a mountain that got smaller and smaller as it gradually descended, forming an elongated triangle and vanishing in the valley. Hence all sides of the city were easily defensible, and the Jebusites were confident of their position. Incidentally, the only place the Jebusites could talk to David was from a tunnel that was over the pool of Siloam. From the far end of that horizontal tunnel up above, they called down and sarcastically taunted David and his men.

Adding to their feeling of confidence, the Jebusites had occupied the City of David from the days of Melchizedek through the 450-year Period of the Judges and Saul's 40-year reign. Not until David was king were the Jebusites conquered and removed. Even though lower in elevation than what we call the Old City of Jerusalem today, the City of David to the south was more easily defended. To conquer the Old City, the enemy simply entered from the north side. A couple of hundred years before Jesus' First Advent, under the Hasmonean Dynasty, a big ditch, or channel, was dug on the north part of the city to make it more defensible. Henceforth any enemy approaching from the north had to cross this barren space.

David said, "Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind ... shall be chief and captain." The Jebusites had dug a well shaft ("gutter") to get access to the water, which was down below. David saw that the potential weakness of the seemingly impregnable position of the Jebusites was being able to climb up that well shaft, but one who did so would have to be very agile and strong. Moreover, the individual(s) would have to take war implements and yet climb with stealth and relative quietness. David was aware that at the upper end of the horizontal tunnel, there was access under the hill to the Virgin Fount, where the pool of Siloam was, with a well shaft at that spot.

Q: What is the thought of the lame and the blind being "hated of David's soul"?

A: The taunting statement of the Jebusites, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither," so bothered and irked David that he determined to eradicate them completely—the lame and the blind as well as the able warriors. The Israelites had been told originally to cleanse the land of certain enemies, including the Jebusites.

After David captured the city, the Israelites turned around and took the words wherewith they had previously been taunted and gave them a different twist, saying, "The lame and the blind have taken the city." In other words, the Israelites used the taunting slogan of the Jebusites as a

victory slogan.

Comment: The Jebusite taunt was like saying, “You cannot even kill our lame and our blind.”

Reply: Yes. Joab became very influential in accomplishing the eradication by going up and staging a surprise attack with a few handpicked individuals. We are reminded of Sardis in the Book of Revelation. The people were overconfident, not realizing that their perpendicular wall could be climbed.

Q: At that time, did Jerusalem consist of only the small part we now call the City of David?

A: Yes.

2 Sam. 5:9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

2 Sam. 5:10 And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

David started the work of Millo, fortifying the lower city and beginning a fill-in construction of the valley, and Solomon, his son, completed the work. David intended to enlarge his city, but Solomon completed Millo. When the Temple was built, the outer perimeter, called Solomon’s Porch, and the back side, the Western (Wailing) Wall, were all filled-in ground.

Comment: Please explain Millo and the work again.

Reply: The actual hill of the City of David was the threshing floor of Ornan, which David purchased to build the Temple. However, the Temple measurements required a larger area than just the threshing floor itself. Thus David contrived a way of enlarging the Temple Mount platform, and Solomon carried it out, making a wall and filling in material behind the wall. Part of Solomon’s Temple, particularly the porch, was built on this filled-in area, which was called Millo. Millo is the southern and western parts of the City of David.

Back there the Tyropoeon Valley was much deeper, and the Temple Mount looked much steeper. As the city was destroyed by the Romans and the rubble was thrown in the valley, the ground level was raised higher and higher, and succeeding generations built on top of the rubble. Starting in the 1960s, the rubble was cleared down several levels, so that it is presently nearer to what it used to be. The Wailing Wall area was formerly the floor of a valley, but the Romans took advantage of that area to make a long oblong stadium.

Next we will read about building David’s house, after which he was thinking about the Temple.

2 Sam. 5:11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.

Comment: It seems that King Hiram voluntarily sent materials and laborers to David, who perceived the act and generosity as a providence of God’s favor.

Reply: That is perhaps the case. The information about what transpired between Hiram and David is very limited, but we do know that he highly respected King David. Hiram sent messengers first, and subsequently came cedars, carpenters, and masons.

Comment: 1 Kings 5:1 tells that Hiram, king of Tyre, “was ever a lover of David,” indicating they were close friends.

Reply: Yes. The sending of messengers suggests that there was a lively correspondence between the two and that, as a result of the correspondence and knowing David's desire to build a Temple unto the Lord, Hiram was willing to cooperate very much in the endeavor and even considered it a privilege to do so.

Hiram suggested he would like to take an active role in participating with David. Certainly Lebanon was renowned for its cedar trees and also for workers skilled in carpentry—in wielding the ax and in hewing and cutting wood—and in stone work. Hiram first built David a personal residence. David had left Hebron and gone to Jerusalem, but he did not yet have a headquarters, a residence, that would become him in the role of king.

2 Sam. 5:12 And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

David now perceived that God had established him king over all Israel, but how did he come to this conclusion? At first, there were two different kingdoms, the northern kingdom and the kingdom of Judah. At one time, the northern kingdom was hostile to him, and even though Saul and Jonathan had died, there might still be enemies who were sympathetic to Saul. However, in noticing how the obstacles were removed one by one and in finding himself in Jerusalem in a unified kingdom, David could see that God had fulfilled His promise of the previous secret anointing to make him king. Moreover, David's kingship was to benefit the nation of Israel *as a whole*, not just some of the people.

2 Sam. 5:13 And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

2 Sam. 5:14 And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon,

2 Sam. 5:15 Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

2 Sam. 5:16 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

David took more wives and concubines, and sons and daughters were born to him over a period of time. Solomon's name is the clue that the births covered a number of years. Solomon was a later son, yet he became the successor to the throne. David had already reigned 7 1/2 years in Hebron before coming to Jerusalem to reign for 33 more years. The Book of 2 Samuel, written after David's death, concentrates on his life, whereas the Books of Kings and Chronicles focus attention on Solomon.

Q: Does "Jerusalem" refer here to the Jebusite city?

A: Yes.

Of course David was not under the restrictions of the Gospel Age with regard to being the husband of one wife, and as king, he had more wives than some who could not afford so many in their household. David and his numerous wives are a picture of the relationship of Christ and his multitudinous Bride class. His concubines represent the Great Company.

Q: What was the difference between a wife and a concubine? What was a concubine's role?

A: A wife was acquired in a more formalistic sense in a marriage ceremony, whereas a

concubine was acquired in another manner. Very often when a king came into power in those days, surrounding nations liked to have a representation in the court, so they donated servants to his household, hoping thereby to have an ear in the kingdom.

Comment: Sometimes a wife brought concubines with her. For example, Rebekah brought ten, and Sarah had one concubine (Gen. 24:61; 16:1).

Reply: Yes, Rebekah brought with her ten maidens, who traveled on camels, showing that she had quite a few maidservants. These individuals were not hired servants.

2 Sam. 5:17 But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.

2 Sam. 5:18 The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

2 Sam. 5:19 And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

2 Sam. 5:20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

2 Sam. 5:21 And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.

Why did the Philistines muster an attack when they heard that David had been anointed king in Jerusalem? The *united kingdom under David* was a threat to the Philistines, and they wanted to nip the situation in the bud before he consolidated his power.

Comment: David was especially dangerous in their eyes because he knew the Philistine territory inside and out.

The Philistines set themselves up to wage battle in the valley of Rephaim, which was just a little south of Jerusalem. They probably chose a site they felt would be most advantageous to them and then began to entrench (“spread”) themselves. The wording almost sounds as if they were preparing for a siege of the whole area.

Rephaim means “giants”; hence the location was the “valley of the giants.” Statements made from time to time in the Old Testament indicate that people living approximately 3,000 years ago knew a lot about certain parts of history which the Scriptures hint at but do not elaborate on. For instance, former names are given of various cities that were renamed when the Israelites occupied them. When we go back to the days of Abraham in Genesis, town names are given that existed then. To our understanding, some of those place names are even pre-Flood. Thus a history, of which we are unaware, is associated with certain locales, such as this valley of Rephaim. The Scriptures merely hint that this place was of great renown in the past. Ruins exist today of towns and cities from before, as well as after, the Flood. We believe the valley of Rephaim has an application prior to the Flood of Noah’s day.

Notice what David did before the battle. He first took the matter to the Lord in prayer. Despite his military successes, he properly was not confident in his own strategies, strength, and military prowess. When he inquired, “Shall I go up to the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hand?” God replied, “Yes, go up, for you will be successful.”

David then went to Baal-perazim, which was near the valley of Rephaim, where the Philistines were entrenched at a lower level. The name Perazim calls to mind Isaiah 28:21, which pertains to the end of the age: “For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” The account here in 2 Samuel 5 throws some light on Isaiah’s end-time prophecy. The word “Baal” is usually defined as “lord,” but it can also, as here, refer to a hill.

David smote the Philistines with a great slaughter. In fact, it was a miraculous *sudden and overwhelming* slaughter—so much so that it was likened to a dam that ruptures with the water pouring forth in torrents. The slaughter could also be likened to the Flood in Noah’s day or to the closing of the Red Sea waters on the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus. David’s words were, “The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters.” As a result, David now “called the name of that place Baal-perazim,” and Isaiah, alluding to this battle, referred to “mount Perazim” in prophesying of God’s yet future defeat of the enemy and the deliverance of the Holy Remnant out of Jacob’s Trouble. From this hill where they were stationed, David’s men descended suddenly on the enemy, overwhelming the Philistines down in the valley. Subsequently that same hill was given the name Mount Perazim because of David’s great victory in the strength of the Lord.

“There they left their images, and David and his men burned them.” It is commendable that David and his men burned the Philistine images, sweeping away and destroying the idols. The Philistines had two kinds of “images”—carved wooden and terra-cotta idols. When they gathered together for battle, they customarily took their idols with them on poles as an ensign, or standard, when they were marching. Similarly, the Israelites had falsely reasoned that by taking the Ark of the Covenant with them into battle, they would defeat the Philistines. And the Romans later marched with an eagle or a serpent on a pole. Seeing the raised ensign approaching from the distance struck fear in the hearts of the people the enemy intended to conquer. Also, by carrying the images, the Philistines considered the battle against the Israelites to be a religious war. They wanted their gods to triumph.

2 Sam. 5:22 And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

2 Sam. 5:23 And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.

2 Sam. 5:24 And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.

2 Sam. 5:25 And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

“And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.” In this instance, David did not consider the second skirmish of the Philistines a continuation of the first. Thus it was right for him to inquire of Jehovah a second time. Again we get a little insight into David’s disposition and the manner of life he pursued with respect to his God.

This time the advice was quite different. Evidently, there was a grove of mulberry trees in this valley on the slope of a hill. As God had directed, David and his men were to hide there among the trees and wait for the signal.

The first time the Philistines were defeated by the Israelites coming down the hill, yet they

went back to the same place, to the scene of their defeat. No doubt they anticipated a similar attack from the hill and now had a different strategy and plan that they felt would avert disaster. However, they were not aware that the Israelites had moved and were now hiding in ambush in the mulberry trees.

Jehovah had said to the Israelites, “When you hear the sound of rustling in the leaves of the mulberry trees, that is my signal for you to attack.” Meanwhile, the Philistines expected the Israelites to come the same way as before. However, to the surprise and consternation of the Philistines, they suddenly heard the rustling of the leaves and thought it was the sound of a *much larger, prodigious* Israelite host approaching. In terror, they were defeated the second time. Again a miraculous defeat of the enemy was associated with the valley of Rephaim and the vicinity of Mount Perazim.

David smote the Philistines “from Geba until ... Gazer [Gaza].” The towns of Ashkelon, Ashdod, etc., were on the Mediterranean coast in the territory of Gaza. Today the Palestinians (descendants of the Philistines) live in the Gaza Strip. Verse 25 is saying that the Philistines were smitten right back to their home territory. David and his men pursued the Philistines and drove them back into their own limited territory in an overwhelming defeat.

“Geba” brings to mind the prophecy of Zechariah 14:10, “All the land shall be turned [by the future earthquake] as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin’s gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s winepresses.” The whole land will be lifted up from Geba to Rimmon and made as a plain, and the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt upon that plain, particularly the Temple aspect. Jerusalem is currently a rather high elevation, going somewhat steeply uphill in the short distance from the Mediterranean coast, but the prophecy suggests it will be lifted up even more by the earthquake and thus be higher than the surrounding hills. In other words, Jerusalem will be higher than the Mount of Olives.

If these names are kept in memory, then later, as other Scriptures come up, we build a catalog of information, enabling us to identify places that even those who draw Bible maps are not familiar with. Maps are made from an etymological standpoint only, but sometimes a word has five or more root meanings depending on how the vowels are supplied.

2 Sam. 6:1 Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

2 Sam. 6:2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.

2 Sam. 6:3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

2 Sam. 6:4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

2 Sam. 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

David had 30,000 chosen men of Israel with him. Now that he was dwelling in Jerusalem in a unified kingdom and his own residence was being built, his interest was centered on getting the “ark of God,” the religious symbol of God’s presence, to also be resident there. The Ark is

also called the “ark of the covenant” and the “ark of the testimony” (Exod. 25:22; Num. 10:33).

Q: Why didn't David want to bring the whole Tabernacle to Jerusalem?

A: The reason is that he was planning to build a Temple. For the time being, he wanted the Ark of the Covenant nearby in a tent, a temporary residence, until the Temple could be built and the Ark put in it. At this point, he did not know that he would not have the privilege of building the Temple, but shortly he would be made aware of that fact.

The Ark was in Baale, also called Kirjath-jearim, in Judah (see King James margin). The term “ark of God” helps us to understand a little more about that article of furniture. The Ark is pictured as a throne, and the Shekinah light is likened to God's presence seated between the two cherubim. The Ark is also called the “chariot” of God, showing that it moves from place to place (1 Chron. 28:18). Wherever God is, wherever He acts, it is from the position of His throne. He does not have to be seated in a particular spot in order to issue commands, for wherever He moves is His throne, as represented by the Ark of the Tabernacle.

The term “ark of God” was used to identify *God's* presence with the Ark in a very specific manner. David brought up from Baale “the ark of God, whose *name* is called by the *name* of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.”

David and the people with him “set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah [to bring it up to Jerusalem].” Notice that they used a “new” cart, and previously the Philistines had sent the Ark back to Beth-shemesh on a “new” cart (1 Sam. 6:7,8). When 50,070 Israelites in Beth-shemesh died because they looked into the Ark, the others burned up the cart and offered oxen to the Lord. Then they asked the men of Kirjath-jearim to come down and take the Ark, and thus it was deposited in the home of Abinadab, who was a Levite but not a priest (1 Sam. 6:19; 7:1). Of the Levites, it was the duty of the Kohathites to bear the Ark in transport (Num. 4:15). Now David and those with him hoped this new cart would be the vehicle to transport the Ark to Jerusalem, a place of permanence.

When the Ark was brought out of the house of Abinadab, it was set on the new cart, and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. Ahio was at the forefront, leading the cart, and Uzzah followed, being toward the back.

King David and “all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.” These instruments were usually used for cheerful, joyful occasions. David and the others began their procession north toward the Holy City, but trouble would shortly arise.

2 Sam. 6:6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

2 Sam. 6:7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

2 Sam. 6:8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.

2 Sam. 6:9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

2 Sam. 6:10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of

David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

2 Sam. 6:11 And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

When David and the others got to Nachon's threshing floor, the actions of the oxen were such that the cart was shaken. Fearing that the Ark would fall off the cart and hit the ground, Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the Ark, firmly taking hold. Immediately he was smitten with death for his action, and David was displeased. Here we see a failing of David, but no one is perfect. The remarkable thing about David is that when his weaknesses were manifested, he rose above them. Although he could not understand at the time and was momentarily quite disquieted with the experience, he later drew the proper lesson. Seeing the error of his way and his wrong perception of what had happened, he feared (reverenced) God all the more.

Down through history, the weaknesses of the true leaders of the Lord's people, such as the messengers to the Church, were sometimes exposed, and a study of their lives indicates how they reacted to those experiences. By their subsequent changed conduct, we know they not only repented but also reformed, and thus they showed the true mettle of their character.

Q: Should David have inquired of God whether to move the Ark?

A: Yes, he should have inquired, just as he did before going into battle. However, he probably thought his motive was so great that surely the Lord would bless the moving of the Ark to Jerusalem. Hence he overstepped his usual practice. Moreover, the Philistines had put the Ark on a cart, and nothing untoward happened.

Comment: But the Philistines did not accompany the Ark. They just put it on the cart, and contrary to nature, two nursing cows left their calves to return the Ark.

Reply: Yes, but like David, we sometimes do not see things in their proper perspective. Hindsight is usually better than foresight.

For a while, David did not understand the lesson. In regard to the people of Beth-shemesh, the transport of the Ark was not the problem. Their error was looking into the Ark, which was strictly forbidden by the Law. Their curiosity resulted in many deaths. However, just because the Philistines transported the Ark by cart, that did not mean the Israelites should do likewise.

A tent was already set up in Jerusalem to temporarily house the Ark when it arrived. At first, David could not understand the Lord's anger and displeasure. However, he corrected the situation as soon as he recognized the problem by making sure that the Ark was subsequently transported in the proper fashion, that the people were ritually cleansed, and that only the authorized individuals carried the Ark. David saw that he had been at fault in the hasty manner in which the Ark had been handled.

David used the same Hebrew word *perez*, meaning "breach," for Baal-perazim and now for Perez-uzzah. The former was a favorable breach of the Lord with regard to the miraculous victory, but the latter incident was unfavorable, suddenly stopping the joy of the instruments and the people when the renowned Uzzah dropped dead for touching the Ark (2 Sam. 5:20).

Incidentally, the handwriting on the wall "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" includes the same thought (Dan. 5:25-28). In explaining the vision, Daniel said, "MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." *Upharsin* is the same basic

word as *peres* in the Hebrew but uses different vowels.

Q: What is the spiritual lesson of Uzzah's steadying the Ark? His touching the Ark seemed like the natural thing to do, but his mind was not centered on its holiness.

A: Some people, in being used of the Lord, get inflated with a sense of their own importance and significance in their work and ministry. Forgetting that Providence afforded them the opportunity of doing good, they get so entrenched in their position of importance and influence that they begin to do things not authorized in the Lord's Word and thus incur the full penalty of Second Death for their actions. Being in a position of enlightenment and leadership, they should know better, and the judgment is more severe (James 3:1). To abuse or misuse knowledge is a serious matter. The Lord is thoroughly capable of handling certain situations that arise without our feeling we must do something. Getting heady, or not holding the Head, can lead to destruction. Uzzah should not have tried to steady the Ark, and neither should we. The principle is to be careful that we do not overstep the boundaries in doctrinal matters. For example, we should not lay down platforms of being "straight in the truth."

With regard to Papacy, many people who were born into the Roman Catholic religion were never spiritual to start with, but eventually they became recognized and elevated in religious circles. We certainly do not believe that all popes are going into Second Death, for many will get enough shame in the Kingdom. Rather, it is the sin against knowledge that incurs great responsibility. Of course some popes will incur a much severer judgment than the great majority who acted out of ignorance. For a pope to accept the adulation of the populace, where people kneel before him and kiss his ring, should be seen as unbecoming. However, a spiritually minded person who understands the doctrine of the Lord's presence, for example, and then forsakes the way is in a more dangerous situation than one who never had that understanding. In short, Uzzah represents a knowledgeable class that willfully disobeys in spiritual matters and thus goes into Second Death.

2 Sam. 6:12 And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.

God blessed Obed-edom and his household because the Ark was in their home, even though the time period was only three months. Obed-edom was a Levite of secondary rank, for the priesthood was of the Amramites, and he was a Kohathite. The Kohathites had the duty of carrying the Ark; hence Obed-edom was a porter (1 Chron. 15:18; 16:38).

Probably a number of blessings occurred during that short period of time to emphasize their miraculous nature because of the presence of the Ark. When David was told about the blessings, he "went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the City of David with gladness." In other words, he resumed his previous intentions of moving the Ark to the City of David, but he had waited for three months because the death of Uzzah for a seemingly small but well-intentioned infraction had caused great fear. (When the Ark was jostled and looked ready to fall, he had put out his hand to steady it.) However, in meditating on the incident, David realized the Ark had been improperly transported. Moreover, Uzzah, a Levite, should have known better than to touch the Ark, and there was negligence in not consulting God or the instructions in His Word before moving it.

Experiencing fear, trepidation, and confusion at first, and seeing that the Lord was severe in His punishments, David did not know if he should venture again to move the Ark. However, upon hearing the news of the blessings on the house of Obed-edom, David realized that the death of

Uzzah was due to carelessness and that the presence of the Ark was a blessing when it was properly handled. The word “So” suggests that David now saw moving the Ark in a new perspective of joy and privilege. Not only were there evident blessings in connection with housing the Ark, but the blessings were a confirmation that moving it was not wrong in itself.

2 Sam. 6:13 And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

“Six paces” would probably be 30 feet, based on the calculation that every two steps, or one pace, is five feet. In other words, a pace consisted of a step with both the left foot and the right foot. Reverential and circumspect precautions were taken in this second transport. Now David was exceedingly careful, for he wanted the Lord to know his care and desire for transporting the Ark in just the proper manner. With a distance of 20 miles at the most to the City of David, the measurement of every six paces meant that less than 3,000 animals were sacrificed en route. Such a large number of animals was not too unusual for a national offering.

This procession with the Ark numbered in the thousands, for David had assembled many singers, musicians, and others. Armed soldiers accompanied the procession to make sure no injuries were inflicted by the Philistines, for example. Transporting the Ark was made a national occasion. While there was great rejoicing, it was mingled with great reverence.

Comment: The Chronicles account sounds as if only seven bullocks and seven rams were offered. “And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams” (1 Chron. 15:26).

Reply: Those animals were probably offered at the arrival point. How did God help the Levites carry the Ark, which was a physical burden? He gave them strength to carry the Ark for a great distance. At the end of the journey, in appreciation of their being physically sustained, they offered these animals.

Q: The RSV states, “And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he [David] sacrificed an ox and a fatling.” Could the Israelites have shown special reverence just one time at the beginning of the procession rather than every 30 feet?

A: Possibly that would be the case, but we are inclined to think that animals were offered every six paces, although the account is not explicit either way. Some of the modern translators are reluctant to translate along the lines of the King James in cases where numbers and miracles seem to them to be too inordinate and excessive.

We had originally thought that the “seven bullocks and seven rams” of 1 Chronicles 15:26 were offered at the end of the journey, but if the Israelites stopped only once after going six paces, the 14 animals would have been offered at that time. In that case, the bullocks could be considered “oxen,” and the rams would be “fatlings.”

Comment: After 1 Chronicles 15:26 states that seven bullocks and seven rams were offered, verses 27-29 say that David wore a linen ephod and that all Israel was there. Singing and joyous shouting took place, accompanied by musical instruments, and Michal saw David “dancing and playing.” The next verse, 1 Chronicles 16:1, tells that when the Israelites got to the City of David, they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings. “So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered [other] burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God.”

Reply: We are not dogmatic. Either interpretation could be used.

2 Sam. 6:14 And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.

2 Sam. 6:15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

“David danced before the LORD with all his might.” Evidently, David had an influential disposition and character, so his enthusiasm was contagious on this occasion. We know from other accounts that when he wept, others wept with him, and when he was happy, others were happy.

King David now girded himself with a linen ephod. He was of the tribe of Judah, not of the priestly tribe, so what justification did he seem to have for wearing the linen ephod and for doing some other things in this procession, as we will see? He was the king of the nation. What precedent might he have thought of to justify his actions so that God would not be displeased? While God was displeased with Uzzah, and in a secondary sense with David in his former negligence, He was not displeased here.

Comment: When Saul tried to sacrifice, he lost favor with God, for the priests should have done the sacrificing. The difference was that the Prophet Samuel was on the scene, but at this time, there was no prophet.

Reply: Yes. David would have had several factors in mind. Just previously the nation of Israel was in confusion. When David ruled in Hebron, he reigned over only the tribe of Judah. Then, after 7 1/2 years, the northern tribes joined a confederacy with David so that there was a united kingdom. Now, when he was ruling in Jerusalem, not only was the nation united, but it was a new situation from the previous disarray. In addition, David might have thought of Melchizedek, who was both a priest and a king (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1). He might also have thought of Moses, who, although an Amramite and a Levite, was not of Aaron yet was involved with the Tabernacle and even some offerings. The specific instruction in the Law was Aaron first and then his seed after him. At this point, David probably wanted to get everything developed and organized in a proper way, and the organization would take a little time, especially since he had so recently been made king in Jerusalem.

Comment: Abinadab was in the area of Gibeah, where the Tabernacle was last set up. Now David was bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, where he would build another “tabernacle” to temporarily house the Ark, that is, before the Temple was constructed.

Reply: Perhaps David built the temporary shelter because the space allotted for the Tabernacle at Gibeah was rather limited in size compared to the larger area when the Tabernacle was set up in the wilderness. Thus he sheltered the Ark in seclusion under skins, intending to build the Temple shortly. However, he subsequently found out it was not his privilege to do so.

2 Sam. 6:16 And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

From a window, Michal, Saul’s daughter, “saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart,” for she thought his conduct was unbecoming. As David danced “with all his might,” she felt he was not acting with poise and dignity (verse 14).

Comment: David was so thrilled to finally be bringing the Ark to Jerusalem that he was

expressing great joy.

Reply: As the daughter of a former king and in view of David's position in the nation, Michal probably thought *she* was the royal heiress; that is, she magnified her importance by thinking that providentially she was his wife and he had been made king through her.

Another fault was that she had remained at home and thus did not participate in this triumphant procession to which all Israel had been invited (verse 15). She did not share the exuberance of the representatives from all the tribes, some of whom marched, in limited numbers, in the walking procession, while many others were spectators. Apparently, she did not have the same appreciation as David and others for what the Ark represented. Therefore, she misconstrued his actions because of her own prejudiced standpoint.

Q: Is there a parallel with new Christians, whose zeal and enthusiasm can be misunderstood? In their excitement, they are regarded as "religious fanatics." In humility, they want everyone to know what they know.

A: Yes, that is true. One of the first reactions is to try to interest all friends in the truth, but after going through the list, we find we did not get the reaction we had anticipated. To Michal, David's behavior was that of a religious fanatic or a country bumpkin.

Comment: Michal was a product of her father, who did not properly appreciate the Lord. Also, she resented having been taken away from her second husband, who had cried over her.

Reply: Yes, her husband was completely distraught. Certain happenings in the Bible cause us to wonder why the Lord did such things, but there is not sufficient information for us to understand the reason. Nevertheless, we know that whatever God did or does is for the best. Sometimes He keeps us in ignorance, and sometimes, even years later, we find an answer elsewhere in the Word when least expected. Even though *faith* sees that the Lord knows best, it is all right to try to understand, but our *attitude* in that endeavor is important.

2 Sam. 6:17 And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

2 Sam. 6:18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

2 Sam. 6:19 And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

The Ark was set in the midst of the "tabernacle" that David had prepared. Then he offered burnt and peace offerings "before the LORD." There followed a blessing, or benediction, on the people and food to take home.

The giving of "a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine" to all of the people, both men and women, shows David's generosity. When he got a tremendous fortune later, he gave it all to the Lord. As a result, when the time came for Solomon to build the Temple, there was a tremendous accumulation of goods that David had prepared for the Lord. Freely he received, and freely he gave (Matt. 10:8).

2 Sam. 6:20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul

came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

Notice the manner in which Michal greeted David—with cutting sarcasm. “How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!” Some people do not understand certain actions. As an illustration, Scotsmen went into battle wearing kilts, which exposed bare knees and looked rather foolish. However, that type of attire served a very good purpose; namely, in the Highlands, where the Scots fought their battles, they did not get all entangled by wearing the customary trappings of soldiery but were adroit in their movements. Thus there is a history behind the wearing of kilts, and today they are a symbol of Scottish national pride for the former prowess and ruggedness of their soldiers. The point is that when we are not acquainted with the customs and motivations of other people, we may misconstrue their actions and come to wrong conclusions. If possible, we should sympathetically enter into the situation but not compromise the Word of God. Had Michal searched her heart and the motivation of her heart, she probably would not have fallen into this error. When one has a wrong motive, the mind justifies a wrong action. After all, Michal was greeting the *king!* Moreover, others of the household may have heard her sarcastic remarks and seen her attitude, both of which were derogatory to the office David occupied. A multitude of factors show that she pursued a thoroughly improper course in her harsh criticism of him.

Once again we can see why David was a man after God’s own heart. His joy over the Ark was so great that he could not contain himself. The Ark had a long history, century after century, of not reaching its destination. Then David became king, and in his short lifetime came the privilege of introducing the Ark to the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Comment: David wrote in the Psalms, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 1:2; 119:97). Some of the Psalms recount Israel’s history, so he must have been fully aware of the details of Scripture. For that reason, this experience was very poignant to him. He had humbled himself and would do so even more. David wrote beautiful Psalms about Israel, and he loved God’s Law; hence the joy of the Ark now moved him exceedingly.

2 Sam. 6:21 And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

2 Sam. 6:22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

In replying to Michal, David pressed his finger on the sore spot: “the LORD ... chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to ... [be] ruler over the people.” It was not because of her being the daughter of Saul, and hence an heiress, that he became king but because God had chosen him. Apparently, Michal harbored the desire to reign, but God had chosen David instead. He continued to answer her with indignation and a biting sarcasm, which were proper under the circumstances: “Therefore will I play before the LORD.” Generally speaking, “a soft answer turneth away wrath,” but here a strong answer was in order (Prov. 15:1).

Comment: Instead of the word “play,” the RSV has, “And I will make merry before the LORD.”

Reply: David sang, danced, and praised the Lord.

Comment: Verse 22 in the Revised Standard reads, “I will make myself yet more contemptible

than this, and I will be abased in your eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.”

Reply: Probably both thoughts are correct. Michal considered David’s actions demeaning, but they were an evidence of his humility before Jehovah. In some circumstances, it is proper for a king, as well as his subjects, not to be too familiar because the office requires official decorum, and on important occasions, proper dress is required. The same is true for the Lord’s people. On other occasions, such as when individuals fell down and worshipped Peter and Barnabas, decorum was put aside, and they said, “Get up! We are men just like you.” Thus the occasion and the circumstance have a lot to do with how those in important positions should react. Yet the pope expects people to kiss his toe, thinking that is decorum! With all of us—king, subject, servant, or whatever—life requires much reflection and the weighing of thoughts and actions.

2 Sam. 6:23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

Either God shut Michal’s womb henceforth, or David had nothing more to do with her. Either way she “had no child unto the day of her death.”

A sad fact of life is that sometimes remarkable individuals with wonderful traits cross our path, and then many years later they are just the opposite. Like Saul, their character changes through some strange circumstance. In the beginning, Saul was an admirable character, but he changed into a disreputable character. Happy memories become sad when we see such changes taking place.

2 Sam. 7:1 And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

King David sat in his house in Jerusalem. The government state of affairs was now properly organized, and he was experiencing a brief period of calm and rest. For the moment, his enemies were not harassing him.

2 Sam. 7:2 That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed, David said to Nathan the prophet, “I dwell in a nice house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells only in a tent.”

2 Sam. 7:3 And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.

Nathan responded favorably and impulsively, thinking it was right for David to now pay more attention to making sure the Ark was properly housed. The king’s suggestion sounded like a good idea, for surely God would be pleased with the thought of a permanent dwelling for the Ark. Moreover, the suggestion emanated from David’s heart, so Nathan gave his blessing.

Nathan was filling the office of a prophet, but he uttered these words without first consulting the Lord. This incident shows that even honest prophets in Old Testament times sometimes responded hastily. As a mouthpiece or prophet of God, Nathan should have taken time out to pray about the matter so that he would be sure to give the king the proper advice. Nathan did not think there would be a problem.

2 Sam. 7:4 And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

That *same* night God answered David through Nathan. Why was the answer given so quickly? The response came soon enough to prevent David from setting the wheels of government in motion to begin building the structure.

2 Sam. 7:5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

2 Sam. 7:6 Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

2 Sam. 7:7 In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

In giving instructions to David through Nathan, God provided some good news. Rather than for David to start right away, the building was to be postponed until his son, who proved to be Solomon, was of sufficient age to reign. God adopted a line of reasoning as follows: “Consider all the centuries that the Tabernacle was in existence as a tent—in the wilderness for 40 years, in Shiloh for over 500 years, etc. In all that time, I never gave any instructions for building a house of cedar.” (Cedar was the composition of David’s house.)

Comment: God was making pictures, or types. For his 40-year reign, David pictured the Church militant, while Solomon’s 40 years pictured the Church in glory. However, God could not tell David these reasons.

Reply: Yes, the Lord had His own reasons. He said to David, “If I had desired such a building, I certainly would have issued instructions along that line without necessarily needing you to initiate the construction.”

And another point. God had His own design. It was one thing to build a house to the Lord and to put human reasoning into the nature of its structure, but the Temple was a symbolic building. (Particularly with Ezekiel’s Temple of the future, which supplants Solomon’s Temple, the measurements and the plans come from God.) A symbolism, of which David had no cognizance, was attached to the design of the courts, the altar, the measurements of the rooms, etc. He would have built a beautiful structure as a place of worship, to which the nation of Israel could come on certain festival days, but God had His own structure in mind. While we call it “Solomon’s Temple,” Solomon had nothing to do with the architecture.

Comment: Although David could not build the Temple, he did prepare the materials.

Reply: Yes, when he realized he could not build the Temple, he did what he could to make it easy for his son Solomon to construct the structure quickly. David collected the materials and made a donation, as we will find out.

Q: In verses 5-7, was God’s answer partially a rebuke to David and Nathan because they had not consulted Him first?

A: Perhaps it was a rebuke in a very slight sense in that the proper decorum had not been observed.

Comment: In 1 Kings 8:18,19, God’s words to David are recorded: “Whereas it was in thine

heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son [Solomon] that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.”

Reply: While David’s motive was good, it needed instruction. In other words, the Lord likes one to worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). “In spirit” means a free and willing service, not out of compulsion. “In truth” means that we should *desire* instruction as to how to accomplish that service. Nevertheless, God commended David’s spirit by assuring him that the succession of kingship after his death would remain with his family.

2 Sam. 7:8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

God took David from the sheepcote and made him the ruler of Israel; that is, He took David from *following* the sheep to *leading* the sheep. David was the last of Jesse’s sons to parade before Samuel, who was seeking the one to be anointed as Israel’s future king. All of the other sons looked good, but Samuel asked if there was not another son. The answer was, “Yes, but he is out in the field.” When David came in, Samuel was instructed to anoint him prophetically to be the future king. Thus, from that humble start in the field, David was called unexpectedly to kingship. Certainly he had not aspired to the office.

Jehovah’s statement, “I took thee from the sheepcote, from *following* the sheep,” is interesting because in many cases, especially in the parables, Jesus went before the sheep, and the sheep followed him. The Lord was impressing upon David the fact that he was not even a leader of the sheep. David followed behind to see that no harm came to them, and he proved he was a concerned shepherd by killing a bear and a lion with his bare hands on two different occasions rather than suffering the flock to be molested. Even with that humble beginning, he emerged as a very talented person as time went on—including being a musician and writing poetry (the Psalms). Many great people never prosper in the present life because circumstances do not favor them with opportunities. David, who had multiple talents, was in this situation until circumstances elevated him to the forefront to eventually become king.

God was telling David, “I give the instructions, not you. You had a nice thought in wanting to build me a house, but remember my position as Lord. If I had wanted a house during that long period of time, I would have said so.” Thus God gave David a tiny rebuke, putting him in his place, but He also let David know the suggestion came out of a good heart. In spite of the chiding, the Lord spoke favorably to David and was pleased with the suggestion.

The lesson is to serve the Lord according to His instructions, not according to our wishes. That is why many people are out trying to save the poor, visit the sick, be the conscience of the government, etc., and they know little about the Bible. These sentiments are noble, but the Lord is looking for pupils and disciples to do *His* bidding in *His* way. He is calling a Little Flock, whom the world does not recognize. The Christian life is a path of humility and quietness, relatively speaking. God will elevate to *future* honor and glory the class who are properly obedient. Those who are selected to be the elect of the next age will ultimately receive power.

2 Sam. 7:9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

2 Sam. 7:10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of

wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,

2 Sam. 7:11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

“Moreover I [God] will appoint a place for my people Israel.” God continued to prod David, saying He would originate the plans for His house. Not only would the Lord provide the place, but He would provide the dimensions and the plans.

Comment: God also said He would “plant” His people.

Reply: Beneath the surface of these remarks is a prophecy of the future Ezekiel’s Temple, which will be built according to God’s instructions and measurements, as recorded in Ezekiel chapters 40-47. That structure will be constructed in Israel when Jerusalem is the capital of the world. At that time, the Ancient Worthies will be the princes in all the earth, and the spiritual Church will govern and issue the instructions for the Ancient Worthies to minister the earthly Kingdom. Israel will then be secure and “move no more.”

In verse 11, Jehovah said He would make David a “house,” a line or succession of rulership. In other words, even though David could not build a *literal* house (Temple), God promised to make him and his seed a *figurative* house of rulers. David is a symbol of Christ in the flesh, who came meek and lowly as a sin offering. At his First Advent, he came *to die*; at his Second Advent, he comes *to rule*. The name David, meaning “my Beloved,” is a picture of Jesus. From heaven, God called Jesus “David” (“my Beloved”)—“This is my beloved [David] Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). David is also a picture of The Christ class, Head and body.

2 Sam. 7:12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

Through Nathan, God continued to speak to David. When David’s life span was accomplished and he slept in death, God would set up David’s seed and establish his kingdom.

2 Sam. 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

David’s successor, Solomon, would build a house for God’s name, and God would establish the throne of David’s kingdom forever.

2 Sam. 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

2 Sam. 7:15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

2 Sam. 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

If Solomon should become errant in his ways and stray from doing God’s will fully and completely, he would suffer some loss and be punished “with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.” Nevertheless, his being errant would not cancel the seed of rulership, for the house of David would continue. As the account continues, certain other

details will crop up from time to time. Only the briefest of instructions are given here.

“My [God’s] mercy shall not depart away from him [Solomon, the son who was chosen to build the Temple], as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.” Notice that God did not say His mercy would not depart from Solomon—period! Rather, He was saying, “My mercy shall not depart away from your successor as I took it away from Saul.” In other words, if Solomon became disobedient, he would not be deprived of his heirs to the throne as Saul was deprived of Jonathan, Ish-bosheth, etc. The kingdom was transferred from Saul over to David, which was another family. Saul was the son of Kish, a Benjamite, and David was the son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah. Should Solomon deflect (and he did), the removal of the throne and its heirship would not depart from the family of David. Both Gospel lineages of Christ are traced back through David; that is, Jesus was the son of David through his mother’s line and also through his foster father, Joseph.

Comment: David’s mercies are sure. The mercies stem back to him, not to Saul.

Reply: Zedekiah was the last king of Israel. When the kingship was removed in 606 BC and Israel was taken into Babylonian captivity, the Lord said to Zedekiah, “Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him” (Ezek. 21:26,27). The lineage of Jesus was traced through two lines of David—through Solomon and through Nathan. Since both were sons of David, the lineage was still of his house. Mary’s lineage was traced one way and Joseph’s another way, but both were of the house of David. In Babylonian captivity, the two separate lines from Solomon were conjoined, being fused into one family again. Therefore, while the offspring of Zedekiah were cut off and it seemed that the Solomonic line had died, the line was actually absorbed into the Nathan line through one common parent. From then on, up until the First Advent, there was one lineage, but it was traced two different ways—through the mother and through the father. The point is that the “sure mercies of David” remained in effect, even though Solomon was given a demotion in certain respects with the Lord’s rebuke for going astray later in his reign (Isa. 55:3). As to Solomon’s true fate, we do not know to what degree he lost out.

2 Sam. 7:17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Nathan received these words for David in a vision. (Later God spoke directly to David through a vision, and not through Nathan or the priest.) Here the prophet needed to be corrected, for he had spoken impulsively without first consulting God, but the rebuke was tender. All of the Lord’s children are chastened because they are imperfect and need schooling and instruction. Therefore, for a person to receive chastening does not necessarily mean he is out of favor.

2 Sam. 7:18 Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

2 Sam. 7:19 And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?

2 Sam. 7:20 And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant.

2 Sam. 7:21 For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them.

2 Sam. 7:22 Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

After David got the instruction from Nathan, he went and “sat before the LORD.” The word “sat” has a deeper connotation than is normally considered; that is, David sat on his heels in a *reflective* attitude, where he put aside all distracting thoughts and meditated before God in worship. Verses 18-29 are the thoughts that flooded David’s mind, which he gave expression to in prayer.

The nature of David’s remarks to God were as follows: “It is true, just like you said. Who was I before you called me? I was in the sheepcote—indeed I followed the sheep—and you elevated me to my present condition. You have honored me above what I am worthy of, for I am only a servant. Why did you select me from among men for this position?” David now felt deflated because of what God had told him through Nathan. The Lord loveth a humble and contrite heart, which David manifested here. In the final analysis, after being instructed and given stripes for certain acts, David was truly a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

“What is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant.” David was saying, “O Lord God, not only have you honored me in making me king, but by your remarks, you have even promised that this rulership will continue through my seed on into the distant future. Who am I that you have condescended to recognize me in such a marvelous fashion? What more can I say? You know how to read my heart, and you know me from the inside out, whereas I am at a loss for words and cannot express my thoughts properly.”

“For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them.” God revealed David’s innermost thinking to him. How interesting that God communicated with a man here on earth, speaking honestly and openly—even if the talking was done through Nathan! Similarly, Jesus was very frank with his disciples. On one occasion, he said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, nothing would be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20 paraphrase). Jesus rebuked his disciples, yet they followed him because they saw that the rebuke was wholesome instruction. The point of the rebuke was not to discourage them but to instruct them in the proper way of thinking and acting. That same type of instruction was in Jehovah’s message to David.

“Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.” David was saying, “I am sorry that I spoke the way I did.”

2 Sam. 7:23 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

2 Sam. 7:24 For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

2 Sam. 7:25 And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.

2 Sam. 7:26 And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

2 Sam. 7:27 For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

What a well-expressed, eloquent prayer! Fortunately, we do not all have to be orators, for the condition of the heart is what counts. Some people cannot even properly petition the Lord when going through the duress of a severe trial, but the Holy Spirit interprets the groaning of the heart into a well-phrased prayer (Rom. 8:26). Here, with David being extremely talented, the prayer of his innermost sentiments flowed beautifully out of him.

After praying, “What is it that you have recognized in me?” David said, “Let it be sure and steadfast just as you have said!” He did not want the promise of the sure mercies to be forgotten. It is interesting that God revealed these thoughts in writing so that we, living thousands of years later, can look back and read David’s prayer to the Lord God of Israel.

When God said, “I will build thee an house,” and David responded, “Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee,” he realized that there was a greater, higher, and more important *figurative* house than the *material* house he had intended to build unto the Lord, namely, a dynastic reign of his family until the coming of Messiah. Of course David did not see an even higher spiritual symbolism. He figuratively interpreted the language about God building a house for him to mean that his seed and progeny would prosper in the rulership. However, that literal rulership was a picture of the future spiritual rulership of the Little Flock, who will be made kings and priests over the earth. Here is an example of how certain expressions in the Old Testament can be considered literally, figuratively, and spiritually. God would build a literal Temple (Solomon’s), a figurative rulership house of David’s lineage, and a spiritual or highly symbolic house of The Christ.

2 Sam. 7:28 And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

2 Sam. 7:29 Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

David continued his prayerful thoughts, which are vaguely reminiscent of Mary’s attitude when the angel of God appeared unto her and said she was blessed above all maidens. Upon hearing the angel’s announcement that the Messiah would be born of her through the Holy Spirit, she said, “So be it.” She was tacitly considered quite approved for her attitude. In contrast, Zacharias was startled and surprised and had some hesitation when he got a message about the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20). For that degree of lack of faith, he was subsequently chided by the angel and temporarily struck dumb. The point is that David’s attitude was quite proper, as expressed in his prayer. His prayer was beautifully expressed and very acceptable to the Lord, as we can see by its tenor and wisdom.

2 Sam. 8:1 And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

David defeated the Philistines and took Metheg-ammah (probably a place, a strategic location, that was important for the safety of Israel). Similarly, in recent years, the Israelis took the Golan Heights from Syria to prevent constant harassment from the hills.

2 Sam. 8:2 And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts.

David also defeated the Moabites. A life or death decision for the captives was made with "two lines," which were something like casting lots. Those who were kept alive became David's servants and brought gifts to him as a ransom for being spared. Probably about half were put to death, so there was quite a decimation of the Moabites. Since they had dealt quite severely with Israel prior to the time of David, this defeat was a strong form of retribution so that they would not rise up again shortly thereafter.

2 Sam. 8:3 David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

"Hadadezer," a title, was similar to the Syrian form Ben-hadad. As David went to recover Israel's border at the Euphrates River, he smote the king of Zobah. (In a description in the Pentateuch of the land to be given to Israel, the northernmost boundary is the river Euphrates where it makes a turn in northern Lebanon.) It was natural for the Syrians to come to Hadadezer's defense, for there was a relationship with this title, and evidently, he was a feudal lord or king.

Q: David's pattern of battle victories represents the Church militant. Would the spiritual picture for the gifts (verse 2) be our laying up treasures in heaven?

A: Yes. The principle was the same with Israel's subjugation of the Canaanites in the land. In antitype, Christians endeavor to overcome the fallen proclivities of their old nature. They wage successive battles over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with each success comes a compensating blessing.

In conquering these various places, putting down enemies roundabout, and gaining strategic locations, David was securing the land so that Solomon had rest when he entered into the kingship. David represents Christians in their warfare and fight of faith in the present life. After those who will comprise the Little Flock finish their earthly course, they are pictured by Solomon as the multitudinous king in glory. Solomon's rest represents the future reign of The Christ with peace all around.

Not only did David have a desire to enlarge Israel's borders to the promised outline given earlier in the Old Testament, but he wanted to gather materials for the Temple (1 Chron. 18:8).

2 Sam. 8:4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots.

David captured 1,000 chariots, 7,000 horsemen, and 20,000 footmen. The correct numbers are given in 1 Chronicles 18:4, "And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen." At most, there were four horsemen for each chariot, but in addition, some footmen could have been attached to the chariot. At any rate, for David and his walking army to fight against a formidable enemy with chariots and win, showed he had a great talent for warfare. The equivalent in today's terminology would be infantry against tanks—a very uneven contest.

Of the chariot horses, David reserved 100. The rest he hamstrung, cutting a ligament so that

even with a halting gait, they could pull a plow or be used for some other domestic purpose but could not be used for warfare. Although hamstringing kept the horses from doing certain activities, it did not cause permanent pain.

Q: Why did David hamstring the horses?

A: Hamstringing prevented the horses from being used again later for battle against the Israelites. The Israelites were prohibited from having horses, for going to Egypt to acquire them would expose the people to the dangers of fraternization and assimilation. The horses represented foreign doctrines, which the Christian is not to entertain.

Some people think that to be a good Christian and a good warrior, one should learn all the intricacies and arguments of the enemy. As a result, they spend a considerable amount of time reading other books and literature, but there is a danger in doing so, for the time should be spent on studying the Lord's Word and instructions.

Q: After David hamstrung the horses, did he leave them for the enemy?

A: Yes, the exception being the 100 he reserved. The Israelites had been told to slay the Canaanites—man, woman, and child. In this case, by hamstringing the horses, they simply made sure the enemy would not be a continuing threat to the security of Israel. Incidentally, the Moabites who lived became servants in quarries.

Q: Was Moab one of the nations the Israelites were to eradicate from the land?

A: No, Moab and Ammon were the sons of Lot following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so they were not to be slain utterly. The king of Zobah, whom the Syrians came to protect, occupied the corner of the land that belonged to Israel. Hence David's strategy was to clean out the troublesome areas so that they would not be a problem in the future and, in the process, gain materials and resources for the Temple.

Q: What did the term "Canaanites" signify? Was it an inclusive term?

A: The "Canaanites" were the older residents of the land, descendants of Ham, so the land was anciently known as the "land of Canaan" (Gen. 12:5). In time, however, foreigners came in—Amalekites, Philistines, etc. Depending on how the term is used, "Canaanites" can be a broader term or a more restricted term. The word "Tabernacle" is the same principle, sometimes meaning the Court, Brazen Altar, and everything, and sometimes referring to just the main structure.

Q: Of the 1,000 chariots David took from the king of Zobah, he kept 100. What happened to the other 900?

A: David may have smelted them down.

2 Sam. 8:5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

David slew 22,000 of the Syrians of Damascus, who came to aid Hadadezer, king of Zobah.

2 Sam. 8:6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

2 Sam. 8:7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

2 Sam. 8:8 And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

David took “shields of gold” and “exceeding much brass” and brought them to Jerusalem for the Temple (see 1 Chron. 18:8).

2 Sam. 8:9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer,

2 Sam. 8:10 Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:

2 Sam. 8:11 Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;

2 Sam. 8:12 Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

2 Sam. 8:13 And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men.

With each of these battles, David’s long-range determination was to save materials for the Temple. All of the spoils, primarily gold and brass, were dedicated “unto the LORD.” Now King Toi of Hamath sent his son Joram to bring gifts and to ask peace of the conquering David. Again David reserved the metals—silver, gold, and brass—for the future Temple.

2 Sam. 8:14 And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David’s servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

2 Sam. 8:15 And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

2 Sam. 8:16 And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

2 Sam. 8:17 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Seraiah was the scribe;

2 Sam. 8:18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David’s sons were chief rulers.

While these names are significant, we would have to read the complete exploits of David in Scripture in order for them to become meaningful to us and to see how they fit into the government he had instituted in Jerusalem.

Comment: What a nice commendation! “David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.”

Reply: Yes, he was fair in his consideration of others. In subsequent chapters, we will read

examples of his fairness in judgment.

Q: Is the King James margin accurate in calling Jehoshaphat a “writer of chronicles” and Seraiah a “secretary”?

A: Yes. Jehoshaphat wrote the historical narration during David’s reign and lifetime.

Comment: David’s sons were “chief rulers.”

Reply: David put trustworthy individuals in these positions to make sure there was no intrigue or hostile intentions against the kingdom of Israel. Joab was retained as captain of the military, and Zadok and Ahimelech were the priests.

2 Sam. 9:1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?

2 Sam. 9:2 And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

2 Sam. 9:3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

2 Sam. 9:4 And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

2 Sam. 9:5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

2 Sam. 9:6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

David inquired if any remained of the house of Saul, for he wanted to “show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake.” Of course the northern part of Israel now trusted David fully. Ziba, a servant of the house of Saul, reported that one son of Jonathan still lived. The name of the surviving son was Mephibosheth, who was lame. When Mephibosheth was fetched and brought to David, he “fell on his face, and did reverence” and said, “Behold thy servant!” Thus he acknowledged that he was David’s servant.

2 Sam. 9:7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

2 Sam. 9:8 And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

It helps to put ourselves in the place of Mephibosheth. He was called to go to the king, and he knew he was the sole survivor of Saul’s house and thus a potential threat to David. When David asked, “Are you Mephibosheth?” the lame son replied that he was, not knowing what to expect. Then David assured him of kind intentions: “Fear not: for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father’s sake, and will restore all the land of Saul, your grandfather;

and you shall eat bread at my table continually.” Mephibosheth responded humbly, “What is your servant that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?” He was probably referring not only to his lame, halting gait but also to his isolation. What an honor to be told that he would get back all of Saul’s household and goods and that he would always be welcome to eat at the king’s table!

Comment: Mephibosheth’s question reminds us of a question in Psalm 8:4, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” In other words, “Why am I so important?” or “Why is the human race so important?”

Reply: Yes, the question especially applies to the fallen human race.

2 Sam. 9:9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

2 Sam. 9:10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master’s son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

2 Sam. 9:11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king’s sons.

2 Sam. 9:12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

2 Sam. 9:13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king’s table; and was lame on both his feet.

Mephibosheth was lame on both feet as a result of falling at age 5 when fleeing with his nurse at the time of Saul’s death (2 Sam. 4:4). Ziba was like a steward in Saul’s household, having considerable authority, for he himself had 20 servants, let alone 15 sons. It was wisdom for him to realize he was in a similar situation now with regard to Mephibosheth. And Mephibosheth’s son, Micha, who was Jonathan’s grandson, was also favored with David’s grant of largesse.

2 Sam. 10:1 And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2 Sam. 10:2 Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David’s servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

2 Sam. 10:3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

2 Sam. 10:4 Wherefore Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

2 Sam. 10:5 When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then

return.

This incident shows what can happen when wrong advice is given. Bad counsel steered Hanun, the new king of Ammon, into being an enemy of Israel. There would be repercussions on the Ammonites for shaming David's servants by shaving off one half of their beards in a vertical line and by cutting off their clothing horizontally at the buttocks. David kindly told his servants to stay at Jericho until their beards grew back, which could take several months.

2 Sam. 10:6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men.

2 Sam. 10:7 And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

2 Sam. 10:8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah, were by themselves in the field.

Obviously, the Syrians did not learn a lesson when 22,000 of them were slain earlier (2 Sam. 8:3,5). Now the Syrians of Zoba(h) sent another 20,000 footmen. In spite of their prior defeat, they joined with the Ammonites, probably feeling more secure with this alliance. David sent his best fighting force to combat them. All of this preparation for battle was the result of bad advice, for David's intentions had been peaceful.

2 Sam. 10:9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians:

2 Sam. 10:10 And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon.

2 Sam. 10:11 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

2 Sam. 10:12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

2 Sam. 10:13 And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.

2 Sam. 10:14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

Not being sure how the battle would go, Joab planned a strategy for the ominous threat. The Lord blessed Israel with the confrontation. When the Ammonites saw that the Syrians had fled before Joab, they also fled, and Joab returned to Jerusalem.

2 Sam. 10:15 And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together.

2 Sam. 10:16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them.

2 Sam. 10:17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

2 Sam. 10:18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

2 Sam. 10:19 And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

This second gathering of the Syrians was an even more ominous threat, so David ordered a national draft, as it were. The Syrians suffered a great defeat and fled before the Israelites. The 40,000 “horsemen” were actually “footmen.” (Otherwise, there would have been too many men for the chariots.) Since the footmen were assigned to the charioteers, the captain of the host simply gave commands to the charioteers, and the footmen automatically followed their own particular standard. In that way, the captain controlled the whole host by instructing the charioteers.

Whatever David did, he seemed to be successful. Ultimately, he subdued all of Israel’s enemies roundabout. When he later handed over the reins of government to Solomon, the military problem was completely resolved—for a while at least.

Comment: The *spiritual* counterpart for David’s victories is 2 Corinthians 10:4, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but *mighty through God* to the pulling down of *strong holds*.”

2 Sam. 11:1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

Previous chapters told that David warred with Ammon and other peoples and was very successful. Now he sent Joab, his general, to conduct another battle with Ammon and did not feel the necessity to go himself. In other words, David had sufficient confidence in Joab’s generalship in this particular campaign. “All Israel” went with Joab in the sense that fighting contingents from all of the tribes accompanied him.

“After the year was expired” is “in the spring of the year” in the Revised Standard Version. That thought is correct, for with the establishment of the Law at the time of the Exodus, the Hebrew year began in the spring. The expression “at the time when kings go forth to battle” also referred to the spring, for once the winter floods were over, warfare resumed.

2 Sam. 11:2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

2 Sam. 11:3 And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

2 Sam. 11:4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

2 Sam. 11:5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

2 Sam. 11:6 And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

2 Sam. 11:7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

David had an illicit relationship with Bathsheba, who was apparently innocent, at least initially. She was cleansing herself from her uncleanness, which was a requirement under the Law. The time setting was “evening tide,” meaning it was almost dark, so she thought no one could see her. David was walking on the roof of his residence when he looked down and saw a very beautiful woman washing herself. He had perhaps gone to the roof to get some air, to pray, or to watch the stars.

Comment: Since he “arose from off his bed” to walk upon the roof, he may have had trouble sleeping.

Evidently, from the little information that is furnished, the incident was a chance occurrence. Of course the Adversary took advantage of the flesh. Because there was such a reverential attitude toward the office of king in those days, Bathsheba obediently hearkened to David’s command. Thus David, in his position of authority, was the more culpable party.

Comment: Also, David inquired who the woman was and sent messengers to bring her to him, so he had time to reconsider his intentions, whereas Bathsheba was oblivious to what was transpiring.

Reply: In other words, David was warm with desire and did not resist. Meanwhile, some time passed, and he learned that Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, a convert to the Jewish faith. Perhaps through a certain interpretation of the Law, David felt he was justified because of Uriah’s foreign background. However, that was a misinterpretation because of the circumstance. We find out later that Uriah was a loyal soldier of great courage who was devoted to the service of Israel.

Bathsheba conceived and sent word to David that she was “with child.” David then sent a message to Joab, saying, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” When Uriah arrived, David struck up a conversation as a pretense. “How is Joab? How are the people doing? How is the war going?” From Uriah’s standpoint, David’s inquiries about the battle seemed perfectly logical.

Comment: Since David pictures the Church in the flesh, there seems to be a spiritual lesson here. If David had gone with Joab into this battle with the Ammonites, he would not have gotten in trouble for his idleness. Accordingly, if the Christian keeps fighting the good fight of faith, if he is engaged in spiritual warfare, he is less apt to sin with the flesh.

Reply: That is exactly the spiritual lesson, and it is an excellent one. But of course we do not know the actual reason for David’s inactivity and remaining in Jerusalem on this occasion.

2 Sam. 11:8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king’s house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

David told Uriah to go down to his house and wash his feet. Since he had been away from his wife for a while, David thought that Uriah would see his wife and have marital relations with her. Then the child would seem to be Uriah’s. David even sent a portion of food to refresh him.

2 Sam. 11:9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

2 Sam. 11:10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?

2 Sam. 11:11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

2 Sam. 11:12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also, and tomorrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

2 Sam. 11:13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

When Uriah slept at the door of the king's house so that he would be ready for any emergency that might arise or so that he would be prepared to go back to the battle early in the morning, David had another strategy. He asked Uriah to tarry until the next day and tried to get him drunk so that he would go down to his house and lie with his wife. However, Uriah was too dedicated to Israel's cause to have pleasure with his wife. Uriah's attitude should have awakened David to his sin. Seeing such nobility of character in this Hittite, David knew Uriah was more honorable than he. David probably felt more and more like a wretched heel.

Comment: David was feeling increasingly desperate to do something.

Reply: He may have felt like a heel, but he knew the sin could not be hidden, for Bathsheba was pregnant. In addition, he was still enamored of Bathsheba and wanted her to be his wife, as proven by the fact that he subsequently wanted Uriah to die in battle.

If the sin were discovered, the Law required an inquiry, and the guilty party was stoned to death. Nevertheless, because David was king, the people would be reluctant to press for an inquiry. In the Tabernacle arrangement, the bread-of-jealousy offering, in which the woman drank water mixed with the dust of the floor, indicated guilt or innocence (Num. 5:11-31).

Comment: Under the Law, the woman was required to cry out if she was being forced. Since Bathsheba did not do this, she might have been considered guilty too, although she would have been torn in wanting to obey the king.

Reply: The situation was confused. The Law lays down basic principles, but real-life incidents are often so complex that it takes a judge to sort things out and render a fair judgment.

At any rate, David was caught in a very grievous fault. He saw that it was useless to try to press Uriah any further in this matter, so he permitted the man to return to battle. The best solution he could see, in which Bathsheba would not be found guilty, was to have Uriah die a seemingly accidental death in warfare, but the life of an innocent man was expended in the process. The details are given in the next few verses.

2 Sam. 11:14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

2 Sam. 11:15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

2 Sam. 11:16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

2 Sam. 11:17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

David gave advance notice to Joab by sending a letter with Uriah. The message was, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire from him so that he will be smitten and die." Joab had the prerogative of assigning individuals for assault, so he cannot be faulted morally for following David's instructions. Accordingly, he placed Uriah in a dangerous battle situation, and the latter died. The responsibility for Uriah's death clearly lay with David.

2 Sam. 11:18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

2 Sam. 11:19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

2 Sam. 11:20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

2 Sam. 11:21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

How shrewd on Joab's part! He anticipated that David might be angry about the number of casualties when the news was suddenly sprung on him. Therefore, he instructed the messenger to tell David that Uriah had died in this battle, for right away David would see through the strategy and realize Joab had faithfully carried out the mandate.

Now we see the truly heinous aspect of David's sin. As a general principle, once a person gets inveigled into a problem, he is mired in sin like quicksand, spiritually speaking.

2 Sam. 11:22 So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for.

2 Sam. 11:23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

2 Sam. 11:24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

2 Sam. 11:25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

When David got the news about Uriah, he sent back an encouraging message to Joab. "We can expect these things to happen. War is war, and there are casualties."

Q: Was David also responsible for the deaths of the men who were with Uriah?

A: Yes, he was indirectly responsible. We will find out later how the Lord visited retribution on David. His own family life was adversely affected as a form of expiation and retribution.

2 Sam. 11:26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

2 Sam. 11:27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

Bathsheba mourned for Uriah. When the mourning period was over, David sent for her and married her, and she had a son.

“But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” This statement should be stronger. The King James margin indicates that David’s action “was evil in the eyes of the LORD.” In the 1611 Old English, the word “displeased” had a harsher connotation, implying here that God’s anger was aroused.

Since the whole human family, generally speaking, will come forth from the tomb, it is relatively immaterial from the standpoint of eternity how long a person lives in the present life. Thus the fact that Uriah probably died at the height of his manhood and in the prime of life will be offset by his resurrection in the Kingdom Age, when he will be rewarded for the good character he manifested in his dedication to Israel and Israel’s God. However, David’s trial and expiation had to occur in the present life, for he proved to be an Ancient Worthy, thus sealing his destiny.

2 Sam. 12:1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 Sam. 12:2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

2 Sam. 12:3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

2 Sam. 12:4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

2 Sam. 12:5 And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

2 Sam. 12:6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

God instructed Nathan how to present this story, for certainly the prophet did not manufacture it himself. The ewe, a female lamb, represented Bathsheba. The fact the ewe was young seems to suggest that Bathsheba was considerably younger than Uriah and thus was more like a daughter to him. However, he was probably not older than 50 to still be able to go into battle.

In hearing Nathan narrate this story, David would have realized that the prophet was being

moved by the Holy Spirit. David would also have realized that the story was based on a true account—that a rich man had done this evil deed—but he did not know the party was he. Nathan came to David in the name of the Lord and gave this parable, showing the ingratitude of the rich man who, instead of taking an animal from his own flock to feed the traveler, took a little lamb from a poor man's goods. Thinking something was happening that he was not aware of, David became highly incensed, but even though he had an innate sense of justice, his righteous indignation did not excuse him by any means. He said that the guilty man would have to restore the ewe lamb fourfold according to the Law and should then be put to death "because he did this [evil] thing, and because he had no pity."

2 Sam. 12:7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

2 Sam. 12:8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

2 Sam. 12:9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

2 Sam. 12:10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

2 Sam. 12:11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

2 Sam. 12:12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

In telling what the rich man in the parable possessed, Nathan was saying that David, as king, had all kinds of commodities at his disposal. Through the prophet, God was saying to David, "I have given *you* much." Notice the directness of the accusation. Before going into a dissertation about the interpretation of the parable, Nathan said bluntly, "You are the man! You are the guilty one!" It took great courage on Nathan's part to address the king in this proper manner.

Not only would retribution come on David, but the Lord gave clues about how it would take place; namely, the retribution would involve his own household. David had sinned *secretly*, so God would make sure that the retribution would be done *openly* ("before the sun") and *with great shame*. David, who had *multiple* wives ("many flocks and herds"), had acted at the expense of Uriah, who had only *one* wife ("one little ewe lamb") (see verses 2 and 3). There was a contrast between David and Uriah all the way down the line.

Jehovah said, through Nathan, "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives [plural] before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun." As retribution, several wives would be taken from David in a *fourfold* retribution, as required under the Law. The retribution would be done "before all Israel, and before the sun," that is, not clandestinely by night.

2 Sam. 12:13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

2 Sam. 12:14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

2 Sam. 12:15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

2 Sam. 12:16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

2 Sam. 12:17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

2 Sam. 12:18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

2 Sam. 12:19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

2 Sam. 12:20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

2 Sam. 12:21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

2 Sam. 12:22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

2 Sam. 12:23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

When the child died, David saw the futility of further mourning, for there would be no practical value in continuing to fast and mourn at that point. Of course Nathan had expressly said that the child would die. Nevertheless, David thought that perhaps God would change His mind and hearken to prayer and fasting if he humiliated himself and petitioned earnestly enough. Also, it is possible the child was quite attractive and looked very promising before getting sick. David had great affection for the child. However, his petitioning did not move the Lord, whose eyes did not pity in this case, for the retribution was in fulfillment of Nathan's prediction. Following the death of the child, David changed his attitude, at least outwardly, and seemed to be restored to normalcy from certain standpoints. Thus the first retribution was the death of this child.

2 Sam. 12:24 And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.

2 Sam. 12:25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Bathsheba conceived again and bore a son, whom David named Solomon. Nathan called

Solomon by the name Jedidiah, which means “beloved of the LORD.” The practice back there was to give at least two names.

2 Sam. 12:26 And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

2 Sam. 12:27 And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

2 Sam. 12:28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

2 Sam. 12:29 And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

2 Sam. 12:30 And he took their king’s crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David’s head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

2 Sam. 12:31 And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

The war with the Ammonites took a little time. The account started in the previous chapter when contingents from all Israel went to fight against Rabbah, the capital city (2 Sam. 11:1). Joab sent back good news of the pending defeat of the enemy and victory for Israel. He instructed the messengers to tell David, “If I go ahead and finish the battle, the victory will be attributed to me, and the city will be called by my name.” Thus the Lord’s Word reveals both good and bad points about individuals. Elsewhere Joab’s actions were not the best, but here his attitude was admirable. By having David come at the last minute to get the victory, Joab manifested a noble trait. When we study the lives of individuals as a whole, we can understand to some degree why God rendered a particular decision by His providence. For example, initially we saw some good points with Saul, but these were followed by unfavorable traits. In the final judgment, Saul was a loathsome character. The lesson is very helpful to us, for we see that one can start out good but end up as an enemy and an outcast of the Lord.

God loved Solomon (verse 24). This statement shows that the Almighty Creator, the Sustainer of the universe, with all of His tremendous capabilities, is not incapable of emotion. He who made the delicate flowers with aromas and scents is the Author of them. Thus we can see His involvement, yet He does not tamper with the human will. He leaves the human will inviolate because His design is not to have robots serving Him with unquestioning minds.

In certain respects, Solomon represents not only Jesus’ role in glory but also The Christ. This representation harmonizes with the thought that a man pictures either Jesus alone or the body in conjunction with Jesus, the Head. Thus David can represent Jesus or The Christ, and the same is true of Solomon. However, David is The Christ in the flesh, in warfare on this side of the veil, whereas Solomon, generally speaking, pictures the Church with Jesus in glory and permanence (as shown by the Temple) and in peace and establishment. From that standpoint, the good aspects of Solomon are favorable in antitype. In fact, even Adam has a favorable connotation if we extricate him from his sin, and in certain pictures, he is a type of Christ.

Q: We know David had to be in Jesus’ lineage, yet of all his wives, Bathsheba, who became his

wife under sinful circumstances, was chosen for the lineage. Of course she was innocent in this matter, but can we assume that, in addition, she probably had a very noble character?

A: Yes. She was honored to be linked with the lineage along with Ruth the Moabitess, Tamar, and Rahab the harlot. The lives of some of the individuals in the lineage were different *before* conversion and *after* conversion. Certainly Rahab did not continue to be a harlot. Her conversion was genuine; the change in her life was real and complete. It is true that Tamar deceived Judah, but he had first defrauded her of one of his other sons. Thus Bathsheba was exonerated and rewarded in that Messiah's lineage is traced through her son.

Comment: The account here in 2 Samuel does not tell how David openly and publicly made his sin known before the nation, but he thoroughly repented.

Reply: Yes, his repentance and public confession are revealed in different ways, especially in the Psalms. We are coming to the part of David's life that is usually avoided in Bible study, but the Bible is to be considered and reasoned upon *as a whole*. The Bible tells history as it was, not as a fabricated, doctored romantic novel. Only Jesus is portrayed with no flaw in his character.

Comment: When the incident with Bathsheba is discussed, the emphasis is usually on God's great mercy and forgiveness, rather than on the severe retribution that came to David despite his contrite heart.

Reply: Yes, he got retribution, but the other outstanding ingredient with David is that he repented openly at the time and also in later life. As an illustration, Paul was guilty of Stephen's death, but at crucial points in his later life, he called to mind this former sin.

Comment: David probably felt alienated from God for a while because of what he had done.

Reply: Yes, and that was especially true when he got older. However, David did repent, and he did get stripes to expiate the sin he had committed. It is interesting that the Scriptures record the nobility of Joab in not taking the honor to himself in regard to capturing the city of Rabbah.

David made the defeated Ammonites saw wood, hew stone, dig iron, and labor about the brick kilns. "Thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon."

We now have a backlog of information on David not only in connection with Saul's pursuit of him but also through many insights into his life as a young man, during the 7 1/2 years of his kingship in Hebron, and now for ten years or so of his kingship in Jerusalem. We are about to enter a study of the period of his life when he was shouldered with great responsibility. At the end of 2 Samuel, Lord willing, we will consider David's life as a whole to see why he was a man after God's own heart and other individuals during that time were not.

2 Sam. 13:1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

2 Sam. 13:2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

2 Sam. 13:3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtle man.

Absalom and Amnon were both sons of David but of different wives. In fact, Amnon, who was born in Hebron, was David's firstborn son (2 Sam. 3:2). Tamar, a virgin, was Absalom's sister

and thus the half sister of Amnon. (We presume Tamar was a *full* sister of Absalom because he was so concerned when an incident occurred later on in the account.) Jonadab, a friend of Amnon and “a very crafty man” (see RSV), was the son of one of David’s brothers and hence David’s nephew. Amnon loved Tamar, being “so tormented that he made himself ill” because of her (RSV).

Comment: Both Tamar and Absalom were beautiful (2 Sam. 13:1; 14:25).

2 Sam. 13:4 And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king’s son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.

The Revised Standard reads, “And he [Jonadab] said to him [Amnon], ‘O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?’ Amnon said to him, ‘I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.’”

2 Sam. 13:5 And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand.

2 Sam. 13:6 So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.

2 Sam. 13:7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon’s house, and dress him meat.

2 Sam. 13:8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes.

Amnon called Tamar his “sister,” but of course she was a half sister. Jonadab, a wily fellow, knew human nature well enough to realize just how David would respond to the subterfuge of a fake illness. It is true that Amnon had a wan look because of being lovesick for Tamar, but this time he feigned an illness in bed in accordance with Jonadab’s suggestion.

The strategy was successful in that David instructed Tamar to go to Amnon’s house and prepare cakes for him. David and Tamar were both oblivious to what was about to happen.

2 Sam. 13:9 And she took a pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him.

2 Sam. 13:10 And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother.

The beginning of verse 9 in the RSV states, “And she took the pan and emptied it out before him.” When Tamar brought the food to Amnon, he said, “Tell the servants to leave.” She conveyed that information, and they obediently left the chamber, so that she was alone in the house with Amnon. In the meantime, Tamar evidently went into the next room, for Amnon called out to her, “Bring the cakes into my chamber so that I may eat them from your hand.”

2 Sam. 13:11 And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.

2 Sam. 13:12 And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.

2 Sam. 13:13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

2 Sam. 13:14 Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

When she complied, he grabbed her and said, “Come lie with me, my sister.” Her response was, “Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel. As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you” (see RSV). Tamar certainly resisted and tried to reason with Amnon, but he would not listen and, being stronger, forced her against her will and lay with her.

Comment: Out of passion, Amnon refused to listen.

Reply: Yes, strong emotion, such as passion or anger, keeps one from listening to sound reason.

2 Sam. 13:15 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

2 Sam. 13:16 And she said unto him, There is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her.

2 Sam. 13:17 Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her.

2 Sam. 13:18 And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king’s daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

What a heel Amnon was! After *defiling* her, he *hated* her. There could be a few reasons why he hated her, one reason being the manner in which she had resisted him. When he sent her away, she said that this evil was greater than forcing her.

2 Sam. 13:19 And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

2 Sam. 13:20 And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom’s house.

As was customary for the daughter of a king, Tamar was wearing a distinctive garment of “divers colours” that indicated she was a virgin. Therefore, when she tore the garment, put ashes on her head, and lamented aloud, Absalom detected the nature of the mischief—that she had been violated—and guessed that Amnon was responsible. Absalom was very concerned for Tamar’s welfare.

Q: In verse 20, was Absalom telling Tamar to forget the matter? What did he mean by saying, “Regard not this thing”?

A: He said in effect, “Do not be concerned.” The implication was that he would take care of the matter, and to do so would require a little time. Meanwhile, Tamar went into seclusion in Absalom’s house because of her humiliation.

Q: Could she have married someone else had she so chosen?

A: It is true that she was free to marry someone else *if* the man would have her under that circumstance. Incidentally, there is an indication that Tamar did marry and have children later on.

2 Sam. 13:21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.

David was very angry when he heard what had happened.

2 Sam. 13:22 And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

2 Sam. 13:23 And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king’s sons.

2 Sam. 13:24 And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant.

2 Sam. 13:25 And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him.

2 Sam. 13:26 Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee?

2 Sam. 13:27 But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.

Hating Amnon for what he had done to Tamar, Absalom had a far-reaching strategy depending on how well he could read his father’s reaction. Two full years later Absalom wanted to get Amnon in a place where he could slay him. Of course during those two years, it would have been known that Absalom had not spoken to Amnon because of ill feeling.

When Absalom issued an invitation to David and his servants and “all” of his sons to gather for sheepshearing, he somehow knew that his father would not accept the invitation himself. Nevertheless, David gave him a blessing. Then Absalom requested the presence of Amnon, who may not have been included in the original invitation. Knowing the ill feeling between the two, David would have been surprised at the request, but Absalom persisted, knowing that Amnon would go if David asked him. The stage was being set.

Q: Why did David say to Absalom, “Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee”?

A: David was saying, “We will not all go lest we overburden you.”

2 Sam. 13:28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when

Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.

2 Sam. 13:29 And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled.

When a master told his servants to commit an act of violence, they might think, "What will the king do to us?" But Absalom, the king's son, said to his servants in effect, "The responsibility for your slaying Amnon rests on my shoulders, so do not be frightened. I am giving the orders. If there is a backlash, it will be chargeable to me, not you, for you are just obeying my orders." The servants did as Absalom commanded. When Amnon's heart was merry with wine, they assassinated him. Immediately the king's other sons fled on their mules, for they did not want David to think they had been involved.

2 Sam. 13:30 And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

2 Sam. 13:31 Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.

2 Sam. 13:32 And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.

2 Sam. 13:33 Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

2 Sam. 13:34 But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him.

2 Sam. 13:35 And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is.

2 Sam. 13:36 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.

Notice that Jonadab, who made the original suggestion, had a ready answer. He may have been in on the assassination plot as well, for he knew that the king's other sons had fled. Meanwhile, David thought all of his sons were dead and was most distressed. The rumor was false, but it may have been intended for psychological purposes. Jonadab spoke up at this opportune moment as though to console the king: "Do not worry. Only one son, Amnon, has been slain." Jonadab suggested that Amnon's sin had lain on Absalom's heart for a long time and that Absalom had been looking for an opportunity to slay him. Then came the news that the other sons were coming back.

Of course David was very distraught when he thought all of his sons were dead. To learn now that only one son was dead did not make him happy, but certainly this news was radically different. David experienced mixed emotions and confusion.

Q: As the nephew of David, was Jonadab part of royalty?

A: He was there, but David's sons had a higher priority. Only in the event of the death of all of David's sons would the rest of the family, the older generation, be considered in the same way.

Comment: The concern and tears should have been for Tamar. Instead, the mourning was for the death of the guilty one. A sin of fornication was to be handled according to the Law.

Reply: David should have taken a stand against Amnon earlier for the rape of his daughter, Absalom's sister.

Comment: Absalom must have realized that he would have to flee from his comfortable surroundings. Thus to seek revenge for Amnon's sin required quite a sacrifice on his part.

Reply: Absalom had a sense of the injustice that had been done. He was more concerned for Tamar than any of the others. Evidently, he took a long time to decide how he would accomplish the revenge. He could not act immediately, for Amnon would have been on guard. Therefore, Absalom bided his time and was patient until the opportune moment came two years later at the time of sheepshearing.

We should keep in mind that individuals who lived prior to the First Advent were not Christians. The Jews had family relationships and certain different moral standards. Certainly in the Gospel Age, there would have been more indignation over what was done. There is neither male nor female in Christ, but a different standard existed back there. Sons were always considered important because of the inheritance of the land and goods. Daughters were considered in the inheritance only if there were no sons (Num. 26:33; 27:1-8). In other words, in a circumstance where the property might go down the drain because of the absence of a male heir, the daughter(s) got the inheritance.

Comment: With Amnon being the firstborn, Absalom might have coveted the throne, thinking he was eliminating one rival as well as getting revenge (2 Sam. 3:2,3).

Reply: The account does not give all of the details and nuances, which would have a bearing on judging a person's character. As much as possible, a judge needs to get all of the facts in order to render a proper judgment. The minds of many sons would be ticking when a king was aging, wondering who would be his successor or heir. Both Adonijah and Absalom wanted the throne. There is a saying, "Uneasy is the head that wears a crown."

2 Sam. 13:37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

2 Sam. 13:38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

2 Sam. 13:39 And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Absalom fled and David mourned for him every day.

2 Sam. 14:1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

2 Sam. 14:2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

2 Sam. 14:3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

Joab now used a ploy, or stratagem, to get Absalom back. Evidently, he liked Absalom, the king's son, who was not only handsome but apparently noble in bearing and thus would make a good king appearance-wise.

Comment: With David's heart longing after Absalom (2 Sam. 13:39), Joab knew he would ingratiate himself with David by bringing his son back.

Reply: Yes, that is another way to look at the situation, but even under this circumstance, Joab had to use a stratagem.

Joab selected a woman of Tekoah and coached her to go to David with a tall story. Some people seem to be endowed by nature with wiliness.

2 Sam. 14:4 And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.

2 Sam. 14:5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

2 Sam. 14:6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.

2 Sam. 14:7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth.

2 Sam. 14:8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.

2 Sam. 14:9 And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne be guiltless.

The woman did obeisance before David and said, "Help me, O king." Then she proceeded to tell a story, as follows. "I am a widow. My two sons were fighting, and one slew the other. The whole family came to me and said, 'Deliver up your surviving son.' I am in a dilemma, for in reprisal, they want to kill my son and his son also, the heir. Help me lest my family be quenched." David believed her story and said he would help her: "Go home and I will take care of this matter." However, the woman did not go home right away but tarried.

2 Sam. 14:10 And the king said, Whosoever saith aught unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

2 Sam. 14:11 Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

2 Sam. 14:12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

2 Sam. 14:13 And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

2 Sam. 14:14 For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

2 Sam. 14:15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

2 Sam. 14:16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

2 Sam. 14:17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

As the woman continued her lengthy narration, she began to slant the story. She talked about her (supposedly) banished son, hoping that David, by drawing a comparison, would get the point about Absalom. We are reminded of Nathan's parable to David about the lamb, in which he said clearly, "Thou art the man!" (2 Sam. 12:7).

In this case, the woman was leading up to the point, just as Joab had coached her. She was saying in effect, "Don't you realize what is happening in regard to how you treated Absalom? Don't you see his concern, the family's concern, and Israel's concern? There will be a political problem if the bloodshed is not stopped and the matter is not settled. You are an angel of God. As His representative on the throne, you should be the dispenser of justice." She was trying to get David to have second thoughts about Absalom, and he was beginning to sense that something was going on.

Comment: Already retribution was taking place. David had violated Bathsheba, and his own daughter had been violated by one of his sons.

Reply: Yes. A real mix-up occurred later, as the retribution came upon him and his family for his sins.

2 Sam. 14:18 Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.

2 Sam. 14:19 And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from aught that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:

2 Sam. 14:20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.

"Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee." The woman had been talking and slanting the story, but now David, going on the offensive, interrupted her and said, "I want to ask you a question." She replied,

“Let my lord the king now speak.”

David guessed that Joab was behind the woman’s story. He realized that a strategy had been foisted upon him. The woman responded, “You are a wise angel of God to see through my story. Yes, the words were put in my mouth by Joab.” Of course the purpose of the story was to bring Absalom home.

Q: Did Joab ultimately stay loyal to David?

A: No, but the defection took place quite a while later. In the account, we see some qualities of Joab that were favorable and some that were not so favorable. The same is true of Absalom. The beginning and the end of Saul, Joab, Absalom, and David are all seen—as well as the end of the two priests Abiathar and Zadok.

2 Sam. 14:21 And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

2 Sam. 14:22 And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, Today thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

2 Sam. 14:23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

2 Sam. 14:24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king’s face.

The king saw through the strategy of the woman—that her story had been concocted by Joab. Of course Joab risked his favor with David by trying this ploy, but he had carefully observed the king earlier and realized the soft spot in his heart for his son. Therefore, Joab gambled on David’s feelings for Absalom as a favorite son and tried to arrange a reconciliation. The strategy worked, for the king told Joab to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem. Right away Joab fell down and ingratiated himself, saying in effect, “Bless you, O king, for favoring me. Yes, I was responsible for the story the woman told.”

Absalom returned, but he could not have an audience with David. Therefore, he went to his own house and did not see the king face to face. Although the arrangement was only a halfway overture, it was favorable to Absalom to a large degree in that he had been recalled.

2 Sam. 14:25 But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

2 Sam. 14:26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year’s end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king’s weight.

2 Sam. 14:27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

Absalom was more or less in isolation in his own home. He was exceptionally handsome, his thick, heavy hair being an outstanding feature. His hair grew so luxuriantly that it was “polled” (trimmed) at the end of every year. The weight of the hair that was cut was 200 shekels “after the king’s weight”; that is, the 200 shekels were a weight of money. To all practical purposes, the shorn hair was put on one side of the scale, and it was counterbalanced with shekels on the

other side of the scale. Those with national pride who observed Absalom's appearance and his smooth tongue (as will be manifested later) would have thought, "What a wonderful king he would make!"

In addition, Absalom named his daughter Tamar in honor of his sister who had been misused by Amnon. Absalom's daughter "was a woman of a fair countenance." Naming his daughter Tamar was a way of exonerating his sister in the eyes of the nation and bolstering her prestige. Incidentally, it is interesting that the Tamar in the Book of Genesis was also a victim of foul play (although in another way).

2 Sam. 14:28 So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

2 Sam. 14:29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

2 Sam. 14:30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

2 Sam. 14:31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

2 Sam. 14:32 And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.

2 Sam. 14:33 So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

For two years after Absalom returned to Jerusalem, David and Absalom did not see each other. Then Absalom, who had been in relative isolation in his home, tried another stratagem. He wanted to have access to the king's court and an audience with his father, but he was forbidden to go direct, so he tried to get Joab to be the intermediary. When Joab ignored him twice, Absalom instructed his servants to set Joab's adjacent field on fire to get his attention. It was customary in those days for servants to obey their masters, and the responsibility for their actions lay primarily with the one who had issued the order(s).

Of course the infuriated Joab now came posthaste to Absalom and said, "Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?" Absalom replied, "I have been trying to communicate with you, but you would not come. Why have I been brought back from Geshur? It would have been better for me to remain there. I want an audience with the king. Now, therefore, let me see the king's face, and if he feels that I am not worthy, let him kill me. I feel I was justified in slaying Amnon." Absalom's strategy worked—he got his audience with David, and the king kissed him.

Q: Why did Joab initially refuse to go to Absalom after bringing him back to Jerusalem?

A: Perhaps he felt he did not want to tip the scale too soon. A lot of politics were involved, and if Joab did not read the situation correctly, his future would be jeopardized. David may have been distracted with other interests, so Joab waited until it was more propitious to contact him. Joab would have surmised why Absalom wanted him to come. He knew that Absalom was getting impatient and wanted an audience with the king, so he stayed away—until his field was

set on fire.

Why was so much space (two chapters) given to this incident based on what had happened to Tamar, Absalom's sister, and what he did to avenge her?

Comment: We are given insight into David's character. Not only was he experiencing retribution for what he had done to Uriah, but he knew God's Law. Having meditated on that Law day and night, he knew that Amnon should have been punished for his violation of Tamar. David might have refrained from taking action because he considered the incident part of his own retribution.

Comment: The Holy Spirit overruled the inclusion of these details to emphasize David's sin and how retribution came on the family. Sometimes retribution takes time, but it is not forgotten.

Reply: The Scriptures tell us that God forgave David for his sin with Bathsheba, but without this history being revealed, some of the Lord's children would question the forgiveness and the statement that David was a man after God's own heart. Thus we are given insight into the circumstances of the retribution that occurred in David's life. Before we finish studying his life, enough details will be revealed for us to be able to draw some conclusions on how sin is forgiven and why certain sins cannot be forgiven but must receive retribution, actual punishment. The details prove that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is a true story. In a concocted story, the hero would be glamorized, and certain facts would be hidden.

2 Sam. 15:1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

Notice what Absalom initiated. He prepared chariots and horses and 50 men to run before him in order to honor *himself* and to appear as though the king had deputed him as *coregent*. The public would assume this fanfare was David's idea and thus would think the king was saying, "Absalom is my successor."

2 Sam. 15:2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

"Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate." By rising early, he appeared to be prompt and diligent in the king's business. Later on, when the Temple was built, it was customary for a judge to sit in the gate. Here, where the practice was more or less in its infancy, Absalom sat before the entrance to the gate, intercepting (and thus preventing) any from getting to David.

When Absalom saw someone coming to the king for judgment, a decision, or advice, why did he ask, "Of what city are you?" He *appeared* to have a personal interest in the locale of the individual. Instead of getting down to business and listening to the case in an impartial way, he assumed a patronizing air that impressed the person seeking judgment from the king. If Absalom's interest had been genuine, his question would have been proper, but it was a pretense, an affected geniality.

2 Sam. 15:3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

2 Sam. 15:4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man

which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

Absalom would respond, “Your matters are good and right, but no man has been deputized of the king to hear you.” He was inferring neglect on David’s part. (Incidentally, the accounts in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are often slanted from the standpoint of how the public would view the matter.) Perhaps David had suggested that Absalom meet the people, although it is more likely that Absalom presumed to take this responsibility upon himself—the account does not say. At any rate, we are given insight into the method Absalom used to wean the affections of the populace to think he would make a nice king. Of course by this time, David was aged, and he was preoccupied with collecting materials for the Temple, which his successor would build. A third factor could have been the wars that were being fought. The point is that Absalom took advantage of this opportunity by ingratiating himself in the eyes of the public.

Notice, too, that Absalom always sided with the claimant *whether the matter was right or wrong*. He let the claimant win the suit, his attitude being, “I assent to your grievance and will see what I can do about it.” Instead, both sides of the issue should have been heard and a fair and impartial judgment rendered. We have to read a little between the lines in order to understand what Absalom was doing. With the statement “Thy matters are good and right,” he was saying, “Your complaint is justified, and there will be some redress.”

Absalom must have uttered these words like a parrot, but each individual he spoke with did not know the words were repetitive. Moreover, he said, “Oh that I were made judge [king] in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!” With horses and chariots and 50 men running before him, plus his feigned interest in the home area of the claimants, the people were impressed. Similarly, when a doctor takes a personal interest in a patient, the patient thinks he is a good doctor. That is the proper attitude of a physician, but in other matters, judgment can be swayed by personality rather than by ability and character.

Comment: What an exaggeration for Absalom to say that if he were king, he would do justice to every man who brought a suit or cause to him!

Reply: Yes, there is a limit to what any one person can do, and the king’s subjects numbered in the millions.

Comment: Even Moses could not handle all the cases in the wilderness (Exod. 18:17-26).

Reply: That is true, and Moses was strong physically, probably more rugged than Absalom.

2 Sam. 15:5 And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

Another tactic was personal contact. When any man came near to do obeisance, prostrating himself, Absalom put forth his hand and embraced and kissed him according to the Eastern custom. With this practice, Absalom was not a statesman but a *politician*.

2 Sam. 15:6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom’s policy had a telling, cumulative effect on the nation over a period of time. He was shrewd in asking the origin of the claimants—thereby being assured that a good word would go back home with them. Certainly he was scheming to establish a rapport with the people and win their affections.

By means of these practices with all who “came to the king for judgment [a decision],” Absalom “stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” There was no way the people could have known the motives of Absalom because each case was a separate incident.

2 Sam. 15:7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

2 Sam. 15:8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

2 Sam. 15:9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

“And it came to pass after forty years” that Absalom spoke to David. What is the meaning of the “forty years” in this context? Since David reigned a total of 40 years and several months, and his reign had not ended at this time, the reference could not have been to his reign. One thought is 40 years from David’s anointing. Some commentators think that “forty years” is a mistake and should be “four years.” Another possibility is that Absalom was 40 years old. According to the *Expanded Comments*, the account should say “four years,” because “three years” are mentioned in 2 Samuel 13:38.

Q: Why did Absalom ask to go to Hebron to pay his vow?

A: Absalom was born in Hebron (2 Sam. 3:2,3). David reigned in Hebron for 7 1/2 years and had six wives down there.

Was the vow a ruse? The Bible simply records what Absalom said and does not state whether he lied. If he was telling the truth, then he originally made a vow in Hebron to serve the Lord. Then subsequently, when he was in exile in Geshur, Syria, for three years after slaying Amnon, he could have renewed that vow to the effect that if in any way he should be reinstated, he would dedicate his life to the Lord. If he truly made this vow, the spiritual lesson would be that it is possible to deceive ourselves with regard to our consecration. When Absalom got back to Jerusalem and was reinstated, did he evidence a desire to serve the Lord? No, he was interested in his own advancement.

This hard question shows that we all need to examine ourselves. From time to time, we should take inventory to be sure our motives are pure. A way may seem right to a man, but the end thereof can be death (Prov. 14:12). The sobering thought is that we can deceive ourselves.

Q: Why did Absalom have to ask David for permission to go to Hebron?

A: Proper decorum was to ask for a leave of absence. Especially in royalty, the king wanted to know who was in attendance near him so that he could give commands. For example, Saul was angry when David was absent because a trap had been set.

King David granted permission for Absalom to go to Hebron, the place of his original vow, saying, “Go in peace.” Absalom departed for Hebron.

2 Sam. 15:10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

2 Sam. 15:11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

2 Sam. 15:12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

Absalom sent spies throughout Israel with an instruction, "When you hear the sound of the trumpet, say that Absalom reigns in Hebron." Thus not merely was he wishing to be king, but he was planning a coup, a conspiracy. The sound of the trumpet would indicate that he had been successful in seizing the throne. In other words, he was setting the stage and would have someone stationed in readiness to sound the trumpet. For Absalom to make these suggestions shows he was getting feedback that the sentiment of the nation was for him and would support the coup. His popularity exceeded even that of David, and the majority of the people felt he would make a good king.

How clever! The details of how Absalom got to be king were to be withheld from the people, and just an announcement of his kingship would be made. If the people found out later about his underhandedness, it would be too late, for he would already be in office.

The spies were to announce, "Absalom reigns in Hebron." The city was revered for its historic value and popularity. Because Absalom was born in Hebron and lived there for a while in his earlier days, the people might consider Hebron to be his city. In any event, he was now in Hebron with 200 men who "in their simplicity ... knew not any thing" about his schemes and purposes; that is, they were naive.

Absalom sent for Ahithophel, David's counselor, who became a conspirator, if he was not one already (see verse 31). Ahithophel may have had a grievance against David, which Absalom knew about and capitalized on. Evidently, Ahithophel was a very wise counselor.

While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel, who was in his home city of Giloh. "The conspiracy was strong," meaning that the people's support for Absalom "increased continually." The fact he had a strong following shows the power of propaganda. In modern terminology, advertising and the news media influence the thinking of people who are not aware of the underlying strategy. The situation was snowballing in Absalom's favor.

2 Sam. 15:13 And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

2 Sam. 15:14 And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

2 Sam. 15:15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

A messenger informed David that the people were favoring Absalom. His words carried weight, for based on this testimony, David took radical action. His immediate departure from Jerusalem suggests he had seen some unfavorable signs that discomfited him, but he had hoped they were not true. Those who give the benefit of the doubt to a person, not desiring to injure him, may naively deceive themselves into thinking what he is doing is right. However, what the messenger said at this time must have tipped the scale for David. The unfavorable suggestions that had been coming to him about Absalom must have been cumulative—things he had witnessed with his own eyes, comments he had overheard, etc.—in order for him to take such precipitous action when the messenger said, "All Israel has gone after Absalom."

Comment: As king, David should have had the upper hand, and now he wanted to avoid bloodshed.

Reply: Yes, for he said, “Arise, and let us flee; ... make speed to depart, lest he [Absalom] overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city [Jerusalem] with the edge of the sword.” David knew that with Hebron the temporary capital and headquarters, Absalom anticipated having to put him to death, and the battle would be fought in Jerusalem. Absalom would surround the city and lay it waste. Meanwhile, David had been building up Jerusalem, so rather than have violence come to the city and its inhabitants, he felt the wise course of action was to leave as quickly as possible. David’s servants said they would go with him.

2 Sam. 15:16 And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house.

David and his entire household fled except for ten concubines, whom he intentionally left “to keep the house.” Normally speaking, concubines would not be molested, for men were the targets. David’s leaving them suggests he was hopeful of returning in peace later, and meanwhile, the household would be kept in repair.

2 Sam. 15:17 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

2 Sam. 15:18 And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

A number of other people, 600 foreigners, went with David. The Hebrew suggests that “a place that was far off” may be the name of a town. The location where they first tarried could not be too far from Jerusalem.

2 Sam. 15:19 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile.

2 Sam. 15:20 Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee.

2 Sam. 15:21 And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.

Even though David was blind concerning his own family, he was shrewd and perceptive with regard to other matters. Therefore, before allowing someone of foreign extraction to accompany him when he was at a low ebb in power and authority—someone who might switch sides at the last minute—David questioned Ittai the Gittite as a test. The king said in effect, “I appreciate what you have done for me, but it would be more logical for you to return to your homeland. You have my blessing. Go in peace.”

Comment: The RSV is clearer in verse 20: “You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, seeing I go I know not where? Go back, and take your brethren with you; and may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you.”

Reply: The statement “I go I know not where” is significant. David was saying, “Why take this risk when you can return in peace to your own homeland.”

Notice the response that David’s words brought forth. Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.”

2 Sam. 15:22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him.

2 Sam. 15:23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

David agreed to Ittai’s request to accompany him, even if death were the result. David and the people with him left under mournful circumstances. The “country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over” in what seemed to be a very strange situation. The people were sympathetic to David, who was being eclipsed in power and authority by his own son. They passed over “toward the way of the wilderness,” that is, due east in the direction of Jericho and the Jordan River. The brook Kidron was nearby, just outside Jerusalem.

We are reminded of Moses’ statement many years earlier: “Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me [let him cross the line to my side]” (Exod. 32:26). Similarly, in regard to tithing, when the tenth animal went under the rod, it was put aside. Here David had to judge as to who would accompany him.

2 Sam. 15:24 And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

2 Sam. 15:25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation:

2 Sam. 15:26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

David’s attitude was, “Whatever the outcome, let God’s will be done.” He instructed Zadok to carry the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem and to remain there. As high priests, Zadok and Abiathar were less apt to be molested, for they were representatives of the religious authority of the nation. David did not think Absalom would hurt them, so he said in effect, “If things go well, I will be back. If things do not go well, that is the Lord’s will.”

Later the account will show that Abiathar defected. To see how many good characters went astray is startling, and it shows the importance of continually cultivating good thoughts. We may be honest and thorough in the beginning, but if we are not on constant guard, our destiny can be changed. Therefore, when the Scriptures tell us to guard our “heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life,” that is not an empty saying (Prov. 4:23). The number who defected is sobering. With regard to the past, the present, and the future, the ratio seems to be about one out of two who turn back.

2 Sam. 15:27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of

Abiathar.

2 Sam. 15:28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.

2 Sam. 15:29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.

Thus the Ark of the Covenant was taken back to Jerusalem and put in the tent arrangement in the vicinity of the Temple mount. Zadok and Abiathar agreed to go back and, as spies, gather information for David so that he would know how events were progressing in the city. Zadok's son, Ahimaaz, and Abiathar's son, Jonathan, also returned, and they would be the messengers to bring the news to David. Meanwhile, David intended to tarry "in the plain of the wilderness" down in the Arabah region.

2 Sam. 15:30 And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

2 Sam. 15:31 And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

2 Sam. 15:32 And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:

2 Sam. 15:33 Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me:

2 Sam. 15:34 But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

Of course some history was behind David's knowing Hushai the Archite. David said in effect, "You will be more useful by not accompanying me but by going to Jerusalem and pretending to support Absalom. In the meantime, you can perhaps offset the influence of the conspirator Ahithophel, who is the counselor of Absalom." Hushai himself must have had a reputation as a counselor and as a man with savvy in political matters.

Q: Was David instructing Hushai to tell a lie?

A: Yes, but as the king, he had certain responsibilities and did not want to be slain. Moreover, it was customary for a king to have spies in order to be informed about the enemy. Absalom's rebellion was *wrong*, so David suggested a lie for the *higher good*. As Christians, we have Gospel Age judgmental standards, which are not quite the same as those in the Jewish Age. The point is that under the circumstances back there, David manifested wisdom. He prayed, "O Jehovah, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." In other words, "Overrule or confuse the counsel of Ahithophel so that it will not be relied upon." David knew that Ahithophel was very shrewd and that having him on the other side was a tremendous plus for Absalom. David greatly feared Ahithophel, but it is interesting how God overruled in the matter. David's prayer was answered in a way he would never have expected. Sometimes we, too, make an earnest prayer very specific, but the answer comes in a way we would never dream.

David was on the Mount of Olives, so he was nearby, just outside the city. His whole retinue was with him, and they were on the move. Absalom was about 12 miles away in Hebron. The weeping was sapping the energy and strength of David and the others. David, especially, was in a low physical state, yet he climbed the mount.

Comment: In ascending the Mount of Olives, David was not only weeping but barefoot with his head covered. It is touching that the people with him likewise covered their heads and wept.

2 Sam. 15:35 And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

2 Sam. 15:36 Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.

2 Sam. 15:37 So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

David was shrewd. As Levites, Zadok and Abiathar would be limited in trying to get information for him, for they were separate and distinct from civil authority. However, if Hushai was in with the political forces, he could convey a message to the two priests, who, in turn, would send their sons as messengers to David with news of what was transpiring. Thus David was saying, "Zadok and Abiathar are loyal, so you can trust them with information for me." As a result, Hushai, David's friend, went into Jerusalem, and so did Absalom.

Q: Is there a spiritual parallel or counterpart for this principle based on the type of judging Paul said the Christian is to do? We are not to so naively go through our Christian walk that we fail to observe wolves in sheep's clothing or that we cast our pearls before swine. Although we do not plan strategies as David did, there are many ways in which we should be careful with our words under certain circumstances and use wisdom.

A: Paul properly used strategy on a number of occasions. For example, when there was a controversy between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and he was being accused before the Roman representative, he said, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6-10). He thus set the one party against the other because they were threatening to kill him. In another case, he used the Roman authority. His general advice was, "Do not go to the secular courts for judgment in matters that can be handled in the Church," but when the time was propitious, he put himself in the hands of the Roman court in order to have his trial before Caesar. As a Roman citizen, he had the right to do this and thereby prolonged his ministry. It is not always wise to tell all the truth we have. The characteristic of a fool is to tell all he knows (Prov. 29:11).

2 Sam. 16:1 And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

"When David was a little past the top of the hill [probably the Mount of Olives], behold, Ziba," who was originally a steward under King Saul, intercepted him, bearing generous gifts of food and animals (2 Sam. 9:2,3,10). After Saul was slain, David had honored Jonathan's son Mephibosheth and also Ziba. David had suggested that Ziba transfer his allegiance from the deceased Saul to Mephibosheth, who was lame, and serve him in a similar capacity.

Ziba's gifts for David and his men consisted of 2 asses, 200 loaves of bread, 100 bunches of

raisins, 100 summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. The “bottle” would have been a large goatskin, which held a considerable quantity of wine. The question arises, Why didn’t David procure his own animals and food when he fled from Jerusalem? The reason is that he left as a penitent, barefoot and with his head covered (2 Sam. 15:30). He could have given orders for a caravan with animals and supplies, but he left in a mood of despondency, feeling that God was bringing retribution upon his head. At this point, he was only a little way from Jerusalem.

By his action, Ziba was more or less showing that his sympathy was with David rather than with Absalom. Of course David was not fully aware of what was happening at first. The king would have appreciated this gesture, for most of Israel had been won over to Absalom.

2 Sam. 16:2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king’s household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

David asked Ziba, “What do you mean by these gifts?” Ziba replied that he wanted to strengthen David’s young men with food and wine, especially in view of the fact that they were going to an unknown destination in the wilderness of Judea.

2 Sam. 16:3 And the king said, And where is thy master’s son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

David asked, “Where is [Saul] your master’s [grand]son [Mephibosheth]?” Ziba answered, “Mephibosheth abides in Jerusalem to cast in his lot with Absalom.” (This was a *lie*, as 2 Samuel 19:24-30 will show.) Through these gifts, Ziba cleverly used subterfuge. Not only was he trying to influence David, but he suspected that in the final analysis, Absalom would not be successful. In other words, Ziba gambled by siding with David, for he figured that his own position would be enhanced if David won out against Absalom. Mephibosheth was not present at this time to tell his side of the story and thus expose Ziba’s deception.

2 Sam. 16:4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

David told Ziba that he could have all the properties that belonged to Mephibosheth. Ziba replied, “I humbly beseech you that I may find grace in your sight, my lord, O king.” David was despondent and felt forsaken because Absalom seemed to have the whole nation on his side. Being in a condition of weakness, penitence, and mourning, the king believed Ziba.

David’s response shows the importance of knowing both sides of an issue and the true circumstance before making a decision. If Ziba had told the truth, David’s giving the land to him would have been proper. The sin was Ziba’s for giving a lying testimony. The motive behind his deception was greed for advancement and favor.

2 Sam. 16:5 And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

2 Sam. 16:6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

2 Sam. 16:7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and

thou man of Belial:

2 Sam. 16:8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

David was already depressed, and now along came Shimei, who cast stones at and cursed him and his men. Being at a very low ebb, David felt that God was looking upon him with disfavor. He submitted to what he thought was a form of retribution and thus did not fight against Shimei and stop him. The man who slew Goliath could have crushed this fellow like a gnat had he so desired. Instead, he accepted all the insult and injury.

Shimei was persistent, pursuing David like a hornet and calling him a “bloody man” and a “man of Belial.” He was saying, “Get out of Jerusalem. You are a usurper and should never have been king in the first place.” Shimei continued, “Jehovah has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul and delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom.” Considering David’s state of mind, we can see that he thought Shimei was telling the truth.

Shimei was a relative of Saul, and of course when Saul and Jonathan died, the affairs changed for the whole family except where David personally intervened. Shimei’s fortunes changed radically when the house of Saul was demoted and David was promoted.

Comment: Shimei harbored a grudge for a long time because David had now been reigning for many years.

David’s “mighty men” were his personal bodyguards, who were “on his right hand and on his left.” They would have been handpicked stalwarts who were unusual in stature and warfare.

2 Sam. 16:9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

2 Sam. 16:10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

2 Sam. 16:11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

2 Sam. 16:12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

If Shimei’s cursing was meant to be the Lord’s retribution, David wanted to accept it as such. He felt that if he were to stop the mouth of Shimei, he would be bucking Divine Providence. Therefore, David was saying, “Let Shimei curse me, especially if God put it upon his heart to take that action.” David manifested this same spirit on several occasions. While he was a man of war, he was also tenderhearted in certain experiences.

In verse 11, David made a comparison between the cursing of Shimei the Benjamite and the intent of Absalom, his own son. Incidentally, Saul, too, was of the tribe of Benjamin. David’s words were true, for Absalom’s rebellion was worse than Shimei’s cursing.

Comment: The words of Abishai regarding Shimei were characteristic of his impulsive attitude:

“Let me go over ... and take off his head.”

Reply: Yes, Abishai was persistent here as he had been earlier with regard to Saul. When David asked, “Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp?” Abishai said, “I will go.” They found Saul sleeping with his spear stuck in the ground at his pillow. Then said Abishai to David, “God has delivered Saul into your hand this day. Now, therefore, let me kill him.” However, David would not let Abishai stretch forth his hand against Jehovah’s anointed, saying that God would overrule the timing of Saul’s death (1 Sam. 26:6-10).

The impulsiveness of Abishai reminds us of the Apostle Peter, who drew a sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest (John 18:10). Peter’s impulsiveness was subsequently curbed, and he became a rock in steadfastness. Jesus said, “When thou art converted”—and Peter’s conversion was remarkable (Luke 22:32).

2 Sam. 16:13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill’s side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

As David and his men continued, Shimei followed along on the ridge of a hill and kept shouting insults and throwing stones down on the king. The situation was like being chased by a hornet.

2 Sam. 16:14 And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

David and his men had not gone very far (perhaps a distance of five miles), but the misfortunes had taxed their energy so that they were at a low ebb both physically and emotionally. Thus they were now resting to get refreshed, whereas normally, they would have wanted to move quickly and put as much distance as possible between them and Absalom. Later we will see that Hushai, the spy whom David sent to Absalom, worked for his good because otherwise, the counsel of Ahithophel would have been followed. (Ahithophel was David’s former counselor—2 Sam. 15:12.)

Comment: We should keep in mind that David was barefoot, which slowed him down.

2 Sam. 16:15 And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

2 Sam. 16:16 And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

2 Sam. 16:17 And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?

2 Sam. 16:18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.

2 Sam. 16:19 And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father’s presence, so will I be in thy presence.

Verses 15-19 tell what was happening in the meantime. As David and his men were moving out of Jerusalem, Absalom and his men were moving into the city. Having Ahithophel, a wise and shrewd counselor, was a real asset for Absalom. Then along came Hushai the Archite, David’s friend. As he approached from the distance, he called repeatedly unto Absalom, “God save the king!” (It sounded as if Hushai wanted Absalom to be the king, whereas his loyalty

was to David.) When Absalom said to Hushai, “What are you doing here? You should be with David, your friend,” Hushai gave a good answer, which was not a lie, but it put Absalom off guard. Hushai said that he would serve and abide with whoever Jehovah prospered in the final analysis. Absalom knew that Hushai was a close confidant of David, but this response was like saying, “In spite of the closeness of my friendship with David, I will recognize closeness with God as being superior.” And Hushai added, “Should I not now serve you, Absalom, as I previously served your father?” (Of course Hushai did not disclose his real purpose in serving Absalom in that capacity.)

2 Sam. 16:20 Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.

Verse 20 is a break in thought, indicating a little time lapse. In consulting those associated with him, Absalom appointed Ahithophel to be the chairman of the group. Knowing Ahithophel was wise, Absalom implied he would follow the advice that was forthcoming. Hushai would have been either present in the council or near enough to overhear what was said.

2 Sam. 16:21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father’s concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong.

2 Sam. 16:22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.

2 Sam. 16:23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

And what did Ahithophel advise? “Go in unto your father David’s concubines. Put up your tent on top of the house so that all of the people will know what you are doing. You will be on center stage out in the open, as it were, and they will know you have taken over.” This shrewd counsel would have a devastating effect, for it would show that Absalom was taking over the throne with strength and authority. Whether a cause is right or wrong, rebels want someone *with strength* to assume authority. We can see the Lord’s retribution for David’s earlier sins with Bathsheba. When David was apprised later of what had happened, Absalom’s actions had a cutting effect on him.

“And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days [both with David earlier and with Absalom now], was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God.” In other words, the counsel of Ahithophel was so shrewd and so wise that it was as if he had consulted and gotten ideas from the oracle of God. Verse 23 is saying in effect, “Had Absalom listened to Ahithophel’s advice *consistently* from henceforth, then, all things being equal, he would have crushed David and made the revolt a success.

2 Sam. 17:1 Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:

2 Sam. 17:2 And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

2 Sam. 17:3 And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace.

2 Sam. 17:4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

The advice of Ahithophel continued. He was saying, “Let me act quickly—even tonight! I will kill the king, and eventually all of his men, the former followers of David, will be wed to you. When they see that you spared them and killed only David, the whole kingdom will be unified unto you.” Again Ahithophel gave very shrewd counsel. David was in a weak and weary condition, and he and his men were resting. Therefore, if Ahithophel went that very night with 12,000 men to apprehend David, the king and his men would be caught unawares. Absalom was pleased with this advice, as were all the elders of Israel. They felt the advice was sound and said “Amen” in effect.

Comment: How cruel for Absalom to consider such advice against his own father! David was worried about Absalom and sobbed when his son died later, but the son’s intent was murderous.

2 Sam. 17:5 Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

2 Sam. 17:6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not; speak thou.

2 Sam. 17:7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time.

2 Sam. 17:8 For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

2 Sam. 17:9 Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

2 Sam. 17:10 And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men.

2 Sam. 17:11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

2 Sam. 17:12 So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one.

2 Sam. 17:13 Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

2 Sam. 17:14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

When Absalom called Hushai for counsel, he and his men felt it was superior to Ahithophel’s.

Comment: Hushai was shrewd too. David was of an entirely different disposition than

Absalom, so Hushai knew that Absalom would accept his advice, thinking it was right. In other words, Absalom would have reacted in anger if he had been in David's place and would have separated himself from his men.

Reply: Yes, Absalom would have been inflamed with anger like a female bear deprived of her cubs, rather than penitent, sorrowful, and weary like David.

Hushai was saying, "The counsel of Ahithophel is not good at this time, for there is an inherent danger. If you go out with your 12,000 men and try to kill David as an individual, you will confront his men, but who knows where the king himself is? He may be so hidden that when you make your surprise attack, he will know enough in advance that he will either regroup his forces or escape. Instead of Ahithophel's advice, I suggest that you gather everyone from Dan to Beersheba and personally lead them to battle. Then you will kill not only David but also all of his men—individuals who might turn on you later." The advice was flattering to Absalom, for he would be in charge and would supposedly kill *all* enemies.

Hushai knew that if his advice were followed, it would take days to rally the men of Israel, and David would have time to escape. He wanted to give David time to find out what was going on. From Absalom's standpoint, Ahithophel's advice was really better, and from David's standpoint, Hushai's advice was superior. Because Absalom misread David's character and disposition at this time, he and the elders of Israel judged Hushai's advice as better. Of course God overruled the matter, for He "had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom." In other words, (1) God put the thought in Absalom's mind to ask Hushai for advice. Of course Hushai had some credibility and credentials for Absalom to even turn to him, but the Lord was behind the suggestion. (2) God gave wisdom to Hushai to know what counsel to give. For other reasons, as we will see, it was absolutely essential that Absalom be in the group that went out to kill David.

What is the thought behind the ropes in verse 13? "Moreover, if he [David] be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there." Hushai was saying to Absalom, "If David flees to a particular town for refuge, you and your men can make a cordon around it and then move inward, with each man marching directly forward, thus shrinking the size of the cordon down to the river where you will seize David. He cannot possibly get out of that net."

Now, thousands of years later, we are privileged to get an insight into the counsel from both sides—how dramatic! Imagine the people in the Kingdom being privy to many counsels down through history that changed the course of men's affairs! All intrigue and counsels that are pertinent to momentous occasions of the past, present, and future have been, and will be, filmed and recorded so that true history will be known.

2 Sam. 17:15 Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

2 Sam. 17:16 Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him.

2 Sam. 17:17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

2 Sam. 17:18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither

they went down.

2 Sam. 17:19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

2 Sam. 17:20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

Here we see the wisdom of David too, for originally the priests had wanted to take the Ark of the Covenant out of Jerusalem. Zadok had intended to accompany David, but the king said the Ark belonged in Jerusalem. Moreover, David felt that Absalom would not hurt Zadok and Abiathar and that the two priests would hear and be able to transmit the news to him so that he would be aware of what was happening.

When Hushai gave his advice and it was accepted, the incensed Ahithophel apparently watched to see if Hushai would sneak out of the city to tell David. However, Hushai merely contacted the two priests in Jerusalem, who sent a maidservant (see RSV) to their two sons. The sons were staying in En-rogel, which was on the way to Jericho, and they would take the news to David.

In other words, there was a grapevine consisting of Hushai, Zadok and Abiathar, and their two sons. They tried to pass the news secretly, but a lad saw Jonathan and Ahimaaz and reported the matter to Absalom, who smelled a rat, to use a cliché. Servants were immediately dispatched to En-rogel, where the two sons were last seen.

Knowing Absalom's men were coming, the two sons climbed down in a well to hide. A woman who was sympathetic to David "spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known." The covering on the well looked very natural. How ingenious! (A similar deception occurred when Rahab hid two Israelite spies under straw on her roof.) Meanwhile, Absalom's servants ran around looking for the two priests' sons but could not find them. The topography of the land, without trees and foliage, meant the two could not get far without being spotted, but the woman's assistance in hiding them in the well was effective. Shortly the two would return to their normal duties and way of living, thus giving the lie to the lad's report that they had been involved. The fact that Absalom's servants could not find the two also made the lad's report seem false. Like Rahab, the woman told a lie: "They be gone over the brook of water." Absalom's servants returned to Jerusalem.

2 Sam. 17:21 And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

2 Sam. 17:22 Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

Ahimaaz and Jonathan's message to David was, "Arise, and pass quickly over the water [the river Jordan]: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you." Accordingly, David and all of his men fled across the Jordan into Gilead, where he had opportunity to arrange his forces (verse 26).

2 Sam. 17:23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Ahithophel committed suicide. This act shows how shrewd he was, for he could see that by following Hushai's advice, Absalom would be defeated by David in the open field. Knowing that David would then kill him as a rebel, Ahithophel hung himself.

2 Sam. 17:24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

2 Sam. 17:25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother.

Absalom made Amasa the captain of his host. Incidentally, this Abigail was not David's wife.

2 Sam. 17:26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

2 Sam. 17:27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

2 Sam. 17:28 Brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse,

2 Sam. 17:29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

It is interesting that the occupants there in the land of Gilead, whom David had formerly fought, now rallied to his support. They showed kindness by providing beds, basins, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain and pulse, beans, lentils, honey, butter, sheep, and cheese to strengthen David and his men, saying, "They are hungry, weary, and thirsty in the wilderness."

By now David and Absalom were both beyond Jordan in the land of Gilead, which was far from Jerusalem. David was very familiar with this territory—Ammon, Moab, and Edom—and was receiving support.

As the intrigue continued, we can see retribution on David in some of the experiences. His contrition and acceptance of the judgments were proper, for he did not try to fight Divine Providence. He had said earlier, "Perhaps God will requite me good" (2 Sam. 16:12). In other words, his thinking was, "If I do not slay Absalom, maybe the Lord will be satisfied with His judgment against me."

Comment: Receiving the message from Jonathan and Ahimaaz would have encouraged David as a sign that God's favor had not wholly departed from him.

Reply: Yes, and with the people in Gilead helping him, David would have felt reinstated. And shortly we will see that Zadok, one of the two high priests, and his children remained loyal to David.

2 Sam. 18:1 And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

David organized the armed forces under proper leadership—under captains of hundreds and thousands. Others rallied around David after he crossed the river Jordan, so now he had an army of reasonable size, even though the greater part of Israel and Hebron backed Absalom.

2 Sam. 18:2 And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

David divided the army into three primary groups. Two of the leaders, Joab and Abishai, were brothers, and the third leader, Ittai the Gittite, from the Philistine city of Gath, had befriended David earlier, declaring his loyalty (2 Sam. 15:19-22). Ittai was perhaps placed over those of a foreign extraction who were intermingled with David's forces.

2 Sam. 18:3 But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city.

David said he would enter the battle himself (verse 2), but those in the army felt he should remain behind in the city, for if he was killed, his support would collapse and they would be regarded as traitors. If he wanted to give them advice, he could do so by messenger. They felt he was "worth ten thousand" of them.

2 Sam. 18:4 And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

David stood in an elevated portion above the entrance gate of the city, reviewing the armed forces as the thousands passed by. Depending on the nature of the construction, a tower and a platform were over the city gate. Probably each of the three contingents came by separately, and he shouted instructions to the particular leader in a voice that carried out into the plain so that the people under that leader could also hear what David said.

2 Sam. 18:5 And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

Why did David give advice to the three leaders to deal gently with Absalom? With Absalom being his son, David may have felt that God had prodded the actions as part of the retribution. In addition, because of the seriousness of the actions, David might have reasoned that should Absalom be slain, he would not have opportunity to repent. Depending on the nature of the misdeed, David dealt generously with others who had turned against him if they repented. Possibly David felt that if Absalom died in his sins, his chances of obtaining life in the future would be dark indeed.

2 Sam. 18:6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

2 Sam. 18:7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

2 Sam. 18:8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

From a battle standpoint, Absalom's supporters were mostly from the ten tribes. As will be seen later, there was a division among their ranks into three parties. At the present time, two of the three had more or less a common interest in wanting David to be defeated and slain. Included among the two parties were those in sympathy with Absalom and those in sympathy with the former house of Saul. Even though families were involved who had been loyal to Saul, they wanted to unite forces to put David down, and then later they could fight among themselves to jockey for a better position of political power.

How did "the wood" devour more people than the sword? In the initial engagement, both the forces of Israel and David's servants fought in the "field," that is, in the plain in front of the woods. When Absalom's supporters fled, the woods impeded their escape so that they were more easily slain from the rear by David's men. In other words, when Absalom's men broke ranks, they were so frustrated and off guard that they were an easy prey for the pursuers. As a result, 20,000 of Israel were slain in combat, which was a "great slaughter."

"The battle was there scattered over the face of all the country." David's three groups under the three leaders Joab, Abishai, and Ittai fought against Absalom, who apparently lacked the generalship ability of David. Of course David had fought many battles over the years. Thus Absalom's forces, who were superior in number, became so disorganized that they were scattered all around and thus were not as much under control as David's forces.

With David's forces being divided into three groups, Absalom had to fight the minds of three different leaders instead of the thinking of just one general. That factor could have contributed to the distracting influence so that Absalom did not know how to handle the situation.

2 Sam. 18:9 And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

2 Sam. 18:10 And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

2 Sam. 18:11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle.

2 Sam. 18:12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

2 Sam. 18:13 Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me.

Evidently, Absalom had to retreat, and as he was fleeing on a mule, Joab's segment of the army caught up with him. When Absalom miscalculated the low-slung heavy boughs of a great oak tree, his head got stuck in the fork of one of the boughs. Probably while he was riding fast on the mule and bouncing up and down, his head got stuck as he went under a particular bough. No doubt his heavy hair added to the problem. As he tried to free his head, his hair got more and more entangled. Of course most people in those days rode almost bareback, so when Absalom's head got stuck, he had to let go of the reins. The mule continued on, and Absalom's feet did not quite touch the ground, perhaps being only an inch or two below his reach so that he could not make contact. A "certain man" reported Absalom's plight to Joab.

The account is very clear as to why this man did not take advantage of the situation and slay Absalom. Not only was he loyal to David, but he did not want to risk his life by killing Absalom (1) because of the king's commandment and (2) because of the certainty that such a matter would be reported to David and punishment would be meted out.

Absalom was vain and heady, thinking he would be a better king than his father. Therefore, for his head and hair to get entangled in the tree was a form of retribution for his rebellion against David. The woods impeded the panicked flight of the others, but it was Absalom whose hair got caught in the boughs of an oak tree.

Hearing what had happened, Joab told the man who informed him that he would have given a reward of ten pieces of silver plus a girdle, which was a symbol of a man of honor and thus a considerable reward, for the slaying of Absalom. However, the man said he would not have done so for a thousand shekels of silver.

Joab probably reasoned that it would be much wiser to kill Absalom because as long as he was alive—and especially if his father forgave him—this potential divisive element would continue to exist in the kingdom. Thus Joab felt it was in the best interest of the kingdom to slay Absalom, in spite of David's personal paternalistic instruction. In other words, Joab felt that David's emotions overrode his better judgment, and actually, that was the case. For David to instruct the army to "deal gently" with Absalom, who was an insurrectionist, was most unusual (verse 5). Joab thought the slaying of Absalom would be in the best interest of David, the kingdom, and perhaps himself as well.

In Joab, we see a mixed character. He was very shrewd in some matters, and his judgment was right on several points. However, he was lacking in character in other areas, as will be seen more and more as the account continues.

2 Sam. 18:14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

2 Sam. 18:15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

Joab was saying, "I do not have time to discuss the matter further. I must get going." With Absalom hanging in a tree, Joab raced back to dispatch him. He took three darts, each of which would have been at least three feet long, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom. However, he was still alive, in spite of hanging there with three staves in his heart, so Joab's ten young armor bearers, or bodyguards, finished Absalom off, putting him out of his misery.

2 Sam. 18:16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

There are different ways of blowing the trumpet: reveille, taps, a signal to assemble for battle, a battle cry, and a sound to signal retreat. Evidently, the way Joab blew the trumpet signaled his forces to stop fighting. Here we are given insight into a good point of his character, for why did he blow the trumpet to call off the battle? Since Absalom, the main culprit, was dead, the rebellion was over. Therefore, Joab took the proper action in stopping unnecessary bloodshed between those of Israel and those of Judah. He "held back the people" from further pursuit. Incidentally, in piecing together the clues, we see that Joab seemed to be a patriot for the kingdom, rather than to have special loyalty to David.

2 Sam. 18:17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

Absalom's body was cast into a great pit in the woods, and many stones were laid upon him to keep animals from eating his body and to make a memorial for him in an unfavorable sense. He was buried in the most convenient spot near where he had died. In time, Absalom's tomb became a toilet because he was such an ignoble character.

From another standpoint, such memorials, consisting of piles of stones, are made in the desert to honor various sheiks. These memorials become landmarks. However, if a memorial was unfavorable, it was customary for a person to take a stone and curse it and then to throw another stone on top of the first stone to show agreement that the deceased was a traitor.

David's forces fled and returned "every one to his tent," wondering and being fearful of what the king would do. Their consciences were involved, for David had given specific orders regarding Absalom, and now he was dead. Their tents were temporary encampments within the city where the forces had discussed strategy prior to the battle. At this point, the forces came back stealthily, feeling discouraged and ashamed for having killed Absalom contrary to David's orders. Their reaction showed the regard they had for the king.

2 Sam. 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

Earlier Absalom had prepared a burial place for himself. The fact that Absalom had no successor to carry on after his death was another form of retribution. Today this monument in the king's dale (the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem) near Zechariah's Tomb is called "Absalom's Pillar."

To repeat, from the standpoint of long-term welfare, David thought it would be better to spare Absalom so that he would have opportunity to recant and repent. Initially, before the rebellion, David probably felt that Absalom would make an ideal king because of his looks, bearing, etc. It took a little time for David to be convinced that Absalom lacked character, but once he rebelled and took over the capital, the matter was obvious in spite of David's paternal instincts.

Q: Does Absalom picture the Adversary here?

A: In a general lesson, yes, but to go into the finer details would destroy the picture. Similarly, with the name David meaning "Beloved," he certainly represents Jesus in many pictures. Therefore, if we isolate what happened to these two contrasting characters in regard to Absalom's sin, we can say that he pictures Satan.

From a practical standpoint, Joab had more sound wisdom than David, for if Absalom had lived, how would he be dealt with? Would he be put in chains? Originally, Joab was friendlier with Absalom than with David, and when Absalom went into exile for several years, Joab finagled an arrangement whereby David could recall him. However, even though Absalom came back to Jerusalem, he was held in reserve in his house. When Absalom wanted a personal audience with David, Joab told him to be patient, saying he could arrange the matter but needed some time. In his impatience, Absalom wrongfully set Joab's field afire. Seeing this streak in Absalom, Joab no longer felt he was an appropriate successor to David. Joab went back to David and continued with him as his general.

Comment: Joab's decision to slay Absalom seems to be right. David tried to save Absalom, but rebelling against his father, the king, was a serious sin.

Reply: As fallen human beings, we also have good and bad traits.

Comment: Later Joab turned against David and supported Adonijah (1 Kings 1:7).

Reply: That is true. Joab later sided with Adonijah, thinking that son would be David's successor. Being like the five-star general of David's forces, Joab was looking out for his own future and thinking from the standpoint of the kingdom of Israel. Adonijah's rebellion was still another form of retribution on David. Retribution came on Absalom, David, and Joab, but David was inherently good—a man who loved God in spite of his weaknesses. Retribution had to come into his life in order to secure the promise that Messiah would be of his lineage.

2 Sam. 18:19 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

2 Sam. 18:20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

2 Sam. 18:21 Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

2 Sam. 18:22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

2 Sam. 18:23 But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.

Cush was probably a black Ethiopian. Joab told Ahimaaz not to take the tidings to David, yet in almost the same breath, he instructed Cush to take the message to the king. Why did Joab hold back Ahimaaz but allow Cush to go? After perhaps a half hour and repetitive asking, Joab let Ahimaaz go too, but at first his reply was, "Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?" In other words, "What would you say? Cush will bring the news, so you would run needlessly and bear no tidings." When Joab granted permission to Ahimaaz, he thought Cush was far enough ahead to reach David first. However, by taking a different route, Ahimaaz overran Cush and was the first to arrive. (Ahimaaz ran a curved route, "by the way of the plain," and Cush evidently ran as the crow flies but over hills.)

Comment: Joab seemed to have a strategy in mind in regard to delivering the message about Absalom to David.

Reply: Joab thought Cush would be the first to give David the message. He never expected Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, to outrun Cush.

2 Sam. 18:24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

2 Sam. 18:25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

2 Sam. 18:26 And the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

2 Sam. 18:27 And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

2 Sam. 18:28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

2 Sam. 18:29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

2 Sam. 18:30 And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

2 Sam. 18:31 And, behold, Cushie came; and Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

2 Sam. 18:32 And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, gave the first message, which was favorable: "All is well"; that is, "You are victorious. Your enemies have been defeated." David persisted, "What about my son? Is Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz gave the impression he did not know about the outcome. If he truly did not know the circumstances of Absalom's death, then perhaps Joab wanted Cushie to go to David as an eyewitness of the slaying. The news of Absalom's death had to be revealed to the king, and Joab would have felt the sooner, the better, so that David's anger would diminish by the time he arrived. Joab might have felt it would be more dangerous for him to bring the news to David that his son was dead.

Therefore, when Cushie arrived, he delivered a strong message. To David's question "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Cushie replied, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." The king knew immediately that Absalom was dead.

2 Sam. 18:33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

David was distraught and emotionally involved in Absalom's death. In view of what Absalom had done against the king and the kingdom, David's reasoning was not sound here. Two factors may have motivated David to react so emotionally: (1) He saw Absalom as the instrument of God's retribution to bring sorrow upon him for his own misdeeds. (2) David felt Absalom needed an opportunity to repent for the sake of his character. Otherwise, it would be hard to understand David's reaction, which would not be proper unless some extenuating circumstances justified it. No doubt many people saw David's reaction and heard his weeping.

Q: Is there a lesson with regard to the two messengers? Ahimaaz went with great zeal to overrun Cushai and give a message to David.

A: Ahimaaz wanted to tell David, the king he loved, the *good news* regarding the *victory*. The defeat of the opposing forces meant that David now practically had the kingdom back in his hands. (From a technical standpoint, Absalom took over in a coup d'état that was successful for a short time except for getting rid of David personally.)

Comment: Verse 19 tells of Ahimaaz's first request to take the news to David: "Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies." Ahimaaz wanted to give *God* the credit for the victory.

Reply: The victory truly was good news. We think that Joab wanted the king to know of Absalom's death as soon as possible so that he would simmer down lest he dispatch Joab in his anger. Now, because of private mourning, David was not on hand when Joab and the army returned.

Joab's advice to put Absalom to death was correct. These studies show that it does not matter how "good" a person is, for not until his life is finished is his destiny set—except, of course, for those who openly commit the "great transgression," the "sin unto death," which can happen at any time during one's lifetime (Psa. 19:13; 1 John 5:16). The cumulative acts of life will have a lot to do with where one stands in final judgment in the eyes of fellow men who are enlightened in the next age and look back. We saw two examples: (1) Saul's character changed for the worse. (2) Absalom no doubt had some proper and good motivations early on and might have been a man of great promise, but he was vain in his appearance and advice as time went on.

Q: Wouldn't David's grieving over Absalom's death show that he was emotionally involved and really loved Absalom? Wouldn't that be true also when he failed to reprove Absalom for slaying Amnon, who had raped Tamar?

A: For one thing, Amnon had forced Tamar, Absalom's natural sister, so the incident was in the family. Even today, whether one gets death, a life sentence, or a lesser sentence, much depends on the type of slaying. For instance, under the Law, the brother of one who was slain accidentally was not put to death for emotionally killing the perpetrator, for the latter should have hurried to a city of refuge. Thus for Absalom to take vengeance on Amnon, who had molested Tamar, David might have felt unsure in his own judgment. There is usually more leeway for an act committed out of emotion. In thinking the matter over, David, who knew the Law, probably felt he had to wink the eye at Absalom's act.

Comment: Absalom premeditated the slaying of Amnon by setting up the circumstances for the deed.

Reply: That is true, but nevertheless, Amnon's violation of Tamar was a dastardly deed, and to make the matter worse, he refused to marry her after destroying her virginity. If we were the judge in some of these cases, we would be very concerned about how to render the proper judgment. That is why in the next age, the Church will be given the divine mind and education and see things as they actually are. They will know how to give judgment because all the facts will be before them.

2 Sam. 19:1 And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2 Sam. 19:2 And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

2 Sam. 19:3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

2 Sam. 19:4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

In review, Absalom had led a revolt in the kingdom against his own father and had crossed the river Jordan. The opposing forces were staged for battle in the land of Gilead, and in the ensuing battle, instead of David and his men being defeated, which seemed to be a sure outcome, they were victorious through the generalship of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. When Absalom's head was caught in a tree, Joab slew him. Now Joab and the others were returning home from that victory.

Joab was told, "Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth [greatly and audibly] for Absalom." The psychological effect of David's reaction to the death of his son discouraged the men who had supported the king and won the outstanding victory. They had expected to come back and be greeted and praised by the king for their courage and victory, but instead, they came stealthily into the city.

2 Sam. 19:5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

2 Sam. 19:6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

2 Sam. 19:7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

2 Sam. 19:8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

Comment: Joab spoke the truth here, yet he should have felt a twinge of conscience for having disobeyed David's order by killing Absalom.

Reply: That is true. Joab was correct to kill Absalom, but he was careful not to disclose to David that the act had occurred by his own hand.

Had David not followed Joab's advice here and gone forth and sat in the gate, the people would have deserted him, resulting in their scattering, as Joab had said. The king's sitting in the gate was like a signal to the people that he was about to make an important pronouncement.

Comment: Even with all his grief, David was able to grasp the soundness of Joab's advice and act on it.

Reply: His emotions overtook him. Without Joab's advice, he would have come to his senses but more slowly, probably not acting until the next day. Joab said David had better come to his senses right away. If he tarried and let the sun go down, he would lose the support of the people. David was so self-centered in regard to Absalom that he temporarily lost control of his

usual sound reasoning. He had the reputation of being an “angel of God” (1 Sam. 29:9; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 19:27). In other words, the people recognized that David had a great deal of common sense, as did his son Solomon, who was subsequently known for his wisdom.

2 Sam. 19:9 And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

2 Sam. 19:10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

2 Sam. 19:11 And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house.

2 Sam. 19:12 Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?

Paragraph marks before verses 9 and 11 in the King James indicate a time interval. When Absalom was slain, the army of his supporters who survived went back across Jordan to their homeland. As they traveled, news came with the returning defeated army that they had lost the battle and that Absalom, whom the ten tribes had elected king, was dead. Verses 9 and 10 give the reaction and sentiments of the people in the ten tribes upon hearing this news. Coming to their senses, they reasoned, “Let us welcome back David as our king. After all, look at his military successes prior to Absalom.”

Not only did the people of the ten tribes reason thus, but word of their reaction got back to David. As a result, he realized that they desired to return their allegiance to him as their king and that they were preparing to send representatives, or an embassy, to greet him and welcome him back to Jerusalem, the capital, with their support. David, who was of the tribe of Judah, quickly sent word through the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to criticize those of Judah, his own people, with whom he had a closer kinship. His message was, “The ten tribes want to welcome me back, and what are you doing? You are my own flesh and blood. Why are you so slow to affirm your allegiance and recognize my kingship?” David was prodding them to take action—“Seeing [that] the speech of all Israel [the ten tribes] is come to the king, even to his house ... wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?”—and he went even further, as succeeding verses show.

2 Sam. 19:13 And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

2 Sam. 19:14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.

What was the king’s strategy? After David prodded those of Judah, saying, “You are my brethren. Why are you the last to welcome me back?” he suggested a change if they cooperated; namely, David would replace Joab with Amasa, the former captain and *leader* of the host of Absalom, the *enemy* (2 Sam. 17:25). Here we are given an insight into David’s inner thinking. His victorious army had been divided into three parts, and Joab’s division was the most successful in the warfare, for they had chased Absalom’s forces into the woods and Joab had slain Absalom. David was saying that Joab, his famed general, would be replaced with one stroke. To repeat: David was suggesting that if Judah sent an emissary to Jerusalem to

acknowledge him, not only would he be pleased, but he would put Amasa over Joab as general of the host.

Joab and Amasa were close relatives of David, both being nephews and of the tribe of Judah. Zeruah, who was David's sister, had three sons, two of whom were still living: Joab and Abishai (2 Sam. 2:18). Therefore, Joab was the son of Zeruah, a sister of David, and Amasa was the son of another sister of David. Consider the situation. Judah had led the rebellion, for generally speaking, the men of Judah had followed Absalom. When David now said to Judah, "You are the last to welcome me back," and then offered to use Amasa, *their* general, to replace Joab, *his own* general, the suggestion was a political strategy to win them over to his side. To offer to elevate Amasa won their hearts, for it showed that he would have Judah back without harboring a grudge. With that one shrewd stroke, the people felt he was not really against them, and the former breach would be healed. David thus "bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man," and they sent word unto him, "Return thou, and all thy servants."

On the one hand, David's strategy worked. On the other hand, Joab, who had given David wise counsel and was his general and had fought on his behalf, was demoted, but why? David probably knew the mettle of Joab's character. A brilliant general, Joab had risked his life for the king on different occasions. He was also wise and exhibited nobility at times. For instance, when he was about to have a victory over the Ammonites, he called David to come from Jerusalem to get the credit as king. Nevertheless, there were defects in his character that troubled David.

At any rate, Joab would have been very upset about his removal from office. Moreover, David indicated that Amasa would be the captain of the host "continually"—that is, *permanently*—instead of Joab.

2 Sam. 19:15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

David had been east of the Jordan River, on the Gilead side. Now he returned and came back to the Jordan. Those of Judah went to Gilgal to meet the king and his household and conduct them over the river.

2 Sam. 19:16 And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

2 Sam. 19:17 And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

2 Sam. 19:18 And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

2 Sam. 19:19 And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

Earlier Shimei, a Benjamite, had cursed David and thrown stones at him. David had permitted the disobedience, realizing it was part of his retribution. Now Shimei hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet David. With Shimei were 1,000 men of Benjamin and Ziba,

Mephibosheth's steward, with his 15 sons and 20 servants. A "ferry boat" was used to bring David and his household across the Jordan. Seeing how the tide was turning, Shimei made an abject apology to David for his previous actions: "Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, ... [let not] the king ... take it to his heart."

Earlier Ziba had told a lie and betrayed his own master, Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son. However, in Ziba's favor is the fact that he had risked his life to support David and his men with food at a time when David was barefoot, discouraged, and in low esteem.

2 Sam. 19:20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

2 Sam. 19:21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S anointed?

2 Sam. 19:22 And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?

2 Sam. 19:23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king swore unto him.

Abishai wanted to put Shimei to death for having earlier cursed the Lord's anointed. However, David said in effect, "No, not on the day of my re-coronation." When Absalom took over, it looked as if David would no longer be king, so now he did not want to mar this happy day by putting someone to death. On other occasions too, David prohibited the slaughter of someone who was definitely on the wrong side. The king promised that Shimei would not die.

2 Sam. 19:24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

2 Sam. 19:25 And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

2 Sam. 19:26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame.

2 Sam. 19:27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes.

2 Sam. 19:28 For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

2 Sam. 19:29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

2 Sam. 19:30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

Mephibosheth, who had been ungroomed since the day David left for battle, now came to meet the king. David asked why Mephibosheth had not supported him: “Wherefore wentest not thou with me?” Mephibosheth replied, “Ziba, my servant, deceived me, for he took the animal I intended to use to ride to you. Moreover, he slandered me in your sight.” Then Mephibosheth expressed sincere gratitude for David’s past favors to him. (Instead of having him slain as a survivor of the house of Saul, David had given Mephibosheth a dispensation of grace—even so much as to eat at the king’s own table.) Mephibosheth said in effect, “I have come to greet you, but I have no right to request anything further.” Notice, Mephibosheth called Ziba “my servant” but referred to himself as “thy [David’s] servant.”

Why did David still allow Ziba to have the land? There may have been other extenuating circumstances, so by faith we have to realize that David had certain things in mind which are not all disclosed. It was important for the account to bring in a lot of detail so that we can see how retribution was visited on David. Nevertheless, we do not know the full motives of Ziba when he saddled the ass and took the animal himself instead of letting the lame Mephibosheth use it to ride to David to give support. Had Absalom been victorious in his rebellion and battle, he surely would have put Ziba to death.

At any rate, David did not punish Ziba and reward Mephibosheth with more land than he had before. His answer to Mephibosheth—“Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba [equally] divide the land [the estate of Saul]”—is a clue that more was involved than the account states. Mephibosheth’s response is touching. He was so grateful that David, an “angel of God,” was still king that he was willing to give everything to Ziba.

David accepted the testimony of Mephibosheth. Ziba did lie, but because he had sacrificed to take much food to David earlier, the king still let him have half of the land. Mephibosheth sat at the king’s table previously, so David would have known a lot about him, and for some reason, there seems to have been a measure of reserve. Also, for taking care of the lame Mephibosheth and overseeing the care of the estate, Ziba deserved some of the land.

2 Sam. 19:31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

2 Sam. 19:32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.

2 Sam. 19:33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

2 Sam. 19:34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

2 Sam. 19:35 I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

2 Sam. 19:36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?

2 Sam. 19:37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

We read about this great man Barzillai (*Bar*, the son of Zillai) of Gilead in 2 Samuel 17:27-29. Now 80 years old, he had helped David earlier and did so again here. His manner of expression is interesting. Trying to patronize him, David was saying, “Come with me. Let me take care of you in your old age.” But Barzillai said no, for he was old and wanted to stay with his own. Instead, he sent Chimham, probably because he was a faithful man and Barzillai felt he would have a greater future being in David’s employ. Not only did Barzillai want Chimham to get the honors, but the servant’s presence, being a constant reminder of the circumstances whence he was now in David’s company, would perpetuate Barzillai’s memory.

2 Sam. 19:38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee.

2 Sam. 19:39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

2 Sam. 19:40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

Barzillai had said to David, “I will go a little way over the river with you.” To leave Gilead and accompany David across the Jordan into Israel proper was an honor and an act of kindness on the part of the old man. David then gave him a fond farewell.

Gilgal was a logical place to ford the river. That location calls to mind the time when Joshua and the Israelites entered the Promised Land and the children of Israel were circumcised (Josh. 4:19; 5:2). The war with Jericho followed.

2 Sam. 19:41 And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David’s men with him, over Jordan?

2 Sam. 19:42 And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king’s cost? or hath he given us any gift?

2 Sam. 19:43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

“All the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel” (verse 40). What does this statement tell us? The ten tribes had been first to express the desire to escort David back, saying in effect, “Let us go to David and welcome him. Look what he did to the Philistines and to other enemies of the nation.” However, when David made a proposition to the people of Judah, who had been dragging their bones, they were stirred up and went over and were actually the first to welcome David and escort him back. Because of their *prior* initiative, the ten tribes were now resentful and jealous of Judah, and only “half” conducted the king. In other words, some of the people in the ten tribes were turned off. Initially they were all for David, but evidently, some got offended and did not pursue the matter any further.

A real battle of words ensued, with recriminations going back and forth between the ten tribes and Judah. Even though only “half” of the ten tribes ended up escorting David, there was probably enough representation so that all ten tribes voiced their gripes. Stated another way,

in going to the king, probably only half of Israel sent a contingent worthy of note. But those who did not come at least had some representatives there to voice their displeasure. They were saying to Judah, “We were the first to make the suggestion, and we outnumber you ten to one. Our desire to welcome David preceded yours.”

Comment: David had to reprimand Judah for not coming initially.

Reply: The reasoning of the ten tribes was actually sound, but David could foresee problems if Judah did not come to his support. He had to allay any suspicions or fears that, when back in power, he might take action against those of Judah for their support of Absalom. Therefore, by David’s offering to make their general, Amasa, his general with a permanent rank, their hearts were won over, for they could see that the king meant what he said and had no lasting grievance. It is interesting that Shimei made haste and was the first to have an audience with the king, having done a turnabout (2 Sam. 19:16,18,19).

2 Sam. 20:1 And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

2 Sam. 20:2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

Normally the tribe of Benjamin’s fate was tied in with that of the tribe of Judah, so it was unusual that Sheba, a Benjamite, rebelled against David. In some translations, “a man of Belial” is rendered “a worthless fellow.” After hastening to welcome David as king over the nation a little earlier and to escort him, the ten tribes were edged out by Judah through a stratagem he used; that is, he reminded those of Judah what they would lose if quick action were not taken. Now came a switch in the attitude of the ten tribes. When Sheba blew a trumpet and made a bold and courageous announcement, they forsook their king. “We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.” Their action shows they were miffed that Judah was allowed the priority of escorting David to Jerusalem. Sheba evidently knew what had happened, so with the ten tribes being hurt to the quick as a people, he came at just the right psychological moment to cause a rebellion.

How logical Sheba’s announcement seemed! Since David was a son of Jesse, who was of the tribe of Judah, one would conclude that the kingship would reside in Judah and continue on and on in that geographic area with the ten tribes on the outside. Sheba knew strategically how to press this issue, saying in effect, “With David being of the tribe of Judah, what lot will the ten northern tribes have? Wouldn’t it be better for us, including the tribe of Benjamin, to establish our own kingdom and have our own kings?” (The nation was *officially* divided into ten and two tribes in the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.)

Meanwhile, Sheba’s announcement had a different effect on those of Judah, who had been slack to respond and welcome David initially. They not only continued to support David but “clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.” They felt Sheba’s announcement was an insult to Judah. Thus a division occurred momentarily.

2 Sam. 20:3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

When David arrived in Jerusalem, one of his first acts was to provide security and food for the

concubines who had been violated by Absalom, but they were denied other privileges unto the day of their death (2 Sam. 16:22).

2 Sam. 20:4 Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

2 Sam. 20:5 So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

2 Sam. 20:6 And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

Upon hearing that Sheba, a man of Belial, had made this approach to the ten tribes and they responded and went over to his side, David realized immediate action was necessary, for the men of war of the ten tribes far outnumbered those of Judah. Judah had a very large territory but not that many soldiery. David told Amasa to gather as many men as possible and to return within three days. However, Amasa tarried and thus did not return within the specified time frame, so David told Abishai to pursue after Sheba. The situation required action, for David knew that a delay would give Sheba time to regroup his forces and find a suitable location to entrench them for battle. David did not want Sheba and his men to get too well organized. As with David's own situation earlier, a delay worked to his advantage, for he regrouped his forces, crossed the river Jordan, and defeated Absalom in battle.

2 Sam. 20:7 And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

2 Sam. 20:8 When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

2 Sam. 20:9 And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

2 Sam. 20:10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

When Abishai responded to David's instruction, Joab was happy to join his brother in the pursuit of Sheba. They gathered a relatively small force at Gibeon, while presumably Amasa was organizing forces for a larger confrontation. The forces were grouped together at Gibeon, an important city and a good meeting place about five miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Comment: Amasa suddenly showed up on the scene.

Reply: Yes, and Amasa was in front of Abishai and Joab, who then realized that he had been active, even though he had not returned to David within three days. In other words, Amasa had been legitimately delayed and had not returned lest he lose time in the pursuit of Sheba.

Evidently, Amasa had found that time was running out, so rather than go back to David, he felt it would be wise to pursue Sheba as quickly as possible. Abishai now saw Amasa in front of him, so he and Joab drew near. Joab was wearing a loose cloak, so his dangling sword was not

close to his side. When his sword fell out (either accidentally or on purpose), he picked it up and slipped it under Amasa's fifth rib, thus killing him with one stroke.

Q: Why did Joab kill Amasa?

A: To show that he had no ill feelings toward Judah, David changed the generalship of his army overnight, as it were, from Joab to Amasa, the former head of Absalom's rebel force. He said to the men of Judah, "Why don't you come and be the first to recognize me as king? Then I will make Amasa the permanent captain of the host." When Judah responded favorably and Amasa was appointed in his stead, Joab was hurt and intensely jealous. Here again Joab killed improperly. Earlier he had slain Abner and Absalom.

2 Sam. 20:11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab.

2 Sam. 20:12 And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

2 Sam. 20:13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

The men were puzzled over Amasa's assassination. Seeing his body lying there in a pool of blood momentarily caused them to stand still and ignore the suggestion conveniently made by one of Joab's own men, "He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab." However, when the same man removed the body and covered it with a cloth, the people responded and went on after Joab to accomplish their original purpose of pursuing after Sheba.

2 Sam. 20:14 And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

2 Sam. 20:15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

Sheba went from place to place and eventually came to the fortified city of Abel of Beth-maachah. Joab and his men were battering the wall, intending to breach the fortification. The fall of the wall was imminent, and when it occurred, they would enter the city and slay all in their path in order to get Sheba.

2 Sam. 20:16 Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

2 Sam. 20:17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

2 Sam. 20:18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter.

2 Sam. 20:19 I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the

LORD?

2 Sam. 20:20 And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

2 Sam. 20:21 The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

Realizing the coming doom, a wise woman in the city called out to speak to Joab, saying, “Come nearer so that I can talk with you.” Joab drew near and respectfully listened to her counsel. She did not want the city to be destroyed or “a mother in Israel” (herself) to die, for all Israelite women hoped to be the one through whom the Messiah would come. Explaining that Sheba was raising an insurrection against David, Joab said the city would be spared if Sheba were turned over to him. The wise woman was sympathetic to the former regime under David, and not wanting the city to be molested or herself to be killed, she said, “Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.” This offer showed savvy, for the city gates would not have to be opened to throw the head down.

A paraphrase of the wise woman’s polite and respectful words are, “Hear the words of your handmaid. I am a daughter of Jacob [Israel]. Why will you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?” And Joab replied, “Far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.”

2 Sam. 20:22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

When Sheba’s head was thrown over the wall, Joab blew a trumpet, and he and his men withdrew and returned to Jerusalem. Thus Joab stopped Sheba and performed what David had wanted to accomplish.

2 Sam. 20:23 Now Joab was over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

2 Sam. 20:24 And Adoram was over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder:

2 Sam. 20:25 And Sheva was scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests:

2 Sam. 20:26 And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

When David was reinstated as king, he appointed his cabinet. Joab was again the captain of the host, and everything was back to normal. The rebellion had been put down.

2 Sam. 21:1 Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

Notice, the account does not just say there was a famine in the land for three years but “year after year.” In other words, the people *were living* that experience. When there was a famine for one year, the people thought maybe conditions would be better the next year. When the next year came, it was another year of famine. And so on with the third year. The people’s

expectancy was inserted in the account to give us a feeling for what happened back there. The Holy Spirit was trying to convey to us the reality of the famine.

When David inquired of God the reason for the continuing famine, the answer was that it was a form of retribution: “It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.” *Delayed* retribution was inflicted on the people of Israel for something that Saul, their king, had done 40 or so years earlier. Thus, depending on the nature of the sin, there is responsibility on either the leaders or those who are led, or on both. In this case, God considered that amends should have been made.

To understand what Saul did that required retribution, we will read background information in Joshua 9:3-27, as follows:

“And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

“They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

“And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.

“And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

“And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

“And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?

“And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

“And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth.

“Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

“This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

“And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

“And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

“And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

“And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim.

“And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

“But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

“This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.

“And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

“And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

“Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

“And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

“And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

“And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

“And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.”

The Gibeonites were a small branch, or family, of the Hivites, one of the seven nations the Israelites were commanded to destroy. Having seen the wondrous victories that Joshua performed in Jericho and Ai and fearing they were next, this particular family devised a stratagem to avoid death. When Joshua entered the land, their city was next on the agenda. Wanting to beat him to the punch, they faked a long journey from a distant land. They put on ragged clothes and worn-out shoes, carried old and rent wine sacks, feigned poverty and hunger by having dry and moldy bread, and entered Joshua’s camp to seek peace. When Joshua asked who they were, they replied with a lie, “We are from a far distant land. We came all this way and heard the wonderful things you have done. We believe in your Lord God and want to be on your side, so give us an oath that you will not kill us.” Thus they finagled Joshua with their seeming sincerity and got an oath of preservation from him, for he swore he would do them no harm. Afterwards Joshua learned that they were actually neighbors.

Several lessons are in this incident, for similar things can happen in an individual’s personal life. Although the Gibeonites were guilty of deception, God honored the oath Joshua made but why? The Lord had commanded the Israelites to destroy seven nations, of which the Hivites were one. However, being deceived, the Israelites made a covenant with a branch of one of those seven nations, and now they had to honor that contract because it was made in Jehovah’s name. This situation was complicated, and we need to see it from the Lord’s standpoint.

First, we are surprised to learn that three years of famine came on the Israelites. As king, David did the right thing by inquiring of the Lord the reason for the famine. Had David not asked, the Israelites would not have known, and perhaps the famine would have continued longer.

Incidentally, Saul failed to ask, and even Joshua, being deceived, did not inquire before making the covenant. Joshua was convinced of the sincerity of the Gibeonites because of the provisions—the torn wine bags and the bread that was dry, stale, and moldy. Their stratagem was almost satanic in ingenuity. However, while the Gibeonites deceived Joshua and the Israelites, it is to their credit that in their course of action in history subsequent to that event, they were faithful and loyal to Israel on several occasions when the nation was hard-pressed.

Christians, too, can be deceived by appearances along certain lines. Tests are permitted to see if we will strictly obey the Lord's instructions. Disobedience brings consequences. One lesson is that an oath to the Lord is to be honored. After consecration, some will say as an excuse for breaking the covenant, "I did not know what I was doing when I made the vow," but such reasoning is wrong.

Apparently, Saul acted with good motives, but they were uninstructed motives; namely, "Saul sought to slay them [the Gibeonites] in his *zeal*" for the Lord (2 Sam. 21:2). We often hear the excuse "he meant well." For example, before his conversion, the Apostle Paul killed Christians, all the while thinking he was faithfully serving the Lord. Despite his good intentions, he received retribution. Joshua's covenant with the Gibeonites was well known and still held, so Saul was wrong to slaughter them at a later period of time, thus ignoring and dishonoring the covenant. The fact that the retribution came a number of years after Saul's death shows that a record is being kept. When retribution occurs in the present life, the stripes can be helpful in the sense of cleaning the slate. Certain sins cannot be forgiven but must be expiated by stripes and suffering, for they are sins against the Holy Spirit—in whatever age they take place.

Comment: A principle of retribution is that all the righteous blood shed from Abel to Zacharias was required in AD 70.

Reply: Yes, that retribution occurred for the slaughter of the prophets, the messengers God had sent.

Comment: Retribution does not necessarily happen immediately. The rest of the righteous blood will be required at the end of the Gospel Age.

Reply: Such complicated situations arise in life between individuals, groups, and nations that the books cannot be straightened out so conveniently in one time period. Where the first opportunity arises for retribution to take place, it does. And that is what happened now in David's day with regard to an act of Saul many years earlier.

The suggestion is that certain evils and calamities can come on a people, particularly a consecrated people, as a form of retribution. In the Jewish Age, Israel was a dedicated nation, and in the Gospel Age, Christians are a dedicated people, so retributive calamities can fall on the people of God. They do not necessarily lose everything, but the thought is that the matter must be taken care of before they can be honored in the next age. Consider David, who had to have certain types of stripes before he died so that he could inherit the promise of the future.

Comment: If one has made a vow to the Lord but is not performing it, the matter will be brought to mind from time to time to give the individual opportunity to act on it. If one ignores the reminders, a harder experience is permitted to impress the lesson more deeply. The principle is, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deut. 23:21).

Reply: We can be thankful the Lord knows to what degree experiences are necessary. Those

whom He loves He chastens (Heb. 12:5-11). Sometimes the Lord's people like to say that trials are chastening experiences only from the standpoint of discipline in doing good, but chastening is done for faults as well as for virtues. Since we all, according to the flesh, have been born of Adam and thus are fallen, we can be sure that some of our chastenings are not sufferings for righteousness' sake but are the consequences of having done something improperly. And sometimes the chastenings are a little of both. We all receive individual testings for our development.

There are times when allowances should be made for words or deeds because of an illness known only to the Lord, not to the brethren. If certain malfunctions take place that the individual is not responsible for, the Lord knows how to handle the matter. The Bible does tell us to judge immoral conduct, but we are not to judge destiny unless the action is so flagrant that it is obviously a sin unto death.

It is a little difficult to apply this incident with the Gibeonites as a type because there are so many loose ends. Jesus said that he who breaks the least of his commandments and teaches men so will be least in the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:19). Therefore, with a more serious matter, one will not even get into the Kingdom. However, we can (and should) recognize certain principles. A *general* spiritual lesson is as follows: Saul represents the professed or nominal Church in the flesh, that is, the tares of Christendom. David pictures the true Church in the flesh warring a good fight of faith. The three-year famine particularly points up what Saul did years earlier.

In Joshua's case, he was completely deceived by the Gibeonites. He did not willingly sin by making an oath with Hivites, for he was almost like Moses in character. We are similarly deceived at times. Perhaps someone close to us tells a lie, so that we are deceived by a friend. Life is complex. Only when we finish our course will we know just where we stand on certain matters. In the meantime, we should do the best we can.

Comment: It is not always a case of what we are told, for sometimes what we are *not* told is the problem. When we hear only half a story, we might presume the rest, considering the individual to be upright.

Reply: Yes, withholding pertinent information can radically change an issue. That is why a jury or judge should know a case as thoroughly as possible before rendering a verdict. Moreover, the news media is often responsible for prejudicing a matter. It is hard to live thoroughly uprightly because of misinformation. Christians are practicing physicians in the present life, and the Lord watches us to see how we approach matters in our private thoughts. Some matters are very perplexing, requiring a lot of prayer.

Love should think no evil. Therefore, we are to give people the benefit of the doubt in their professions, as long as their deeds evidence that they are trying to live, serve, and please the Lord—in other words, as long as their deeds reasonably match their professions (1 Cor. 13:5). However, we are not to give the benefit of the doubt when there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. We must judge according to the principles in God's Word, not according to our emotions, for the natural heart is exceedingly deceitful (Jer. 17:9). To please the Lord, we have to use *directed* reasoning. We should first try to find plain precepts or examples in Scripture that seem to parallel what we are considering. Where this is not possible, we must rely on prayer for guidance.

2 Sam. 21:2 And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel

and Judah.)

2 Sam. 21:3 Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

Years earlier the Israelites had made a covenant with the Gibeonites, and Saul violated that covenant by seeking to slay them. Now, after inquiring of God and being told the three-year famine was retribution for Saul's "bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites," David asked what he could do for them and how he could make atonement (verse 1). His motive in wanting to make atonement was touching—so that they would "bless the inheritance of the LORD."

What does the New Testament say about public sin? If a Christian commits a grievous sin that is publicly recognized in the community, he brings dishonor on the Lord's cause and name, as well as on himself. The act can be a stench in the nostrils of others with regard to Christianity. In fact, many people today are inclined to be agnostics or atheists because they see grievous things occurring.

David was saying to the Gibeonites, who originally did the defrauding, "What shall we do for you so that you will not look on Jehovah with any displeasure? What can we do to remove the blot that we performed against you so that you will not look on me as king and on the kingdom of Israel with any reproach?" The principle was the same when God tested Moses by saying, "The people are worshipping a golden calf. Let me go down there and destroy them and make of you a holy nation." Moses reasoned with God in his reply: "What will the other nations think if you destroy all of these people? They will say that you took the Israelites out of Egypt with a mighty hand, opening the waters of the Red Sea, but were not able to get them into the Promised Land." David had somewhat the same type of thinking here, for he was concerned about the reflection that might be cast on the Lord's cause.

Notice that the Gibeonites were a remnant of the Amorites, not of the Amalekites. The iniquity of the Amorites had come to the full, but the Amalekites were even worse.

2 Sam. 21:4 And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you.

2 Sam. 21:5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

2 Sam. 21:6 Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.

The Gibeonites responded, "Let seven men of Saul's sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them." A general spiritual lesson is that nominal Christendom has certain penalties to pay for their heinous acts. Just as all the righteous blood accumulated from Abel up to the First Advent had to be requited, so all the righteous blood from Jesus' day through the seven stages of the Gospel Age must be requited in a much more dramatic way on mystic Babylon, the professed Church, in the great Time of Trouble.

2 Sam. 21:7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

2 Sam. 21:8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare

unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

Mephibosheth was spared because a vow had been made between David and Jonathan. Thus once again a vow was honored.

Of the seven “sons” of Saul who were delivered to the Gibeonites, five were raised by Michal, Saul’s daughter. Michal was barren and “had no child [of her own] unto the day of her death” because she laughed at David when he danced “before the LORD” (2 Sam. 6:16-23). Hence the five sons she raised for Adriel were killed, so her posterity was cut off even from an in-law standpoint. Again retribution was enacted.

For verse 8, the Revised Standard and the King James margin have the thought that these were the five sons of Merab, Michal’s sister, who was also the daughter of Saul, and that she bore them to Adriel. That thought may or may not be correct, but the translators apparently wanted the text to conform to the thought that Michal died childless.

2 Sam. 21:9 And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.

The Gibeonites had a grudge against Israel for a past injustice committed by Saul, so David asked how their grievance could be addressed. Their reply was that he should give them the remaining posterity of Saul, seven sons, to be slain (verse 6). David granted their wish with the two sons of Rizpah and the five sons raised by Michal.

The execution of the seven took place in the time of harvest, specifically the beginning of the barley harvest. The double mention indicates that there is probably a reason, which is unknown to us at this time. The barley harvest was early in the spring, only a little while before the wheat harvest. Grain has to be harvested quickly in order to prevent mold and spoilage.

Comment: Possibly Saul’s unjust act toward the Gibeonites had taken place at the same time of the year.

Through deception on the part of the Gibeonites, Joshua made a covenant with them in the name of the Lord. Years later Saul, being overzealous toward the Lord, slaughtered a number of Gibeonites in violation of the covenant. Saul had acted with zeal, having a good motive, but the zeal was misdirected. Now seven sons were executed together, all at the same time. The Gibeonites wanted revenge, plain and simple. Because Saul was responsible, they wanted to exterminate his posterity.

Comment: The hanging of the seven sons together served as a reminder to any who might still harbor the hope that Saul’s lineage would get back into power. God remembered Saul’s disobedience, and retribution had to come.

Comment: The Law required dead bodies to be buried by sundown, so it was an added disgrace for the bodies to be publicly displayed for a period of time.

Reply: Yes, and the bodies were probably hung in a way that made them visible from a considerable distance.

2 Sam. 21:10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and

suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

2 Sam. 21:11 And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

2 Sam. 21:12 And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:

2 Sam. 21:13 And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

2 Sam. 21:14 And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was entreated for the land.

Rizpah, a concubine of Saul, was not physically able to take the bodies down, so she covered them with sackcloth and kept birds and beasts from the bodies for a while—until David heard and acted, gathering the remains of Saul and Jonathan up near the southern end of the Sea of Galilee and also the remains of the seven who were hanged. He had them buried near Jerusalem in the sepulcher of Kish, Saul's father. That family tomb is on the northern outskirts of modern Jerusalem today.

Comment: This whole incident was really of the Lord, for He had caused a three-year famine so that David would inquire the reason.

Reply: Yes. According to the Law, a famine was the result of disobedience. God said that the Gibeonites had been wronged by Saul in violation of an oath made with them predicated on misinformation.

A principle is that promises or covenants to the Lord are of extreme importance. Only in exceptional circumstances can an oath be broken. For example, monks and nuns may have consecrated, thinking their consecration was to the Lord, whereas they were really dedicating their lives to the Roman Catholic Church (or institution) under a deception. In such a case, a subsequent separate vow to the Lord is like a higher law that overrides a lower law. Martin Luther, formerly a monk and the sixth messenger to the Church, fit into this category, and his marriage to an ex-nun was permissible in the eyes of the Lord. We would also think that the nun was released from her vow to the Roman Catholic Church. Many have made foolish vows that wed them to organizations, the Society being another example. The point is that these matters and circumstances have to be carefully and soberly weighed, for we can see how seriously the Lord takes vows made to Him. Any extenuating circumstances have to be mighty important and valid in order to disregard a vow.

Comment: Another example is the vow of a young child, which the parents could disannul scripturally because of the age of the child.

Reply: Under the Law, the disannulling had to take place before sunset. No more than one day could elapse. Those who say years later, "I did not know what I was doing," are not excused. To avoid such an excuse, the questions that are tendered at the time of one's immersion are significant: "Have you recognized that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness? Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?" Those who answer in the affirmative cannot say many years later they did not know what they were doing.

Comment: Some say subsequently they did not know all that was involved in consecration.

Reply: Just as with marriage, that type of remark does not make sense, for the Scriptures state plainly that the only grounds for divorce are infidelity along the lines of fornication and adultery. Of course death also breaks the marriage contract. With regard to the consecrated, whenever a divorce is initiated, the brethren should be informed as to the basis of that divorce. Otherwise, if the information is nebulous, what others are doing defiles or temporizes our own conscience. The basis of a divorce should be stated succinctly, and then the matter is before the Lord.

2 Sam. 21:15 Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

2 Sam. 21:16 And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David.

2 Sam. 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

Israel had another war with the Philistines. Notice the size of Ishbi-benob, who was one of the sons of the giant. His spear head weighed 300 shekels of brass, and he was girded with a new sword. His intention was to slay David, who was weakening. How touching that those who were with David noticed his declining strength and felt he should no longer go to war, their reason being that he should not quench “the light of Israel”! In other words, if David died, who would be the next king? Absalom had seemed like the logical successor until his character became apparent.

Abishai, who was like David’s right-hand man in so many matters and was ready to defend him, impulsively stepped in and slew Ishbi-benob. Usually warriors, who dealt with bloody, brutal affairs, did not develop gentle characters, but David’s men admired him not only because he was king but also because he was an unusual personage.

Comment: As impressive as the armor of Ishbi-benob was, Goliath’s spear head had weighed twice as much—600 shekels of iron (1 Sam. 17:7).

2 Sam. 21:18 And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.

2 Sam. 21:19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam.

2 Sam. 21:20 And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

2 Sam. 21:21 And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimeah the brother of David slew him.

2 Sam. 21:22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and

by the hand of his servants.

There were three more battles between the Philistines and Israel. The genetic traits of the giants can be seen here. Four giants were slain: Ishbi-benob, Saph, the brother of Goliath, and one who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. The war phase of David's reign was drawing to a close, and henceforth he would devote more attention to other matters—matters that were on his mind and heart.

2 Sam. 22:1 And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

2 Sam. 22:2 And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

2 Sam. 22:3 The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

Chapter 22 is a poem, song, or psalm of thanksgiving uttered by David when he was given rest from all his enemies. Now that he was older and his body was aging, he was reminiscing about previous years, realizing it was almost as if the Lord had had him in His hand, protecting him. The Book of Revelation tells that the seven stars were in the hand of Jesus, meaning that special providences operated during their lives, for otherwise, had the Lord not protected them, surely their careers would have terminated in death prematurely (Rev. 1:20; 2:1). David had the same sense of protection, calling *God* his rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation, high tower, refuge (like a cave), and savior. He wanted to tell Jehovah how appreciative he was of this protection and watch-care.

Q: Prophetically speaking, will the feet members at the end of the age have similar sentiments as they sense victory at the termination of their career?

A: Yes. As the Apostle Paul said, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Earlier in his life, he said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [the crown]” (Phil. 3:13). The principle is expressed in 1 Kings 20:11, “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off [prematurely].” But there came a time in Paul's life when he sensed his career was terminating, and he knew he had waged a warfare to the best of his ability. Some have this sense of triumph at the time of their death, but that is not necessarily the circumstance of all the faithful. In fact, it is erroneous to teach that all of the Little Flock die with confidence.

2 Sam. 22:4 I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

David was not resting on his oars, but he realized that conditions were beginning to stabilize and that the Lord had been the cause of his living to the present time when he could offer this psalm of praise. However, he used the future tense—“so shall I be saved from mine enemies [past and future]”—because he knew that additional trials could yet occur.

2 Sam. 22:5 When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;

In times past, David had dark experiences, moments, and thoughts where he thought his life might end, but God helped and saved him out of those circumstances. One notable experience was the rebellion of Absalom, when David was vastly outnumbered by supporters of his son.

2 Sam. 22:6 The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;

“The [imminent] snares of death prevented [preceded or threatened] me.”

Q: Does this psalm apply *collectively* to the Church rather than individually? A comment in the *Berean Manual* states that the deliverance of the body of Christ will occur just before a great Time of Trouble and manifestation of divine indignation and power.

A: Yes, the psalm is a collective or large picture. To apply all of the verses specifically to David would be an exaggeration. He recalled deeds of the past, miraculous happenings, whereby God manifested His indignation to the enemies of Israel, but we know that David is a picture of The Christ in the flesh, Head and body members. For example, God’s wrath was manifested when Jesus died on the Cross; namely, an earthquake rent the Temple veil, some were resuscitated from their tombs, and in AD 69-70, not many years after the people had said, “His blood be on us,” terrible trouble and judgment came on the Jewish nation. Similarly, when the body members are complete at the end of the Gospel Age, the great Time of Trouble will occur.

2 Sam. 22:7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.

Sometimes the cry is silent, and sometimes it is audible. If one knows he is finishing his course shortly, probably the first thing he would do is to beseech the throne of grace. Sometimes death comes suddenly. Ever since consecration, we have been relying on the grace and mercy of God on our behalf to have His approval, and it would certainly be proper to do the same, to cry unto the Lord, at the end of our course.

2 Sam. 22:8 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth.

The earth and the foundations of heaven shook because God was wroth, showing that the deceasing party in this picture is in His favor. The repercussion is a manifestation of the Lord’s indignation against those who are instrumental in bringing the sorrows of death on the David class. Incidentally, even though David was the king of Israel and the leader, he had many enemies even among the Israelites—and probably a lot more than we read about in the highlights of his experiences as recorded in Holy Writ. The David class in the flesh can lead a lonely existence in some respects. On the one hand, a person can be the loneliest person in the most populous city, and on the other hand, he can be happy and active out on the farm where the population is sparse. Much has to do with the mind, which is the Christian’s battleground.

The clause “the earth shook” reminds us not only of the Time of Trouble spoken of in the Book of Revelation but also of Mount Sinai, which quaked greatly at the giving of the Law. Symbolically, as Paul said, everything that can be shaken will be shaken (Heb. 12:27). Peter also referred to the trouble in speaking about the heavens and the earth being on fire (2 Pet. 3:7).

2 Sam. 22:9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

Comment: God does see and hear, as numerous Scriptures show, but verse 9 is symbolic, although there will be signs in nature in the coming trouble.

Reply: Yes, there will be signs particularly in Israel but in other places as well at the right psychological moment in the Time of Trouble to get men to look upward in that day (Isa. 8:21).

Comment: God will be angry and the repercussions will be great, but the smoke coming out of His nostrils and the fire issuing forth from His mouth are symbolic.

Reply: God sometimes smells the smoke and inhales the fragrance of sacrifices in the sense of accepting them. Conversely, exhaling air from the nostrils is a symbol of His disfavor. In viewing cataclysms of nature, we think of Jehovah, the God of all nature, being angry. Accordingly, the centurion who saw the signs and wonders in nature in connection with the Crucifixion said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). From 12 noon until 3 p.m., the heavens darkened, and the earthquake, which would be a fitting climax, probably occurred at the moment of his death.

2 Sam. 22:10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet.

2 Sam. 22:11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.

A cloud like an awning, spoken of as a covering, spread out over the entire nation of Israel in their 40 years in the wilderness. From that main cloud, a pillar came down like a column or a chimney and attached itself to the Tabernacle. The Israelites knew that inside the funnel was a manifestation of God's presence. For that reason, when the cloud went before the nation like a finger, it was called the "angel of God" (Exod. 14:19).

Thus the bowing down of the heavens in verse 10 refers to a visible manifestation of God's presence in earth's affairs. Something happens that can be appreciated. That which was once stationary comes down and touches the earth, as it were, making God's presence known among the sons of men. In this context, the manifestation would be in connection with trouble.

With tornadoes, a cloud is seen in the distance. When a funnel drops down, it forebodes trouble. Thus people have a respect for the power of the forces of nature. God cloaks Himself with, or puts on as a garment, a dark cloud so that He cannot be seen. The Israelites knew His presence was in the cloud over the nation because once in a great while lightning came forth either in a destructive sense, as with Nadab and Abihu, or in a favorable sense, as when it devoured the offering on the Brazen Altar in the Court at the time of the dedication of the Tabernacle (Lev. 10:1,2).

God "rode upon a cherub," that is, on a symbolic cherub chariot. In some cases, four cherubim are shown, corresponding to the four wheels of a vehicle.

Q: Is there a relationship between the cherub and the Mercy Seat?

A: Verse 11 refers to the Mercy Seat from a different perspective than what we are accustomed to in *Tabernacle Shadows*. There the Ark of the Covenant was a *fixed* article of furniture in the Most Holy, upon which the blood of atonement was applied, but in the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah, the Ark is not stationary. Especially in the Book of Ezekiel, it is like a moving chariot, the Lord's vehicle. God is shown seated on top of the Ark, and it can go like lightning as far as the cherubim are concerned. God walks on "the wings of the wind." The wind can be blowing 100 miles per hour, and God leisurely walks ahead of it. What a majestic picture!

In the Book of Revelation, after offering up the prayers of all the saints, the angel uses the same censer to take coals of fire from off the altar and cast them into the earth, causing repercussions (Rev. 8:3-5). Shortly after the last members of the Church go beyond the veil will come the great Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation (Matt. 24:21).

2 Sam. 22:12 And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies.

2 Sam. 22:13 Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled.

Verse 12 reminds us of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple. He identified the Almighty as a God who hides Himself in darkness (2 Chron. 6:1). The symbolic "brightness before him" of coals of fire is like the light coming out, which starts to heat up the ground in front. The symbolic description shows that the Time of Trouble will *precede* the manifestation of God's presence. Not only is the Time of Trouble retribution and God's indignation, but His deliverance of the Holy Remnant of Israel will make known to man that He is now intervening in earth's affairs. Many people will know they are in the Time of Trouble, for the language of that situation will be universal, but they will not see (perceive) God until the inauguration of the Kingdom in Jerusalem. Then Jehovah will reveal Himself. Thus the coals of fire preceding God represent the impact that prepares man to receive His presence.

2 Sam. 22:14 The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.

2 Sam. 22:15 And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them.

2 Sam. 22:16 And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

2 Sam. 22:17 He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;

2 Sam. 22:18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.

2 Sam. 22:19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

2 Sam. 22:20 He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

Verses 14-20 blend in with another scenario, namely, the Exodus, the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians, who pursued them right up to the water of the Red Sea. God exposed the depths of the sea by parting it with an east wind so that the Israelites went over dry-shod but not the Egyptians. In the type, He made bare the "channels" of the sea on behalf of the nation of Israel. In the antitype, this event pictures the deliverance of spiritual Israel from one standpoint and the world of mankind from another standpoint. The Church is called the "Israel of God," but eventually all mankind will be "Israelites" (Gal. 6:16). Thus there are two passovers in the antitype; one pertains to the Church and the other to the world.

Q: Does the term "a large place" in verse 20 refer to the heavens?

A: Yes, that is true from the perspective of the Church at the forepart of the Kingdom Age. In addition, this long song, which covers the entire chapter, will be like a national anthem for mankind at the end of the Kingdom Age after the Little Season. All who are accounted worthy to enter the age beyond the Millennium will enter the "large place" on the natural plane and be called the children of God (Luke 20:35).

"The LORD thundered from heaven, and ... sent out ... lightning." At the time of the Exodus, a strong thunder and lightning storm occurred, as well as wind, to cause confusion with Pharaoh

and his chariots. Horses are courageous in battle, but they are very sensitive to lightning. Thus the animals were discomfited in the Red Sea and went helter-skelter. Meanwhile, God was above, in perfect control, riding in His chariot on the wings of the wind, while the trouble and confusion occurred below.

“He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.” Verse 17 is a reference to Moses (whose name means “one drawn out of water”), Jesus, and The Christ depending on certain circumstances. David was now speaking mechanically, being moved by the Holy Spirit to say things he did not fully understand. In this exalted frame of mind, he was thinking and writing about his past and about stories he had heard and learned from his parents and his forefathers, such as the account of the Exodus. In addition, the Holy Spirit caused him to write prophetically about the Church.

Verse 19 is better in the Revised Standard: “They came upon me in the day of my calamity; but the LORD was my stay.”

Comment: With regard to the Church, the “large place” sounds like the “banqueting house” in the Song of Solomon.

Reply: “He [Jesus] brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love” (Song 2:4). We hope to be invited to this banquet, which will be a festivity, a cup of joy with the Little Flock, before the marriage supper takes place with the Great Company. Jesus said, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it [the cup of joy] new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29). Thus a festivity of some kind will precede the marriage supper.

2 Sam. 22:21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

2 Sam. 22:22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

2 Sam. 22:23 For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them.

2 Sam. 22:24 I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.

2 Sam. 22:25 Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eyesight.

2 Sam. 22:26 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.

2 Sam. 22:27 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury.

Comment: Verses 21-25 remind us of Job, whose intentions were perfect before the Lord.

We do not know the actual point in David’s life when he made a definite consecration contract in the sense that we, as Christians, do. He may have committed some misdeeds prior to his consecration, for there are stages of development. For instance, at the Memorial, Jesus said to Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and *when thou art converted*, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). After that, Peter denied Jesus three times and repented. The original

contract with the Lord is still valid, but there comes a time when the sobriety of the contract is even more impressed on the individual. If we apply this principle to David, there was a point at which he did not depart anymore from the Lord. However, if he went backward, there was no excuse for his sin with Bathsheba. The point is that it seems as if David made a stronger commitment at some time in his personal life. Of course the spirit of the psalm thus far has a larger and deeper application than just the personal life of David, but since the psalm came out of his mouth, we are trying to see which parts apply to him.

Comment: David knew he had made some mistakes, but he also knew his heart intentions were pure—and he could trace the retribution in his life.

Reply: Reflecting back on his life and seeing the retribution came with experience. “With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful.” David had exercised mercy on the different ones who spat on him, rebuked him, and hunted him like a wild animal, and now he not only realized that the Lord had forgiven him but also noticed the change in his own character. In reflecting on his life, he could see progressive change coming to a point where he was almost crystallized in his attitude and development, and this progress took time.

“I ... have kept myself from mine iniquity.” David had developed to a point where he was overriding his lower or baser instincts, subduing them, and keeping them under control. “Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eyesight.” David failed earlier, but there came a point at which he kept himself from his baser instincts.

“With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward [crooked] thou wilt show thyself unsavoury [perverse—RSV].” In other words, to those who act rashly, harshly, and/or improperly, the same thing will happen in God’s dealings with them.

2 Sam. 22:28 And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down.

2 Sam. 22:29 For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

2 Sam. 22:30 For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall.

2 Sam. 22:31 As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.

2 Sam. 22:32 For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?

2 Sam. 22:33 God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.

2 Sam. 22:34 He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet: and setteth me upon my high places.

2 Sam. 22:35 He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

David was certainly no little stripling in his prime, for he had great physical strength from God. With many Christians, there comes a point in their life when they review much of their past. Of course the Christian is not strengthened to break a steel bow in his arms (verse 35), but spiritually speaking, he can sometimes do something in a miraculous or superhuman manner. For instance, a circumstance may be beyond human repair, yet the Lord somehow furnishes the victory so that although it is accomplished by God’s grace, the Christian does it—which is a lot different from having a path simply open in front of him.

Comment: David was called the “light of Israel” (2 Sam. 21:17), and now he said that God was his light (verse 29).

Verses in this psalm express sentiments of Jesus, of his Church, and of all who love God with various degrees of understanding. And certainly a review of one’s life is profitable.

2 Sam. 22:36 **Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great.**

David’s song of thanksgiving continues. He composed the song quite late in his service as king but evidently not in the last few years of his life. This twenty-second chapter is almost a word-for-word rendition of Psalm 18. Our thought as to the reason for the slight differences is that the Book of Psalms was written to music. Therefore, some of the momentous songs David composed from the depths of his heart under certain circumstances were subsequently edited and metered to appropriate instruments for public praise on behalf of Israel.

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.” In what way did God’s gentleness make David great? The first half of the verse suggests warfare: “Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation.” However, the verse as a whole suggests not only that God had been a defensive shield, protecting David in both spiritual and natural warfare, but also that God had dealt with him along the lines of gentleness. God raised David from a humble origin as a shepherd tending sheep to the highest position in Israel. But how did gentleness make him great?

Comment: David received some strong retribution, but nevertheless, in reviewing his life, he could see that the Lord had providentially led him step by step and did not crush him.

Reply: Although certain sins were committed, God could forgive David because he asked for forgiveness and made his shame public before the nation. David was remorseful when his sins were called to his attention in various ways. Some of the Psalms reveal his thinking in down moments, and others show his exuberance, enthusiasm, and praise. The retribution was punishment for sins committed against light. However, David responded favorably to God’s dealings with him. On another occasion, David said, “Thy rod and thy staff [two extremes] they comfort me” (Psa. 23:4). As the hymn goes, “Send sorrow; send pain. Sweet are thy messengers, sweet their refrain.” The gentleness of God was severe through retribution, but in viewing the nature of his misconduct and the way God effectually covered his sins through retribution and forgiveness, depending on the degree of enlightenment, David felt he had not been crushed and destroyed and expelled from the presence of God but had been recovered.

2 Sam. 22:37 **Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip.**

David did slip on occasion, but he did not utterly stumble. The Lord provided David with the means of stability in his walk so that he could recover his errant ways. The expression “so that my feet did not slip” suggests adversarial experiences.

2 Sam. 22:38 **I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them.**

2 Sam. 22:39 **And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet.**

Verses 38 and 39 discuss David’s destruction and consuming of his enemies.

Comment: With this song being partially prophetic of the Church, the Christian should have this attitude and determination in battling the world, the flesh, and the devil. There seems to be an application especially to the new creature's subduing of the old man.

Reply: Yes. David's psalms were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In some cases, what he wrote was very pertinent to himself as an individual, but a number of his experiences are the experiences of the David class. For instance, Psalm 22 is almost entirely a prophecy of Jesus' experiences on the Cross, when he was humiliated before the eyes of the nation of Israel. Therefore, in reading David's psalms, we must realize that they may be telling of his personal experiences, or they may be a prophetic utterance pertaining to Jesus and/or the Church. The name David means "Beloved," a title of Jesus.

In reading verses 38 and 39, we are reminded of the prophecy of Messiah, who will put all enemies under his feet, the last enemy being death (1 Cor. 15:25,26). Then he will hand over the Kingdom to the Father, and "the God of peace shall bruise [destroy] Satan under your [the Church's] feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).

2 Sam. 22:40 For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me.

Two of David's adversaries were Saul and Absalom. Moreover, David considered Goliath, the enemy of Israel, to be his enemy as well.

2 Sam. 22:41 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

Absalom was literally caught by the neck and the head in the low-lying branch of a tree, and his hair multiplied the problem of extricating himself. Even though Joab disobeyed orders from David by subsequently slaying Absalom, the latter was put down. Thus David's enemies were slain either by him in successful combat or by the Lord through another human instrumentality.

The "neck" is usually considered a symbol of pride, stubbornness, or obstinacy. To be given the neck of an enemy is a symbol of his defeat, whether that neck is put under a yoke or is separated from the body proper along with the head.

2 Sam. 22:42 They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

2 Sam. 22:43 Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad.

Q: When David's enemies looked to God for help, He did not answer them. Is there a prophetic aspect with regard to the nominal systems?

A: Yes. Originally, the title "Baal," which means "Lord," had a proper connotation, but it became corrupted—and thus became the symbol of the *false* lord, not the true Lord.

David's enemies cried unto what they thought was the supreme God to support them, Saul being an example. Also, Elijah had a contest with the false prophets of Baal, sarcastically saying, "Perhaps your god is asleep or has gone on a journey." Worshippers of Islam call on Allah as God, but Jehovah is the God *of Israel*. Prayers are offered to God in nominal Christendom, and the contradictions are especially seen in time of war when *both* sides pray to God for victory.

The opposing forces simultaneously call on the God of Babylon to support their side to no avail. In fact, answers often come from the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). The enemies of the Lord should be viewed as *enemies*. Verses 42 and 43 are discussing those who oppose and try to obstruct and restrict the progress of Israel, the people of God. We should speak strongly to one who is froward and unruly (1 Thess. 5:14). Thus there are times when it is necessary to rebuke and hinder, even sharply if necessary (Titus 1:13). God is a God of love, but love is manifested in various ways. We should *hate* evil and *love* righteousness.

2 Sam. 22:44 Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me.

2 Sam. 22:45 Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.

Verse 44 starts a change, sliding into another gear that sounds like a prophecy of the future. David wrote, “Strangers shall submit themselves unto me.” Although he defeated the Ammonites and other peoples, this statement is an expression of the future. David was prophetically talking about his experience in the next age, when he is raised as an Ancient Worthy and is imbued with authority as the head of the heathen, the Gentiles, the people at large, other nations. And of course David represents The Christ.

2 Sam. 22:46 Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places.

Combining thoughts from the RSV, verse 46 reads, “Foreigners shall lose heart, and come trembling out of their fastnesses [fortresses].”

2 Sam. 22:47 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.

David was saying that Jehovah liveth and is the God of the “rock” of his salvation. God is the Rock and the Savior in the highest sense. Jesus is also a Rock but subordinate to his Father. The Apostle Paul likened the rock in the wilderness, which supplied water to the Israelites, to Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Therefore, verse 47 refers to both God and Jesus as the means of salvation: “Exalted be the God [Jehovah] of the rock [Jesus] of my salvation.”

2 Sam. 22:48 It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me,

2 Sam. 22:49 And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

God delivered David from the “violent man,” that is, especially from Saul but also from all other enemies who opposed him. As a result, David died a natural death and was not slain in battle. David penned this song in later life when he had rest from all his enemies.

In regard to David personally, Saul threw a javelin at him during fits of temper. One minute Saul was docile and contrite, and the next minute he pursued David with even more bitterness, hatred, and jealousy. If we enlarge the picture to consider David as representative of The Christ, the “violent man” is Satan, the Adversary, the Opposer.

From the perspective of the nominal Church, Saul is a picture of the Papacy, which has opposed the true Church militant in the flesh during the Gospel Age. Particularly in the period of the Inquisition, Papacy opposed true Christians.

2 Sam. 22:50 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.

2 Sam. 22:51 He is the tower of salvation for his king: and showeth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

“Therefore [in this song of deliverance] I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD.” David praised God for deliverance from all his enemies.

God “showeth mercy to his anointed [David] ... and to his seed for evermore.” The word “seed” has two interpretations in this context: (1) David’s posterity and (2) all who will get life throughout the Millennium. The covenant God made with David, called the “sure mercies,” was to the effect that the throne would not be severed from his house, or lineage (Isa. 55:3). While circumstances in later generations seemed to indicate that the “sure mercies of David” had failed and been forgotten, God’s covenant remained firm and constant and surfaced in the Israelites’ return from Babylonian captivity, in the prophecies of the Minor Prophets, and in the gospel message to the Church (Acts 13:32-34). Jesus came from the lineage of David.

2 Sam. 23:1 Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

“Now these be the last words of David.” How should this statement be understood, for subsequent chapters record more about David, continuing on into 1 Kings for the closing moments of his life? This statement, which does not refer to a technical termination of his expressions, was not written by David. Rather, it was inserted by the compiler of 2 Samuel (perhaps Gad the seer—1 Chron. 21:9). An independent party said these were the closing sentiments of David’s experience, but they were not necessarily the last words he uttered. However, they may have been the last words he penned in the form of odes or psalms.

David “was raised up on high [to the throne], the anointed [by Samuel the prophet] of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel.” The Psalms, especially toward the end, are nothing but praise: “Praise the LORD,” “Sing unto the LORD a new song,” etc. Evidently, the net effect of the combination of both composing the music and writing the words was extraordinary. Consider how David’s singing soothed Saul. When Saul was on the verge of ill temper, David’s strumming the harp quieted the king’s spirit.

2 Sam. 23:2 The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.

2 Sam. 23:3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

David wrote, “The [Holy] spirit of the LORD [Jehovah] ... was in my tongue.” God told David, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” In other words, those who rule must be just and must mete out proper justice to others. Individuals who occupy positions as God’s mouthpiece—in any capacity—bear great responsibility to properly instruct their subjects, and they must do so in the fear, or reverence, of God. This justice is to be based not on personal whims, emotions, and thoughts but on the teachings of Scripture. Although Isaiah 11:3,4 applies to Jesus, it states the principle: “He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with *righteousness* shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” Even though this hearing and seeing are firsthand, issues of life and death have to be properly appraised as to the Lord’s will. Jesus wants to do his Father’s will to such an extent that he does not think from his own standpoint

but asks, “What would the Father have me do?”

2 Sam. 23:4 And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

The “morning” (or dawn) of David’s earthly career certainly had “clouds,” for his brothers looked upon him as a lad who kept sheep and surely did not think Samuel would anoint him to be king. Until David proved himself as the champion over Goliath, that family prejudice was probably quite frustrating. Similarly, Joseph was resented by his brothers until he became the prime minister of Egypt. They were jealous because he seemed to be their father’s favorite.

Therefore, verse 4 is alluding to the future inauguration of the Kingdom of peace—the time of the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12). When Elijah was in a cave, a mighty wind rent the rocks and was followed by an earthquake and a fire. Then came the “still small voice” of Jehovah. God was in that last manifestation in His normal, peaceful disposition, and the greater part of the Kingdom will be characterized by this prosperity.

David, as an individual, had clouds throughout his career. When pursued by Saul, he was hunted like a wild animal. Much later he ascended the throne. The same is true of Jesus, who was the subject of rebuke, sarcasm, and opposition from his own people at the First Advent. And it is said of the David class during the Gospel Age, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Verse 4, then, applies to the next age. When “the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence [fear and tremble] before him” (Hab. 2:20). The blessings of the Kingdom will follow.

“And he shall be ... as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” Tender grass after the rain is a nice illustration of the Kingdom. New grass, freshly seeded, thrives with and is very responsive to water even in dry soil. Pictures of Africa and the Negev of Israel show rain gushing down the wadis and then spreading out over the dry, barren desert floor. In some cases, only a few hours later grasses start to spring up out of the ground. Verdure abounds in responsiveness when water reaches the land.

2 Sam. 23:5 Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

This verse is a key to understanding verse 4. David was expressing his desire for and his faith in the future Kingdom and the promises of God. He trusted that the everlasting covenant would come to pass, but it was not growing yet.

2 Sam. 23:6 But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:

2 Sam. 23:7 But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

David likened the “sons of Belial” to “thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands.” The man who touches them “arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear” (RSV). The reference is not to individuals who may have a prickly disposition. Rather, this Second Death class are so hardened in sin that they, like thorns, cannot be dislodged by or from the root by human hands but need to be uprooted and destroyed by a harsher means. The thorns are so strong in all directions that they cannot be removed with human hands but must be handled with a spear, a hard instrument, and then burned and destroyed in their place. “They

shall be utterly burned [consumed—RSV] with fire in the same place.”

Comment: The NIV has, “They are burned up where they lie.”

2 Sam. 23:8 These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

2 Sam. 23:9 And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

2 Sam. 23:10 He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

2 Sam. 23:11 And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines.

2 Sam. 23:12 But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.

2 Sam. 23:13 And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

2 Sam. 23:14 And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

2 Sam. 23:15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

2 Sam. 23:16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

2 Sam. 23:17 And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

2 Sam. 23:18 And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three.

2 Sam. 23:19 Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three.

2 Sam. 23:20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:

2 Sam. 23:21 And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand,

and slew him with his own spear.

2 Sam. 23:22 These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men.

2 Sam. 23:23 He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard.

2 Sam. 23:24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

2 Sam. 23:25 Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite,

2 Sam. 23:26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,

2 Sam. 23:27 Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

2 Sam. 23:28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,

2 Sam. 23:29 Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin,

2 Sam. 23:30 Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,

2 Sam. 23:31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,

2 Sam. 23:32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,

2 Sam. 23:33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,

2 Sam. 23:34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,

2 Sam. 23:35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,

2 Sam. 23:36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,

2 Sam. 23:37 Zelek the Ammonite, Nahari the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,

2 Sam. 23:38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,

2 Sam. 23:39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

Verses 8-39 can be confusing to those who are not analytical, so we will treat them in another way. These verses catalog some of David's chief men and the offices they occupied. David had a group of three, a triad, at the top. Underneath that triad was a second category of three, and below the second category was a third category for a total of 37 men (see verse 39).

Without going into all the history, we will just read the names of the triads. The top three comprising the first triad were Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah (verses 8-12). The second triad was Abishai, a brother of Joab; Benaiah; and Asahel, also a brother of Joab (verses 18-24). Under Asahel were other men of renown. Adino slew 800 men at one time, although some feel

the number was 300 based on the Hebrew symbol (verse 8). When the main force withdrew from the onslaught of the enemy, some of these men stayed behind as individuals and would not retreat. In not retreating, they slew so many of the enemy that the withdrawing army of Israel had the courage to turn around, go back, and take the spoil. Notice that Uriah the Hittite is included as one of these men of renown (verse 39).

2 Sam. 24:1 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

2 Sam. 24:2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

2 Sam. 24:3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?

2 Sam. 24:4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

According to verse 1, not only was the anger of Jehovah kindled against Israel, but He moved David to commit the sin of numbering Israel and Judah. Fortunately, there is a self-adjusting correction for this statement. Just as 2 Chronicles 36:9 states that Jehoiachin was 8 years old when he began to reign and 2 Kings 24:8 corrects the record to say that he was 18 years old, so the Bible corrects verse 1. Both the King James margin for verse 1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 state that *Satan* provoked David to number Israel: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." In other words, Satan prompted David to make this request of Joab, the general of the host. One of the problems with verse 1 is that the pronoun "he" is a wrongly supplied word, for it is not in the Hebrew.

Why did David number the host of Israel? He wanted to assess his strength from an army standpoint, but Joab, who tried to discourage the numbering, said in effect, "Would to God that the number was a hundred times more than your estimate."

As clues in the Psalms indicate, David was mathematically inclined. For example, in order that the Levites and priests of Israel might have an equal distribution of service in connection with the coming Temple, David divided the year into 24 courses. This rotational arrangement minimized or eliminated any discontent or grumbling due to favoritism in service. It is true that in the military, one might want to number the people to ascertain his resources for draft purposes in case a potential enemy threatened an attack. Although we really do not know David's full motivation in numbering the Israelites, he could have had the Temple in mind. Solomon, his son, had what amounted to a "draft" in order to go into the forests and cut down trees and transport the logs down to Israel by boat. In other words, he wanted a division of labor in building the Temple. There was also a distribution of service with the quarrying of stone, the shaping of the pillars, etc. In addition, people other than Israelites shared in certain aspects of the Temple work.

In writing Psalm 119, David broke it up into the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In each stanza, a particular letter commences each of the several lines for a thought, namely, A, A, A, A and then B, B, B, B. While the Hebrew letters correspond with our A, B, C, etc., when they are written out, they are not smooth enough for us to recognize them, normally speaking. This method of writing again shows that David was orderly and mathematically inclined, even as a

general. Thus, when Satan provoked David to number the Israelites—an act of disobedience that displeased the Lord—he was already inclined this way by nature.

David instructed Joab, “Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan [the northernmost village] even to Beer-sheba [the southernmost settlement of significance], and number ye the people.” Joab was reluctant to comply and hoped God would give David a vision to see how large the force was without numbering the people. Thus Joab hoped something would satisfy lest David disobey. In this incident, Joab was right and his reaction was to his credit. In studying the characters of individuals in 1 and 2 Samuel, we find pluses and minuses on the ledger.

When David insisted, Joab and the captains, who had all opposed the king in this matter and tried to forestall him, gave in and did the numbering. No doubt some strong words were exchanged in the process.

A logical question now arises: Why was God’s anger stirred against the *people of Israel* when the brunt of the work and the responsibility for numbering, for census taking, fell on the shoulders of Joab and the captains underneath him, not on the people? Why was God displeased with Joab and the captains, even though they had manifested reluctance to David and had tried to stop the numbering? The account seems to indicate they could have *refused* to follow David’s order of disobedience. In other words, it was to their credit that they voiced opposition, but they did not take a firm enough stand. The principle is illustrated when Peter and other apostles were imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Upon their release, the religious leaders of Israel forbid them to preach further, but Peter replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). The highest authority is God, not the king or any other earthly leader.

Even the congregation, the people, were responsible, for they had heard about the census and could have remonstrated. It is important to study the underlying principles that are involved. This incident, then, was a test on David, the leadership, and the people in *varying* proportions of responsibility.

2 Sam. 24:5 And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer:

2 Sam. 24:6 Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon,

2 Sam. 24:7 And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beer-sheba.

2 Sam. 24:8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

For nine months and 20 days—almost ten months—Joab and the captains under him went throughout Israel numbering the people. They more or less made a circuit in the north, followed by a circuit in the south, and then returned to Jerusalem. With the Hivites and the Canaanites being mentioned, this census was quite extensive. Tyre and Zidon (Sidon) are still cities in Lebanon today.

2 Sam. 24:9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

The census was taken from the standpoint of men of war who were in the prime of life, able-

bodied men from about 25 to 50 years of age, capable of rendering active service in the army. The numbering showed that there were 800,000 “valiant men” in Israel and 500,000 in Judah, for a total of 1,300,000.

To establish Israel’s total population in David’s day, we could multiply 1,300,000 by at least 4, and probably by 4.5 to include women, children, and elders. Thus approximately 6 million people, plus the Levites and the tribe of Benjamin, lived in Israel in the days shortly before the building of the Temple (1 Chron. 21:6).

2 Sam. 24:10 And David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

What smote David’s heart when Joab came back with the total? When Joab and the captains had expressed opposition to the numbering, David did not heed them, so what brought the realization of sin to him? In retrospect, he may have reconsidered the words of Joab and the captains and gotten the point, but it was too late to stop the census takers, who were spread out in the nation.

Comment: Perhaps David felt alienated from the Lord in his personal life and prayer during the nine-month period.

Reply: Upon their return, Joab and the captains may have been despondent when they gave David the official total. Their demeanor might have reflected this sadness. If David was tenderized earlier, their coming back with sad countenances, having dutifully followed his instructions against their will, would have smitten his heart with remorse.

2 Sam. 24:11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying,

2 Sam. 24:12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.

2 Sam. 24:13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days’ pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

2 Sam. 24:14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

Gad the prophet is called “David’s seer.” Nathan the prophet, who had rebuked David early in his career in connection with Bathsheba, was still alive at this time, for he outlived the king. Evidently, these two men were involved in somewhat comparable offices, but what was the distinction between the roles of Gad the “seer” and Nathan the “prophet”? Probably the office of Nathan was slightly higher in that he was both a seer and a counselor, whereas Gad got mechanical messages and related them. As a seer, he foresaw or foretold events but was not necessarily in the category of a personal counselor.

Gad gave David, as the king of Israel, three options: (1) three years of famine (see 1 Chron. 21:12), (2) three months of flight from enemies, or (3) three days of pestilence. Notice that the three choices went backwards—three *years*, three *months*, three *days*. Not knowing which punishment was the worst from the standpoint of the degree of severity, David replied in

effect, “I am in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of God’s mercy and not into the hand of man.” The matter was too much for him to analyze.

In regard to the change from “seven years” to “three years” of famine, see the Revised Standard Version. Some letters and numbers in the old codices are very faint and thus can lead to a wrong translation. The series of “three” is probably correct, especially since that number has a connotation of trouble. Also, the Book of Chronicles, which is a separate account written by another party and probably from another codex, is usually more accurate.

God allows impediments to enter Scripture to stumble those not in heart harmony with the Bible and its inspiration, but the Bible corrects itself through either the immediate context or other Scriptures. The Lord operates in the present age with a “hand,” or priesthood, that is leprous (imperfect by nature) in the sight of man. But when those of the Little Flock go into the grave, figuratively the bosom, and are drawn out in resurrection, the hand will be clean with perfect bodies. The hand of service in the present life is quite different from the hand of the royal priesthood in glory.

God was saying to David, “You will be punished, for you have sinned. Which punishment do you want?” David responded, “The choice is too hard for me.” Of course all three punishments would have been under divine control, but David was giving the choice to God.

This incident occurred at a critical point in David’s career, for he was now old. Shortly before, he had been reinstated to kingship following the rebellion of Absalom. Now, in this new arrangement, not all were 100 percent loyal to him.

2 Sam. 24:15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men.

God chose the three-day pestilence, which, considering David’s words, “Let me fall into the hand of thy mercy,” was probably the lightest of the three punishments. The pestilence was upon Israel from morning until the time appointed, resulting in the death of 70,000 men. Incidentally, fleeing from the enemy did not mean that a person would just run and be out of breath but that the slaying would occur over a three-month period and people would be dropping right and left as they fled from a pursuing enemy.

2 Sam. 24:16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

2 Sam. 24:17 And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house.

The Chronicles account adds the following detail: “And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces” (1 Chron. 21:15,16).

David *literally* saw the angel of God with a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. The

death of the 70,000 was concentrated in the Jerusalem area, perhaps occurring at the time of a feast or religious service. (If not, a number of itinerant people were always in the capital city in connection with business.) Thus the deaths were more significant, for the corpses were seen in that one area, specifically at the threshing floor of Araunah.

David pleaded for the people and said, "Let the judgment be against me and my father's house." As king, he properly accepted the responsibility for having initiated and pressed the instruction to number the people. Speaking emotionally, he was saying in effect, "Let the curse be upon me so that there will be no successor."

2 Sam. 24:18 And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

2 Sam. 24:19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

2 Sam. 24:20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.

2 Sam. 24:21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

Araunah (also called Ornan) was the owner of the threshing floor (1 Chron. 21:15). David wanted to buy the threshing floor to build an altar unto the Lord so that the plague would be stopped. The plague was to last only three days, but David did not want to take any chances that God's displeasure might be extended.

2 Sam. 24:22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood.

2 Sam. 24:23 All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

2 Sam. 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

2 Sam. 24:25 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

Araunah, a Jebusite, was a man of stature himself, having a background of nobility and acting "as a king." He offered oxen to David for sacrifice. Araunah's threshing floor was on the future Temple Mount. Incidentally, the Jebusites, one of the seven nations the Israelites were to drive out of the land, had been inhabitants of Jerusalem (Deut. 7:1,2).

David insisted on paying for the threshing floor and the animals for sacrifice so that they would cost him something. Thus he purchased the tract of land that later became the site of Solomon's Temple and its outer courts. The fact wheat was threshed in this northern part of Jerusalem shows that at this time, the area was rural and undeveloped. The City of David was the southern part of Jerusalem.

It may be, too, that this giant angel, which we have described in the booklet “God, Angels, and Men,” stood between heaven and earth on that very place, namely, Araunah’s threshing floor. The angel was of tremendous stature so that all could see him, and the sword was hanging in a dangerous fashion over the city proper, the southern part of Jerusalem. Seventy thousand people died before the angel’s hand was stayed.

Verse 24 states that David paid Araunah 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor and oxen. The more accurate Chronicles account lists the payment as 600 shekels of gold (1 Chron. 21:25). Fifty shekels, the price of a man from 20 to 60 years of age, was too low (Lev. 27:3). Moreover, the proximity of the land to the city proper made it valuable. At any rate, God accepted David’s offering, and the plague was stopped.

1 KINGS 1:1–2:12

1 Kings 1:1 Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.

1 Kings 1:2 Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.

1 Kings 1:3 So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

1 Kings 1:4 And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

King David was “old and stricken in years” and quite feeble. His coldness must have been visibly apparent to those in his household, probably causing him to have shakes and tremors.

Q: Why wasn’t one of David’s wives selected to keep him warm? One who loved him and was in good health would want to care for him.

A: Possibly the young woman was warmer-blooded and had more energy to help David than a current wife. At any rate, “the king knew her not,” so there was no sexual intimacy.

Q: Why, in some Bibles, are 1 and 2 Kings called the third and fourth books of Kings?

A: The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel are generally designated 1 and 2 Kings in the Hebrew Bible. Then the Books of 1 and 2 Kings are called 3 and 4 Kings, for a total of four books of Kings.

1 Kings 1:5 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

1 Kings 1:6 And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom.

1 Kings 1:7 And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him.

1 Kings 1:8 But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah.

Adonijah, a son of David who was born in Hebron, exalted himself, saying, “I will be king,” and prepared to usurp the throne. Earlier Absalom, of a different mother, had acted similarly. Absalom was the third son of David, and Adonijah was the fourth (see 2 Sam. 3:2-4). Adonijah appointed 50 men to run ahead of his chariots, thus creating an impressive spectacle when he went from city to city. Moreover, like Absalom, Adonijah was a “very goodly [handsome] man.” Adonijah probably considered himself next in line to ascend the throne, but David did not have him in mind—and neither did the Lord. David had never provoked Adonijah to give cause for this rebellion. As intelligent as David was, he was naive in certain ways.

Adonijah conferred with Joab, the influential general of the army, and Abiathar, one of the two high priests. Before too precipitously taking this honor to himself, Adonijah wanted to make sure some of the leading men in the realm were on his side. Both Joab and Abiathar, who should have known better, agreed to help him. Joab fluctuated in his loyalties to David. Earlier he had shown an inclination to favor Absalom, and now he sided with Adonijah.

Meanwhile, Zadok, the other high priest, remained loyal to David along with Benaiah, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and the “mighty men” (2 Sam. 23:8-39). Shimei, who had opposed David earlier, now sided with him. His favorable support in David’s feeble years, as well as his recognition of David after Absalom’s death, helped to offset what Shimei had done previously (2 Sam. 16:5-13; 19:16-20).

1 Kings 1:9 And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zohemoth, which is by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king’s sons, and all the men of Judah the king’s servants:

1 Kings 1:10 But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

1 Kings 1:11 Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not?

1 Kings 1:12 Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.

En-rogel was at the southern extremity of Jerusalem where the Hinnom, Kidron, and Tyropoeon valleys form the Hebrew letter “S.” The stone of Zohemoth was probably being used as an altar to sacrifice sheep, oxen, and cattle. With the exception of Solomon, Adonijah called all of his brothers, the king’s sons, and all the men of Judah to a feast.

Realizing what was happening, Nathan the prophet acted quickly, for if Adonijah successfully assumed the reins of authority, he would want to eliminate Solomon and probably Bathsheba too in order to consolidate his power. Since David was more or less bedridden at this time, he was not active and alert and observing what was taking place. Nathan offered to give advice to Bathsheba to save her life and that of her son.

1 Kings 1:13 Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign?

1 Kings 1:14 Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words.

1 Kings 1:15 And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king.

1 Kings 1:16 And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou?

1 Kings 1:17 And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.

1 Kings 1:18 And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not:

1 Kings 1:19 And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called.

1 Kings 1:20 And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

1 Kings 1:21 Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

Nathan prompted Bathsheba with the words to speak to David. Of course she realized the necessity and the urgency of following the prophet's advice. Nathan's strategy was to enter—seemingly by chance—during Bathsheba's meeting with the king in order to confirm her words as a second witness.

When David saw Bathsheba honor him and knew she had some request to make, he asked, "What can I do for you?" She replied, "Didn't you swear to me that my son Solomon would reign after your decease? Now Adonijah is reigning, and you are unaware of his usurpation behind your back. What do you plan to do about the matter? Adonijah is even having a feast with notable men in attendance. Your prior servants have participated in the conspiracy." Then Bathsheba reminded David that she and Solomon would be slain if Adonijah succeeded.

1 Kings 1:22 And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

1 Kings 1:23 And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

1 Kings 1:24 And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?

1 Kings 1:25 For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah.

1 Kings 1:26 But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called.

1 Kings 1:27 Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not showed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?

Being careful not to mention Solomon at the start of his audience with the king, but to vary his account from that of Bathsheba, Nathan asked the question “Did you appoint Adonijah to be your successor?” Then, to be convincing, he added the additional details that Adonijah and his supporters had actually made the proclamation “God save king Adonijah.” By calling Solomon David’s “servant,” Nathan was saying that all of the king’s other sons were with Adonijah, but he and Solomon were faithful: “But me, even me thy servant, and ... thy servant Solomon.” He added, “Haven’t you let me, your servant, know who your successor is? Have you done something without informing me? Is Adonijah reigning by your authority?”

By rebelling and presumptuously seizing the kingship, Adonijah manifested a lack of faith in God. He did not have the proper respect and reverence for God and acted more out of politics and strategy based on an ulterior motive.

1 Kings 1:28 Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king’s presence, and stood before the king.

1 Kings 1:29 And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,

1 Kings 1:30 Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

1 Kings 1:31 Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

1 Kings 1:32 And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

1 Kings 1:33 The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon:

When Bathsheba had her audience with the king, she was alone with him, relatively speaking. As soon as Nathan came in, she exited. The prophet spoke to David, and then he also left. What was David’s reaction? He said, “Call Bathsheba,” and had a second audience with her, repeating his earlier oath that Solomon would be his successor. Next he called Nathan to return, along with Zadok and Benaiah this time. To the three, he said, “Take my servants and cause Solomon, my son, to ride upon my mule, and bring him down to the Pool of Gihon for the anointing ceremony.” It was important that both Nathan and Zadok be involved with anointing Solomon to be king. There needed to be a double anointing, as it were, one by the priest and one by the prophet.

Comment: David’s humility is seen here. He readily relinquished the crown to Solomon and offered his own mule.

Reply: Yes, he saw the urgency of the matter. The anointing had to be done that very day. His mule was probably a very select animal that was white and had certain features marking it as belonging to the king.

Incidentally, the Virgin Fount circular pool, the Pool of Gihon, was the same waterway as the Pool of Siloam but at the upper end. Siloam was the rectangular pool at the bottom. The Pool of Gihon was near where Hezekiah’s Tunnel starts at the upper or north end.

Comment: When Solomon's Temple was built, underpriests served in the 24 courses of service set forth by David.

Reply: Yes. Abiathar's support of Adonijah will bar him from service in the future Ezekiel's Temple. Because of Zadok's faithfulness and loyalty to David, he and his children will be the underpriests for the ceremonies in the Kingdom.

1 Kings 1:34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

1 Kings 1:35 Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

1 Kings 1:36 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so too.

1 Kings 1:37 As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David.

1 Kings 1:38 So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon.

A company of people went with Solomon, who rode David's mule down to the Pool of Gihon for his anointing. Following the anointing and the blowing of the trumpet, a proclamation was to be made: "God save King Solomon."

Q: Who were the Cherethites and the Pelethites?

A: They were foreigners who cast their lot with David when he was in hiding from Saul. Now they were like the king's household guard in one sense, whereas the "mighty men" were his chief fighters.

1 Kings 1:39 And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

1 Kings 1:40 And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

The acoustics were particularly keen at the time of Solomon's anointing so that the sound wafted down to where Adonijah was. The "earth [was] rent with the sound" of the trumpet, the shout, people piping with pipes, and the rejoicing. The shout of Solomon's enthusiastic supporters was amplified by the Lord to reach Adonijah's ears. Imagine the shock and dismay that came upon him when he heard the noise!

1 Kings 1:41 And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?

1 Kings 1:42 And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings.

1 Kings 1:43 And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king.

1 Kings 1:44 And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule:

1 Kings 1:45 And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard.

Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, reported the startling news of what had happened. Many of those with Adonijah had served under David, but they had now transferred their allegiance. Looking to the future, they threw their support to Adonijah—without first consulting the Lord.

Comment: In Bible chronology, David's reign is reckoned as 40 years.

Reply: In reading the account carefully, we see that his reign actually lasted 40 1/2 years, but it was considered 40 years. In the chronology listings in Kings and Chronicles, the reigns are invariably rounded off and reckoned as full years. Only in rare cases are months mentioned, and that is where kings reigned for only a few months, Jehoiachin being an example (2 Kings 24:8). Had David reigned a little longer, the time would have been considered as 41 years. For the sake of the type, therefore, his reign had to be cut short.

1 Kings 1:46 And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom.

1 Kings 1:47 And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed.

1 Kings 1:48 And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it.

1 Kings 1:49 And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.

1 Kings 1:50 And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

Adonijah and his supporters had just finished eating when they heard the trumpet and "uproar." Then in came Jonathan with the news. In fear, all of Adonijah's supporters forsook him, "every man [going] his [own] way." Knowing his attempt to seize the throne had failed, he fled to the altar in the court of the Tabernacle and caught hold of the horns with his hands. The altar was like the tribunal of last resort, for holding onto the horns was a symbol of expecting clemency and mercy from the king.

Now, at the end of David's reign, the tent he had erected in Jerusalem many years earlier to house the Ark was still there, as well as an altar. Through this expediency, the feasts could be observed until the Temple was built.

1 Kings 1:51 And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me today that he will not slay his servant with the sword.

1 Kings 1:52 And Solomon said, If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.

1 Kings 1:53 So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

Solomon said Adonijah could live if he showed himself a worthy man. Adonijah returned to his house as Solomon commanded.

Here was a peculiar situation with three personalities on the scene at the same time: Adonijah was illegally anointed as king, Solomon was legally anointed as king, and David was still on the scene in the flesh. In antitype, Jesus was anointed King at the beginning of the Gospel Age, and the Church has been down here in the flesh throughout the Gospel Age. Stated another way, while the David class is in the flesh, the Head of the Solomon class has already been anointed.

The account is now coming to the end of David's life when "Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom" (verse 46). Not only did Solomon have David's mule going to and from the Pool of Gihon, but David's advice was, "Have him sit on my throne" (verse 35). Solomon literally sat on the seat that David customarily used on occasions of state, the point being to seal before the minds of the public that he was the successor. However, it was not until David's death that Solomon was king in the full sense of the word. Bathsheba had used that very reasoning with David: "Don't you know that as soon as you fall asleep in death, Adonijah will slay Solomon and me?" (verse 21). Thus the successor had been appointed and was there, but the reign aspect would not begin until the death of David himself.

Q: What happened to Abiathar?

A: King Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being high priest (1 Kings 2:26,27).

In the United States, if the President had to undergo serious surgery and was incapacitated, someone would temporarily take over the reins of government until he had recovered. Similarly, Solomon now handled the affairs that David was incapable of doing. Because of his infirmity, David was more in the role of adviser, as will be seen in the Chronicles account.

1 Kings 2:1 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

1 Kings 2:2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man;

1 Kings 2:3 And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

1 Kings 2:4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

1 Kings 2:5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.

1 Kings 2:6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

1 Kings 2:7 But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

1 Kings 2:8 And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.

1 Kings 2:9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.

Verses 2-9 are David's charge to Solomon just before his decease. The "if" clause spoken by David in verse 4, "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee ... a man on the throne of Israel," was a *conditional* promise. In contradistinction, the "sure mercies of David" were *unconditional*. If Solomon was unfaithful, Messiah's lineage would be reckoned through someone else. And that is what happened—the true blood lineage of Mary went through Nathan (Luke 3:31).

Verse 8 confirms that this is the same Shimei who had cursed David earlier. David showed kindness to him because of later actions of reconciliation. However, now that David was about to pass off the scene, he felt that Shimei was not to be held guiltless. Because he had dishonored the office of king, the representation of Jehovah's throne, he was worthy of death. Notice that David could discern wisdom in Solomon: "thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him." He was confident Solomon would know how to handle the matter. Likewise, David charged Solomon to put Joab to death, again referring to Solomon's wisdom: "Do therefore according to thy wisdom." David was squaring accounts with Shimei and Joab.

On a happier note, David instructed Solomon to show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite by letting them eat at his table. David was appreciative of their support when he was fleeing from Absalom.

Q: It is understandable that, because of his promise, David did not order the death of Shimei, but why did he refrain from putting Joab to death?

A: There were probably personal reasons, for Joab did some unusual things, as will be discussed when we review his life.

1 Kings 2:10 So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

1 Kings 2:11 And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

1 Kings 2:12 Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly.

In round numbers, David's reign of 40 years consisted of seven years in Hebron and 33 years in Jerusalem. He died and was buried in the City of David.

Here was another beginning, for upon David's death, "then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly." Like David, Solomon was anointed ahead of time and did not officially reign until his predecessor died.

There is a hint with David in regard to the closing of the door at the end of the age. We have suggested that a time will come when God will know the door is shut, but those on this side of the veil will not be aware of that fact. A little later it will be known that the door is shut, as shown by the reaction of the foolish virgins (Matt. 25:10).

In another picture, Abraham, because of his faithfulness, was told *in advance* about the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18:17,18). Of course Abraham's seeing the destruction from afar indicates that in antitype the Little Flock will view the destruction of the antitypical Sodom from heaven. The point is that Abraham had developed a crystallized character when he was given advance information. Accordingly, the Pastor used certain Scriptures to suggest the possibility that God will know when a sufficient number of feet members are on this side of the veil to complete the Little Flock, but the consecrated down here will not know. At that point in time, the door of opportunity for the high calling will be shut. When the closing of the door is realized by the consecrated still down here, all 144,000 will be on the other side of the veil. Hence there are two hypothetical "closings" of the door.

From that standpoint, the development of the Church occurs in stages. The anointing with the Holy Spirit to the high calling, which takes place at consecration, can be lost by an individual, yet his life can still be saved. For instance, when we give our all to the Lord and enter the door of the high calling, we are bona fide participants. If faithful unto death, we will receive a crown. But there may come a time when we are not the proper material; that is, we have not developed in the manner that is pleasing to the Lord and He selects someone else without our knowing the person is a replacement.

We are speaking now about the dispensational closing of the door. When we say the door will be closed as dramatically as it was opened at Pentecost, we are referring to the visible closing, which is part of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. A voice from heaven will say, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.... [but] Blessed are they which are called [invited] unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7,9). That message says, in effect, that the door is closed. In regard to the opening of the door at Pentecost, just as God knew in advance, prior to Pentecost, that 11 apostles would be faithful and one would be lost, so the *theoretical* closing of the door, known by God in advance, will not coincide with the *practical* closing of the door.

Q: What is the hint in the account of David regarding the closing of the door? Is it the fact that Solomon did not really assume the throne until David had died?

A: Yes. The antitypical Solomon class of the future is chosen from the other side of the veil *before* the selection becomes apparent down here. (The David class is in the present life; the Solomon class is beyond the veil.) We know the time is drawing nigh for the wedding of the Bride and the Lamb, but we do not know which individuals will secure that honor. However, the identities of the 144,000 are known above. The *aged* David is significant with regard to the *feet* members. The *anointing* is one thing; being *seated in office* is another matter.

With co-reigns in the past, such as in Egypt, where a father and a son reigned at the same time, the father was accredited with the reign in spite of his infirmity, and the son, who may have been doing the bulk of the work, did not actually reign until the father died. When David was feeble in his old age, Solomon assumed the duties of his father and spoke with his father's

authority. He reigned in a practical way but not in the theoretical way until David died. Thus we see three parts to the reign: two anointings of Solomon followed by his sitting on the throne of David. The wording of verse 12—“Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father”—implies there was a manner in which he previously did not sit on the throne, yet when Solomon was anointed, David said, “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne *this day*, mine eyes even seeing it” (1 Kings 1:48).

1 CHRONICLES 28 AND 29

1 Chron. 28:1 And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.

David assembled unto Jerusalem the various princes, captains, and officers of Israel and the various divisions of the army and those in his own household to make an announcement.

1 Chron. 28:2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

The aged, feeble David stood up and began his address: “Hear me, my brethren, and my people.” Evidently, he had been seated, and now he made the effort to stand on his feet so that all eyes would be riveted on him. He declared his intention to build a “house of rest [a Temple] for the ark of the covenant of the LORD.” He “had made ready for the building”; that is, he had already expended considerable effort to gather the materials for the construction of the building.

1 Chron. 28:3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.

As much as David would have liked to build the Temple, God said that being a man of war was not compatible with building a house of peace and rest.

1 Chron. 28:4 Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel:

1 Chron. 28:5 And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

1 Chron. 28:6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.

David traced his background as being identified with the tribe of Judah, whence the Prince of Israel was to come. Of course David, whose name means “Beloved,” was a type of Messiah.

Comment: The fact that God called Solomon’s Temple “my house” shows His approval.

Reply: Yes. Even though that Temple was sullied subsequently, the original design was of the

Lord. In contradistinction, God will not permit anyone to pollute Ezekiel's Temple of the future, for He has handpicked those who will administer its functions and be responsible for ensuring there will be no defection of any of its priesthood or representatives.

1 Chron. 28:7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day.

The "if" clause with regard to Solomon was an important stipulation: *if* Solomon was constant in keeping God's commandments, God would establish his kingdom forever.

Q: How would God have communicated this information to David?

A: Probably in a dream at night.

1 Chron. 28:8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.

1 Chron. 28:9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

1 Chron. 28:10 Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.

Earlier remarks were addressed to the assemblage convened at Jerusalem. Now David turned to his son and presumably addressed him in the presence of all the others, giving him a charge to be faithful in superintending the Temple and the people. As their king, Solomon was to be faithful in judging them and in fulfilling the responsibilities attached to the office.

"Take heed now; for Jehovah hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it." Up to this point, the "sanctuary," the Tabernacle arrangement, was a tent of meeting built of skins, but now it would be a house of a far more enduring substance.

1 Chron. 28:11 Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat,

1 Chron. 28:12 And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things:

1 Chron. 28:13 Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD.

As David had received from God the entire plans for the construction of the Temple, so he passed them on to Solomon.

Q: Verse 12 states that David gave Solomon "the pattern of all that he had [received] by the spirit." Was this a special communication?

A: Yes, David was specially commissioned to receive explicit plans of the Temple. To be given the “pattern” means that he must have seen the *finished* structure in either a vision or a dream, not just blueprints. We are reminded of the time when Moses was given the vision of the Tabernacle on Mount Sinai. God said, “See ... that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount” (Heb. 8:5). Now God was doing the same thing in effect to David.

Q: In vision, David saw the Temple as it would be constructed, but how did he convey this mental picture to Solomon? Would he have drawn the plans for Solomon?

A: When David gave the “pattern” to Solomon, there might have been a visual representation as well as an explanation. We do not think Solomon had to conjecture as to what David saw. As a military man, David had mathematical capabilities.

Verses 11 and 12 tell very briefly what David saw—the central building, the structure of the Temple proper where the Mercy Seat was, as well as the design of the outer and inner courts and the chambers roundabout. Verse 13 indicates that Solomon was also given the “courses of the priests and the Levites”—what their functions were to be. The priests had various activities to perform when they were at the Temple, and the Levites had subordinate responsibilities.

Verses 11-13 are plainly stated, but of course they do not provide details of the “pattern,” the drawing, the design, of Solomon’s Temple. This general synopsis gives us a feeling as to what David handed over to his son, who received what was like a mechanical engineer’s drawing of the Temple.

The “porch” (singular) was the porch of the inner Temple, where, during ceremonies at which the high priest officiated, the people looked at what we would call a stage. God gave David great detailed information, of which only *generalized* expressions are given here: “houses,” “treasuries,” “upper chambers,” and “inner parlours.” The “houses” correspond to the side chambers of the Temple proper (the inner large building). The side chambers, big buildings on either side, looked like one structure, but actually the beams of the side chambers could not in any fashion enter the wall of the inner Temple proper. Thus the side chambers were the side buildings.

God also gave David details of the Holy and the Most Holy—that is, of the “inner parlours thereof.” Moreover, the side chambers had three upper floors. We can see that God had to give David a tremendous amount of verbal instruction and measurements in order to explain the details. However, unless we had the details before us and were familiar with the architecture of Solomon’s Temple, we could not fully grasp what the account is describing. Hence for 2,000 years, this huge Temple complex has not been understood. As indicated elsewhere, David was given a series of visions.

David gave Solomon the pattern “of the place of the mercy seat” and also “the pattern of all that he had by the spirit.” In other words, verses 11-13 are introductory, giving a generalized description of the inner and outer construction details.

The term “by the spirit” reminds us of 2 Peter 1:21, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The Old Testament prophets were mostly moved vocally, so that their voices made spiritual utterances, but in this case, David’s hand was moved to do spirit writing, or drawing. This power of the Holy Spirit is counterfeited by fallen angels, who work through and move spirit mediums to do similar writing and/or cause knockings, or rappings, to indicate approval or disapproval.

Thus David's hand was mechanically moved by the Holy Spirit to do accurate drawings. Without the tools of an architect, the drawing of straight lines would have been impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit. These intimate details are furnished in God's Word for those who hunger and thirst after information. If permissible, they diligently desire to understand every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. 1 and 2 Chronicles were written for those who desire this kind of information.

Verse 12 mentions "the treasuries of the house of God" and "the treasuries of the dedicated things." The "dedicated things" were the offerings of the people, which included money, animals, goods, metals, food, oils, and products of the vineyard. The people brought their "dedicated things" according to the particular service or time of the year. Or they brought personal property that they desired to give to the Lord to be converted into use for the maintenance of the Temple and for the labor of those who served in the Temple.

The "treasuries" were different kinds of rooms (storerooms, rooms with beds, dressing rooms, etc.), not in the Temple proper (the Holy and the Most Holy) but in the side chambers. Similarly, the Tabernacle had side chambers, for the sides of the tent that covered the rectilinear structure came down on an angle to form spaces which were also considered holy and were used to store incense, oil, and other goods and served as dressing rooms and sleeping quarters. The Temple was a large structure with many rooms that were dedicated to different kinds of services. As designed by God and shown in the original drawing given to David, the Temple had a place for everything that would be needed. David passed that drawing on to Solomon. David gave him the pattern of not only the Temple proper, the courts, and the side chambers of the main Temple building but also the other chambers that were around the court.

Verse 13 describes the courses of the priests and the Levites for the work and service of the Temple. An outline was given "for all the work ... and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD." The 24 courses corresponded for the Levites and the priests. The change of venue provided an opportunity for all of the priests to serve. In the Tabernacle arrangement, there were only four underpriests (Eleazar, Ithamar, Nadab, and Abihu) and one chief priest (Aaron), whereas the Temple arrangement had many underpriests, so for all to have an opportunity and time of service, the year was divided into portions or allotments. Moreover, a particularity of service was predetermined; that is, a musician was a musician, a singer was a singer, a conductor was a conductor, etc.

Comment: 1 Chronicles 6:32 states, "And they ministered before the dwellingplace of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order."

Reply: Before the Temple was built, the threshing floor of Ornan and a tent were used. God gave David the schematic of what was to be done and how, and who would be chosen for a particular service. For example, the preaching had to be done with good elocution and distinction of voice. Similarly, with the 144,000, God has chosen each of the members to fulfill a particular function in the Kingdom Age. In the present life, the characters of the Little Flock are being developed and prepared, but in the next age, the Holy Spirit will give the capability and the power, let alone the perfection of nature. What a wonderful picture is before us!

Comment: The *Father* gives Jesus the pattern of the Church and the coming Kingdom. A proof text is Matthew 20:23, where Jesus said, "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

1 Chron. 28:14 He gave of gold by weight for things of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; silver also for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of

every kind of service:

1 Chron. 28:15 Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick, and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick.

1 Chron. 28:16 And by weight he gave gold for the tables of shewbread, for every table; and likewise silver for the tables of silver:

1 Chron. 28:17 Also pure gold for the fleshhooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basins he gave gold by weight for every basin; and likewise silver by weight for every basin of silver:

1 Chron. 28:18 And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

David made sure he had sufficient quantities of the gold, silver, and brass that would be needed (1 Chron. 29:7). Notice that there were candlesticks (plural)—ten of them—and multiple tables of shewbread (2 Chron. 4:7). The Holy of Solomon's Temple was twice as big as the Tabernacle Holy, which was more than adequate for the relatively small three articles of furniture. The Temple was brilliantly illuminated, with candlesticks in both the Holy and the Most Holy. The Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and Ezekiel's Temple were all of God's design, but the fact that each serves a different purpose, or function, affects the architecture to a degree.

What is meant by the expression that David gave gold and silver "by weight"? With regard to the Mercy Seat, for example, he had a particular quantity—no more and no less. The Mercy Seat was to be made with that specified allotment, and no additional gold was to be taken out of a bin, or general supply. God knew in advance the exact amount and weight of any metal for the pattern that He gave. Therefore, not only was the artisan limited as to the size of the article, but he found that the amount was exactly right according to the pattern. In other words, the metals for the instruments were exact in weight and amounts.

We can see the tremendous quality of David's mind to be able to keep these amounts and weights in his head. Immediately we are reminded of Moses' ability with the Tabernacle, which was much smaller but included a lot of detail. All of the details and measurements had to be in David's head when he apportioned the work and distributed the materials. David and Moses were very much alike.

Construction details are not given for Solomon's Temple because God knew that it would pass away. Although He was the author of the original plan, the Temple and its priesthood became defiled. Knowing the end from the beginning, God intended that Solomon's Temple would be supplanted by Ezekiel's Temple, which will be superior.

Knowledge by itself does not produce what God wants in the human race. Not only will the proud, the intellectuals, be humbled, but also that which is ornate and showy will be toned down. There will be a different type of lifestyle, with every man living in his own little dwelling under his own vine and fig tree. The environment after the Kingdom Age will be agricultural and more natural, as opposed to city life, which is abnormal and artificial.

David went from being a shepherd boy to reigning as a king, and now he was involved with the plans for the Temple. Similarly, the Lord's people are normal and ordinary, but God will

work on their inherent capabilities and make out of them something wonderful. It is important to stay humble in the present life and to remember that we are nothing unless we continue in the Spirit. “If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). Have we not seen individuals who ran the course like meteors and then burned out and left the truth? In the account of David, we are given a picture not only of the Temple but also of his innermost feelings and emotions.

Two types of revenue were involved: (1) David’s personal property, and (2) what he donated of the spoils of war when God gave him the victory over his enemies. The latter was like state revenue, which David did not allow to be exploited for other things. Spoils obtained by the army were kept in escrow for the Temple.

Comment: Coming from the fields and watching over flocks of sheep by night—coming from nothing, as it were—David now possessed great wealth but chose to donate it for the Temple.

Reply: With the exception of Jesus, David was the greatest of the earthly kings.

The “ark of the covenant of the LORD” is called “the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings.” The cherubim chariot was God’s vehicle of operation. This thought fits in beautifully with His four attributes. Whatever God does is always in harmony with His four attributes: Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. There is a consensus, a mutual agreement, a harmony, between all four. We use the term the “plan of God,” but the operation, or movement, of the four attributes is the divine plan itself.

The Ark in the Temple is called the “chariot” of God from the standpoint that the two cherubim representing the divine attributes of Love and Power are in a standing-up posture, being free to operate because the atonement price was paid. Stated another way, in the Tabernacle, the two cherubim were stationary, or frozen, to the Mercy Seat, watching and waiting for the application of the atonement sacrifice. In the Temple, which is a picture of the future, that work has been completed, and God’s Love and Power are liberated and free to operate.

1 Chron. 28:19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.

Not only was the pattern of the Temple given to David in vision, but it was committed to writing so that he knew how to prepare for the construction and what quantities of materials would be needed. It was as though God took David’s wrist and fingers and mechanically moved them to do the drawing. God gave Moses the Law and the pattern of the Tabernacle and its furniture, and He gave David a similar experience. David did not state when he had this experience, but it would have occurred a reasonable amount of time before he turned the government over to Solomon so that he could gather the materials.

Comment: Please explain the differences between the Tabernacle Ark and the Temple Ark.

Reply: The Tabernacle Ark was still in existence at this time, so it was put in the Most Holy of the Temple. However, the cherubim of the old Ark were in a kneeling posture and were made of one piece of gold hammered out into figurines at either end of the rectangular slab, or Mercy Seat, that covered the box underneath. In the Temple, two giant cherubim were standing up, and their outspread wings embraced the entire width of the Most Holy. Under them was the Tabernacle Ark, which, compared to the size of the giant cherubim, was like a miniature box. In both structures, however, the two cherubim represent Love and Power.

Comment: Verse 19 in the Hebrew-English translation reads, “All was in writing from the hand

of Jehovah; he caused me to understand all of the work of the pattern.”

1 Chron. 28:20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

1 Chron. 28:21 And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee for all the service of the house of God: and there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man, for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.

Verses 20 and 21 are somewhat reminiscent of the Tabernacle, where Bezaleel and Aholiab were provided to do cunning work (Exod. 31:1-6). Although the Tabernacle was a rather simplified structure, the Lord raised up two men skilled in all manner of wisdom. Solomon's Temple, being a more complex building, required much more cooperation and many more willing hands. All skilled workmen were guaranteed, and Solomon was to be cared for—at least until the Temple was complete.

The Lord must have devoted considerable time to explaining the services to David. He was given not only a three-dimensional picture of the Temple and a pattern of the furniture and its purposes but also an outline of how the services would be performed. We can appreciate how much preparation work David did, for it took Solomon very little time to build the Temple, relatively speaking. If Solomon had had to gather the materials and do everything from scratch, much more time would have been required.

David was saying that Solomon would be like an absolute monarch. His words to Solomon remind us of what Moses said to Joshua at the end of the 40 years. Moses wanted to go into the Promised Land, but when God indicated that Joshua would lead the people, Moses gave him a blessing and encouraged him. Here David wanted to build the Temple but had to give the undertaking to his son Solomon. Then David gave Solomon a pep talk, as Moses had done earlier with Joshua. We believe these are meant to be analogies.

Comment: In the antitype, Jesus gave instructions in regard to the Comforter's coming when he passed off the scene (John 14:16,26). The real work of the Gospel Age began after Jesus had returned to his Father. Likewise, with the Church, Elijah will be off the scene but will be credited with the anointings of Hazael and Jehu. In each case—with Moses, David, Jesus, and the Church—the ones who are accredited pass the work on to others.

1 Chron. 29:1 Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God.

David made this statement “unto all the congregation” in late life, shortly before his decease. He said in effect, “God alone has chosen Solomon, my son, to be my successor to build the palace, the Temple. The Temple is for Jehovah.” Saying that Solomon “is yet young and tender” is a vague description, but 1 Chronicles 22:9 helps by recording what God said to David: “Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.” This verse should be corrected to say, “Behold, a son *is* born unto thee” (instead of “Behold, a son *shall be* born to thee”), for Solomon was already on the scene at this time. God gave the name Solomon to David's son, just as He gave Jesus' name to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:31).

1 Chron. 29:2 Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.

David said he had prepared with all his might for the house of God and then enumerated the component materials, starting with the metals: gold, silver, brass, and iron. Next he mentioned wood, onyx, stones of various colors, precious stones, and marble. Iron was mostly used for spikes or nails to fasten boards together in the massive building. Brass was used as a veneer for walls, thick planks of wood were used for the floor and side walls, and gold was used for furniture in the Holy and the Most Holy. For instance, there were ten gold candlesticks in the Holy (1 Kings 7:49). The stones “of divers colours” were used for vestments and garments and also for overlaying in the building. The shoulders of the ephod had onyx stones.

The interior walls of Solomon’s Temple were all gold. In Ezekiel’s Temple, the gold will be much more modified. The intent with Solomon’s Temple was to make the house of the Lord the most magnificent palace in the world. The purpose of Ezekiel’s Temple will be different. The edifice will be one of simplicity but of great proportions, being very, very large. Although the Holy and the Most Holy will have the same dimensions in both temples, the overall structure of Ezekiel’s Temple will be larger and far more complex. And Ezekiel’s Temple will be far more impressive, for it will be built on top of a predominating mountain that will be raised in the future. The grandeur of Ezekiel’s Temple will be its size and magnificence, but it will be modified and subdued to counteract the temptation of man, which is to be overawed by jewels rather than by the symbolic meaning. Thus the Third Temple will be greater, but its array will be more modest.

1 Chron. 29:3 Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house,

1 Chron. 29:4 Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal:

1 Chron. 29:5 The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?

Comment: David successfully faced temptations with the great wealth acquired as the spoils of war. Instead of personally keeping the gold, silver, brass, etc., he devoted them as materials for the construction of the Temple.

Reply: David devoted not only the spoils of war and the resources of the nation as materials for the Temple but even his own salary, as it were, and gifts given to him as king. We get some concept of the beauty of the Temple because the courtyards were built of beautiful inlaid stones, and the building itself was unusual. The Temple was a true wonder of the world for its beauty, although it was not officially listed as such because of Israel’s presumed insignificance. The structure was not tremendous as far as being a work of art, but it was extraordinary in its beauty, as designed of God. For example, there was a cloister walk with marble columns, and flagstone steps and the courtyard floor were beautifully designed in harmonious colors. Olive wood, known for its adaptability for carving, was overlaid with other materials, and the walls were all covered. With regard to the future Ezekiel’s Temple, we are given only the very basics,

but the design is different from that of Solomon's Temple.

The description of materials continued. David gave 3,000 talents of the gold of Ophir, which was proverbial as the choicest type of gold. The golden wedge of Ophir was an outstanding remnant of a previously built structure. The quality of that gold, as well as its abundance, was from the land of Ophir, which we believe was the land of Havilah (Gen. 2:10-12). Incidentally, we are purposely omitting many interesting but nonessential details, for without an illustration to accompany the explanation, they would be difficult to understand.

The last part of verse 5 attracts our attention: "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" David was asking for willing volunteers. He was saying, "I have assembled the materials, but a lot of help is needed. Who will volunteer his services?" Special talents were required, so he was asking the hearers to donate their time. This request was mostly for servitude in addition to the thousands of Levites; that is, other willing workers were invited to participate, and according to their talent, they were under the guidance of the appropriate overseers in the different component parts of the Temple. For example, there were doorkeepers, porch keepers, those who tended the animals, and those who took care of the incense. In other words, many were used in a subordinate fashion to contribute their own goods, their talents, or just their labor. Similarly, today there are various types of service for the Lord's people.

1 Chron. 29:6 Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly,

1 Chron. 29:7 And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.

1 Chron. 29:8 And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

1 Chron. 29:9 Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

Many now gave freewill offerings for the Temple, as the Israelites had done hundreds of years earlier for the Tabernacle. Immense amounts of materials had already been gathered, and on this occasion, the people "offered willingly ... with [a] perfect heart" additional materials to adorn and enrich the structure and to help the priesthood in connection with the work to be done. When they gave more than 5,000 talents of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron, plus precious stones, David "rejoiced with great joy" at the response. With one talent of gold weighing almost 100 pounds, the 5,000 talents were an *enormous* amount—almost like the Treasury of the United States.

Comment: What a generous and beautiful attitude in giving!

Reply: The people eagerly and willingly responded.

1 Chron. 29:10 Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

1 Chron. 29:11 Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the

kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

1 Chron. 29:12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

1 Chron. 29:13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

1 Chron. 29:14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

1 Chron. 29:15 For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

1 Chron. 29:16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.

1 Chron. 29:17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

1 Chron. 29:18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

1 Chron. 29:19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

Initially David addressed the people. Then he turned his attention to Solomon and gave him a specific charge. Next he again addressed the people, asking them to cooperate in the effort. Now, in gratitude, David began an emotional prayer of thanksgiving, covering verses 10-19. The prayer is self-explanatory. It is nice just to hear the words as he prayed to God in the sight of all the people, honoring His holy name in the final song just prior to his death.

Comment: The prayer seems to have a prophetic aspect too, for it can be uttered in Israel again after the New Covenant is established.

Reply: Yes, we can see the appropriateness of the prayer. The “palace is not for man, but for the LORD God” (verse 1). The fact that Solomon’s Temple is called a “palace” here is a clue that the use of the word in Jeremiah 30:18 refers to Ezekiel’s Temple. “Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the *palace* shall remain after the manner thereof.”

We can see the generosity of both David and the people—and what a nice perspective he expressed! Rejoicing, he continued his prayer to Jehovah, “We are thankful for the privilege of being able to return a little of what belongs to you.” Then he said, “Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.”

Solomon was in the proper heart condition at this time and through the building of the Temple. His prayer of dedication reflected a wonderful spirit, showing he was the right person to do that work and to administer justice to Israel. In time, other factors came in.

In beseeching and asking for certain things, David said, "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness." We are reminded of Moses' saying in the Book of Deuteronomy that God was proving the Israelites whether or not they loved Him with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength (Deut. 13:3). Likewise, as Christians, we are all being tested as to the constancy of our character development while keeping in mind Paul's statement "This one thing I do" (Phil. 3:13).

David concluded praising God in prayer and then asked Him to give Solomon a perfect heart and a constancy of true character. Of course we know Solomon eventually strayed, so the Lord does not always answer prayers the way they are framed. Nevertheless, there was nothing wrong in David's praying along this line, for he was thinking of nothing but the honor of the Heavenly Father. He wanted the congregation, as well as Solomon, to keep God constantly in memory. David prayed for Solomon "to build the palace, for ... which I have made provision."

Comment: David was pleased that others had the same willing and generous spirit.

Reply: Yes, he was something like a cheerleader but in a *very pious* fashion. In witnessing his enthusiasm, the people themselves were filled with joy.

1 Chron. 29:20 And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

1 Chron. 29:21 And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:

At the end of his prayer, David turned to the people and said, "Now bless the LORD your God." Evidently, there followed a congregational prayer, one that the nation was familiar with. Then they worshipped God and did obeisance to King David. Thousands of burnt offerings were subsequently offered. Notice the large numbers: 1,000 each of bullocks, rams, and lambs. The bullocks were the sin offering, and the rams and lambs showed the acceptability of the sin offering. On the one hand, the 1,000 bullocks represent Christ in a special sense, but on the other hand, the Church participates. The 1,000 rams represent Christ, and the 1,000 lambs picture the Church. Thus were pictured the Head and the body members.

The Church participates in sin offerings, thank offerings, and other offerings. For those who have difficulty seeing the Church's participation in the sin offering, the burnt offering is convincing scriptural reasoning, for it signifies the acceptability of prior offerings. A burnt offering was treated in a peculiar way; namely, the several body parts were placed with the head. While the offering is called a burnt offering, we can see that it represents The Christ, Head and body members, for the body parts—legs, shoulder, etc.—were all laid to the head. While the burnt offering is like a thank offering that is acceptable, the first chapter of Leviticus calls it an "atonement." "And he [the offerer] shall put his hand upon the head of the *burnt offering*; and it shall be accepted for him to make *atonement* for him" (Lev. 1:4).

1 Chron. 29:22 And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

The people went through the formality of again anointing Solomon king. This time the anointing was done in the presence of David before all the people. As originally intended in the type, Zadok was the only high priest at this time and also when the Temple services started.

The congregation “did eat and drink before Jehovah on that day with great gladness.” They also “made Solomon ... king the second time.” After Nathan the prophet intervened, Zadok the priest anointed Solomon the first time (1 Kings 1:38,39). Subsequently on his deathbed, David prayed silently to God when his enemies whispered about him. God answered that prayer by granting David a little revival, so he was now on hand for Solomon’s second anointing.

Comment: David was anointed three times.

Reply: Yes, he was anointed privately by Samuel, then publicly at Hebron, and finally by the ten tribes at Jerusalem.

Q: Is there an antitype of Solomon’s two anointings?

A: Jesus is our King. We are not accustomed to thinking of him in this role in our prayers, but certainly he is our King because we have given our whole heart and will to him as our Lord, Redeemer, and King in the present life in both senses of the word—the Davidic standpoint now and also the Solomonic standpoint. There were two anointings of Solomon. At Jordan, Jesus was anointed to be a King of peace, and on the Cross, even though he was dying, the sign said in three different languages that he was the King of the Jews. Therefore, Jesus was anointed in the trial period of his life, and he was also anointed King after Pentecost. The Davidic anointing was as a King before Pentecost. In the Solomonic picture, Jesus is still King, and we are still in the Gospel Age before the Kingdom Age.

The antitypical King Solomon is worded another way in other pictures. For example, Jesus is a King after the order of Melchisedec, which is an order of both Priest and King. Thus Jesus was anointed King both before and after Pentecost. When he was up in heaven, there was rejoicing with a cry of “Worthy is the Lamb!” The Second Psalm pictures what was taking place; namely, God set Jesus on the throne as a King at His right hand after Pentecost. In the Kingdom Age, Jesus will not be anointed King. Rather, he will be *shown* as King, for the marriage will have already taken place. Jesus and the Church will be in office as King and Queen on the throne.

The one anointing in the Tabernacle picture is much more comprehensive in its simplistic form. Jesus was anointed to be King in the court of the Tabernacle on the first day of the eight-day period of Leviticus 8 and 9. Those two chapters are one ceremony, the first part being of seven days’ duration with the eighth day following. The Tabernacle is a wonderful means of understanding truth in the present age—better than the much more comprehensive picture of Solomon’s Temple, which will be shown and explained perfectly in the Kingdom Age.

Q: Did all of these sacrifices take place in one day? If so, there must have been many altars.

A: Yes, that is true. At one time, almost half of the court area was made like an altar. Also, the offerings could be done symbolically. For instance, with 28,000 priests being divided into 24 courses, Solomon could go around and put his hand on each priest’s shoulder as the animal was being offered, as though to say to the public, “I am doing the offering through the priesthood, which is part of the high priest.” Thus the offerings could easily have been done and will be explained in the Kingdom. In fact, the sacrifices in this service were photographed as they actually occurred back in Solomon’s day for viewing in the Kingdom Age. This was an inauguration ceremony, not the Day of Atonement or even necessarily a sabbath day.

1 Chron. 29:23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.

1 Chron. 29:24 And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king.

Earlier Solomon was anointed king at the behest of Nathan the prophet and David's wife Bathsheba. At that time, he was pronounced king, but as long as David was still alive, Solomon did not sit on the throne in the full sense of the word.

"Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD [*Jehovah*]." Notice that in spite of Israel's disobedience, God never relinquished His sovereignty, His Kingship, over the nation. Thus the throne is called "the throne of Jehovah." And when the picture is spiritually interpreted with its fulfillment in the antitype, it will be in conformity with what is said here, using slightly different words. In one sense, God will very definitely be the King of earth during the Kingdom Age, for Acts 17:31 states, "Because he [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he [God] hath raised him [Jesus] from the dead." God is really the One in charge, and Jesus is His kingly representative, as indicated here in verse 23; namely, Solomon sat as king on the throne of *Jehovah*.

Various Scriptures picture the relationship between God and Jesus in other ways. For example, Jesus will be a Governor in the Kingdom Age. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). The word "ruler" can also be "governor" in Hebrew. The Micah text is quoted in Matthew 2:6, "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a *Governor*, that shall rule my people Israel." The use of "Governor" in the New Testament quotation from Micah shows that "ruler" and "governor" are synonyms in the Hebrew word.

"Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father." Solomon sat on the throne when David died, and the inference is that everything seemed to prosper instantly at this point. Moreover, "all Israel obeyed him." Verse 24 defines the word "all" as "all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David." They all "submitted themselves unto Solomon the king." Most of the "mighty men" had followed David during his period of exile. In other words, the kingdom was well established under Solomon.

1 Chron. 29:25 And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

How remarkable that the people could see a divine backing on King Solomon! Right from his inauguration, there was solidarity, and everything seemed to be in the right position in a utopian kingdom. Solomon had greater royal majesty than any king before him. Here is a strong clue that he pictures The Christ in glory.

Q: Did Solomon's "royal majesty" include the building of the Temple?

A: Yes. It took a few years for the Temple to be built, but there was no friction or interference. The Temple was the first work of the typical kingdom of Solomon, and in the coming Kingdom, after Gog and Magog are defeated in Jacob's Trouble, as shown in Ezekiel 38 and 39, the building of the Third Temple will start, as shown in Ezekiel 40, the very next chapter. Thus one of the first acts of the Kingdom will be to start the building of the Temple.

1 Chron. 29:26 Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel.

1 Chron. 29:27 And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

Expressed in whole numbers, the 40-year reign of David was broken into two segments with seven years in Hebron over Judah and 33 years in Jerusalem over the entire nation. It is interesting that the tribe of Benjamin is not mentioned.

Earlier we discussed that the seven-year reign in Hebron represents Christ's reign over his Church during the Gospel Age and that the reign of 33 years over the ten-tribe kingdom represents the reign over natural Israel, which will include the world, who must become Israelitish in order to be under the New Covenant arrangement.

In the final analysis, the seven-year reign over Judah in Hebron represents those who prove to be of the Little Flock. The Benjamin class, who are not mentioned, represent the Great Company. Judah is frequently mentioned in contradistinction to the ten tribes, and Benjamin, not mentioned, is understood. Judah was prophesied to be the ruling class—a ruler or a governor—which represents The Christ, whereas Benjamin is a service-oriented class rather than the class with executive authority. Many pictures support this statement.

1 Chron. 29:28 And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

David died “in a good old age, [being] full of days,” that is, in old age. In addition to his age, he was “full of ... riches, and honour.” Then “Solomon his son reigned in his stead.” David was forgiven of his sins, for not only did he repent, but he received retribution.

1 Chron. 29:29 Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer,

1 Chron. 29:30 With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.

The acts and whole history of David were recorded in the books of Samuel, Gad, and Nathan. Of the three books, we possess only Samuel. From the Hebrew standpoint, the two books of Samuel are considered the first two books of Kings. Then 1 Kings becomes the third book, and 2 Kings is the fourth book of Kings. The logical question is, Where are the books of Gad the seer and Nathan the prophet? We can be sure they are preserved somewhere to be brought forth in the Kingdom Age to show the veracity of the testimony of the Old Testament—the geography, the history, the lineages, etc. All of the information has been preserved for posterity to show how ignorant mankind has been with regard to the Scriptures. Man looks everywhere else and uses his imagination when the answers have been readily available in Holy Writ. The Book of Nathan, which would have covered the first part of David's life and reign, including his anointing by Samuel in the home of Jesse, preceded the Book of Gad (see also 1 Sam. 22:5; 2 Sam. 24:11-19; 1 Chron. 21:11-19; 2 Chron. 29:25). Parts of the writings of Nathan and Gad may be buried in 1 and 2 Samuel in a way that we cannot distinguish, for some of the verses were obviously added later, when the books were assembled in their present format.

The books of Samuel, Nathan the prophet, and Gad the seer include information about David's “reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.” What is the signification of the expression “the times that went over him [David]”? The “times” can be taken two different ways. (1) They can be considered

symbolically in regard to the different experiences of David's life. For instance, if a chronicler was writing a biography about David, he would give an outline early in the book of the different periods and the various experiences of David's life, such as his being a shepherd, a warrior, and a king or telling about his personal strength and character. (2) The "times" could also be God's times and seasons (see Dan. 2:21). For example, "seven times" were announced in Leviticus 26, where God said that if Israel did not hearken to His word, the nation would go into bondage and receive various punishments. If, after all these chastisements and the raising up of judges for deliverance, the nation was still stiff-necked, God said that "seven times" of punishment would pass over Israel. David was quite well aware of many things for which we normally do not give him credit. More than anyone else, he gloried in the Exodus and the wonders of Jehovah—the plagues that came upon Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, etc. In fact, he gave an insight into some details that we do not get when we read the actual account. After reading David's Psalms, we can go back to the original account and realize a fuller understanding. For example, instead of just thinking of a great lightning and thunder storm at the time Israel journeyed across the Red Sea, we realize there was a lot of noise, let alone the existence of a cloud and a great wind. David gloried in and lived the experiences when he wrote about them, especially in Psalm 78, which is very long. Many years before David was king, he loved God's mighty acts and deeds. His heart and soul were in the history of Israel.

Q: Are "all the kingdoms of the countries" the nations that were annexed to Israel by conquest and submission?

A: That would be true in the lesser sense. In addition, there were prophecies of the Messiah to come and the spiritual Kingdom. As shown in 1 Chronicles 17, David could see a little of the superior spiritual sense.

REVIEW OF DAVID'S LIFE: A CHARACTER STUDY **A Man After God's Own Heart (1 Sam. 13:14)**

Usually in studying about a person's life, we want to know about his parents. Jesse was the father of David, but the Scriptures do not give the name of his mother. However, in spite of the fact that Jesse is in the genealogical table of Messiah and not his mother, David referred to her briefly in a way that is rather touching—as though to give her a lot of credit for his own experience and background. In Psalms 86:16 and 116:16, David referred to himself as "the son of thine [God's] handmaid." We are reminded of Mary, who likened herself to "the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38). David's words show he recognized that his mother was especially devout, and he credited her with much of the faith that was in him. When we go back a little further in David's lineage, we see that his great grandmother was Ruth (Matt. 1:5,6). Both Boaz and Jesse were men of faith, but the faith strain could have come from her too. Thus David was an unusual child and perhaps something like Moses, Paul, and John the Baptist with a certain selection being made in regard to his parents and immediate forebears.

We will try to treat David's life somewhat chronologically. The youngest of eight sons, he was a good shepherd who risked his life for the sheep. As an evidence to those who entrusted the care of the sheep to an individual, the Law required the shepherd to at least bring back a piece of the animal that attacked the sheep. Instead of just bringing back a piece, David killed a lion and a bear with his bare hands on two different occasions. In other words, he had such concern for the sheep that he not only had direct contact with the predator but also risked his life. David attributed the strength for these acts to the power of the Lord: "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine [Goliath]" (1 Sam. 17:37). The strength and power of a lion's jaw and a bear's hug are tremendous.

The next notable happening in David's life was when Samuel anointed him to be king. David was anointed "in the midst of his [natural] brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:13).

David took provisions to his brothers who were in a battle with the Philistines, of whom Goliath was the champion. When David arrived at the battle scene, he heard the giant give taunting remarks to the army of Israel, defying the God of Israel. He learned that Goliath had been doing this every day for 40 days, going up and down between the two opposing armies. In all that time, no one from the Israelite side had accepted the challenge of the giant. David not only accepted that challenge but went against the giant without armor and with the simplest of weapons—as a shepherd boy with just a slingshot and five smooth stones from the brook. He went out in the strength of the Lord, saying in effect, "You are worthy of death because you have defied our God. I am coming to you in the name of the Lord." David defended God's honor against *great* odds and with *great* faith, and the giant was slain. As a result of David's slaying of Goliath and his other feats in battle, a saying went throughout Israel, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). This saying incurred the anger and jealousy of King Saul.

After the battle with Goliath, David was famous in the nation, and of course Saul had to do something to honor him. The strange thing is that David initially got into Saul's household because of his ability to play the harp. When Saul was having one of his tantrums during a moody spell and musical therapy was suggested, David was brought to the household. Not only could David play the harp, but he could play it exceedingly well. In addition, he had a beautiful singing voice and composed poetry. What made David unusual is that he used his talents along religious lines to praise God. Jesus expressed the principle that "a rich man [a man rich in talents of knowledge, influence, strength, money, or something else] shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.... [For] It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:23,24). David was also appointed as the armor bearer of Saul and thus was close to the king in another capacity.

As soon as David defeated Goliath, Jonathan saw qualities in David that he admired, even though he himself was the heir apparent to the throne if Saul should die. Jealousy did not enter Jonathan's mind as it did with Saul, who saw David as a threat. Saul feared that David might replace him in the affection of the people, even to the point of his removal from the throne, whereas Jonathan loved him greatly.

After David killed Goliath, Saul asked about his background, saying, "Whose son art thou, thou young man?" (1 Sam. 17:58). When David was brought into Saul's household earlier to play the harp, the king did not necessarily memorize all the background information about him. After David played the harp for a while for Saul, there was another war. At that point, David temporarily returned to care for the sheep while some of his older brothers went to fight. In time David took provisions to his brothers at the battle scene and slew Goliath. He now answered Saul's question, "I am the son of *thy servant Jesse* the Bethlehemite." Instead of replying all about himself, David wanted his father to receive recognition. He was thinking about his family and his father, desiring them to be looked after. Here was another admirable quality of David. As a result, the family was freed from taxation.

Samuel's early anointing of David was not well known. However, after Saul began to displease the Lord and Samuel told the king that the kingdom would be removed from him and given to someone better, Saul deduced that the individual was David. As a result, Saul's hatred and jealousy of David increased even more.

On another occasion, Saul threw a javelin at David while he played the harp in the presence of

the king. David played soothing music, but the hatred Saul was feeding on exceeded the power of the music. The javelin missed, but David did not retaliate. He merely adroitly dodged the spear, avoiding impalement. This happened again, and again David escaped the thrust of the javelin. Now David realized he had to leave, for the king's intent was clearly to put him to death. Nevertheless, for Jonathan's sake, a test was set up to determine Saul's intent in regard to David. The king's reaction to David's absence at the feast convinced Jonathan of his father's murderous intentions. Jonathan's final signal to David was to the effect that the king was determined to put him to death. They embraced, made a covenant, separated from one another, and David went into hiding.

Saul made such a concentrated effort in the nation and had so many forces out scouting that David found it necessary to flee to the Philistines, the camp of the enemy, for refuge. David used subterfuge on that occasion, for he was determined not to take arms against the Israelites, his own kin. During the flights from Saul, David sent his aged parents to the king of Moab for safety lest they be killed (1 Sam. 22:3,4). Incidentally, Jesse was very old when he had David, and he was even older now. His age can be proven in a mathematical way.

When David was in Saul's presence before his flight, his popularity grew by leaps and bounds. As a result, Saul was more or less pressured into promising his older daughter, Merab, to David in marriage, but he subsequently reneged and gave her to someone else (1 Sam. 18:17). Michal, another daughter, loved David, so Saul devised a strategy whereby David would have to obtain 100 Philistine foreskins as a dowry before he could marry her (1 Sam. 18:25). Of course Saul expected David to be killed in the process, and even if he was not killed, the hatred of the Philistines toward him would be multiplied. Instead, David came back with 200 Philistine foreskins and got Michal in marriage. Later she warned David of her father's determination to murder him. We are reminded of what David did afterwards in setting up a strategy for Uriah to be killed, so this experience with Saul could have been retribution *in advance*. The payment of sin and retribution is an interesting subject. Take sin, for instance. When Jesus died for the sins of mankind, he died not only for those who were already dead and for the living at the First Advent, but also for those who were yet unborn. Retribution usually takes place afterwards, but in some unusual cases, we wonder if it does not occur in advance.

Now David became a fugitive, going from place to place. At one point, Saul was asleep in the very cave where David and his men were hiding (1 Sam. 24:3-15). However, David would not allow Saul, as the Lord's anointed, or representative, to be killed but merely cut off a piece of his garment. What does this incident tell us about David? (1) He had a high regard for the *office* of God's anointed. (2) He did not run ahead of the Lord but waited for Divine Providence. On a second occasion, David had the opportunity to kill Saul but did not (1 Sam. 26:7-16). This time Saul was asleep out in the open with his spear stuck in the ground beside his pillow. After David's servants took the spear, he yelled to awaken Saul, pointed out the missing spear, and castigated Abner, Saul's general. Thus David had *two* opportunities to kill Saul, and earlier Saul had *twice* thrown the javelin at David, trying to kill him. In other words, for each of those two attempts, David had the opportunity to slay Saul. David might have sensed that killing Saul would be permissible righteous retribution, but he had such a high regard for the divine office of king of Israel, the people of the Lord, that he did not lift a finger in that direction. David felt that if God wanted him to be king, He would accomplish the matter in His own time and way.

As we review David's life, we can see what the average person would have done back there under the same circumstances. Even if the person loved the Lord, he would have felt it was God's providence to kill Saul for having thrown the javelin twice. How easy it is to misread providence! It is interesting to listen to how brethren interpret providence, for there are times when we would take the opposite action. God will have to determine which interpretation is right. The point is that it is possible to feel justified in doing something wrong. The way David

interpreted providence shows the mettle of his character.

We will briefly consider a few of David's Psalms. About half of the Psalms can be directly attributed to him, and many of the remainder are inferentially attributed. Of course Moses wrote some of the Psalms, but David is called "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1).

Part of the superscription of Psalm 59 is, "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him [David]." David composed this Psalm when he knew that Saul's intent was to put him to death. In writing the Psalm, which was like a prayer, David was seeking God's help. In regard to his attitude toward Saul, David expressed himself as being completely innocent and having no subterfuge or ulterior motive to overthrow the king: "The mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD" (verse 3).

The end of the superscription for Psalm 56 reads, "When the Philistines took him [David] in Gath." Then David wrote the Psalm, asking for the Lord's mercy.

The superscription for Psalm 51 states in part, "When Nathan the prophet came unto him [David], after he had gone in to Bathsheba." This Psalm, which pertained to David's adultery, exposed to the nation (and to posterity) what he had done. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (verses 1-3). David admitted he had weaknesses in his body, but nevertheless, the Lord knew of his desire to please Him. David was saying, "You can see my inner parts, but still I want to be cleansed within." He continued in prayer, "Purge me with hyssop [discipline, retribution—do whatever is necessary to bring me back into your favor], and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (verse 7). "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (verses 9-11). Of course this Psalm "to the chief Musician" will be put to music and known and sung in Ezekiel's Temple. David knew that by putting his prayer and feelings in writing and composing the music, it would be sung in the future, and his sin would be kept in memory. He was not trying to cover over his sin and say, "I know God has forgiven me." No, he wanted his transgression on the record for all to see. It is much easier to confess on the spur of the moment, and maybe even publicly, but this Psalm will be forever present—not only to David's own people but also to posterity. What a wonderful attitude!

Psalm 57 was written when David "fled from Saul in the cave." David prayed for mercy when he spared Saul's life: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me." He felt a little ashamed for having cut the skirt of the king's garment and having dangled the cut-off piece to show what he could have done, for he did not mean to desecrate the honored office. For this, he was asking the Lord's forgiveness. We are getting an insight into David's character. Many of the Psalms are prophetic, but they also reveal David's inner man, as it were. David was given punishments and stripes, but he did not try to cloak his sins.

The information in each superscription is the instruction pertaining to that Psalm. David wrote the instructions for his own Psalms. If a great composer gave a great work to a conductor, wouldn't the conductor want to know the mood and the emphasis that were intended? To say what experience the work applied to would be very helpful in knowing how to play the notes—happy, sad, or whatever. And the type of instrument(s) used also creates the mood—a tuba versus a flute, for example. Thus David often gave the background setting for his Psalms.

In studying the complexities of the character, moods, and thoughts of various people, we try to

grasp the Lord's perspective as best we can. David was given punishments and stripes, but he also unabashedly declared the nature of his sin and did not try to cloak or mollify it.

Back to the basic account. When Shimei greatly insulted David, Abishai said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (2 Sam. 16:9). But David would not have Shimei killed because he felt the insults being heaped on him were part of the retribution for some of his own actions. Not retaliating was a remarkable facet of his character.

David had a generous attitude toward some who could be potential enemies. When he was king in Hebron and reigned over Judah for 7 1/2 years, the ten tribes were not under his control, and Ish-bosheth, Saul's surviving son, was a potential threat. Moreover, Abner supported Ish-bosheth. When both Ish-bosheth and Abner were treacherously slain, David mourned. His sorrow showed the magnanimity—the largeness—of his heart where possible.

David had to flee because of Absalom, his son, who tried to usurp the throne. Later the tide turned in David's favor in spite of all the circumstances. When he was going back to Israel proper, the ten tribes wanted to welcome him, but he preferred that Judah do the welcoming. However, to gain the confidence of the ten tribes, David elevated Amasa, the former enemy's general, to be his own captain of the host instead of Joab. This action also shows David's magnanimity where possible. His strategy worked—the tribes were united.

When Amnon, Abner, and Ish-bosheth were assassinated, David was grieved over the way the slaying was done. And when Absalom was killed, David grieved greatly, even though his son had feigned that he was more interested in the welfare of the constituents of Israel than his father. Because of the nature of Absalom's sin, David's fatherly concern was excessive.

The experience with Absalom was a form of retribution. Later on, another son, Adonijah, defected. In addition, David's first son with Bathsheba died, and various plagues were visited on Israel as a result of his poor judgment in the latter part of his reign when he numbered the tribes. The motive may have been his concern in regard to future military maneuvers, but David's wanting to have a standing army evidenced a little lack of faith. He wrote, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). Here we see the possibility that Jesus can save to the uttermost those who come to him. However, there is a difference between sins committed before consecration and sins committed after consecration. Many have come into God's favor who were formerly murderers, adulterers, etc., as a habit of life. The one example of any substance along these lines is in 1 Corinthians 5, where a very grievous sin was committed. The nature of how to deal with such a sin is revealed in the two epistles to the Corinthians. A properly handled matter can result in the retrieval of the sinner. There is no justification for saying that forgiveness is the same whether or not one has consecrated. Committing sins after consecration is *far more serious*.

Another favorable characteristic of David is that when his kingdom was established, he desired to build the Temple. He had all the plans and gathered the materials, and he even made arrangements for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought to Jerusalem and housed in a tent preparatory to the permanent storage of the Ark in a building befitting the Lord's honor.

David's motives with the Temple were far-reaching. For years he diverted personal funds in that direction as much as possible. Some of the booty he captured was used to pay wages to workmen and to get materials and skilled craftsmen. Then he laid the charge in Solomon's lap because God told him, "You have been a man of war, so you cannot build my house of peace."

1 Kings 15:4,5 reads, "Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in

Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” David committed three major sins, but of the three, only Uriah was charged against him in the final analysis because there was no mitigating circumstance or palatable excuse. The sin against Uriah was the chief blot on David’s character, but in reviewing his life, we see that he did repent, acknowledge his sin, mourn openly, change his ways, and receive retribution. As we say of new creatures in the Gospel Age, that part of a sin which is attributable to Adamic weakness and the Fall can be covered by Christ’s merit *if we ask for forgiveness*. The remaining part, which is willful, cannot be forgiven in either this age or the next age but must be *expiated with punishment*. Viewing David from this standpoint—his asking for forgiveness, the mending of his ways, his nature, and the retribution he received—we see that indeed he was a man after God’s own heart.

Q: When David’s daughter Tamar was defiled by Amnon, one of his sons, he did not take action. Wasn’t he remiss in that instance?

A: With some matters that are not explicitly stated as a charge against David, we have to say there are circumstances we cannot fathom. For instance, when a messenger came back and said Saul had been slain, David killed him. We ask, Why? But how did he deliver the message to David? What was the manner of his expression, and what was his motive? Evidently, he delighted in bringing this message of Saul’s defeat and considered it good news—but Jonathan died also, and the battle was a defeat for Israel. If the messenger presented the news as good, it is obvious he had a wrong spirit and motivation. The point is that in some matters, we do not know the full import as to why David did or did not do certain things. A sin is a sin, but there may have been mitigating circumstances for not taking the proper steps. When these accounts are replayed in the Kingdom, if there were mitigating circumstances, they will be told in more fullness so that the world will see the principles and get the full import. For example, any conspiracy that might have been taking place will be seen. No doubt more will be revealed about Absalom and his ambitions.

REVIEW OF ABSALOM AND JOAB: A CHARACTER STUDY

1. Absalom, a Son of David

As we read the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, it is not hard to see that Absalom was not in God’s favor. The acts of his life reveal many traits that are not held in much esteem. Let us consider whatever points we can (1) that were to his credit and (2) that manifested traits displeasing to the Lord. From both of these aspects, we will try to gain some profit or lessons.

Born in Hebron, Absalom was David’s third son (2 Sam. 3:2,3). In outward appearance, he gave every semblance of being an excellent example of what a king should be. He was handsome, tall, noble in bearing, and pleasing in manner and disposition, that is, when he wished to turn on his charm.

Absalom’s sister, Tamar, was forced by Amnon, a half brother of both. Like Absalom, she evidently was very beautiful. When Amnon defiled her, we can see why Absalom was especially incensed, for Tamar and Absalom were both children of the same mother.

Comment: The Pastor gave some excuse on Absalom’s behalf because of the fact that his mother was a heathen. Hence he was not raised in a God-fearing atmosphere. Moreover, David, being busy with battles and matters of state, probably did not spend much personal time with him as he grew up. Of course David should not have married a heathen woman to begin with, and by his doing so, problems occurred later on.

Reply: Yes, having a successful army meant that David's time was occupied with military campaigns against Ammonites, Moabites, Philistines, etc. In these engagements, he was away from home. And even later, when he was anointed king and filled that office at both Hebron and Jerusalem, he had state responsibilities that prohibited his having as close a family life and as strict a control over their affairs as might have been possible under other circumstances.

When Tamar was defiled against her will, Amnon refused to marry her. Perhaps some justification can be given for Absalom's actions based on the Law, which allowed for requiting an injury done between two brothers. Absalom continued to hold an understandable grudge against Amnon. However, an ulterior motive in slaying Amnon could have been that Absalom wanted to eliminate his older brother, an heir apparent to the throne. Nevertheless, because nothing was done about Amnon's rape of Tamar, there was an extenuating circumstance for Absalom to avenge the sin, but the nature of how the assassination was brought about was deceptive. The slaying was accomplished at a festive family gathering arranged by Absalom, who made a pretense of friendship with Amnon and then turned on him. Hence treachery was involved, even though there was some justification.

Comment: Absalom had an ulterior motive in requesting David to allow Amnon to attend the gathering.

Reply: Bad blood existed between Absalom and Amnon. Even though a broad invitation was issued to the family, Absalom knew it was unlikely that Amnon would attend for fear of some intended treachery. Therefore, through his father David, Absalom assured Amnon that he was welcome and that bygones were bygones. Meanwhile, Absalom instructed his servants to assassinate Amnon during the meal.

Following the slaying, Absalom fled to Geshur for three years. Then Joab sent a wise woman to David with a tall tale to enlist his sympathy and get across the point of asking Absalom to return to Jerusalem. Absalom was recalled, but for two more years, he was more or less confined to his house and could not come into the presence of the king and see him face to face. Joab, the general of the army, had sympathy for Absalom during this particular period. Finally Absalom, who was getting impatient to have full redress for the injury that had been inflicted, set fire to Joab's field to get his attention. Feeling he had served sufficient time, Absalom kept goading Joab to do something about the matter and stop delaying. When the field was set afire, Joab was turned off by Absalom.

And Absalom did something else that began to reveal wrong traits. He requested a chariot from David and then had 50 men run ahead of the chariot. Thus whenever he traveled in Israel, the people saw runners preceding the chariot and thought a very important personage was coming. Being very handsome, Absalom wanted to evoke the admiration and the sympathy of the populace in his favor. Based on other things he did, he probably gave nice greetings with a big smile. As the people watched and listened, they thought, "Wouldn't he make a nice king?"

In addition, Absalom went to the gate of Jerusalem early on many mornings. Just as Moses could not judge 2 million people personally and needed assistants, so David had assistants, among whom was Absalom, who used those occasions to endear himself to the people. Having ambitions to be king, he tried to wean the people's support to himself instead of David. Pride was involved as he implied he would be a better king than his father. In his case, pride went before a fall (Prov. 16:18).

Absalom said he wanted to go to Hebron to fulfill a vow he had made. This explanation seemed like a plausible reason for taking a lot of chief men with him, so no suspicions were

aroused. In the meantime, Absalom planned a revolt and was going down to Hebron to counsel with different ones who would side with him. In other words, a conspiracy was involved, and he enlisted the sympathy of David's wise counselor, Ahithophel. Absalom's strategy was to take over the kingdom, even to the extent of slaying his own father.

Ahithophel advised that when David learned of this rebellion and heard the names of some of those supporting Absalom, he would see the wind was blowing in his son's favor. When David saw that almost the entire populace had sided with Absalom, he vacated Jerusalem, weeping and walking barefoot, intending to flee across the Jordan River. At that point, Ahithophel asked for 12,000 men to pursue David quickly, saying that if the king was killed, all resistance would come to naught. He could see that David, who was depressed and gloomy and moving slowly, was in an unguarded position, and that by now he had hardly gotten over the Mount of Olives and was just outside the suburbs of Jerusalem.

However, Absalom set aside Ahithophel's counsel in favor of the counsel of Hushai, a spy for David who pretended to support Absalom. In effect, Hushai suggested a delaying tactic to Absalom and his associates, saying, "There is no need to hurry. Rather than putting only David to death, why not kill all those in sympathy with him as well? In that way, you will rid the kingdom of a troublesome element." Then Hushai said to Absalom, "You would lead this victorious coup d'état in chasing after David." Absalom was flattered to hear that he would lead what seemed to be a sure victory.

In the meantime, Hushai warned David to hurry, and the delaying tactic of his counsel allowed enough time for the king to get across the Jordan River. Hushai knew that David was far more skilled in combat than the inexperienced Absalom. However, in his pride, youth, and vigor, Absalom probably felt that he and his more numerous supporters would quickly overwhelm David. In private battles, David had slain many people with know-how.

Hushai's strategy was not suspected because it flattered Absalom. Moreover, the counselors of the ten tribes preferred his counsel to that of Ahithophel because they thought that with the dispatching of David and many of the tribe of Judah, perhaps Saul's power would return. In other words, they felt that even though Absalom, a son of David, was on the throne, he would be outnumbered, and time would be in their favor. Thus not only Absalom but also others associated with him were flattered by Hushai's counsel. How dangerous flattery can be!

Absalom was willing to kill his own father. He was proud and self-seeking, whereas he should have known that *God* had placed David on the throne. David was anointed king three times: (1) in secret, (2) in Hebron, and (3) in Jerusalem. Absalom would have been aware of at least two of the anointings.

Comment: A *Reprint* article says we might wonder how the allegiance of some people could switch so wholeheartedly and so quickly to Absalom. Two suggestions were made: (1) When David publicly repented for his sin with Bathsheba, the majority of the nation probably did not view the matter the right way but despised him and considered his repentance to be a sign of weakness. (2) David's accumulation of gold, silver, etc., for the building of the Temple was a high motive that could have been misconstrued. Knowing that great spoils of war were being taken but not knowing where they were going, many people probably mistrusted David. The lesson for the Lord's people in both cases is that the purest of motives can be misunderstood.

Reply: Those are good points, for the unconsecrated cannot understand the behavior and ideals of the Lord's people. In regard to the first point, the world wants wealth, power, dress, and bearing in their leadership. The nation wanted a powerful leader but failed to recognize that quality in David. His repentance and humility were not appreciated as much as Absalom's

appearance and bearing, which, in the people's eyes, fit the office. In regard to the second point, some would have known what David was doing with the booty of war, but the general populace could have misread the situation, thinking David was guilty of self-aggrandizement.

Comment: Another *Reprint* article spoke about the degree of sin when Absalom sat in the gate, pretending he would be a wiser counselor and a better administrator of justice than his father. In essence, Absalom was *stealing* the people's affections. As new creatures, we would be guilty of this sin if we *wrongly* spoke against a brother. By using innuendos and undercutting someone unjustly, we are stealing affections away from him.

Reply: The Christian may not physically murder a person, but he can assassinate the character of an individual. However, if someone is a wolf in sheep's clothing or is dishonoring the Lord's cause, it is not assassination of character to point out what the individual is doing. We have to be very careful in connection with judgment. While we should be prone to be merciful, being merciful under those conditions would make us more loving than God, and that trait is a stench in His nostrils. The circumstances have to be weighed, for the motivation that prompts the action being taken is exceedingly important. Being silent can lead to the corruption of the body of Christ, for silence gives consent. To be silent about flagrant error in either doctrine or morals is to become an accomplice in weakening and defaming the Lord's cause.

A lot of compromising is done today in courts of law. Sometimes personal immunity is given to the one who is considered least involved in the crime if he will inform on the others. The object is to assure a guilty verdict.

In accordance with Hushai's advice, Absalom pursued David. An engagement took place on the other side of Jordan with Absalom acting as commander-in-chief and Amasa being his general. However, they were no match for David's army, which was divided up into three groups, with one group being under the leadership of Joab. When Absalom's forces were routed, Joab pressed hard after Absalom, following him into a forest. There Absalom's head got stuck in a low-lying branch, and as his animal continued on, he hung there. Joab personally stabbed the helpless Absalom three times, and his men completed the killing, thus ending the rebellion. The manner of Absalom's death was unusual in that his head and hair were the cause—as though to suggest that headiness, pride, vanity, and self-esteem brought about his downfall, as symbolized by his beautiful hair catching in the tree. We are reminded of Lucifer, who also had a downfall. Originally God blessed him as one of the two sons of light, or sons of the morning (Ezekiel 28). Lucifer was bedecked with all kinds of jewels and had many rewards and privileges as one of the two archangels of God, Michael being the other one. The results were the opposite: Jesus was thoroughly loyal and obedient to his Father and humble, and Satan was self-seeking, vain, and proud—qualities that led to his downfall.

2. Joab, the Captain of David's Host

Joab's character is a little more difficult to judge because there are pluses and minuses, whereas with Absalom, the minuses far outweigh the pluses, so it is obvious that he earned judgment and death. Joab first came into prominence in the capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. David saw that the Jebusites were so entrenched in an ideal spot that to conquer them would require a strategy. Their position was easy to defend and so formidable to the enemy that at this very late period—after 450 years of judges and about 50 years of kings—they still had not been conquered, even though the Israelites had more or less defeated all of the other named enemies (Hivites, Hittites, etc.). Therefore, David promised that whoever could get up there and secretly invade the Jebusites, creating an opening, or breach, for his men to enter and capture the city, would be handsomely rewarded. Joab and some of his men climbed up a treacherous and slippery well shaft that the Jebusites used for their water supply. As a result,

he was made commander-in-chief of David's armed forces.

The ten tribes were at odds with the two tribes, so a feeling of friction existed between them. Much of the friction had to do with the fact that King Saul, even though a Benjamite, was identified more with the ten tribes, whereas David was identified with Judah at first and Benjamin later, as history developed. For the ten tribes to fight the two tribes in warfare would be like fratricide where perhaps hundreds of thousands would die. Therefore, a strategy was pursued; namely, Joab and Abner agreed to have a jousting contest in a real life-and-death struggle between their respective handpicked 10 or 12 best warriors. According to the agreement, whoever won the contest would be considered the victor, thereby avoiding unnecessary bloodshed in the nation. However, when the contest ended in a tie with no victor, warfare ensued—the warfare that the ten and the two tribes had tried to avoid. This time Judah was victorious, and so much so that Abner, the general of the forces of the ten tribes, fled. (Of course Joab was on David's side.) Joab's brother, Asahel, who was fleet of foot, being likened to an antelope, kept pursuing Abner. As a result, Abner was frustrated. He knew this young man was no match for him physically and did not want to slay him, but Asahel persisted with Joab and a third brother also in pursuit but far behind. Finally, Abner reluctantly killed Asahel in self-defense and escaped. Joab was incensed and used the act as an excuse to have perpetual animosity toward Abner. Not only had Abner not wanted to kill Asahel, but Joab was aware of that fact. Nevertheless, a blood feud developed between the two.

What about Joab? Was Asahel's death the real reason he wanted to kill Abner? We would say no, for he feared Abner as a rival. Abner, the former capable general of the ten tribes, had been helping Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's sons, and had made him king. Subsequently Ish-bosheth offended Abner, who had laid down his life for him. In fact, without Abner's assistance, Ish-bosheth would have been nothing. Consequently, Abner defected and went to see David, wanting to join his forces. Joab, who had aspirations, was jealous, for he could see that David might appoint Abner to be above him or even to share the responsibility. Thus he had ulterior motives for killing Abner and conveniently used revenge for his brother's death as an excuse. In other words, he dispatched a potential rival under false circumstances. When Abner came to David in an act of friendship, safe conduct should have been allowed. Therefore, for Joab to take advantage of one who was on a goodwill mission was underhanded treachery.

Why, then, did David not do anything to Joab? He was probably too weak politically to carry out what he might have done otherwise. Under the Law, if a man's brother was put to death, he could pursue the one who caused the death, and if he captured and killed the slayer before he got into a city of refuge, the avenger was free from punishment. The death was considered the hard luck of the individual who did not run fast enough to reach the city of refuge in time. However, this situation was a little different because Abner slew Asahel under conditions of war, and then Joab turned around and killed Abner, who was consulting David on a mission of peace. Thus treachery was involved. The Law did not mention whether the brother who was killed was innocent or guilty. Regardless, the one who then killed the slayer, acting on behalf of his dead brother, was not punished but was free under the Law because the killing was done in the heat of passion as family retribution and was considered manslaughter.

Joab killed Abner in Hebron, probably in the outskirts. Certainly Joab was a capable general, and he may have been very shrewd in this matter by waiting until Abner got outside the city limits, since Hebron was a city of refuge. In other words, not only was Abner on a peaceful mission, but Hebron was a city of refuge. (Incidentally, when Ish-bosheth died, the kingdom was unified, and David transferred the capital from Hebron to Jerusalem. By now all of the tribes had pledged their allegiance to him as king.)

In this situation, then, Joab was legally correct, but since bad circumstances were involved, he

was not ethically correct. David's hands were tied to a certain extent because of this peculiar circumstance. However, although David did nothing outright to Joab, he pronounced a curse on his posterity.

Joab was shrewd and cunning, and he was farseeing in his goals and ambitions. For example, earlier on behalf of Absalom, he persuaded a woman to go to David with a fabricated story. Certainly Joab was ambitious like Absalom but not necessarily to be king.

When David sent Joab to fight the Ammonites on the far side of Jordan, Joab was so successful that he realized the fall of the city was imminent (2 Sam. 12:26-28). He then sent word to David, saying, "I do not want to capture this city and take the glory to myself. You should hurry down here and lead the forces to victory." Thinking of the king's honor was a plus for Joab's character. In addition, his climbing up the wall and capturing the city of the Jebusites was to his credit. But a definite minus occurred with regard to Abner.

David had given counsel in connection with this battle because he fell in love with Bathsheba. When she became pregnant, he wanted Uriah, her husband, to be put in the frontlines so that he would be killed in warfare. Then David could legally take Bathsheba unto himself as a wife. Because Joab obeyed David and thus consented to the plan, he shared in the blame and was an accomplice. In fact, he sent a secret communication back to David, saying that all was well, for as the king had asked, so it had happened. This complicity was another minus in Joab's character, for he understood David's purpose in putting Uriah in the frontlines.

In addition, Joab sided with Absalom to bring him back from exile. David was unaware of anything suspicious, but Joab could see that it was only a matter of time until Absalom became king. Therefore, he was looking out for his own personal interests—not to be king but to be top man in the military—and he was ready to change sides until Absalom burned his barley field. His subsequent siding with David was not so much a plus as it was a convenience, for he felt that David's chances would be enhanced by his presence and capability as a general.

When Absalom rebelled, Joab followed David to Transjordan. There the army was divided into three parts, and Joab was the commander of the part that was responsible for Absalom's death. (David had given the order to bring back Absalom alive, but Joab disobeyed and slew him.) With the death of Absalom, the central figure, the revolt was crushed. Joab returned in victory, for the armies supporting Absalom had been put to rout, yet David was not on hand to give a welcome. Joab more or less rebuked David, saying in effect, "We have gone out and risked our lives by casting our lot with you against great odds. The Lord has blessed us with victory, and now that we have come back, you have a long face and are crying about the death of your son. You are mourning when this should be a time of great joy. Your throne was ready to topple, and you have been marvelously reinstated as king." Of course David could see there was much truth in what Joab was saying. Here was a plus for Joab in giving such counsel to David. An important factor is that Absalom was not a king appointed by the Lord. Since Absalom had usurped the throne, the revolt was finished when Joab put him to death.

David returned to Jerusalem, but again Joab acted treacherously. In the revolt, a general named Amasa had sided with Absalom, along with a number of people from Judah. Now, to unify the kingdom after the rebellion, David acted generously and appointed Amasa general over Joab. Seeing Amasa as a rival and worrying about his own future, Joab deceitfully murdered him. First, Joab embraced Amasa and caught him by the beard. Then he purposely dropped his sword, reached down to pick it up, and slipped the sword between the ribs and heart of the unsuspecting Amasa. Initially the men with Joab were fearful of what he had done, but he brazened the matter out and again received the generalship. David probably felt he had no other choice at this point.

Again we see that Joab had ambitions and jealousy like Absalom but to be general, not king. Whenever his position as head of the military was threatened or in any way jeopardized, he was quite willing to assassinate his rival and commit deeds of treachery.

David sinned in wanting to number the Israelites. Instead of trusting in the Lord, he was probably trying to organize the military forces of the unified nation to prepare for the future. At first, Joab correctly objected vociferously and strenuously, but then, sad to say, he consented to do the numbering, even though he knew it was wrong. By his change of mind, he vitiated his earlier stand. Joab should have refused to do the numbering and resigned his generalship. Only one in a million would have taken that action, and Joab was not of that caliber. A lesson is here for us as well. When we properly take a stand, it is to our credit, but if we concede while principle is still being violated, we undercut the very stand that we took.

Joab excelled in personal valor and in his capability as a general, and he was also capable of counseling, for he had good judgment in certain matters. *Personal ambition*—the desire for personal honor, esteem, and prestige—led to his downfall, as it does with many others. Ambition is a dangerous foe indeed.

An additional minus for Joab was his siding with Adonijah, another son of David who wanted to be king. Joab must have been looking at David and thinking the king was getting old and feeble. Feeling David had very few years left, Joab tried to feather his nest for the succession. He believed Adonijah would be the next king, so he wanted to cement his generalship.

In viewing Joab's life as a whole, we can see that what the Lord held against Joab as grievous sins was probably expressed by David. When David knew he was going to die, he charged his son Solomon to see that Joab was put to death. The reasons he gave were the slaying of innocent blood with Abner and Amasa. These two were spoken of as being better than Joab. The treachery and the motivation behind the slayings were particularly grievous.

Q: Why did David give the responsibility to Solomon instead of taking care of the matter himself?

A: David did not slay either Joab or Shimei because some of their actions could have been retribution for his own sins. Moreover, under the Law, Joab could technically and legally kill Abner for slaying Asahel, his brother. To avoid being killed, the slayer had to flee to a city of refuge, even if the slaying was accidental.

Comment: Joab was a man of strength, so for him to give in and number the Israelites when he knew the act was wrong incurred guilt. He certainly had the strength to disobey David when it came to killing Absalom, so he could have continued to refuse to do the numbering.

Reply: Joab was motivated by *self-interest*, not by an interest in serving God and the honor of the kingdom. David was completely different from his son Absalom and from Joab because he wanted to please God and to retrace his steps, and he consulted the Lord on certain matters. He composed psalms and sang hymns in honor of the Lord and did not aspire to the throne. He had two opportunities to slay Saul, and he could have interpreted both circumstances as God's providence to permit him to kill Saul and gain the crown. A person with ambition would certainly have interpreted as providential the fact that Saul was asleep. Moreover, David did not have to do the killing himself, for his servant offered to do the slaying. David waited on the Lord, whereas Absalom and Joab did not possess that characteristic. David's repentance, his acts of contrition, and his asking for forgiveness—plus his acceptance of the retribution that came upon him—were outstanding.

Comment: Clearly David felt that Shimei's earlier hostile actions toward him were retribution. Nevertheless, Shimei was wrong to curse the Lord's anointed, so David knew Solomon would put him to death.

Reply: Yes. However, Shimei turned and supported David at his weak point, favoring him at the crucial moment of Absalom's rebellion. David gave some recognition to that kindness by sparing Shimei's life during his reign.

Q: David did not administer punishments or give rewards in some cases but charged Solomon with doing this. Would the antitypical lesson be that the Church in glory will make sure that honor comes in the Kingdom Age to those who gave cups of cold water to the saints during the Gospel Age? Conversely, retribution will come to those who willfully did evil. Thus rewards and punishments will come in the Kingdom Age for things done in the present life.

A: The question is related to the death of the high priest. Perhaps David felt that certain things would be done after his death but not during his lifetime. Moreover, the opposition of Absalom and Shimei were a form of retribution upon him. For example, shame came on David when Absalom molested his concubines in the sight of all the people. David might have had difficulty in drawing a line as to which experiences were retribution and which experiences required action on his part. His dilemma would have been, "Should I graciously accept what has happened, or should I, as the king and agent of Jehovah, do something about the matter?" In some cases, he acted, and in other cases, he did not.

Comment: Because of his own sins, perhaps David felt he should not do the punishing.

Reply: By giving the charge to Solomon, he felt Joab and Shimei definitely needed retribution from the standpoint of the honor of the kingdom. Even though Joab held the horns of the altar, the court of last resort for clemency, Solomon gave instructions that he should be slain.

The lesson to be impressed is how the harboring of secret motives of jealousy, envy, greed, pride, and/or ambition can lead to the downfall of some of the best people. Consider Saul, who had initial humility and many attributes. Harboring certain wrong sentiments led to his downfall—despite his commendable qualifications and qualities in the beginning. The lesson for the Christian is that no matter how many wonderful deeds and exploits one may have done, they can all be undone if wrong motives are entertained. The Prophet Ezekiel said, "The righteous ... shall surely live; [but] if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it" (Ezek. 33:13). In other words, a person may have done things correctly in the past, but if he sins against the Lord, there is no turning back. The Israelites replied to God, "You are not just," but they did not know how to weigh matters. To them the Lord's ways seemed unequal and too severe at times. Ezekiel explained that their human judgment was misreading the divine character and purpose.