

BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL

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INTRODUCTION

Although not stated, it's generally accepted by Jewish tradition that Samuel is the author of 1 Samuel; however, since we read about his death in 1 Samuel 25:1, it's widely accepted that someone else wrote the account of his death. Jewish tradition also indicates that Samuel was the author of 1 Samuel 1-24, and the prophets Gad and Nathan wrote 1 Samuel 25-31, all of 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles 29:29-30.

The book itself starts with a history of the end of the judges period, and it goes through the beginning period of the prophets who would guide Israel right up until Malachi.

DATE

We don't know the exact date of the writing of this book, but we do know it was sometime after Solomon reigned but before the Babylonian captivity, 1 Samuel 5:5 / 1 Samuel 6:18 / 1 Samuel 27:6.

SAMUEL

In answer to Hannah's prayer, that is, Samuel's mother's, 1 Samuel 1:9-20, Samuel was born in a place called Ramathaim, and his father's name is Elkanah, 1 Samuel 1:1-2.

He was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, which meant he was dedicated to working in the temple from a very young age, which was in accordance with the law, 1 Samuel 1:24-28.

He was a prophet of God, 1 Samuel 2:27-36, but as unique as he was the only person who served as a judge, prophet and priest at the same time for the nation of Israel, 1 Samuel 2:35.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The most glorious part of the history of Israel was the United Kingdom, so-called to distinguish it from the Divided Kingdom which followed, it lasted from about 1095 to 975 B. C. and included the reigns of three great kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. The story of this period is related in the two books of Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11 / 1 Chronicles 1-2, and 1 Chronicles 9.

SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

You will remember that for about three hundred years, the twelve tribes of Israel had been loosely governed by judges. The last and greatest of these was the prophet, Samuel. But the children of Israel wanted to be like their neighbours, so they came to Samuel and asked for a king.

Although God was much displeased with their request, He instructed Samuel to anoint as their king a young man named Saul who stood head and shoulders above the people. The people gathered at Mizpeh and were presented with their new ruler, who was so timid that he hid among the baggage.

Saul began his forty-year reign well. Israel was beset by enemies, and he undertook the task of driving them back. His army defeated the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites and others.

Soon, Saul was a popular figure among the people. But his popularity went to his head, and he ceased to be a humble servant of God. Instead, he became self-willed, bent on doing things the way he wanted them done, regardless of the will of God.

On one occasion, he was commissioned to ‘utterly destroy the Amalekites.’ Instead, he spared the king and saved some sheep and cattle to sacrifice. Because he had thus disobeyed the Lord, Samuel rebuked him with the words, ‘Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,’ [1 Samuel 15:22](#).

From that time on, God rejected Saul as king. Saul deeply loved him and selected him as his armour bearer. David quickly rose to prominence by slaying with a sling the champion of the Philistines, the giant Goliath.

The ensuing glory given to David provoked the jealousy of Saul, who began to suspect that David was trying to supplant him as king. From that time on, Saul sought to kill David and for years hunted him as an outlaw over the hills of Israel.

Perhaps the most beautiful friendship in the Bible is that of David and Jonathan, the son of Saul, who, although he realised that David would become king instead of himself, constantly sought to save David from his father’s ire. Saul and Jonathan both fell in battle with the Philistines to prepare the way for David as king.

DAVID, A MAN AFTER GOD’S HEART

After Saul’s death, David was crowned king of the tribe of Judah while Saul’s son, Ishbosheth, reigned over the rest of Israel. When his kingdom collapsed after seven years, David’s authority was extended over all of Israel.

David selected Jerusalem as his capital and set about the task of making Israel a great nation. In successive wars, he expanded the kingdom from the Nile to the Euphrates River.

David was truly a man after God’s own heart. The Lord declared of him, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all my will,’ [Acts 13:22](#).

The psalms written by David are an expression of his complete devotion to God. This consecration was especially evident in his constant willingness to obey all the Lord’s commands. We may learn from him that we cannot expect the approval of God unless we are always willing to do what He asks of us without question.

Despite David’s success and his faithfulness to God, he made one grave mistake that followed him to his death. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Some stories have portrayed Bathsheba as a siren who intentionally seduced David.

Nothing in the Bible bears out this idea. To cover up his sin, David had Uriah placed in the thick of battle so that he might be slain, and then, when he was dead, took Bathsheba as his wife.

All of this greatly displeased God, and Nathan the prophet was sent to rebuke David by telling him the parable of the ewe lamb, [2 Samuel 12](#). David repented, but his troubles now began. His son Absalom murdered his own brother. Later, Absalom led a revolt against David and died in the attempt.

For a time, David was forced to flee. Adding to his grief, another son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the kingdom with the help of David's trusted general, Joab. To forestall the kingdom from falling into the wrong hands, David had his son, Solomon, crowned king while he yet lived. Shortly thereafter, David died, bringing to an end the forty-year reign of a great man of God.

SOLOMON, FROM WISDOM TO IDOLATRY

Solomon's rule was in sharp contrast with his father's. While David had faced turmoil for almost his entire reign, Solomon's was one of unbroken peace. He began auspiciously.

In a dream, he asked for God's wisdom rather than riches and honour, and because of his thoughtful request, he was rewarded with all three. Solomon's wisdom is known to all.

Three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs came forth from this sage! [1 Kings 4:32](#). Much of his wisdom is recorded for us in the three books which he wrote and which we will study in another lesson. Politically, he extended the influence of Israel to its greatest height, making it a world power.

The fabulous wealth of Solomon astounds us, even to this day. He had one thousand four hundred chariots, twelve thousand horsemen, and an annual income of six hundred threescores and six talents of gold. And he didn't have to pay income tax!

On one occasion, he was given an outright gift of one hundred and twenty talents of gold by the queen of Sheba. When she visited Solomon to see if all the reports of his fame were true, she was so amazed that she exclaimed, 'Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard,' [1 Kings 10:7](#). The greatest of all Solomon's accomplishments was his building of the temple of God to replace the tabernacle in which Israel had worshipped since the wilderness wanderings.

Probably no structure in the world's history has equalled it in cost. Built by one-hundred and eighty-three thousand men in seven and a half years, it cost an immense sum of money to erect. The great wealth of Solomon eventually led to his undoing.

He sought every kind of pleasure and married seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Most of these were idolaters, and what a time he must have had in trying to please them all. His high cost of living led him to tax the people heavily, much to their dissatisfaction.

His reign had started with wisdom and wealth; it ended with women and idolatry. When his forty-year rule ended, he was a thoroughly disillusioned and unhappy man. In his revelry, he had laid the groundwork for the division of his great kingdom after his death.

OUTLINE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah, and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year, this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD.’ 1 Samuel 1:1-3

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Ramathaim-Zophim, [1 Samuel 1:1](#).

‘Literally, the two high places of the watchman; these were, no doubt, two contiguous hills, on which watchtowers were built, and in which watchmen kept continual guard for the safety of the country and which afterwards gave name to the place.’

We’re introduced to a man named Elkanah, who was a Levite, [1 Samuel 1:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 6:33-38](#),

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is reason to believe that Elkanah, an Ephrathite, or inhabitant of Bethlehem, [1 Samuel 17:12](#) / [Ruth 1:2](#) and of the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, [1 Kings 11:26](#), the father of Samuel, represents the fifth generation of settlers in Canaan, and therefore that Samuel was born about 130 years after the entrance into Canaan, four complete generations, or 132 years and about 40 years before David.’

It appears that Elkanah has two wives, [1 Samuel 1:2](#) / [Deuteronomy 21:15](#). Although God allowed polygamy in the Old Testament, it’s clear that God never intended for it to be that way, God always intended that there be one man and one woman in marriage, [Matthew 19:8](#).

When we closely examine all those in the Old Testament who had more than one wife, we see that time and time again, there were always problems and families issues, [Genesis 16:1-6](#).

We're also introduced to a man named Eli who was the high priest, he had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, 1 Samuel 1:3, who were also priests but had a reputation for being corrupt, 1 Samuel 2:12-17 / 1 Samuel 2:23-25 / 1 Samuel 3:13.

Shiloh was a village in central Palestine northwest of the Dead Sea, it was a meeting place and sanctuary for the Israelites and the site of a tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant was kept until its capture by the Philistines.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Samuel 1:3.

'This title of Yahweh, which, with some variations, is found upward of 260 times in the Old Testament, occurs here for the first time. The meaning of the word "hosts" is doubtless the same as that of 'army', Daniel 4:35, and includes all the myriads of holy Angels who people the celestial spheres, 1 Kings 22:19. It is probably with reference to the idolatrous worship of the Host of heaven that the title the "Lord of Hosts" was given to the true God, as asserting His universal supremacy, Nehemiah 9:6. In the New Testament the phrase only occurs once James 5:4.'

'Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah, he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Her husband, Elkanah, would say to her, 'Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?' Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house. In her deep anguish, Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.' 1 Samuel 1:4-11

Here we begin to see the problems of having two wives, 1 Samuel 1:2. Elkanah would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah whose name means 'a Pearl' and to all her sons and daughters, 1 Samuel 1:4.

But notice he gave Hannah whose name means 'Beauty or charm', a double portion of meat to Hannah because of his love for her, 1 Samuel 1:5 / Genesis 43:34.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The sacrifices which were made were probably peace-offerings, of which the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar; the fat was burnt on the fire, the breast and right shoulder were the portion of the priest, and the rest belonged to him who made the offering, on it he and his family feasted, each receiving his portion and to these feasts God commands them to invite the Levite, the poor, the widow, and the orphan, Deuteronomy 16:11.'

God had closed Hannah's womb, 1 Samuel 1:5, and as a result, tension arose. Peninnah became jealous of Hannah, and the tension went on for years, 1 Samuel 1:6-7.

To understand what's happening here, we must place ourselves in the shoes of Hannah. She was Jewish, and in those days, it was considered shameful if women didn't have any children; the Jews believed it was a sign of God's disfavour.

Elkanah is clearly concerned for Hannah and asks why she is weeping. Why doesn't she eat? Why is she downhearted? Doesn't he mean more to her than ten sons? 1 Samuel 1:8.

Whilst in Shiloh, Hannah stood up, Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house and in deep anguish, Hannah prayed to God whilst weeping bitterly, 1 Samuel 1:9-10.

Hannah is so upset with what's happening, she prays to the Lord and makes a vow, 1 Samuel 1:11. The vow mentioned here would be a Nazarite vow, which consisted of committing her son to the Lord's service in the temple for their entire life, Numbers 6:5 / Numbers 30:6-16.

'As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, 'How long are you going to stay

drunk? Put away your wine.’ ‘Not so, my lord,’ Hannah replied, ‘I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.’ Eli answered, ‘Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.’ She said, ‘May your servant find favour in your eyes.’ Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning, they arose and worshipped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. So, in the course of time, Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the LORD for him.’ 1 Samuel 1:12-20

As Hannah was praying, Eli noticed that her lips were moving, but he couldn’t hear any words coming from her mouth, and he concluded that she must be drunk, [1 Samuel 1:12-14](#).

He uses the word ‘wine’, [1 Samuel 1:14](#), and it’s the Hebrew word, ‘yayin’, which refers to wine which has been pressed from grapes. In reply, Hannah uses the word ‘beer’, [1 Samuel 1:15](#), which is the Hebrew word ‘shekar’, which means intoxicating drink which comes from grain, honey, or fruit.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fact that Eli supposed her to be drunken, and the other of the conduct of Eli’s sons already mentioned, prove that religion was at this time at a very low ebb in Shiloh; for it seems drunken women did come to the place, and lewd women were to be found there.’

However, Hannah wasn’t drunk, she was simply pouring out her soul to the Lord in prayer, [1 Samuel 1:15](#), she felt worthless and was in great anguish and burdened with grief, [1 Samuel 1:16](#).

She was doing what all of God’s people should do when it comes to prayer, [Colossians 4:12](#) / [1 Peter 5:7](#). Eli tells her to go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him, [1 Samuel 1:17](#).

Notice how she had complete trust in God, she never doubted God would answer for one moment, [James 1:7](#). She started eating again and she was no longer downcast, [1 Samuel 1:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A beautiful example of the composing influence of prayer. Hannah had cast her burden upon the Lord, and so her own spirit was relieved of its load. She now returned to the family feast and ate her portion with a cheerful heart, [Acts 2:46-47](#). The word ‘sad’ is not in the Hebrew text, but it fairly supplies the meaning intended.’

The next morning they arose and worshiped before God and then went back to their home at Ramah, [1 Samuel 1:19](#). She made love with her husband Elkanah, [1 Samuel 1:19](#), and she became pregnant, [1 Samuel 1:20](#). God answered her prayer by opening up her womb, she gave birth to a son and named him Samuel, which means ‘heard of God’, [1 Samuel 1:20](#).

HANNAH DEDICATES SAMUEL

‘When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfil his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, ‘After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always.’ ‘Do what seems best to you,’ her husband Elkanah told her. ‘Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the LORD make good his word.’ So, the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him. After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, ‘Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life, he will be given over to the LORD.’

And he worshipped the LORD there.’ 1 Samuel 1:21-28

Because the Levites were set aside to work in the tabernacle full-time for the Lord, all the Israelites were to give a yearly offering, a tithe, to the Levites to support them, [1 Samuel 1:21](#) / [Numbers 18:25-28](#).

Hannah didn't go as women weren't required to go, and so she said to Elkanah, after the boy is weaned, she will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always, [1 Samuel 1:22](#).

Elkanah is happy with this arrangement and tells her to stay here until she has weaned him, only may the LORD make good his word, [1 Samuel 1:23](#). So she stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him, [1 Samuel 1:23](#) / [Genesis 21:8](#). The weaning process took place around two to three years after a child was born according to [2 Maccabees 7:27](#).

When Hannah and Elkanah took their son Samuel to Eli, in order that he be dedicated to tabernacle work, they took a very generous offering with them, [1 Samuel 1:24](#) / [Leviticus 12:6](#), so that Eli could take extra care of Samuel.

When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, [1 Samuel 1:25](#), and she reminds him that she was the one who of she was, she was the woman who prayed beside him, [1 Samuel 1:25-26](#).

She was the woman who prayed for a child, and God heard and answered her prayer, [1 Samuel 1:27](#). She then tells Eli that Samuel is to be dedicated to the LORD for life, [1 Samuel 1:28](#).

It should be noted that Samuel was a Levite, and so he would be dedicated to the Lord anyway. The difference is that he would be solely dedicated to working in the tabernacle under the supervision of Eli. Notice it says that he worshipped God, [1 Samuel 1:28](#).

Youngblood, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘he’ who worshipped before the Lord, [1 Samuel 1:28](#), may refer to Elkanah, the leader of the family and the main man in the context. It might also refer to Eli, to whom Hannah was speaking.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘I think it probably refers to Samuel, the most immediate antecedent of ‘he’ in [1 Samuel 1:28](#). If this interpretation is correct, this reference marks the beginning of Samuel’s ministry, which all of chapter 1 anticipates.’

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘Then Hannah prayed and said: ‘My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD, my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. ‘There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. ‘Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed. ‘The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. ‘The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles, and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. ‘For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’s; on them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness. ‘It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. ‘He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.’ Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.’ 1 Samuel 2:1-11

HANNAH'S PRAYER

We can't help but hear the heartfelt thanks Hannah gives to God in her prayer. We also notice that her prayer was very humble, as she asks God to help her not to become arrogant toward Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, [1 Samuel 1:1](#).

She speaks about how the LORD is her Rock, [1 Samuel 2:2](#) / [2 Samuel 22:2-33](#) / [Psalm 18:2](#) / [Psalm 28:21](#) / [Psalm 62:2](#) / [Psalm 62:6](#). This indicates that Hannah was familiar with [Genesis 49:24](#), which records Jacob's blessing of Joseph, wherein he referred to God as the Rock of Israel.

When she says, 'do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance', [1 Samuel 2:3-4](#), she's directing this to Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, who used to taunt Hannah because she couldn't have children before she gave birth to Samuel, [1 Samuel 1:6-7](#). Those who were full, hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry are hungry no more, [1 Samuel 2:5](#) / [1 Samuel 2:36](#) / [Ezekiel 13:19](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'All the things mentioned in these verses frequently happen in the course of the Divine providence, and indeed it is the particular providence of God that Hannah seems more especially to celebrate through the whole of this simple yet sublime ode.'

The words, 'she who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away', [1 Samuel 2:5](#), are a reference to the long barrenness of the Gentile world, to be followed by a fruitfulness far exceeding that of fleshly Israel.

Seven is a number implying perfection and completeness, and this didn't apply to Hannah because she only had six children. She says God is the arbiter of life and death and only He can give life and only He has a right to take it away, [1 Samuel 2:6](#).

'The LORD sends poverty and wealth, he humbles and he exalts, [1 Samuel 2:7](#). 'He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour, [1 Samuel 2:8](#). For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's, on them he has set the world, [1 Samuel 2:8](#). In other words, God is God almighty and He sustains all things by the Word of His power.

God will direct the steps of His faithful servants and keep them from every evil, [1 Samuel 2:9](#). It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be broken, [1 Samuel 2:9-10](#). The Most High will thunder from heaven, the LORD will judge the ends of the earth, [1 Samuel 2:10](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:10](#).

'This is a most remarkable passage, containing a clear and distinct prophecy of the Kingdom and glory of the Christ of God, [Luke 1:69-70](#).'

The reference to 'giving strength to his king', [1 Samuel 2:10](#), is possibly prophetic in nature, as Israel sought after a king in Gideon, [Judges 8:22](#). This tells us that Israel wanted a king long before Saul was anointed as Israel's first king.

The word 'horn', [1 Samuel 2:10](#), simply means strength. The word 'anointed', [1 Samuel 2:10](#), is the word 'mashiyach' in Hebrew, and it's used here to mean the anointing of a king. Later, the word 'anointed' came to refer to the Messiah as the anointed one.

The Interpreter's Bible says the following, concerning [1 Samuel 2:10](#).

'This verse seems to envisage the miraculous discomfiture (defeat) of the enemies of Israel, followed by the judgment of the nations and the coming of the Messiah.'

Cook, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:10](#).

‘This is a most remarkable passage, containing a clear and distinct prophecy of the Kingdom and Glory of the Christ of God, [Luke 1:69-70](#).’

Elkanah goes home to Ramah, but Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest, [1 Samuel 2:11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:11](#).

‘The word ‘minister’ is used in three senses in Scripture.

1. Of the service or ministration of both priests and Levites rendered unto the Lord, [Exodus 28:35](#) / [Exodus 28:43](#).
2. Of the ministrations of the Levites as rendered to the priests, to aid them in divine Service, [Numbers 3:6](#).
3. Of any service or ministration, especially one rendered to a man of God, as that of Joshua to Moses, [Numbers 11:28](#).

The application of it to Samuel as ministering to the Lord before Eli the priest accords ‘most exactly’ with Samuel’s condition as a Levite.’

ELI’S WICKED SONS

‘Eli’s sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD. Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up, the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. But even before the fat was burned, the priest’s servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, ‘Give the priest some meat to roast; he won’t accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.’ If the person said to him, ‘Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want,’ the servant would answer, ‘No, hand it over now; if you don’t, I’ll take it by force.’ This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD’s sight, for they were treating the LORD’s offering with contempt.’ [1 Samuel 2:12-17](#)

It’s clear that Hophni and Phinehas, [1 Samuel 1:3](#), had no personal relationship with God because they had no regard for the Lord, [1 Samuel 2:12](#). They are called scoundrels, [1 Samuel 2:12](#), or the ‘sons of Belial’, KJV, which means without profit, worthlessness, [2 Corinthians 6:15](#).

Because they took advantage of those who wanted to be obedient to God, we can see just how corrupt and evil they had become. The Israelites were to bring their offerings to the priests in order to support the Levites, [Leviticus 7:28-34](#).

However, Hophni and Phinehas took advantage of the people, [1 Samuel 2:13-16](#). They were basically abusing the people spiritually; they were greedy and took more than they were supposed to.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:13](#).

‘When any man offered sacrifice, that is, when a peace-offering was brought, the right shoulder and the breast belonged to the priest, the fat was burnt upon the altar, and the blood was poured at the bottom of the altar; the rest of the flesh belonged to the offeror. Under the pretence of taking only their own part, they took the best of all they chose, and as much as they chose.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:13-16](#).

‘The Law of Moses defined exactly what was to be the priest’s portion of every peace offering, [Leviticus 7:31-35](#), as it also gave express directions about the burning of the fat, [Leviticus 7:23-25](#) / [Leviticus 7:31](#). It was therefore a gross act of disobedience and lawlessness on the part of Hophni and Phinehas to take more than the Law gave them. Incidental evidence is afforded by this passage to the existence of the Levitical law at this time.’

This sin of Hophni and Phinehas was very great in the LORD’s sight, for they were treating the LORD’s offering with contempt, [1 Samuel 2:17](#) / [1 Samuel 2:29](#) / [Malachi 1:10-11](#) / [Malachi 3:3](#).

‘But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year, his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, ‘May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.’ Then they would go home. And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.’ 1 Samuel 2:18-21

While Hophni and Phinehas are abusing God’s people, Samuel was ministering before the LORD, and he is described as a boy wearing a linen ephod, [1 Samuel 2:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the ephod and the little robe, [1 Samuel 2:18-19](#).

‘This was the usual dress of the priests. It does not appear whether Levites wore an ephod properly. Possibly, it was a mark of Samuel’s special dedication to the Lord’s service that he wore one. The ephod was sometimes used as an idolatrous implement [Judges 8:27](#). The robe of the ephod was also one of the garments worn by the High Priest, [Exodus 28:31](#). This pointed mention of the ephod and the robe as worn by the youthful Samuel, seems to point to an extraordinary and irregular priesthood to which he was called by God in an age when the provisions of the Levitical law were not yet in full operation, and in which there was no impropriety in the eyes of his contemporaries, seeing that nonconformity to the whole Law was the rule rather than the exception throughout the days of the Judges.’

After the dedication of Samuel to the tabernacle service, the annual visits of Samuel’s mother and father became very important for them. Not only did they fulfil their obligations to bring their offerings to the Levites, [1 Samuel 2:19](#), as the law required, [Leviticus 7:28-34](#), but this was also an opportunity to visit their son Samuel.

Eli would bless Elkanah and Hannah by saying, may the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD, and then they would go home, [1 Samuel 2:20](#).

God blessed Samuel’s parents with five more children, three boys and two girls, [1 Samuel 2:21](#). Notice the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD, [1 Samuel 2:21](#).

‘Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. So, he said to them, ‘Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the LORD’s people is not good. If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anyone sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?’ His sons, however, did not listen to their father’s rebuke, for it was the LORD’s will to put them to death. And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with people.’ 1 Samuel 2:22-26

Doesn’t your heart just go out to Eli? This must have been so embarrassing for him as his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, just go from bad to worse, they become more corrupt. They were sleeping with women at the entrance of the tabernacle, [1 Samuel 2:22](#), which shows great contempt towards God, [1 Samuel 2:12](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is probable that these were persons who had some employment about the tabernacle. [Exodus 38:8](#), where the Hebrew text is similar to that in this place.’

Eli asks his sons why they would do such things, and evidently word got back to him about their wickedness from all the people, and it wasn’t good, [1 Samuel 2:23-24](#).

It’s such a shame that his sons didn’t follow their father’s example, [Proverbs 22:6](#), and as a result, they will be judged by God because of their own sinfulness, [1 Samuel 2:25](#) / [1 Samuel 4:11](#) / [Ezekiel 18:20](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:25](#).

‘The law had determined what sins should be punished with death, and it was supposed that there was no appeal from the decision there pronounced. [1 John 2:1](#) is an answer to this question, but it is an answer which the Gospel alone can give.’

If we learn anything from this event, it's simply this, children can't rely on their parent's faith or righteousness, they must have their own, they must take personal responsibility for their own actions because we will all be judged by God individually for our actions, [2 Corinthians 5:10](#).

Notice though, that despite Eli's sons being sinful in their behaviour, Samuel himself remained in favour with the Lord and the people, [1 Samuel 2:26](#) / [Luke 2:52](#).

PROPHECY AGAINST THE HOUSE OF ELI

'Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, 'This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestor's family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestors' family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites. Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?' 'Therefore, the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever.' But now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age, and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, no one in your family line will ever reach old age. Every one of you that I do not cut off from serving at my altar I will spare only to destroy your sight and sap your strength, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life. 'And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always. Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread and plead, "Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.'" 1 Samuel 2:27-36

The man who came to Eli was an unnamed man, but we know he was a man of God, [1 Samuel 2:27](#), which implies that God was working through him amongst Israel. We know he wasn't a prophet because Samuel was known as the first prophet amongst Israel, [1 Samuel 3:20](#).

'Your ancestor's family', [1 Samuel 2:27](#), is a reference to the Levites who were represented by Moses and Aaron while they were still in Egypt. It was God who chose their ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be His priest, to go up to His altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in His presence, [1 Samuel 2:28](#). God also gave their ancestor's family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites, [1 Samuel 2:28](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The bountiful provision made by God for His priests is mentioned as the great aggravation of the covetousness of Eli's sons, [2 Samuel 12:7-9](#).'

God asks Eli why he scorned His sacrifice and offering that He prescribed for His dwelling? Why does Eli honour his sons more than God by fattening himself on the choice parts of every offering made by His people? [1 Samuel 2:29](#). Hophni and Phinehas hated the offerings to the Lord because they were never satisfied with their share of the offerings that were to be given to the Levites. This showed how greedy they were; they always wanted more.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 2:29](#).

'They disdained to take the part allowed by law, and would take for themselves what part they pleased, and as much as they pleased, [1 Samuel 2:13-16](#). Thus, they kicked at the sacrifices. Permitting them to deal, as above, with the offerings and sacrifices, and take their part before the fat was burnt unto the Lord, thus they were first served. At this Eli connived, and thus honoured his sons above God.'

God promised that members of Eli's family would minister before me forever, [Exodus 29:9](#) / [Exodus 40:15](#) / [Numbers 25:10-13](#), but now He says, far be it from me! [Jeremiah 18:9-10](#).

Those who honour Him, He I will honour, but those who despise Him will be disdained, 1 Samuel 2:30. God is going to ‘cut off their strength’, 1 Samuel 2:31 / Zechariah 11:17 / 1 Samuel 2:33, implies that the house of Eli had been unconditionally chosen to work and serve in the tabernacle, but because Eli’s two sons were so evil, his election for service would come to an end.

God says, Eli will see distress and although good will be done to Israel, no one in Eli’s family line will ever reach old age, 1 Samuel 2:32. God says, ‘every one of you that I do not cut off’, 1 Samuel 2:33, is a future reference to Abiathar who escaped the slaughter of the priests of Nob, 1 Samuel 22:18-23 / 1 Kings 2:26-27.

What happens to Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to Eli, they will both die on the same day, 1 Samuel 2:34 / 1 Samuel 4:11. Later God would raise up a faithful high priest in Samuel, 1 Samuel 2:35, as well as a priest through Zadok, 2 Samuel 8:17 / 2 Samuel 15:24 / 1 Chronicles 6:8-15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Samuel 2:35.

‘This seems to have been spoken of Zadok, who was anointed high priest in the room of Abiathar, the last descendant of the house of Eli, 1 Kings 2:26; 1 Kings 2:27. Abiathar was removed because he had joined with Adonijah, who had got himself proclaimed king, 1 Kings 1:7.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It also refers to all the priests whom the Lord would raise up as faithful servants of his altar, and only receives its complete and final fulfilment in Christ, the true and eternal High Priest.’

Any descendants left over from the house of Eli would look to Samuel and his descendants, 1 Samuel 2:36.

Lange, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In 1 Samuel 2:36, is added another feature in the portraiture of the faithful priest: in this close connection with the kingdom, he will occupy so exalted, honourable, and mighty a position over against the fallen house of Eli, that the needy and wretched survivors of that house will be dependent on him for existence and support.’

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days, the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. One night, Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he ran to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ But Eli said, ‘I did not call; go back and lie down.’ So, he went and lay down. Again, the LORD called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ ‘My son,’ Eli said, ‘I did not call; go back and lie down.’ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. A third time the LORD called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ Then Eli realised that the LORD was calling the boy. So, Eli told Samuel, ‘Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’ So, Samuel went and lay down in his place.’ 1 Samuel

3:1-9

THE LORD CALLS SAMUEL

Samuel was still a boy when he ministered before the LORD under Eli, [1 Samuel 3:1](#).

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘Samuel’s call to the prophetic office happened when he had just completed his twelfth year, [Luke 2:42](#).’

Notice ‘in those days the word of the LORD was rare’, [1 Samuel 3:1](#). The word ‘rare’ is translated as ‘precious’ in the KJV; the Hebrew word is ‘yaqar’, which means ‘valuable’. What the writer is telling us is that very few prophets spoke the valuable Word of God in those days, [2 Samuel 2:27-36](#).

Eli’s eyesight wasn’t as good as they once was due to his old age [1 Samuel 3:2](#), and the lamp of God hadn’t gone out yet, [1 Samuel 3:3](#) / [Exodus 27:20-21](#) / [Leviticus 24:3](#). This tells us that it was just before daybreak.

The Lord called Samuel, but he thought it was Eli calling him, [1 Samuel 3:4-5](#). The Lord called Samuel again, and once again he thought it was Eli calling him, [1 Samuel 3:6](#). Samuel didn’t yet know the LORD because the word of the LORD hadn’t yet been revealed to him, [1 Samuel 3:7](#).

Samuel didn’t have any visions or dreams from God up to this point, hence why he did not know the Lord. This implies that he had personal knowledge of the Lord but no personal experience of the Lord.

On the third call, Eli understood it was actually the Lord calling Samuel, [1 Samuel 3:8](#), so he told him to lie down again and speak to the Lord when He calls again, [1 Samuel 3:9](#).

‘The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Then Samuel said, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’ And the LORD said to Samuel: ‘See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. At that time, I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’ Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, ‘Samuel, my son.’ Samuel answered, ‘Here I am.’ ‘What was it he said to you?’ Eli asked. ‘Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything, he told you.’ So, Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, ‘He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.’ [1 Samuel 3:10-18](#)

It’s now that the Lord came and stood near Samuel, [1 Samuel 3:10](#). This appears to be a personal visual experience for him.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He probably saw nothing, and only heard the voice; for it was not likely that any extraordinary representation could have been made to the eyes of a person so young. He heard a voice, but saw no similitude.’

Samuel heard the Lord and spoke the very words Eli told him to speak when the Lord called again, [1 Samuel 3:11](#) / [1 Samuel 3:9](#). The reference to the ‘ears tingling’, [1 Samuel 3:11](#), was a sign that something dreadful was about to happen to him, [2 Kings 21:12](#) / [Jeremiah 19:3](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is remarkable that Jeremiah repeatedly compares the destruction of Jerusalem with the destruction of Shiloh, [Jeremiah 7:12](#) / [Jeremiah 7:14](#) / [Jeremiah 26:6](#) / [Jeremiah 26:9](#) / [Psalms 78:60-64](#).’

The Lord then tells Samuel that Eli’s ministry was coming to an end, [1 Samuel 3:12](#). This may seem a bit unfair, however as he was their father, he didn’t use his authority as their father to discipline his sons, when they were being corrupt in their service for God in the tabernacle, [1 Samuel 3:13](#) / [1 Samuel 2:12-17](#) / [1 Samuel 2:22-25](#).

God judging Eli’s family forever meant that judgment would come upon Eli and his family; this would bring an end to the priesthood of Eli’s house. Even though he was a righteous man, he had to pay the price for his son’s wickedness, [1 Samuel 3:14](#) / [1 John 1:7](#) / [Acts 13:39](#).

Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and notice he called him his son, 1 Samuel 3:15-16. Eli wants to know what God said to Samuel and tells him not to hide anything from him, 1 Samuel 3:17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Samuel 3:17.

‘This was a very solemn adjuration; he suspected that God had threatened severe judgments, for he knew that his house was very criminal, and he wished to know what God had spoken. The words imply thus much. If thou do not tell me fully what God has threatened, may the same and greater curses fall on thyself.’

Samuel goes ahead and tells Eli everything, hiding nothing from him, and then Eli says, He is the LORD, let him do what is good in his eyes, 1 Samuel 3:18.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Compare the devout submission of Aaron, Leviticus 10:3, and of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:19. And, for the highest conceivable submission to the will of God, Luke 22:42.’

‘The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognised that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.’ 1 Samuel 3:19-21

God was with Samuel as he grew up, and none of Samuel’s words fell to the ground, 1 Samuel 3:19. This basically means that all of Samuel’s prophetic words came to be fulfilled, and none of them failed.

The reference from ‘Dan even to Beersheba’, 1 Samuel 3:20, is used to describe the whole of the land of Palestine, from the north to the south and everything in-between, Judges 6:8.

It was throughout this area that Samuel was attested as a prophet, which implies that there were other areas of Palestine where the people didn’t recognise Samuel as a prophet, 1 Samuel 9:5-6.

Whilst a priest speaks to God on behalf of the people, a prophet speaks to the people on behalf of God. Throughout the Bible, especially the Old Testament, the prophets would tell God’s people, and other nations, what would happen if they didn’t repent of their sinful behaviour.

For the people to be able to repent, they had to listen to what the prophets said and then do what the prophets said, Jonah 3. If they rejected the prophets, they were in essence rejecting God Himself, since the prophets spoke God’s Word on behalf of God. We’re told that the LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed Himself to Samuel through His word, 1 Samuel 3:21.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘And Samuel’s word came to all Israel. Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek. The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand of them on the battlefield. When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, ‘Why did the LORD bring defeat on us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Shiloh, so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.’ So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.’ 1 Samuel 4:1-4

THE PHILISTINES CAPTURE THE ARK

The Lord used Samuel as Israel's leader to bring Israel together again as a nation, and now the Philistines were getting concerned, [1 Samuel 4:1](#). Notice the Israelites camped at Ebenezer, [1 Samuel 4:1](#), which means the stone of help.

The Philistines decide to gather at Aphek, [Joshua 12:18](#), and initiate an attack against Israel, [1 Samuel 4:1](#). Why? Simply because up until this point, Israel was pretty much divided, and as long as they remained divided, they posed no real threat to them.

It's a sad fact that the Ark of the Covenant became somewhat of a 'lucky charm' for Israel over the years, and this is what's happening here. They were defeated by the Philistines, [1 Samuel 4:2](#), and so, they thought getting the Ark was the answer.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This must have been a severe conflict, as four thousand were left dead on the field of battle. The contest also must have lasted some considerable time, as these were all slain hand to hand; swords and spears being in all probability the only weapons then used.'

They thought that God's presence was symbolised by the ark, they thought God was confined to a box and so they took it into battle with them against the Philistines, [1 Samuel 4:3](#).

They totally ignored the fact that the Ark of the Covenant was supposed to remain in the tabernacle. The people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim, [1 Samuel 4:3](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'In the evening of the defeat of the Israelites, the elders held a council, and resolved to send for the ark, which is described in full, as implying that in virtue of the covenant God could not but give them the victory, [Numbers 10:35](#); [Joshua 3:10](#).'

Notice that Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God, [1 Samuel 4:4](#).

'When the ark of the LORD's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, 'What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?' When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, the Philistines were afraid. 'A god has come into the camp,' they said. 'Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods?'

They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!' So the Philistines fought, the Israelites were defeated, and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.' [1 Samuel 4:5-11](#)

When Israel's 'lucky charm', that is, the Ark of the Covenant, arrived in camp, there was a lot of celebration. In fact, the shouts were so loud that the ground shook, [1 Samuel 4:5](#).

The Philistines believed that the great gods had come to help Israel, [1 Samuel 4:6-7](#). They were terrified and felt they had no chance against the Israelite's gods, [1 Samuel 4:8](#).

The Philistines believed it was these great gods who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, [1 Samuel 4:8](#). It's interesting how God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt over four hundred years before, but the Philistines knew about it four hundred years later. This tells us that all the stories of the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea had been passed on from generation to generation, even outside of Israel.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is a remarkable testimony on the part of the Philistines to the truth of the events which are recorded in the Pentateuch. The Philistines would, of course, hear of them, just as Balak and the people of Jericho did, Numbers 22:5 / Joshua 2:10.’

Notice the term the Philistines used to describe Israel, they called them ‘Hebrews’, 1 Samuel 4:9 / 1 Samuel 4:6 / Exodus 1:15 / Exodus 2:6, they always described them as Hebrews in derogatory terms.

Israel was once again defeated by the Philistines, 1 Samuel 4:10, and once again because the Israelites used the Ark of the Covenant as a ‘lucky charm’. This tells us that they were defeated because their hearts weren’t right with God. Notice the ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died, 1 Samuel 4:11.

THE DEATH OF ELI

‘That same day, a Benjamite ran from the battle line and went to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair by the side of the road, watching, because his heart feared for the ark of God. When the man entered the town and told what had happened, the whole town sent up a cry. Eli heard the outcry and asked, ‘What is the meaning of this uproar?’ The man hurried over to Eli, who was ninety-eight years old and whose eyes had failed so that he could not see. He told Eli, ‘I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day.’ Eli asked, ‘What happened, my son?’ The man who brought the news replied, ‘Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also, your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.’ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken, and he died, for he was an old man, and he was heavy. He had led Israel forty years.’ 1 Samuel 4:12-18

The Benjamite who ran from the battle line to Shiloh tore his clothes with dust on his head, 1 Samuel 4:12. This was a symbol of sorrow and mourning. When the Benjamite arrived, Eli was sitting on his chair by the side of the road. Eli was concerned about the Ark of the Covenant, and when everyone else found out what happened, there was a cry to the Lord, 1 Samuel 4:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Eli.

‘He was a most mild and affectionate father, and yet the safety of the ark lay nearer to his heart than the safety of his two sons. Who can help feeling for this aged, venerable man?’

Eli heard the outcry but didn’t know the meaning of it, 1 Samuel 4:14. When Eli, who is now ninety-nine years old and was losing his eyesight, got told that the Ark had been captured by the Philistines and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas had died, 1 Samuel 4:11, he was shocked but it appears that he was more shocked that the Ark of the Covenant had been captured, 1 Samuel 4:15-17.

As a result, he fell backwards from his seat and broke his neck, 1 Samuel 4:18. This was the end of his forty-year reign as a leader of Israel, 1 Samuel 4:18 / Judges 3:11.

‘His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labour and gave birth, but was overcome by her labour pains. As she was dying, the women attending her said, ‘Don’t despair; you have given birth to a son.’ But she did not respond or pay any attention. She named the boy Ichabod, saying, ‘The Glory has departed from Israel’—because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, ‘The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.’ 1 Samuel 4:19-22

When Phinehas, 1 Samuel 4:19, that is, Eli’s other wife, 1 Samuel 1:2, who was heavily pregnant, heard the news concerning the Ark of the Covenant and that her husband Eli and her two sons had died, she herself died whilst she was giving birth, 1 Samuel 4:19-20.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is another very affecting story; the defeat of Israel, the capture of the ark, the death of her father-in-law, and the slaughter of her husband, were more than a woman in her circumstances, near the time of her delivery could bear. She bowed, travailed, was delivered of a son, gave the child a name indicative of the ruined state of Israel, and expired!’

Before dying, she gave birth to a son and named him ‘Ichabod’, 1 Samuel 4:21, which means ‘no glory’. This was to be a reminder of the tragic events that took place when Israel fell to the Philistines, the ark was now gone, and so now, God’s presence has departed, 1 Samuel 4:21-22.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The lesson of the ruin brought upon Churches by the covetousness and profligacy of their priests, which is here taught us so forcibly, and which has been again and again illustrated in Jews and Christians, is too solemn and important to be overlooked. When the glory of holiness departs from what should be a holy community, the glory of God’s presence has already departed, and the outward tokens of His protection may be expected to depart soon likewise, Ezekiel 10:18 / Ezekiel 11:23 / Revelation 2:5. But though particular congregations may fall, our Lord’s promise will never fail his people, Matthew 28:20.’

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, we saw that the Philistines had defeated the Israelites twice, and they captured the Ark of the Covenant. The next two chapters focus on the events and problems which the Philistines had because they had the Ark of the Covenant in their presence.

THE ARK IN ASHDOD AND EKRON

‘After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then they carried the ark into Dagon’s temple and set it beside Dagon. When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. But the following morning, when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon’s temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.’ 1 Samuel 5:1-5

The Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant to Ashdod, 1 Samuel 5:1, which was one of the main cities in Philistia. This was the highly ‘religious’ place where Dagon, the idol of the Philistine god, was placed, 1 Samuel 5:2. Dagon was believed to be the father of Baal, 1 Samuel 31:9 / Judges 16:23 / Isaiah 37:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This idol, which was supposed to be partly in a human form, and partly in that of a fish, Judges 16:23.’

When the Philistines put the Ark next to Dagon, they arose in the morning, they found their idol had fallen over face down before the Ark of the Lord, 1 Samuel 5:3.

They rebuilt the idol, but the same thing happened again, this time the head and hands were completely broken off, 1 Samuel 5:3-4. This was God's way of demonstrating that their idols were no match for Him.

We are told this is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold, 1 Samuel 5:5. The Philistines must have come to the conclusion that since Dagon was the father of Baal, then there must have been another god, an unknown god, behind Baal whom they didn't know, Acts 17:22-29.

'The LORD's hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation on them and afflicted them with tumours. When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, 'The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy on us and on Dagon, our god.' So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them, 'What shall we do with the ark of the god of Israel?' They answered, 'Have the ark of the god of Israel moved to Gath.' So they moved the ark of the God of Israel. But after they had moved it, the LORD's hand was against that city, throwing it into a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumours. So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. As the ark of God was entering Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, 'They have brought the ark of the god of Israel around to us to kill us and our people.' So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and said, 'Send the ark of the god of Israel away; let it go back to its own place, or it will kill us and our people.' For death had filled the city with panic; God's hand was very heavy on it. Those who did not die were afflicted with tumours, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.' 1 Samuel 5:6-

12

Because the Philistines had stolen the Ark of the Covenant, God went on to punish them. He caused devastation among them and afflicted them with tumours in Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, 1 Samuel 5:6 / 1 Samuel 5:8 / 1 Samuel 5:9 / Deuteronomy 28:27.

When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they decide that the ark of the god of Israel mustn't stay here with them, because God's hand is heavy on them and on Dagon their god, 1 Samuel 5:7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here the end was completely answered: they now saw that they had not prevailed against Israel, on account of their god being more powerful than Jehovah; and they now feel how easily this God can confound and destroy their whole nation.'

They called together all the rulers of the Philistines and asked them what to do with the ark, and they were told to move the ark to Gath, which they did, 1 Samuel 5:8.

God once again afflicted the people of the city, both young and old, with an outbreak of tumours, 1 Samuel 5:9, and they moved the ark to Ekron, 1 Samuel 5:10.

The Philistines quickly conclude that these things were happening to them because they had the Ark of the Covenant in their presence, 1 Samuel 5:11, and so they decide to give it back to the Israelites, 1 Samuel 5:11.

They also come to the conclusion that this had nothing to do with their idol gods, 1 Samuel 5:5, because they call it, 'the ark of the god of Israel', 1 Samuel 5:11. We need to note that not only did the Philistines pray to God for deliverance, but God also heard their prayers, 1 Samuel 5:12.

As we enter the next chapter, we will see that the Philistines were delivered from their tragedies, and it was possible only by divine intervention. This also shows us that God hears the prayers of other nations as well as those who are His chosen people and that He cares about all mankind, Acts 10:30-31.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

‘When the ark of the LORD had been in Philistine territory seven months, the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, ‘What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it back to its place.’ They answered, ‘If you return the ark of the god of Israel, do not send it back to him without a gift; by all means send a guilt offering to him. Then you will be healed, and you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you.’ The Philistines asked, ‘What guilt offering should we send to him?’ They replied, ‘Five gold tumours and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers. Make models of the tumours and of the rats that are destroying the country and give glory to Israel’s god. Perhaps he will lift his hand from you and your gods and your land. Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When Israel’s god dealt harshly with them, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?’ ‘Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. Take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way, but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory, toward Beth Shemesh, then the LORD has brought this great disaster on us. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand that struck us but that it happened to us by chance.’ 1 Samuel 6:1-9

THE ARK RETURNED TO ISRAEL

Every religion in the world, even those pagan religions, has its ‘go-to’ people. The Philistines were no exception; their ‘go to’ people were the priest and the diviners who served and worshipped Dagon, who was an idol of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 6:1-2 / 1 Samuel 5:1-5.

The priests basically worked in the capacity of serving the religious rites and ceremonies of the religion of the Philistines. The diviners were basically magicians who took advantage of people’s imaginations, Deuteronomy 18:10. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word for ‘priest’ here is the same as that used for the priests of the true God; that for diviners is everywhere used of idolatrous or superstitious divining. Three modes of divination are described, Ezekiel 21:21-22, by arrows, by teraphim, and by the entrails of beasts, Exodus 7:11 / Daniel 2:2.’

They decided that if they sent the Ark of the Covenant back to the Israelites, then they should also send a gift, 1 Samuel 6:3. But notice this was a ‘guilt offering’, 1 Samuel 6:3, but this isn’t a ‘guilt offering’ as the Israelites understood it to mean because the Philistines were practising some form of magic.

The Philistines asked what guilt offering should be sent to him, and they said, five gold tumours and five gold rats, according to the number of the Philistine rulers, because the same plague has struck both you and your rulers, 1 Samuel 6:4.

Although the previous chapter makes no mention of ‘rats’, 1 Samuel 6:4, we can easily make the connection between the plague and the rats; this would probably be like the bubonic plague, which, according to all the evidence, was the particular plague that struck Philistia. The number ‘five’, 1 Samuel 6:4, in these verses and the mention of all five cities in 1 Samuel 6:17, indicate that the plague had involved all Philistia.

The Philistines are to make models of the tumours and of the rats that are destroying the country, and give glory to Israel’s God; by doing so, they were hoping God would lift His hand from them and their gods and their land, 1 Samuel 6:5.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The whole land was afflicted; the ground was marred by the mice; the common people and the lords afflicted by the haemorrhoids, and their gods broken in pieces.’

Notice the reference to the Egyptians and Pharaoh, [1 Samuel 6:5](#) / [1 Samuel 4:8](#). Even these magicians and diviners were well aware of what God did four hundred years after Israel left Egypt. Notice also that they understood the truth that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God, [1 Samuel 6:6](#) / [Exodus 8:15](#) / [Exodus 8:32](#) / [Exodus 9:34](#). God didn't harden Pharaoh's heart; God gave him the opportunity to exercise his own free will, and Pharaoh chose to harden his own heart against the will of God.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning what the Philistines were trying to do here, [1 Samuel 6:7-9](#).

'The device of the Philistines in sending back the ark was clearly experimental, and they had no certain knowledge as to the way it would turn out. Therefore, we should understand the statement in [1 Samuel 6:3](#), that they would be healed as a conditional promise. This indicates that they were still uncertain as to whether or not God was responsible for their plagues.'

This was basically a test by the Philistines, and the test was this: if the cows smashed the cart in order to return to their calves, then the presence of the Israelite God was not with the ark of the covenant, [1 Samuel 6:7-9](#).

Normally, cows wouldn't have left their calves and cows that had never been yoked wouldn't have taken a cart anywhere, much less on a seventeen-mile trip down a dusty road.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'So it appears that their calves had been with them in the fields. This was a complete trial: unless they were supernaturally influenced, they would not leave their calves, unless supernaturally directed, they would not leave their home, and take a way unguided, which they had never gone before.'

Beth Shemesh, [1 Samuel 6:9](#), was an ancient Canaanite city. The name means 'house of the sun god'; this tells us that the Canaanites had shrines and temples throughout Canaan.

'So they did this. They took two such cows and hitched them to the cart, and penned up their calves. They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumours. Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh. Now the people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight. The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock. The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. The Levites took down the ark of the LORD, together with the chest containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. On that day, the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD. The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this and then returned that same day to Ekron.' [1 Samuel 6:10-16](#)

Since the Philistines weren't aware of how to carry the ark, that is, it was to be carried on poles resting upon the shoulders of priests, [Deuteronomy 31:9](#), they put them on a cart which was being pulled along by the cows, [1 Samuel 6:10](#).

They placed the ark of the LORD on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumours, [1 Samuel 6:11](#). Against their nature, the cows progressed on the designated route while lowing for the calves that they left behind, [1 Samuel 6:12](#).

The men of Beth Shemesh were Levites, [1 Samuel 6:13](#). That city having been designated as a city of the Levites ever since the days of Joshua, [Joshua 21:16](#). The people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced at the sight, [1 Samuel 6:13](#). The cart came to the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and there it stopped beside a large rock, [1 Samuel 6:14](#) / [Genesis 28:18](#) / [Judges 13:19](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the large rock.

‘This great stone was probably used as an altar on this occasion, and the cattle stopping at it of their own accord was understood by the Beth Shemites as an intimation that they were to offer sacrifices on it to the Lord God of Israel, who had so wonderfully brought back the ark from its captivity.’

The people chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD, 1 Samuel 6:14. Whilst the Philistines looked on, the Levites took charge of the ark.

The Levites took down the ark of the LORD, together with the chest containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock, 1 Samuel 6:15. On that day, the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the LORD, 1 Samuel 6:15.

The five rulers of the Philistines saw all this and then returned that same day to Ekron, 1 Samuel 6:16. The Philistines came to the conclusion that there was a God relating to the ark, and although they didn’t fully understand, they knew that the ark was back where it belonged, with the Israelites.

‘These are the gold tumours the Philistines sent as a guilt offering to the LORD—one each for Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. And the number of the gold rats was according to the number of Philistine towns belonging to the five rulers—the fortified towns with their country villages. The large rock on which the Levites set the ark of the LORD is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh. But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the LORD had dealt them. And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, ‘Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?’ Then they sent messengers to the people of Kiriath Jearim, saying, ‘The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to your town.’ 1 Samuel 6:17-21

The five gold tumours were a guilt offering to the Lord from the Philistines, along with the five gold rats from the five rulers, 1 Samuel 6:17-18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The desolation that had been made through the land by these animals had excited a general concern, and it appears from the text that all the cities of the Philistines, as well fenced as without walls, sent a golden mouse as a trespass-offering.’

Notice the Lord struck down seventy people because they looked into the ark; as a result, the people mourned, 1 Samuel 6:19. Note that the footnote tells us that the number was fifty thousand and seventy.

Davis, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The number of the slain, 50,070, 1 Samuel 6:19, may represent an error a scribe made as he copied the text, though there is strong textual support for the large number. Several Hebrew manuscripts omit 50,000, and Josephus mentioned only 70 fatalities. Perhaps 70 men died, as the NIV and several other modern translations state.’

It’s clear that the people were terrified and quickly realised that they couldn’t just handle the ark however they wanted, 1 Samuel 6:20. It must be handled according to God’s instructions, that is, it was to be carried on poles resting upon the shoulders of priests, Deuteronomy 31:9. The men of Beth Shemesh couldn’t bear the presence of the ark and so the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took it, 1 Samuel 6:21.

In the next chapter, we see that they placed it in Abinadab’s house, and consecrated Eleazar his son, to guard it, 1 Samuel 7:1. The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim for twenty years in all, 1 Samuel 7:2, but this wasn’t where it was supposed to be; it was supposed to be placed inside the holy of holies.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They brought it to Abinadab’s house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar, his son, to guard the ark of the LORD. The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all. Then all the people of Israel turned back to the LORD. So Samuel said to all the Israelites, ‘If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.’ So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths and served the LORD only. Then Samuel said, ‘Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you.’ When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day, they fasted, and there they confessed, ‘We have sinned against the LORD.’ Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah. When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. They said to Samuel, ‘Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.’ 1 Samuel 7:1-8

As we saw in the last chapter, when the Philistines returned the ark, the men of Beth Shemesh couldn’t bear the presence of the ark, and so the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took it, 1 Samuel 7:1 / 1 Samuel 6:19-20. They placed the ark in Abinadab’s house, and consecrated Eleazar his son, to guard it, 1 Samuel 7:1. The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim for twenty years in all, 1 Samuel 7:2, which means that the ark stayed there until David began his reign, 2 Samuel 6:3-4.

SAMUEL SUBDUES THE PHILISTINES AT MIZPAH

Samuel calls the people to repent, give their hearts totally to God and get rid of the foreign gods amongst them, 1 Samuel 7:3. This tells us about the idolatry which was going on amongst God’s own people.

If Israel wants to end the oppression from the Philistines, it must do as God requires. At this moment in time, the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only, 1 Samuel 7:4.

The Baals were handmade images that represented the Canaanite gods, and the Ashtaroth were handmade images that represented fertility. This would include the fertility of crops, animals, and man, which tells us that everything they did religiously was governed by these handmade images.

This god, also known as Astarte, was worshipped by the Phoenicians and Canaanites. The Greeks also worshipped this god and called it Venus, who was the goddess of sex and fertility.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Twenty years of Samuel’s life had passed since the last mention of him, 1 Samuel 4:1. Now he appears in the threefold character of prophet, Judge, and the acknowledged leader of the whole people. His words were an answer to a profession of repentance on the part of Israel, the practical proof of which would be the putting away of all their false gods, Judges 6:10.’

Samuel tells Israel to assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and he will intercede with the LORD for them, 1 Samuel 7:5, just as Moses did, Exodus 17:11-12 / Numbers 12:13. Whilst there, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD, 1 Samuel 7:6. They fasted and confessed their sins against God, confessed, 1 Samuel 7:6.

Notice how Samuel takes the role of a judge, 1 Samuel 7:6 / Exodus 18:13-16. Although Samuel gathered Israel at Mizpah, he knew that this would result in the Philistines attacking them. Hence, when the Philistines gathered together to attack, the Israelites became frightened, 1 Samuel 7:7.

Notice that they turn to Samuel to ask him to plead to the Lord on their behalf, **1 Samuel 7:8**. This tells us that they appear to accept Samuel as their judge and leader.

Mizpah was like a gathering point for Israel; we see them gathering there when they declared war on Benjamin, **Judges 20:1**, and it was this place where Saul was made king, **1 Samuel 10:17**.

‘Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel’s behalf, and the LORD answered him. While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far the LORD has helped us.’ So the Philistines were subdued, and they stopped invading Israel’s territory. Throughout Samuel’s lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines. The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered the neighbouring territory from the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.’ **1 Samuel 7:9-14**

Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to God and God heard him, **1 Samuel 7:9**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This sucking lamb must have been eight days under its mother before it could be offered, as the law says, **Leviticus 22:27**.’

Notice as Samuel was offering the sacrifices up to the Lord the Philistines attacked but the Lord steps in with ‘loud thunder’, **1 Samuel 7:10**. We don’t know exactly how God did this but we do know that the result of this miraculous intervention meant that Israel defeated the Philistines and pushed back as far as Beth Kar, **1 Samuel 7:11**, which was around five miles west of Jerusalem.

After God gave Israel the victory, Samuel took a stone and named it ‘Ebenezer’, **1 Samuel 7:12**, which means, ‘stone of help’. Erecting a stone monument was very common among God’s people, **Genesis 28:22 / Genesis 31:45 / Genesis 35:14 / James 24:26**.

The Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel’s territory and throughout Samuel’s lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines, **1 Samuel 7:13**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God often suffers nations and individuals to be brought to the lowest extremity, that he may show his mercy and goodness by suddenly rescuing them from destruction, when all human help has most evidently failed.’

The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered the neighbouring territory from the hands of the Philistines, **1 Samuel 7:14**.

And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites, **1 Samuel 7:14**. God’s victory over the Philistines was to prevent the Philistines from returning to the areas where Israel lived at that time.

‘Samuel continued as Israel’s leader all the days of his life. From year to year, he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also held court for Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.’ **1 Samuel 7:15-17**

Samuel continued as Israel’s leader all the days of his life, **1 Samuel 7:15**. Notice that he went on a circuit, **1 Samuel 7:16**. This tells us that he travelled around Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and Ramah as a prophet and a judge, **1 Samuel 7:16**. This also tells us that the people came to him when he was in one of those places.

Samuel built an altar, **1 Samuel 7:17**, which is interesting because it tells us that during this time the tabernacle and the altar had been destroyed at some point, he wouldn’t have done this if the tabernacle was still there, along with the

altar inside it, we also know that God would never have accepted it, if they were still there, Deuteronomy 12:5 / Deuteronomy 12:13.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel’s leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.’ 1 Samuel 8:1-5

ISRAEL ASKS FOR A KING

Samuel, who is now getting older, appointed his sons as Israel’s leaders, 1 Samuel 8:1. He entrusted the work of God into the hands of his sons Joel, 1 Samuel 8:2, which means, ‘the Lord is God’ and Abijah, 1 Samuel 8:2, which means ‘the Lord is Father’.

Sadly, just like Eli’s sons, 1 Samuel 2:12-17, they too became corrupt, they were greedy and took advantage of the offering the people brought to them. They had no respect for their father or his name because they took bribes and ended up distorting judgments because of them, 1 Samuel 8:3.

Homer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When the laws are perverted by force; when justice is expelled from her seat; when judges are swayed from the right, regardless of the vengeance of Heaven.’ Or, in other words, these were times in which the streams of justice were poisoned in their source, and judges neither feared God nor regarded man.’

As a result of Samuel being old and his sons becoming corrupt, all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 1 Samuel 8:4. They wanted a king to whom they could give allegiance too, 1 Samuel 8:5. It’s clear that Israel is now at the stage where they felt more secure with men than they did with God.

‘But when they said, ‘Give us a king to lead us,’ this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: ‘Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day, I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.’ 1 Samuel 8:6-9

After demanding a king, Samuel became upset and prayed to the Lord about it, 1 Samuel 8:6, which is a good lesson for us today. Notice what the Lord tells him, He tells Samuel to listen to the people, but He also points out that it wasn’t Samuel they were rejecting, it’s the Lord Himself, they rejected the Lord as their king, 1 Samuel 8:7.

The Lord says His people were rejecting Him, even though the people thought they were rejecting Samuel, Matthew 5:10-12 / 1 Thessalonians 4:8. They wanted a leader whom they could physically see and touch, therefore God was rejected.

God had been leading them directly for around four-hundred years, 1 Samuel 8:8, but this wasn't enough for them, they wanted a political leader like those around them. Samuel is warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights, 1 Samuel 8:9.

‘Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, ‘This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks, and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys, he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.’ 1 Samuel 8:10-18

Samuel here makes a prophecy concerning their own decision to have a king, other than accepting God as their King, 1 Samuel 8:10, and the outcome wasn't going to be good. The king they would eventually choose would be Saul, 1 Samuel 10:9-24.

Saul would become their earthly king and would demand soldiers from the people, 1 Samuel 8:11. He would force them into working for him for his benefit, 1 Samuel 8:12, he would take their property for his own benefit, 1 Samuel 8:13-16, and heavily tax the people, 1 Samuel 8:17 / 1 Kings 5:13-18 / 1 Kings 12:4.

All these demands of the king would become a great burden to the people, 1 Samuel 8:18, a burden from which generations to come would suffer, Hosea 8:4. It's clear from this day of demanding a king, to be like the nations around them, that Israel would always desire a physical king.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Samuel explained what having a king similar to all the nations would mean. The elders were interested in the functions of monarchy, but Samuel pointed out the nature of monarchy. It meant the loss of freedoms and possessions that the people presently enjoyed.’

‘But the people refused to listen to Samuel. ‘No!’ they said. ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.’ When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, ‘Listen to them and give them a king.’ Then Samuel said to the Israelites, ‘Everyone go back to your own town.’ 1 Samuel 8:19-22

As usual, after being told by Samuel what dreadful things would happen to them, they refused to listen to him, 1 Samuel 8:19. They wanted to be like the nations around them; they wanted to have a leader so that they could be like the other nations, 1 Samuel 8:19-20. This shows us just how stubborn the people have become.

God knew they would eventually want a leader, a king, Deuteronomy 17:14-20, but the Lord allows them to choose, 1 Samuel 8:21-22. He never forces anyone to love Him or follow Him. And so, Samuel told the Israelites to go back to their own town, 1 Samuel 8:22.

Throughout the Scriptures, the Lord allows people to choose for themselves, Joshua 24:15, but God can use people's choices, even the bad choices, to bring about the good, Genesis 3:15. Ultimately, God brought about the Messiah, Genesis 12:1-3, even though His people rejected Him time and time again.

We're reminded that there will be consequences for our decisions, Genesis 3:1-24, and when we read through Israel's history, we can see that things just go from bad to worse, and it begins with Saul.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else. Now the donkeys belonging to Saul’s father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, ‘Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys.’ So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them. When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, ‘Come, let’s go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us.’ 1 Samuel 9:1-5

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL

The tribe of Benjamin, from which Saul came, was very strong on leadership and very influential among the twelve tribes.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The genealogy of Saul is here given as far as Aphiah, ‘Abiah,’ 1 Chronicles 7:8, who was of the house of Becher the son of Benjamin, Genesis 46:21. ‘Kish’, 1 Chronicles 9:35-39, was the son of ‘Ner’ the son of ‘Jehiel,’ or, ‘Abiel’ here and 1 Samuel 14:51, the first settler, ‘father,’ 1 Chronicles 9:35, at Gibeon, or Gibeah of Saul, and who married ‘Maachah,’ a daughter or granddaughter of Caleb. If so, it is obvious that the names of several generations are omitted between Kish and Abiel, and among them that from which the family of Matri 1 Samuel 10:21 was called.’ Saul is described as being ‘a man of standing’, 1 Samuel 9:1, which means he was prestigious among the tribe. The main problem with Saul, as we shall see later, is that he was more concerned about pleasing men and getting approval from men, rather than God.

Saul wasn’t a teenager, but a ‘handsome young man’, 1 Samuel 9:2, which basically means he was in the prime of his life, and good-looking. He appears to have made an impression on others around him. Saul’s father, Kish, tells Saul to take a servant and go to find it, 1 Samuel 9:3.

He went through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them, 1 Samuel 9:4. He went into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there and then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them, 1 Samuel 9:4.

When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul decides to go back, or his father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about them, 1 Samuel 9:5.

‘But the servant replied, ‘Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let’s go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take.’ Saul said to his servant, ‘If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?’ The servant answered him again. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take.’ (Formerly in Israel, if someone went to inquire of God, they would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer,’ because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.) ‘Good,’ Saul said to his servant. ‘Come, let’s go.’ So they set out for the town where the man of God was.’ 1 Samuel 9:6-10

The servant tells Saul there is a man of God in this town, 1 Samuel 9:6. The ‘man of God’ was Samuel who is described as being highly respected and everything he says comes true, 1 Samuel 9:6.

It was Samuel that Saul hoped would tell him where his father’s missing sheep were, 1 Samuel 9:6. As was the custom of the day, anyone seeking advice from a man of God had to bring a gift in return for any answers, 1 Samuel 9:7 / Ezekiel 13:19 / Hosea 3:2 / Galatians 6:6.

We must note that Israel didn't have coins of any currency at this point in time; that didn't happen until the Romans came along. Buying and selling were done using weights of gold or silver, and in some cases, it would be livestock which was used for their currency. The silver mentioned here, 1 Samuel 9:8, weighed around 2.5 grams, or one-tenth of an ounce, of pure silver.

A seer, 1 Samuel 9:9, was basically someone who made prophetic announcements, while a prophet spoke the Word of God to the people. Sometimes they spoke about what was happening there and then, and other times they spoke about future events.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A seer and a prophet were the same in most cases; only with this difference, the seer was always a prophet, but the prophet was not always a seer. A seer seems to imply one who frequently met with, and saw, some symbolical representation of God. The term prophet was used a long time before this; Abraham is called a prophet, Genesis 20:7, and the term frequently occurs in the law. Besides, the word seer does not occur before this time; but often occurs afterwards down through the prophets, for more than three hundred years, Amos 7:12 / Micah 3:7.’

Saul agrees that this is a good idea, and so they set off to meet Samuel, 1 Samuel 9:10.

‘As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women coming out to draw water, and they asked them, ‘Is the seer here?’ ‘He is,’ they answered. ‘He’s ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time.’ They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.’ 1 Samuel 9:11-14

As Saul and his servant were going up the hill, they met some young women who were going to get water, to supply their household needs, 1 Samuel 9:11. This was customary in Bible times, Genesis 24:15 / John 4:7.

Saul also asked the young women if the seer is here, 1 Samuel 9:11, to which they reply yes, he’s ahead of them but they need to be quick because he has just come to their town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place, 1 Samuel 9:12. The ‘high place’, 1 Samuel 9:12, was the place where the worship of idols usually occurred.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though Samuel lived chiefly in Ramah, yet he had a dwelling in the country, at a place called Naioth, where it is probable there was a school of the prophets, 1 Samuel 19:18-24.’

Notice that the people won't eat until the ‘seer’ had blessed the sacrifice first, 1 Samuel 9:13, to bless the sacrifice is another way of saying giving thanks for the sacrifice, Luke 9:16 / John 6:11. It was the ‘high place’ of worship where the people would eat, Exodus 29:13 / Exodus 29:22 / Leviticus 3:4 / Leviticus 3:10 / Leviticus 3:15.

It was the Israelite’s custom to eat together when they worshipped together; this custom is seen in the New Testament too, 1 Corinthians 11:13-34 / 2 Peter 2:13 / Jude 12. They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place, 1 Samuel 9:14.

‘Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: ‘About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people, Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.’ When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, ‘This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.’ Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, ‘Would you please tell me where the seer’s house is?’ ‘I am the seer,’ Samuel replied. ‘Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning, I will send you on your way and will tell you all that is in your heart. As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?’ Saul answered, ‘But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?’ 1 Samuel 9:15-21

God revealed to Samuel the man he was to anoint and make ‘ruler’, 1 Samuel 9:15-16. The word ‘ruler’ is sometimes translated as ‘captain’ or ‘prince’, which has the same meaning as the word ‘king’.

Samuel is to anoint him ruler over my people Israel, and he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 9:16. God says He has looked on His people, for their cry has reached Him, 1 Samuel 9:16.

When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, this is the man I spoke to you about, he will govern my people, 1 Samuel 9:17. The word ‘govern’ is sometimes translated as ‘reign’, which again assumes that Saul would be anointed as a king.

When Saul approached Samuel, he asked, Would you please tell me where the seer’s house is? 1 Samuel 9:18.

Samuel tells him that he is a seer and tells him to go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will send you on your way and will tell you all that is in your heart, 1 Samuel 9:19.

Notice that Samuel tells him that the things he’s been searching for have been found, 1 Samuel 9:20. He also says to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line? 1 Samuel 9:20.

The desire of Israel was to have a physical king rule over them, as the nations around them did, 1 Samuel 8:6-9, and it appears that Saul didn’t have a clue what Samuel was speaking about.

Saul really shows his lack of confidence by telling Samuel that he was from the least of the tribes of Israel, and Benjamin was fairly insignificant compared to the other tribes, 1 Samuel 9:21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The tribe of Benjamin, originally the smallest of all the tribes, Numbers 1:36, if Ephraim and Manasseh are reckoned as one tribe, had been nearly annihilated by the civil war recorded in Judges 20. It had, of course, not recovered from that terrible calamity in the time of Saul, and was doubtless literally much the smallest tribe at that time. Nothing could be more improbable, humanly speaking, than that this weak tribe should give a ruler to the mighty tribes of Joseph and Judah.’

At this point, we can see Saul’s humility, but as we shall see later, this humility wasn’t going to last very long. We must note that Saul now fully understands what Samuel is saying to him concerning his becoming king of Israel, Judges 6:15.

‘Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited—about thirty in number. Samuel said to the cook, ‘Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside.’ So the cook took up the thigh with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, ‘Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion from the time I said, ‘I have invited guests.’ And Saul dined with Samuel that day.’ 1 Samuel 9:22-24

Saul was given the place of honour at the dinner table, 1 Samuel 9:22, and the ‘piece of meat’, 1 Samuel 9:23, that Samuel gave him was the shoulder of the animal.

This is significant because this part of the animal was reserved for the priests. So the cook took up the thigh with what was on it and set it in front of Saul and Samuel. This is what has been kept for him, 1 Samuel 9:24.

He tells Saul to eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion from the time I said, ‘I have invited guests,’ 1 Samuel 9:24. And Saul dined with Samuel that day, 1 Samuel 9:24. Samuel was truly exalting Saul because Saul was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel and lead His people.

‘After they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of his house. They rose about daybreak, and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, ‘Get ready, and I will send you on your way.’ When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together. As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, ‘Tell the servant to go on ahead of us’—and the servant did so—‘but you stay here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God.’ 1 Samuel 9:25-27

Samuel and Saul spoke on the roof of Samuel’s house, 1 Samuel 9:25, which was common in the day. They rose about daybreak, which implies Saul stayed the night and slept on the roof.

Samuel called to Saul and told him to get ready, and he would send him on his way, 1 Samuel 9:26. When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together, 1 Samuel 9:26.

As they were going, Samuel said to Saul, tell the servant to go on ahead of us and the servant did so, but you stay here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God, 1 Samuel 9:27.

I'm pretty sure Samuel would have spoken to him about his spiritual concerns for Israel as a nation, and it appears that Samuel wanted to establish a long-lasting relationship with Saul right from the start. The anointing of Saul would take place on the next day, as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

‘Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, ‘Has not the LORD anointed you, ruler over his inheritance? When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel’s tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, ‘The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, ‘What shall I do about my son?’ ‘Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to worship God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them. ‘After that, you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, timbrels, pipes, and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you. ‘Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.’ 1 Samuel 10:1-8

Samuel took some olive oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, 1 Samuel 10:1. The use of olive oil was common for anointing someone who was to be king, Exodus 28:41 / 1 Kings 19:16.

Here we find Samuel anointing Saul privately, later the anointing of a king would become more official and more of a public affair, 1 Samuel 10:17-25 / 1 Samuel 11:14-15. The kissing was a testimony of Samuel’s sincere friendship and affection for Saul, 1 Samuel 9:25-27.

Notice it’s the Lord who does the anointing, 1 Samuel 10:1. If anyone wanted to represent God, then the anointing must first come from God Himself. In other words, unless God has anointed someone, they couldn’t become king without God’s approval. Notice also that the inheritance is God’s inheritance, 1 Samuel 10:1; this is because Israel as a nation belonged to God.

He was the One who gave birth to her, Exodus 4:22-23; He was the One who delivered them out of Egypt, Deuteronomy 26:8, and He was the One who brought them into the Promised Land, Joshua 1:1-6. In other words, if it weren’t for God, Israel as a nation would never have existed in the first place.

THE SIGNS GIVEN TO SAUL

1. Saul would meet two men near the tomb of Rachel who would give him word that the donkeys had been found, 1 Samuel 10:2 / Genesis 35:19.

2. Saul would meet three men at the great tree of Tabor going up to worship at Bethel, and they would give him two loaves of bread, 1 Samuel 10:3-4 / Genesis 28:19.

The two loaves of bread, 1 Samuel 10:4, were a supply of provisions from God for Saul and his servant because they had already run out of food, 1 Samuel 9:7.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There were two things indicated by this gift of bread which evidently had been intended as a sacrifice at Bethel. 1. It was a token of the tribute that all of Israel would pay to their king, and 2. it indicated that Henceforth Saul would share with the sanctuary the offerings of the people.’

3. Saul would meet a procession of prophets, playing instruments of music and prophesying, 1 Samuel 10:5 / 1 Samuel 13:3 / 2 Samuel 8:6 / 1 Chronicles 11:16 / 1 Chronicles 18:13 / 2 Chronicles 17:2 / 1 Kings 4:19.

4. The Spirit of the Lord would come powerfully upon Saul, 1 Samuel 10:6 / Judges 3:10 / Judges 11:29.

5. Saul himself would prophesy, 1 Samuel 10:6.

Notice that Samuel says that Saul will be changed into a different person, 1 Samuel 10:6.

‘Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is a remarkable expression, and occurs nowhere else. It describes the change in point of mental power and energy which would result from the influx of the Spirit of the Lord, 1 Samuel 10:9. In the case of Samson it was a supernatural bodily strength; in the case of Saul a capacity for ruling and leading the people of which before he was destitute, and which the Spirit worked in him, Acts 1:8 / Isaiah 11:2-4.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What a number of circumstances thus precisely foretold! Does not this prove that Samuel was under the continual inspiration of the Almighty?’

Samuel prophesied these signs and told Saul Whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with him, 1 Samuel 10:7. The purpose of these signs was to confirm to Saul that God had indeed chosen him to lead His people and become Israel’s first king.

He tells Saul to go ahead of him to Gilgal, where he will come down to him to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but Saul must wait seven days until Samuel comes and tells him what he is to do, 1 Samuel 10:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is likely that these seven days referred to the time in which Samuel came to Saul to Gilgal, offered sacrifices, and confirmed the kingdom to him, after he had defeated the Ammonites, 1 Samuel 11:14-15.’

SAUL MADE KING

‘As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day. When he and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he joined in their prophesying. When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, ‘What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?’ A man who lived there answered, ‘And who is their father?’ So it became a saying: ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ After Saul stopped prophesying, he went to the high place. Now Saul’s uncle asked him and his servant, ‘Where have you been?’ ‘Looking for the donkeys,’ he said. ‘But when we saw they were not to be found; we went to Samuel.’ Saul’s

uncle said, 'Tell me what Samuel said to you.' Saul replied, 'He assured us that the donkeys had been found.' But he did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship.' 1 Samuel 10:9-16

All of the signs that Samuel prophesied concerning Saul came to fulfilment, 1 Samuel 10:9. The Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul and he began to speak forth the Word of God, just as the other prophets were speaking forth the Word of God, 1 Samuel 10:10 / 1 Samuel 10:5.

We notice that the prophets were speaking on behalf of God to the people, this was a prophet's role. We also note that there are now more prophets in Israel; they probably came from the prophet training school, which was led by Samuel, 1 Samuel 10:5 / 2 Kings 2:3 / 2 Kings 2:15 / 2 Kings 4:38.

It's clear that those who knew Saul, the son of Kish, were amazed that he could prophecy among the other prophets, 1 Samuel 10:11. A man asks who their father is, and it became a saying, Is Saul also among the prophets? 1 Samuel 10:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the question of who their father is, 1 Samuel 10:12.

'This is a very obscure phrase. If by 'father' be intended the head or leader, 1 Chronicles 25:6 / 2 Kings 2:12, of the prophets, the question means: 'What kind of leader can they have to admit such a person as Saul into the company?' Some versions read 'Who is his father?' in the sense: 'Who would have expected Kish to have a son among the prophets?' Matthew 13:54-55.'

After Saul stopped prophesying, he went to the high place, 1 Samuel 10:13. Saul's uncle asks him and his servant, where they have been and they replied looking for the donkeys, but when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel, 1 Samuel 10:14.

Saul's uncle wants to know what Samuel said and Saul tells him that Samuel assured them that the donkeys had been found, 1 Samuel 10:15-16. Notice, however, he didn't tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingship, 1 Samuel 10:16.

'Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah and said to them, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities.

And you have said, 'No, appoint a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans.' When Samuel had all Israel come forward by tribes, the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was taken. Finally, Saul, son of Kish, was taken. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. So they inquired further of the LORD, 'Has the man come here yet?' And the LORD said, 'Yes, he has hidden himself among the supplies.' They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people, he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel said to all the people, 'Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.' Then the people shouted, 'Long live the king!' Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes. Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. But some scoundrels said, 'How can this fellow save us?' They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent.' 1 Samuel 10:17-27

Samuel summoned the people of Israel to Mizpah, 1 Samuel 10:17, and although Samuel anointed Saul privately, 1 Samuel 9:26-27 / 1 Samuel 10:1, Samuel now performs a very public coronation of Saul.

He goes on to remind the people of how God worked amongst them as their King. It was God who brought Israel out of Egypt, and it was God who delivered them from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed them, 1 Samuel 10:18.

But they have now rejected their God, who saves them out of all your disasters and calamities, and they said, No, appoint a king over us, 1 Samuel 10:19. Presenting themselves before the Lord by tribes was the procedure used for casting lots, 1 Samuel 10:19-20 / Joshua 7:16-17 / Jonah 1:7 / Acts 1:16.

The lot is tossed into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord, Proverbs 16:33. When the tribe of Benjamin came forward, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was taken and then finally Saul was taken, 1 Samuel 10:21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the family of Matri.

‘His name occurs nowhere else among the families of Benjamin, or in the genealogy of Saul, 1 Samuel 9:1.’

Notice when they looked for Saul, they couldn’t find him, 1 Samuel 10:21. Inquiring of the Lord was usually done using the Urim and Thummim, 1 Samuel 10:22 / Exodus 28:20 / Numbers 27:21 / 1 Samuel 22:10 / 1 Samuel 28:6 / 1 Samuel 30:8.

It’s interesting to note that after inquiring of God if Saul hadn’t arrived yet, God says, ‘Saul hid himself’, 1 Samuel 10:22. This is probably because of his humility, 1 Samuel 9:21, but it’s a shame that his humility won’t last very long and will be replaced with arrogance and pride.

They ran and brought Saul out, and as he stood among the people, he was a head taller than any of the others, 1 Samuel 10:23. Samuel now asks the people if they see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people, and the people shout, ‘Long live the king’, 1 Samuel 10:24.

This was a way of accepting Saul as their king; they would now honour him and be loyal to his every command. It was never a part of God’s plan for Israel to have a physical king, but He allowed them to have one.

When the people saw that Saul was anointed by God, they knew they had to obey their new king; if they disobey their new king, they are disobeying God Himself.

If anything, this would remind them of everything God has done for them in the past, whilst at the same time, they should really question why they wanted a physical king in the first place, if they already had a King, that is, God Himself.

It’s clear that when Samuel anointed Saul as their earthly king, they were rejecting God as their heavenly King; they were rejecting the One who rules in heaven, 1 Samuel 8:7.

Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of kingship, and he wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD, 1 Samuel 10:25. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes, 1 Samuel 10:25.

Notice that Saul went to his hometown of Gibeah, 1 Samuel 10:26. This was the town which had been destroyed in the civil war against Benjamin, Judges 19:20. This was the place which served as Saul’s headquarters when Israel was at war with the Philistines.

However, some were against Saul being anointed; they were the sons of Belial, 1 Samuel 10:27. As far as they were concerned, when they looked at Saul, they didn’t see a king. The good news is that Saul managed to stay in control of himself, despite them despising him.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, ‘Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you.’ But Nahash the Ammonite replied, ‘I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel.’ The elders of Jabesh said to him, ‘Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you.’ When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud. Just then, Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, ‘What is wrong with everyone? Why are they weeping?’ Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said. When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces,

and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, ‘This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel.’ Then the terror of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out together as one. When Saul mustered them at Bezek, the men of Israel numbered three hundred thousand, and those of Judah thirty thousand. They told the messengers who had come, ‘Say to the men of Jabesh Gilead, ‘By the time the sun is hot tomorrow, you will be rescued.’ When the messengers went and reported this to the men of Jabesh, they were elated. They said to the Ammonites, ‘Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you like.’ The next day, Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night, they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.’ 1 Samuel 11:1-11

SAUL RESCUES THE CITY OF JABESH

In the previous chapter, we saw Samuel anointing Saul and most of the people agreeing that God made Saul king and leader of Israel. As we begin this chapter, we find that Saul’s kingship was going to be put to the test very quickly as Nahash the Ammonite, 2 Samuel 10:2 / 1 Chronicles 19:1-2, besieged Jabesh Gilead, 1 Samuel 11:1 / 1 Samuel 31:8-13, and the men of Jabesh wanted to make a treaty with him, 1 Samuel 11:1.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We know little about Nahash; there was a king of this name among the Ammonites in the time of David, 2 Samuel 10:2, but probably not the same person. Nahash might have been a common name of the Ammonitish kings.’

Notice that Nahash the Ammonite gave terms and conditions for a treaty with the men of Jabesh. He wants to gouge out the right eye of every one of them and so bring disgrace on all Israel, 1 Samuel 11:2. This tells us just how evil he and the Ammonites were, Amos 1:13.

The elders of Jabesh ask for seven days so they can send messengers throughout Israel and if no one comes to rescue them, they will surrender, 1 Samuel 11:3. When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud, 1 Samuel 11:4.

Just then, Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, what was wrong with everyone? Why were they weeping? Then they repeated to Saul what the men of Jabesh had said, 1 Samuel 11:5.

There was a close relationship between the Benjamites and the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead. There was a time when Israel almost wiped out the Benjamites, and four hundred men from Jabesh were given to the women of Benjamin so that they could preserve the tribe, Judges 21:8-14.

The Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul because of the demands of the Ammonites, 1 Samuel 11:6 / Judges 3:10 / Judges 6:34 / Judges 11:29. Make no mistake about it, what the Ammonites were demanding was absolutely cruel and unjust.

And so, Saul burned with anger and took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel, 1 Samuel 11:6-7.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though not expressly stated, it is doubtless implied that he sent the portions by the messengers to the twelve tribes, after the analogy, and probably in imitation of Judges 19:29. He made use of the revered name of Samuel to strengthen his own weak authority. Samuel accompanied Saul in the expedition, 1 Samuel 11:12.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Sending the pieces of the oxen was an act similar to that of the Levite, [Judges 19:29](#), where see the note. And both customs are similar to the sending about of the bloody cross, to call the clans to battle, practised by the ancient Highlanders of Scotland, [1 Samuel 11:15](#).’

When Saul made the call to all of Israel, the response was fear in the hearts of the people, [1 Samuel 11:7](#). This fear resulted in three-hundred and thirty-thousand men who were ready for war, [1 Samuel 11:8](#).

They told the messengers who had come to say to the men of Jabesh Gilead, by the time the sun is hot tomorrow, they will be rescued, [1 Samuel 11:9](#). When the messengers went and reported this to the men of Jabesh, they were elated and they told the Ammonites, tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you like, [1 Samuel 11:9-10](#) / [1 Samuel 11:3](#).

The next day, Saul separated his men into three divisions, and during the last watch of the night, they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together, [1 Samuel 11:11](#). The Ammorites were completely overwhelmed.

SAUL WAS CONFIRMED AS KING

‘The people then said to Samuel, ‘Who was it that asked, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Turn these men over to us so that we may put them to death.’ But Saul said, ‘No one will be put to death today, for this day the LORD has rescued Israel.’ Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship.’ So all the people went to Gilgal and made Saul king in the presence of the LORD. There they sacrificed fellowship offerings before the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites held a great celebration.’ [1 Samuel 11:12-15](#)

God was working through Saul, and it was through him that He saved Israel from the oppression of the Ammorites. As this was Saul’s first test as king and he was successful, everyone got behind him in total support of his kingship, but the people suggested that anyone who didn’t support him was to be put to death, [1 Samuel 11:12](#) / [1 Samuel 10:27](#).

But notice that we see Saul showing mercy here, [1 Samuel 11:13](#), because of his victory over the Ammonites, he wants all of Israel to become one, he wants all of Israel to come under his reign as one.

Saul and Samuel knew this was God’s victory, [1 Samuel 11:13](#), and so, Samuel tells everyone to go to Gilgal to renew Saul’s kingship, [1 Samuel 11:14](#). They also offered fellowship offerings and held great celebrations, [1 Samuel 11:15](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 11:15](#).

‘The Septuagint has another reading, ‘and Samuel anointed Saul king there.’ The example of David, who, besides his original anointing by Samuel, [1 Samuel 16:12-13](#), was twice anointed, first as king of Judah, [2 Samuel 2:4](#), and again as king over all Israel, [2 Samuel 5:3](#), makes it probable that Saul was anointed a second time; but this may be included in the word ‘made king’, [1 Samuel 12:3](#) / [1 Samuel 12:5](#).’

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

‘Samuel said to all Israel, ‘I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you. Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these things, I will make it right.’ ‘You have not cheated or oppressed us,’ they replied. ‘You have not taken anything from anyone’s hand.’ Samuel said to them, ‘The LORD is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.’ ‘He is witness,’ they said.’ 1 Samuel 12:1-5

SAMUEL’S FAREWELL SPEECH

In the previous chapter, we saw that Saul was renewed in his kingship after his victory over the Ammonites, [1 Samuel 11:12-15](#). This chapter is a continuation of this event, and as Saul is being confirmed as king of Israel, Samuel uses this occasion to give a farewell speech to the people, like Moses did, [Deuteronomy 31:1-13](#), and Joshua did, [Joshua 24:1-28](#).

Samuel says to Israel that he has listened to everything they said to him and have set a king over them, [1 Samuel 12:1](#). Now they have a king as their leader and as Samuel is now old and gray, and his sons are here with them and he has been their leader from his youth until this day [1 Samuel 12:2](#).

It was both God and Saul who were witnesses to the fact that Samuel had handled himself with honesty among the people as he didn’t take any bribes from anyone, [1 Samuel 12:3-5](#).

‘Then Samuel said to the people, ‘It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of Egypt. Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the LORD as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD for you and your ancestors. ‘After Jacob entered Egypt, they cried to the LORD for help, and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this place. ‘But they forgot the LORD their God; so he sold them into the hand of Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab, who fought against them. They cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We have sinned; we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.’ Then the LORD sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around you, so that you lived in safety. ‘But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’—even though the LORD your God was your king. Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the LORD has set a king over you. If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your ancestors.’ 1 Samuel 12:6-15

Samuel reminds the people that it is the LORD who appointed Moses, and Aaron, [1 Kings 12:31](#) / [Hebrews 3:2](#), and brought their ancestors up out of Egypt, [1 Samuel 12:6](#) / [1 Samuel 4:8](#) / [1 Samuel 6:6](#).

Then Samuel says he is going to confront them with evidence before the LORD as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD for them and their ancestors, [1 Samuel 12:7](#).

Samuel tells the people that it was God who brought them out of Egypt over four years ago, [1 Samuel 12:8](#), and because He made a covenant with Abraham and Israel, then God can be seen as a just God because He fulfilled His promises to them.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He shows them that through all their history God had ever raised them up deliverers, when their necessities required such interference.’

But despite them turning from God, God continued to deliver them from their oppressing enemies, [1 Samuel 12:9](#) / [Judges 4:2](#), when they cried out to God for help in repentance, [1 Samuel 12:10](#) / [Judges 6:28-32](#).

On the other hand, Israel as a nation broke their covenant with God by turning to the Baals and Ashtaroths, hence why they confessed their sins, [1 Samuel 12:10](#) / [1 Samuel 7:3-4](#).

Samuel reminds them that God sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel to deliver them, [1 Samuel 12:11](#), so they can live in peace, [Hebrews 11:32](#). Note that some translations have the name Bedan, but this name doesn't appear anywhere in the Book of Judges, so the name Barak is more accurate.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘According to the present arrangement of the Book of Judges, and the common chronology, the oppression of Sisera must have occurred about 200 years after the entrance into Canaan. But Samuel here places it as the first great servitude, before that under Eglon, king of Moab, or that from which Shamgar delivered them. And this is in accordance with the internal evidence of the Book of Judges itself. It is also the order of [Judges 10:11](#), except that there the Ammonites, [Judges 3:13](#), are placed before the Philistines.’

Nahash was the king of the Ammonites, [1 Samuel 12:12](#), and it's highly likely it was because of their fear of him that Israel wanted a king of their own in the first place.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was not the first time they had demanded a king, [1 Samuel 8:5](#). But at the crisis mentioned here, they became more importunate, and it was in consequence of this that the kingdom was a second time confirmed to Saul. Saul was elected at Mizpeh, and he was confirmed at Gilgal.’

Samuel tells them here is the king they have chosen, the one they asked for, see, the LORD has set a king over you, [1 Samuel 12:13](#). Samuel reminds them to fear the Lord and Obey Him, [1 Samuel 12:14](#).

This was Samuel reminding the people that God was still their true king and they needed to fear Him and obey His commands. If they don't obey the LORD, and if they rebel against His commands, then God's hand will be against them, as it was against their ancestors, [1 Samuel 12:15](#).

‘Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes! Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call on the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realise what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king.’ Then Samuel called on the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel. The people all said to Samuel, ‘Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.’ ‘Do not be afraid,’ Samuel replied. ‘You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD but serve the LORD with all your heart. Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. For the sake of his great name, the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own. As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish.’ [1 Samuel 12:16-25](#)

To help the Israelites fear God, Samuel asks them to stand still and see this great thing God is about to do before their very eyes, [1 Samuel 12:16](#). He asks is it not wheat harvest now? [1 Samuel 12:17](#) / [Amos 4:7](#).

He will call on the LORD to send thunder and rain, and they will realise what an evil thing they did in the eyes of the LORD when they asked for a king, [1 Samuel 12:17](#).

Samuel called on God to make Himself be known and heard through thunder and rain, [1 Samuel 12:18](#) / [Proverbs 26:1](#). It appears that the thunder and rain had the effect which Samuel wanted, they feared the Lord and were in awe of Him, [1 Samuel 12:18](#).

The purpose of the thunder and the rain was also a sign from God that He didn't agree with Israel wanting a physical king on earth when they had a heavenly King already, [1 Samuel 12:19](#). Samuel tells them not to be afraid, they have done all this evil and yet don't turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart, [1 Samuel 12:20](#). Samuel reminds them that they weren't to turn useless idols for protection, [1 Samuel 12:21](#) / [Isaiah 44:9](#) / [1 Corinthians 7:4](#). He reminds them that God will not forsake them not because of anything they do but for His own Name's sake, [1 Samuel 12:22](#) / [Genesis 12:3](#).

Although the Lord wouldn't forsake them, the reality was that they would forsake the Lord and when they do, they will bring the Name of God into shame among other nations, [Exodus 20:7](#).

We can't sit on the fence with God; we can't claim we belong to Him but at the same time just live however we wish. The way we conduct ourselves should be a reflection of the God we serve. Samuel's love for God and his people is seen in the fact that he says it would be a sin for him if he didn't pray for the people, [1 Samuel 12:23](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'They had earnestly begged him, [1 Samuel 12:19](#), to pray to God for them, that they might not die, and he tells them that he should consider himself a sinner, should he cease to be their intercessor.'

He wants to teach them the way of good and right, [1 Samuel 12:23](#), that is, God's ways and what is right in God's eyes. He goes on to encourage them to consider what God has done for them in the past in an effort to encourage them to remain faithful to God and His will, [1 Samuel 12:24](#) / [Mark 12:29](#).

There are times when people need to be reminded of what they did in the past, and although this can be embarrassing at times, it should also help us recognise what God has done for each of us in the past, [2 Peter 1:9](#).

What Samuel is doing here is asking them to think about why they wanted a physical earthly king in the first place, when God, their heavenly King, has done so much for them in the past.

Notice the final warning which Samuel gives the people, if they persist in doing evil, both Israel as a nation and their king will perish, [1 Samuel 12:25](#). As we know, this is exactly what is going to happen when the Assyrians and the Babylonians take them into captivity. The good news is that Israel never asked for a physical king to rule over them after these events.

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

'Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years. Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Mikdash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, 'Let the Hebrews hear!' So all Israel heard the news: 'Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become obnoxious to the Philistines.' And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikdash, east of Beth Aven. When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.' [1 Samuel 13:1-7](#)

SAMUEL REBUKES SAUL

The text tells us that Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty-two years, [1 Samuel 13:1](#) / [Acts 13:21](#). However, the translation may be misleading.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The text of this verse, omitted by the Septuagint, is held to be corrupt, and the numerals denoting Saul’s age at his accession as well as the duration of his reign are thought to be omitted or faulty. Saul may have been about 30 at his accession, and have reigned some 32 years, since we know that his grandson Mephibosheth was five years old at Saul’s death, [2 Samuel 4:4](#), and [32](#) added to the seven and a half years between the death of Saul and that of Ishbosheth, makes up the 40 years assigned to Saul’s dynasty in [Acts 13:21](#). Neither is there any clue to the interval of time between the events recorded in the preceding chapter, and those which follow in this and succeeding chapters. But the appearance of Jonathan as a warrior, [1 Samuel 13:2](#), compared with the mention of Saul as ‘a young man’, [1 Samuel 9:2](#), implies an interval of not less than ten or fifteen years, perhaps more. The object of the historian is to prepare the way for the history of David’s reign. He therefore passes at once to that incident in Saul’s reign, which led to his rejection by God, as recorded in [1 Samuel 13:13-14](#).’

Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Mikdash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin and the rest of the men he sent back to their homes, [1 Samuel 13:2](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Saul, no doubt, meditated the redemption of his country from the Philistines and having chosen three thousand men, he thought best to divide them into companies, and send one against the Philistine garrison at Michdash, another against that at Beth-el, and the third against that at Gibeah, he perhaps hoped, by surprising these garrisons, to get swords and spears for his men, of which we find, [1 Samuel 13:22](#), they were entirely destitute.’

Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it, [1 Samuel 13:3](#), and so after the trumpet was blown throughout the land, Saul said, ‘let the Hebrews hear!’ [1 Samuel 13:4](#).

Although the Philistines used the name Hebrew as a derogatory term, [1 Samuel 4:6](#), Saul uses the word to describe God’s people, [Genesis 14:13](#) / [Genesis 40:15](#). The Israelites were ‘obnoxious’, [1 Samuel 13:4](#), which is offensive to the Philistines. This is because they were so different from the Philistines, both culturally and religiously.

Saul gathered everyone at Gilgal, [1 Samuel 13:4](#). This was important strategically because Gilgal was filled with caves, holes, rocks, tombs and cisterns, [Judges 6:2](#) / [Judges 6:11](#) / [Jeremiah 40:11-12](#).

It was the perfect place to hide from the enemy. When Israel saw the Philistine’s army as numerous as the sand of the seashore, [1 Samuel 13:5](#), it’s not surprising they were afraid and hid in the caves, [1 Samuel 13:5-6](#).

After all, the Philistines were trained warriors with chariots, whereas the Israelites were basically just farmers who only fought when someone was attacking them.

We are told that some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead, but Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear, [1 Samuel 13:7](#).

‘He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. So he said, ‘Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.’ And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. ‘What have you done?’ asked Samuel. Saul replied, ‘When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikdash, I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favour.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.’ ‘You have done a foolish thing,’ Samuel said. ‘You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a

man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.' Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about six hundred.' 1 Samuel 13:8-15

Saul waited seven days for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice to the Lord, but Samuel didn't come and so, some of Saul's men scattered, 1 Samuel 13:8. Saul felt compelled to offer a burnt offering and so, he decided to take matters into his own hands and offered a sacrifice because the people were all over the place, 1 Samuel 13:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'There is a difference of opinion among commentators whether Saul himself offered the sacrifices prepared for Samuel, thus encroaching upon the priest's office; or whether he ordered the priests to sacrifice, as Solomon did. In the latter case, his sin consisted in disobeying the word of God, who had bidden him wait until Samuel came. And this is, on the whole, the more probable; since Samuel's rebuke says nothing of any assumption of priesthood, such as we read in the case of Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:18.'

When Samuel finally arrives, 1 Samuel 13:10, he wasn't happy and Saul gave some excuses for his actions.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Samuel was punctual to his appointment; one hour longer of delay would have prevented every evil, and by it no good would have been lost. How often are the effects of precipitation fatal!'

SAUL'S EXCUSES

1. Saul said his army was dwindling because people were leaving him, and he felt he must do something to stop it, 1 Samuel 13:11.

2. Saul said that Samuel didn't come as soon as he expected him, 1 Samuel 13:11.

3. Saul said the gathering of the Philistines at Michmash was a threat, 1 Samuel 13:11.

4. Saul said he didn't wish to go into battle without asking the Lord, 1 Samuel 13:12.

5. Saul said he 'felt compelled to offer the burnt offering', 1 Samuel 13:12, which basically means that he acted reluctantly.

Saul offered these excuses to Samuel, but Samuel told him he had sinned, 1 Samuel 13:13, for it wasn't his job to offer sacrifices, 1 Samuel 15:17-23. Saul plainly disobeyed Samuel, and he was a king, not a priest, and only priests were to offer sacrifices, 2 Chronicles 26:1-21. He did a foolish thing in breaking the commandment of the Lord, Romans 1:22.

Because of this foolish act, Samuel tells him that there will be no more kings from his lineage, 1 Samuel 13:14. This would include Jonathon never becoming a king and following in his father's footsteps.

We must remember that although God rejected Saul, He didn't reject Israel, and because God loved Israel, He would raise up a king, a man after His own heart. Saul was a man after Israel's heart; he was all about image, prestige, and the things people look at, but God will now give Israel a man after His own heart and raise that man up to be the next king, 1 Samuel 13:14, that is, David, 2 Samuel 12:13.

WHY DID GOD SAY THAT DAVID WAS A 'MAN AFTER HIS OWN HEART'?

To try and understand why David was a man ‘after God’s own heart’, we need to contrast the character of Saul, who was Israel’s first king, with the character of David, their second king.

It wasn’t long after Saul had become king that we began to see what was really going on in his heart. If you remember, Saul and his army were about to go into battle against the Philistines, and he wanted God’s blessings to be with him and his army.

I guess there was nothing wrong with wanting God’s blessings before going into a war. However, the problem came because he became impatient; he was told to wait seven days for the prophet Samuel to arrive, but his patience ran out. So, he decided to go ahead and present a burnt offering to the Lord himself, [1 Samuel 13:1-9](#).

Like most of us who are impatient, he came out with an excuse when Samuel finally arrived and asked him what he had done. Saul’s excuse was that he ‘felt compelled’ to offer the burnt offering, when in fact he deliberately chose to offer the sacrifice knowing that this could only be done by the priests, [1 Samuel 13:12](#).

Saul was then told by Samuel that he would no longer be king and his kingdom would be taken from him because of his actions. Saul was a character who only thought about himself; he totally ignored God’s commandments and God’s direction.

He totally disobeyed God, and as a result, this demonstrated that he certainly wasn’t a man after God’s own heart, [1 Samuel 13:13-14](#). Notice that Samuel mentions that God was looking for a man after His own heart, a man who would become the new leader of Israel.

A little later, God sent Samuel to Jesse the Bethlehemite to find the next king from among his sons, [1 Samuel 16:1](#).

When Samuel arrived, he was impressed with several of the sons of Jesse, but God didn’t want them, and so He helped Samuel to choose the right person.

We read here that God doesn’t judge people on their external appearance, but He looks at their hearts, [1 Samuel 16:7](#).

In other words, God doesn’t fall for the façade that many people have today, with their false words and actions. God knew Saul’s heart and rejected him, and then He looked at David’s heart and chose him, [1 Samuel 16:10-13](#).

WHAT MADE DAVID DIFFERENT FROM SAUL?

1. God chose David because He knew David would obey Him and do what God commands.

Saul did his own thing, what he wanted to do, [Jeremiah 7:21-23](#), but David was obedient to God and His commands, [Acts 13:21-22](#). Notice that God says that David, ‘will do everything I want him to do’, this implies obedience.

Saul did his own thing and didn’t want to obey God because he wanted to please himself, but David felt compelled to obey God in order to please God. In other words, David cared about what God cared about, he desired what God desired, and his heart sought after the things that God sought after.

This is exactly what we see in Christ when He lived His life, [Luke 2:49](#) / [Luke 22:42](#). No one can have the heart of God if they don’t obey God and carry out His commands.

2. God chose David because He knew David would love Him more than anything else.

This was something else which Saul lacked. We can’t tell God that we love Him if we’re not willing to obey Him, [John 14:15](#). These simple words of Jesus are very clear, but many people struggle to keep His commands.

Many people claim that they love God but totally ignore His commandments. Maybe the reason they struggle to keep His commands is simply that they struggle to truly love God in the first place.

David loved Saul but he loved God more, hence why he obeyed God rather than obeying Saul. We only have to turn to the Psalms to find that many of them were written by David, not Saul.

Many of the Psalms which David wrote were all about God; there are many which are love songs, which reveal his heart's desire and love for God. Many of the Psalms were written by David, and they reveal that David had a real passion for God; he really wanted to know God, [Psalm 42:1-2](#). It's clear that David only wanted to worship God, whilst Saul just wanted to worship himself, [1 Samuel 18:8](#).

3. God chose David because He knew David would lead people and not follow people as Saul did.

We can always tell what kind of relationship a person has with God by the way they interact with others around them. We see this difference in the character of Saul and David, Saul wanted nothing more than to be praised by those around him, and as a result, he ended up following people, rather than leading them, he ended up obeying people rather than obeying God, [1 Samuel 15:24](#).

While Saul desired the praise of men, David was the absolute opposite, he successfully led people because he was following God's lead and was obedient to Him. As a result of following and obeying God, he successfully encouraged people to do what was good and right in the eyes of God.

We see this on one occasion when he had an opportunity to kill Saul because His men were encouraging him to do so, but David encouraged them not to do so because he wanted to please God instead, [1 Samuel 24:4-7](#).

It's in these verses that we see that David 'persuaded his men' while Saul was persuaded by men. We see that Saul wanted to carry out his own vengeance, but David left the matter in God's hands, [1 Samuel 24:12](#).

David never tries to win the hearts of people; he only wants to win the heart of God and as a result, he became a great leader because he not only loved God more than anything else, but he also fully obeyed Him.

4. God chose David because He knew David would come to hate sin as He hates sin.

People often wonder how David could be a 'man after God's own heart' when he sinned many times against the Lord. The two most memorable sins were when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, murdered on the battlefield, [2 Samuel 11:1-16](#).

David didn't live a sinless life, but as His love for God grew stronger, he came to hate sin as God hates sin. [Psalm 32](#) tells us of David's repentance and sorrow over his sin.

We see this especially in [Psalm 51](#), after the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, [2 Samuel 12:1-23](#), David is clearly repenting of his sin with Bathsheba.

While being a man after God's own heart is about obeying God, having the same desires as God's heart, and seeking to please God rather than people, a man after God's own heart also repents deeply when he knows he's failed.

WHY WAS DAVID A MAN 'AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART'?

David deeply loved God more than anything else, and he obeyed His commands, [Jeremiah 9:23-24](#). He learned to hate sin as God hates sin, [Romans 6:23](#); he grieved over his sin as God grieves when we sin, [Genesis 6:6](#). He wanted to lead people in the ways of God, rather than allowing people to lead him into sin.

CONCLUSION

God knows that none of us can live a perfect life like His Son Jesus did, 1 Peter 2:22-24, but He still desires that His people will have hearts 'after His own heart'. He still desires that we love God more than anything else, 1 John 5:3. He still desires that we obey His commands, John 14:21.

He still desires that we hate sin and refrain from sinning, Romans 6:1-14. He still desires that we lead people to Him and encourage them to obey His commands, Matthew 28:18-20. He still desires that we live a holy life because He is a holy God, 1 Peter 1:15-16. The question is, do you desire what God desires? Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Earlier, Saul had about three thousand in his regular army, 1 Samuel 13:2, but now he is down to six hundred, 1 Samuel 13:15, because many soldiers scattered while Saul waited for Samuel. The loss of so many men was probably the reason why Saul offered the sacrifice without Samuel, and it displayed a heart of distrust and disobedience to God.

ISRAEL WITHOUT WEAPONS

'Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Gibeah in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Mikdash. Raiding parties went out from the Philistine camp in three detachments. One turned toward Ophrah in the vicinity of Shual, another toward Beth Horon, and the third toward the borderland overlooking the Valley of Zeboyim facing the wilderness.' 1 Samuel 13:16-18

Whilst Saul, Johnathon and the other men were at Gibeah, 1 Samuel 13:16, the Philistines just went on the rampage, 1 Samuel 13:17-18. With such a large army, they could go wherever they wanted, as no one could stop them. They were a fearless and fearsome army against Saul and Israel.

'Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, 'Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!' So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plough points, mattocks, axes, and sickles sharpened. The price was two-thirds of a shekel for sharpening plough points and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads. So on the day of the battle, not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them.' 1 Samuel 13:19-22

These verses explain the sad state that Israel was in during the oppression of the Philistines. The Philistines had all the best weapons, and they wanted to make sure Israel didn't have any means of obtaining and making their own, 1 Samuel 13:19.

We can imagine the Philistine blacksmiths, even though they charged each Israelite a small amount of money to sharpen the plough points, mattocks, axes, forks, and sickles, would never sharpen them too much so they could be used as a weapon, 1 Samuel 13:20-21.

There were so few iron weapons available that only Saul and Jonathon possessed one, 1 Samuel 13:22. The other Israelites would have to use whatever was available to them, Judges 20:16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is very likely that in the former wars the Philistines carried away all the smiths from Israel.'

JONATHAN ATTACKS THE PHILISTINES

‘Now a detachment of Philistines had gone out to the pass at Mikmash.’ 1 Samuel 13:23

As we shall see in the next chapter, it was because of this oppression from the Philistines that Jonathan initiated a personal attack against the Philistines, [1 Samuel 13:23](#).

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘One day, Jonathan, son of Saul, said to his young armour-bearer, ‘Come, let’s go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side.’ But he did not tell his father. Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod’s brother Ahitub, son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD’s priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left. On each side of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost was a cliff; one was called Bozez and the other Seneh. One cliff stood to the north toward Mikmash, the other to the south toward Geba. Jonathan said to his young armour-bearer, ‘Come, let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few.’

‘Do all that you have in mind,’ his armour-bearer said. ‘Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.’ Jonathan said, ‘Come on, then; we will cross over toward them and let them see us. If they say to us, ‘Wait there until we come to you,’ we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the LORD has given them into our hands.’ So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. ‘Look!’ said the Philistines. ‘The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in.’ The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, ‘Come up to us and we’ll teach you a lesson.’ So Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, ‘Climb up after me; the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel.’ Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armour-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that first attack, Jonathan and his armour-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre.’ 1 Samuel 14:1-14

JONATHAN ATTACKS THE PHILISTINES

This is a continuation from [1 Samuel 13:23](#), and it appears that since Saul’s army was down to around six hundred men, [1 Samuel 13:15](#) / [1 Samuel 14:3](#), Jonathan took the initiative to go out by himself.

As he didn’t tell his father, [1 Samuel 14:1](#), he went secretly, basically to teach these uncircumcised Philistines a lesson. And so, he, along with his armour-bearer, made a surprise attack on the Philistine outpost, [1 Samuel 14:1](#), and killed twenty Philistines, [1 Samuel 14:14](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This action of Jonathan was totally contrary to the laws of war; no military operation should be undertaken without the knowledge and command of the general. But it is likely that he was led to this by a Divine influence.’

Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree, [1 Samuel 14:2](#). The Hebrew word for ‘pomegranate’ is Rimmon, but there’s no doubt that the tree is meant here and not the rock Rimmon as some have suggested, [Judges 20:45](#) / [Judges 20:47](#).

Saul had about six hundred men with him, among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod’s brother Ahitub, son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD’s priest in Shiloh, [1 Samuel 14:2-3](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This fragment of a genealogy is a very valuable help to the chronology. The grandson of Phinehas, the son of Eli, was now High Priest, and Samuel, who was probably a few years older than Ahitub, the son of Phinehas, was now an old man. All this indicates a period of about 50 years or upward from the taking of the ark by the Philistines.’

Notice no one was aware that Jonathan had left, [1 Samuel 14:3](#). On each side of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost was a cliff, one was called Bozez, and the other Seneh and one cliff stood to the north toward Mikmash, the other to the south toward Geba, [1 Samuel 14:4-5](#).

He says to his armour-bearer, Let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men, [1 Samuel 17:26](#) / [1 Samuel 17:36](#) / [Judges 14:3](#) / [Judges 15:18](#), and notice he says perhaps the LORD will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few, [1 Samuel 14:6](#).

Jonathon knew that nothing could hinder the Lord; he knew if God was with Him, he could do great things, which was the reason why he was so courageous to go out and attack the Philistines in the first place.

Johnathon was setting a real example for the rest of the Israelites here, and if he can convince his fellow Israelites that God can and will do great things through him because he trusted God, then God can do the same for them if they trust Him.

His armor-bearer says to Jonathon, do all that you have in mind, I am with you heart and soul, [1 Samuel 14:7](#).

Jonathon suggest that they cross over toward them and let them see them and if they say to us, wait there until we come to you, we will stay where we are and not go up to them, [1 Samuel 14:8-9](#). However, if they say, Come up to us, we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the LORD has given them into our hands, [1 Samuel 14:10](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jonathan had no doubt asked this as a sign from God, exactly as Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, did, [Genesis 24:12](#).’

So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost, and they were spotted by the Philistines, who said, The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in, [1 Samuel 14:11](#).

The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, come up to us and we’ll teach you a lesson, [1 Samuel 14:12](#). So Jonathan tells his armor-bearer, climb up after him, the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel, [1 Samuel 14:12](#).

Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him and the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him, [1 Samuel 14:11](#). They killed twenty Philistines in an area of about half an acre, [1 Samuel 14:14](#).

ISRAEL DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES

‘Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God. Saul’s lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. Then Saul said to the men who were with him, ‘Muster the forces and see who has left us.’ When they did, it was Jonathan and his armour-bearer who were not there. Saul said to Ahijah, ‘Bring the ark of God.’ (At that time, it was with the Israelites.) While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, ‘Withdraw your hand.’ Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle. They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords. Those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and had gone up with them to their camp went over to the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. When all the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the

Philistines were on the run, they joined the battle in hot pursuit. So on that day the LORD saved Israel, and the battle moved on beyond Beth Aven.’ 1 Samuel 14:15-23

It was God who started the panic stations, it was God who made the ground shake, 1 Samuel 14:15. In other words, God was working in this battle against the Philistines, 1 Samuel 7:10 / Joshua 10:11 / Psalms 114:4. The Israelites saw the Philistines melting away in all directions, 1 Samuel 14:16, which basically means they were running all over the place in confusion.

Saul tells those with him to muster the forces and see who has left us and when they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there, 1 Samuel 14:17.

Notice that the Ark of the Lord was with Israel at this point in time, 1 Samuel 14:18. This suggests that the ark was possibly where it belonged, inside the temple.

Willis, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Saul’s bringing the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to Gibeah in a time of crisis is no more out of harmony with the statements in 1 Samuel 7:2, and in 2 Samuel 6:2, than David’s taking the ark out of the tent he had made for it, 2 Samuel 6:17, so that it could accompany Joab and his army in the siege and conquest of Rabbah, 2 Samuel 11:11.’ Saul tells the priests to withdraw their hands, 1 Samuel 14:19. This was a command that meant the priests were to withdraw from their pockets of the ephod the Urim and Thummim.

These were the lots by which the will of God was determined, and although we’re not really sure exactly how they worked, it’s possible they were used to determine ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Saul, in his impatience to join the battle, would not wait for the answer from God, which he had desired Ahijah to inquire for; just as later, 1 Samuel 14:35, he would not wait to finish the altar which he had begun to build. Had he now waited, he would doubtless have avoided the error into which he fell.’

When Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle, we see the confusion that had set in. The Philistines ended up attacking one another in the middle of the night, 1 Samuel 14:20.

Saul takes full advantage of the confusion which God caused in the Philistine camp and all the soldiers of Israel were encouraged by the leadership of Jonathan and Saul.

Notice the use of the word, ‘Hebrews’, 1 Samuel 14:21. It appears that Samuel, the possible author of the book, is making a distinction between the Hebrews and the Israelites.

The word ‘Hebrews’ here, 1 Samuel 14:21, is used in reference to the Israelites who had been recruited into the army of the Philistines, whereas the word ‘Israelites’, 1 Samuel 14:21, is used in reference to those who were with Saul and Jonathan. As a result of God’s help, Israel was delivered on this occasion from the oppression of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 14:22-23 / 1 Samuel 13:6.

JONATHAN EATS HONEY

‘Now the Israelites were in distress that day, because Saul had bound the people under an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be anyone who eats food before evening comes, before I have avenged myself on my enemies!’ So none of the troops tasted food. The entire army entered the woods, and there was honey on the ground. When they went into the woods, they saw the honey oozing out; yet no one put his hand to his mouth, because they feared the oath. But Jonathan had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath, so he reached out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it into the honeycomb. He raised his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. Then one of the soldiers told him, ‘Your father bound the army under a strict oath, saying, ‘Cursed be anyone who eats food today!’ That is why the men are faint.’ Jonathan said, ‘My father has made trouble for the country. See how my eyes brightened

when I tasted a little of this honey. How much better it would have been if the men had eaten today some of the plunder they took from their enemies. Would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater?' 1 Samuel 14:24-30

Saul, rather foolishly, placed the soldiers under an oath not to eat until the battle was finished, 1 Samuel 14:24-26 / 1 Kings 19:2, but it appears that Jonathan hadn't been informed about this fast, and so, he ate some honey, 1 Samuel 14:27.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'There were many wild bees in that country, and Judea is expressly said to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Honey dews, as they are called, are not uncommon in most countries, and this appears to have been something of this kind. I have seen honey in considerable quantity on the trees and long grass in the fields, and have often eaten of it.'

One of the soldiers reminded him of his father's oath, 1 Samuel 14:28. Jonathan says to the soldier that his father has made trouble for the country, and then he tells him to look and see how his eyes brightened when he tasted a little of this honey, 1 Samuel 14:29.

He then says how much better it would have been if the men had eaten today some of the plunder they took from their enemies; would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater? 1 Samuel 14:30. The foolish oath that Saul imposed on the people is shown in the fact that the Israelites had no more strength to cause a greater victory over the Philistines.

'That day, after the Israelites had struck down the Philistines from Mikdash to Aijalon, they were exhausted. They pounced on the plunder and, taking sheep, cattle, and calves, they butchered them on the ground and ate them, together with the blood. Then someone said to Saul, 'Look, the men are sinning against the LORD by eating meat that has blood in it.' 'You have broken faith,' he said. 'Roll a large stone over here at once.' Then he said, 'Go out among the men and tell them, 'Each of you bring me your cattle and sheep, and slaughter them here and eat them. Do not sin against the LORD by eating meat with blood still in it.' So everyone brought his ox that night and slaughtered it there. Then Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first time he had done this.' 1 Samuel 14:31-35

As a result of Saul's foolish oath, 1 Samuel 14:24, the Israelites were exhausted and starving, 1 Samuel 14:31. This hunger led to them eating sheep, cattle, and calves together with the blood, 1 Samuel 14:32-33 / Genesis 9:4 / Acts 15:20 / Acts 15:29. In other words, they ate the food without preparing it to eat according to God's law, Leviticus 17:10-14 / Leviticus 19:26 / Deuteronomy 12:16.

Saul apparently used a large stone upon which the animals were killed as part of an altar to the Lord, 1 Samuel 14:33-34. However, notice that because he was in such a hurry to chase the Philistines, he only began to build the altar, 1 Samuel 14:35; he didn't finish building it, 1 Corinthians 27:24.

'Saul said, 'Let us go down and pursue the Philistines by night and plunder them till dawn and let us not leave one of them alive.' 'Do whatever seems best to you,' they replied. But the priest said, 'Let us inquire of God here.' So Saul asked God, 'Shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? Will you give them into Israel's hand?' But God did not answer him that day. Saul therefore said, 'Come here, all you who are leaders of the army, and let us find out what sin has been committed today. As surely as the LORD who rescues Israel lives, even if the guilt lies with my son Jonathan, he must die.' But not one of them said a word. Saul then said to all the Israelites, 'You stand over there; I and Jonathan, my son, will stand over here.' 'Do what seems best to you,' they replied. Then Saul prayed to the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Why have you not answered your servant today? If the fault is in me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the men of Israel are at fault, respond with Thummim.' Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot, and the men were cleared. Saul said, 'Cast the lot between me and Jonathan, my son.' And Jonathan was taken. Then Saul said to Jonathan, 'Tell me what you have done.' So Jonathan told him, 'I tasted a little honey with the end of my staff. And now I must die!' Saul said, 'May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan.' But the men said to Saul, 'Should Jonathan die—he who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never! As surely as the LORD lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he did this today with God's help.' So the men rescued Jonathan, and he was not put to death. Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and they withdrew to their own land.' 1 Samuel 14:36-46

Saul wanted to continue chasing the Philistines, [1 Samuel 14:36](#), but the priest suggested that they stop and consult God first, [1 Samuel 14:36](#). Notice that when they did inquire of God, God didn't answer, [1 Samuel 14:37](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Why was this answer delayed? Surely Jonathan’s eating the honey was no sin. This could not have excited God’s displeasure. And yet the lot found out Jonathan! But did this argue that he had incurred guilt in the sight of God? I answer: It did not, for Jonathan was delivered, by the authority of the people, from his father’s rash curse; no propitiation is offered for his supposed transgression to induce God to pardon it; nor do we find any displeasure of God manifested on the occasion.’

Because there was no answer, this led Saul to come to the conclusion that there must be sin in the camp, [1 Samuel 14:38](#). The search for the sinner now begins and Saul says as surely as the LORD who rescues Israel lives, even if the guilt lies with my son Jonathan, he must die and notice that not one of them said a word, [1 Samuel 14:39](#).

Saul then said to the Israelites, you stand over there, I and Jonathan my son will stand over here and they are happy to what he says, [1 Samuel 14:40](#). Then Saul prays and asks God why has you not answered his servant today? [1 Samuel 14:41](#).

He says if the fault is in me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the men of Israel are at fault, respond with Thummim, [1 Samuel 14:41](#). The Urim and Thummim are mentioned again here and they are specifically mentioned only eight times in the Old Testament, [Exodus 28:30](#) / [Leviticus 8:8](#) / [Numbers 27:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) / [1 Samuel 14:41](#) / [1 Samuel 28:6](#) / [Ezra 2:63](#) / [Nehemiah 7:65](#).

However, in many other situations, they are described as casting lots or inquiring of the Lord, they were almost certainly used by the High Priest who wore the ephod.

Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot, and the men were cleared, and Saul says cast the lot between me and Jonathan, my son and Jonathan was taken, [1 Samuel 14:41-42](#). It was eventually revealed that it was Jonathan who had eaten against the oath by which Saul had made the people swear, [1 Samuel 14:24](#).

Saul asks Jonathan to explain what he had done, and Jonathan tells him that he tasted a little honey with the end of my staff, and now he must die! [1 Samuel 14:43](#).

When Saul discovered it was his son Johnathon who had sinned, it was here that we begin to see his foolishness. Yes, he started off as a king well, with humility and a person of great stature, but now his foolishness was manifested by a rash statement that he would command that his son be put to death if the oath of the fast had been broken, [1 Samuel 14:44](#).

Notice that it was the other Israelites who came to Jonathon’s rescue, [1 Samuel 14:45](#). This was a time when the will of the people triumphed over the mindless statement of Saul.

The word ‘rescue’, [1 Samuel 14:45](#), in Hebrew is the word ‘padah’, which means to ransom or to redeem. In other words, it was the people who redeemed Jonathan from the unrighteous plans of their king.

Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and they withdrew to their own land, [1 Samuel 14:46](#). I’m pretty sure that this whole event was the beginning of Saul’s downfall as a king. He’s becoming like a dictator, and the people are already rebelling against him.

‘After Saul had assumed rule over Israel, he fought against their enemies on every side: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment on them. He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, delivering Israel from the hands of those who had plundered them.’ [1 Samuel 14:47-48](#)

After reinstating his role as ruler over Israel, Saul became very successful in his military campaigns in delivering Israel from the threat of the nations around them.

He got rid of all those who were oppressing Israel and taking advantage of them, 1 Samuel 14:47-48. The war against the Amalekites is mentioned in the next chapter.

SAUL'S FAMILY

‘Saul’s sons were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-Shua. The name of his older daughter was Merab, and that of the younger was Michal. His wife’s name was Ahinoam, daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the commander of Saul’s army was Abner, son of Ner, and Ner was Saul’s uncle. Saul’s father, Kish and Abner’s father, Ner, were sons of Abiel. All the days of Saul, there was bitter war with the Philistines, and whenever Saul saw a mighty or brave man, he took him into his service.’ 1 Samuel 14:49-52

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning these verses.

‘The name Ish-Bosheth or Eshbaal is missing from the list of Saul’s children; this is probably because this list was written very early in Saul’s reign, before Eshbaal was born. Abner made Eshbaal king over part of Israel following Saul’s death, and he contested with David for the throne of all Israel for a period of seven years. The significant fact of Eshbaal being forty years of age when he was declared king is the basis for concluding that Saul reigned forty years, 2 Samuel 2:8-11. The theory that Ishvi is the same son as Eshbaal is an ingenious device to avoid the deduction regarding the length of Saul’s reign.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The only other ‘Ahimaaz’ mentioned in Scripture was the son of Zadok the priest. The word “Ahi” (brother) is frequently found in composition in names in the High Priest’s family, e.g. in Ahijah, Ahimelech. It is not improbable that Ahimaaz may have been of this family, as marriages between the royal and priestly houses were not unusual, 2 Kings 11:2 / 2 Chronicles 22:11, and perhaps it may have been owing to such a connection that Ahijah was brought into prominence by Saul. If there be any truth in the above supposition, it would be an indication that Saul was not married until after his election to the throne.’

Abner was Saul’s uncle and he becomes the captain of Saul’s army, 1 Samuel 14:50. Although Saul was victorious over the majority of Israel’s enemies, the Philistines didn’t give up, they became like a thorn in the flesh for Israel, Numbers 33:55.

Notice how Samuel’s prophecy concerning Saul was beginning to be fulfilled, in the fact that Saul took any mighty or brave man and forced him to join his army, 1 Samuel 14:52 / 1 Samuel 8:11.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

‘Samuel said to Saul, ‘I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you, king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites, and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels, and donkeys.’ So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand from Judah. Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. Then he said to the Kenites,

‘Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.’ So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.’ 1 Samuel 15:1-6

THE LORD REJECTS SAUL AS KING

Samuel’s words to Saul are a sharp reminder that God is the One who anointed Saul, [1 Samuel 15:1](#). God was going to punish the Amalekites because of what they did to Israel, [1 Samuel 15:2](#).

This would happen four hundred years after the events of Israel coming out of Egypt, [Exodus 17:8-13](#) / [Deuteronomy 25:17-18](#). The Amalekites also attacked Israel at Hormah, [Numbers 14:43-45](#).

They also joined forces with Eglon, the king of Moab, to attack Israel, [Judges 3:13](#). Later still, they joined forces with the Moabites when they raided Israel’s fields and crops, [Judges 6:3-5](#) / [Judges 6:33](#) / [Judges 7:12](#) / [Judges 10:12](#).

Samuel tells Saul to totally destroy the Amalekites, [1 Samuel 15:3](#). This was God’s way of wiping them from the face of the earth; it was now time for them to be punished.

God tells Saul he must spare no one but totally destroy every living thing, and take no spoils, [1 Samuel 15:3](#) / [Joshua 6:17-21](#). The reason God’s punishment is so harsh is because of the way they treated God’s people in the past.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When a city or people were thus made chereem, everything living was to be destroyed, and no part of the spoil fell to the conquerors, [1 Samuel 15:21](#). The valuables were put into the sacred treasury.’

Notice that Saul summoned the men at Telaim, [1 Samuel 15:4](#). This appears to be the same place as Telem in the land of Judah in southern Israel, [Joshua 15:24](#). Telaim was the closest part of Israel to the Amalekites.

Notice how many foot soldiers Saul now has, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand from Judah, [1 Samuel 15:4](#). This number of soldiers has grown from six-hundred men, [1 Samuel 13:15](#).

The Kenites were related to the Midianites and lived among the Amalekites, [Numbers 24:21](#), they were to be spared if they moved away, [1 Samuel 15:6](#) / [Numbers 24:9](#) / [Genesis 12:3](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Kenites.

‘The Kenites were an ancient people. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was a Kenite. Hobab, his son (if the same person is not meant), was a guide to the Hebrews through the wilderness. They had a portion of the promised land, near the city Arad, [Judges 1:16](#) / [Numbers 26:20-21](#).’

‘Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. He took Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves, and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.’ 1 Samuel 15:7-9

Although Samuel had warned Saul that God wanted no one spared and that all the living creatures should be totally destroyed, Saul ignored God’s commands again.

When Saul attacked the Amalekites, he spared the life of Agag, the king of the Amalekites, [1 Samuel 15:7-8](#), and they spared the lives of some sheep, cattle, calves and lambs, and they kept everything which was good, [1 Samuel 15:9](#), which was the spoils of war. Later in [1 Chronicles 4:43](#), we find that some of the Amalekites actually managed to escape and wage war against Judah again during the reign of Hezekiah.

‘Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: ‘I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.’ Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. Early in the morning, Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, ‘Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a

monument in his own honour and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.' When Samuel reached him, Saul said, 'The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions.' But Samuel said, 'What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?' Saul answered, 'The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.' 'Enough!' Samuel said to Saul. 'Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.' 'Tell me,' Saul replied.' 1 Samuel 15:10-16

Although God knew what kind of King Saul would become, he deeply regretted making him king, because of his disobedience to the Lord, [1 Samuel 15:10-11](#) / [1 Samuel 15:35](#). Samuel, too, became very angry and cried out to the Lord all night, [1 Samuel 15:11](#) / [Jonah 4:1](#), but please note his anger was aimed at Saul, not God.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Samuel's crying out to God, [1 Samuel 15:11](#).

'With the wild scream or shriek of supplication, [1 Samuel 7:8-9](#) / [1 Samuel 12:18](#). The phrase and the action mark Samuel's fervent, earnest character.'

When Samuel goes to meet Saul, he was told that Saul has gone to Carmel and set up a monument in his own honour and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal, [1 Samuel 15:12](#) / [2 Samuel 18:18](#).

When Samuel finally meets him, Saul, full of pride, tells Samuel he has carried out the Lord's instructions concerning the Amalekites, [1 Samuel 15:13](#), but he must have known that he didn't, [1 Samuel 15:3](#).

Slowly but surely, we see how Saul was failing as a king. He started off so humble, from the lowly tribe of Benjamin, he was started off willing to obey God and please Him in every way, but now he's become arrogant and self-reliant, and totally disobeys God in whatever he does.

Samuel then asks Saul about the bleating of the sheep he can hear and the lowing of the cattle, Samuel 15:14. Notice also how he didn't even take responsibility for his actions; he tells Samuel it wasn't him but the soldiers who spared the best livestock, [1 Samuel 15:15](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'There is something thoroughly mean in his attempt to shift the responsibility of what was done from his own kingly shoulders to those of the people. Every word uttered by Saul seems to indicate the breaking down of his moral character.'

'Samuel said, 'Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you, king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.' Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?' 'But I did obey the LORD,' Saul said. 'I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag, their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal.' But Samuel replied: 'Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.' 1 Samuel 15:17-23

Samuel tells Saul what God told him the evening before, he tells him that even though he was nothing, God anointed him to become king, [1 Samuel 15:17](#). God sent him on that mission to totally destroy the Amalekites, [1 Samuel 15:18](#), but he totally disobeyed God, [1 Samuel 15:19](#).

Saul still tries to defend himself by telling Samuel that he did obey God, he says he completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king, [1 Samuel 15:20](#).

The problem was he was supposed to destroy everything, including the king, [1 Samuel 15:3](#). And once again, he blames his soldiers for allowing the sheep and cattle to live, but tries to justify it by saying the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal, [1 Samuel 15:21](#).

Samuel asks him whether the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? Then he tells him that 'to obey God is better than sacrifice', [1 Samuel 15:22](#).

This phrase is repeated throughout the Scriptures and carries a lot of importance with it, [Hosea 6:6](#) / [Psalm 50:8-14](#) / [Psalm 51:16-17](#) / [Isaiah 1:11](#) / [Jeremiah 6:20](#) / [Micah 6:6-8](#) / [Matthew 9:13](#) / [Matthew 12:7](#).

There's no doubt that sacrifice was commanded by the Lord, but not on this occasion; what was required here by the Lord was obedience. Although Saul obeyed the law to sacrifice, he was disobedient to the law to destroy the Amalekites.

Many people today fall into the trap of thinking if they just sacrifice many things for the Lord, whether it be their time, money or personal material goods, that their sacrificial acts will save them.

The truth is, none of these things counts for anything if they aren't living obediently to the Lord's commands, [Isaiah 64:6](#) / [John 14:15](#). Samuel tells him for rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because Saul has rejected the word of the LORD, God has rejected Saul as king, [1 Samuel 15:22](#).

'Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men, and so I gave in to them. Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.' But Samuel said to him, 'I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!' As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours—to one better than you. He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind.' Saul replied, 'I have sinned. But please honour me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.' So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshipped the LORD. Then Samuel said, 'Bring me Agag, king of the Amalekites.' Agag came to him in chains. And he thought, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past.' But Samuel said, 'As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women.' And Samuel put Agag to death before the LORD at Gilgal. Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.' [1 Samuel 15:24-35](#)

I don't doubt for one moment that Saul's confession of sin was genuine, [1 Samuel 15:24-25](#) / [Psalm 51:1-8](#), but it does appear he's more concerned about his reputation as king among the people, rather than his standing before the Lord.

As a result of his disobedience, Samuel tells Saul that the Lord is going to remove the kingdom from him, [1 Samuel 15:26](#). This is illustrated in the tearing of Samuel's robe, [1 Samuel 15:27](#).

Samuel then tells Saul that the kingdom will be given to someone better than him, [1 Samuel 15:28](#). This is an obvious reference to David, who would be a man after God's own heart.

The main difference between Saul and David is that David, when he sinned, would take full responsibility for his actions. He always wanted to please God and be obedient to Him; he would rather please God than please people.

Notice how God is described as the Glory of Israel, [1 Samuel 15:29](#). In other words, if it weren't for God, Israel as a nation would never have existed in the first place, [Ezekiel 16:1-14](#).

And God is not about to change His mind; He isn't going to lie concerning Saul's fate, [1 Samuel 15:29](#). It's difficult to tell what Saul's motives were for worshipping the Lord, [1 Samuel 15:30](#).

Maybe he genuinely wanted to make things right, but it is possible, knowing the character of Saul, that he simply wanted to pay lip service to the Lord, [Mark 7:1-9](#). A few people often wonder why Samuel went back with Saul to worship in the first place, [1 Samuel 15:31](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Samuel sincerely desired to help Saul in the presence of the people, for he dearly loved the man.

Had Samuel refused the honour due to Saul's rank, it would have given an occasion of intrigue and resistance against Saul's government and could well have been a step toward bringing back the old anarchy.

2. Another possibility is that Saul might have threatened to take Samuel's life if he refused.

His seizing of Samuel's robe was in itself an act of violence, and Saul was certainly capable of killing anyone whom he considered to be a threat to himself.

3. The third alternative is that Samuel's action here constituted a sin on the prophet's part.

'We consider this to be the least likely of the reasons cited here, and that the first reason is probably correct.'

After worshipping the Lord, Samuel requests that Agag be brought to him, and Agag appears to think that his life is going to be spared, [1 Samuel 15:32](#), but Samuel put him to death, [1 Samuel 15:33](#).

Samuel fulfilled the Lord's command, [1 Samuel 15:3](#) / [Leviticus 27:28-29](#), and did what Saul refused to do. After this event, Saul returns home, [1 Samuel 15:34](#), and was never to see Samuel again, [1 Samuel 15:35](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Samuel seeing Saul again.

'But we read, [1 Samuel 19:22-24](#), that Saul went to see Samuel at Naioth, but this does not affect what is said here. From this time, Samuel had no connection with Saul; he never more acknowledged him as king; he mourned and prayed for him, and continued to perform his prophetic functions at Ramah, and at Naioth, superintending the school of the prophets in that place.'

Notice that Samuel mourned for Saul, [1 Samuel 15:35](#). This tells us how much he truly loved him. We can still love someone even though they sin, much like God still loved Saul but regretted making him king, [1 Samuel 15:35](#) / [1 Samuel 15:10](#).

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we saw that God rejected Saul as king of Israel. In this chapter, we find God's appointing of David to be Israel's new king and ruler. Following on from this chapter, we begin to see the great tension which arose between Saul and David, which was motivated by Saul's rejection.

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

'The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.' But Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.' The LORD said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.' Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, 'Do you come in peace?' Samuel replied, 'Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.' Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.' [1 Samuel 16:1-5](#)

The Lord doesn't mix his words with Samuel; He tells him it's time to stop mourning for Saul, [1 Samuel 16:1](#) / [1 Samuel 15:35](#), and get on with the task God has given him to do.

In other words, it was time to move on from the past and start to look to the future. God has chosen a new king for Israel from the household of Jesse, [1 Samuel 16:1](#) / [Ruth 4:17](#) / [Matthew 1:5](#). Bethlehem was a small insignificant village, but because of the event, which was about to happen, it was going to become very significant, [Micah 5:2](#). Samuel asks God how can he go because if Saul hears about it, he will kill him, but God tells him to take a heifer with him and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD,' [1 Samuel 16:2](#).

God also tells him to invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and He will show Samuel what to do; he is to anoint for God the one He indicates, [1 Samuel 16:3](#). I'm sure you notice that although Samuel was concerned about Saul, God didn't even mention him.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 16:3](#).

'The common custom was, after the blood of the victim had been poured out to God, and the fat burnt, to feast on the flesh of the sacrifice. This appears to have been the case in all, except in the whole burnt-offering; this was entirely consumed.'

As with most towns and cities, there were elders who met at the city gates, and when Samuel arrived the elders 'trembled' and asked if he came in peace, [1 Samuel 16:4](#).

On the surface this seems like a strange reaction, they obviously feared the Lord and His authority but more likely they 'trembled' because they thought that anyone who supported Samuel was against Saul as their king, by default this would mean that they would end up being killed because they supported Samuel, [1 Samuel 22:11-19](#).

Samuel then asks them to 'consecrate themselves', [1 Samuel 16:5](#). In other words, they were to be set apart for God's work. Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice, [1 Samuel 16:5](#). They were to be ready for the sacrifice which Samuel was preparing to do.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Change your clothes, and wash your bodies in pure water, and prepare your minds by meditation, reflection, and prayer; that, being in the spirit of sacrifice, ye may offer acceptably to the Lord.'

'When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD.' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, 'The LORD has not chosen this one either.' Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, 'Nor has the LORD chosen this one.' Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has not chosen these.' So he asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?' 'There is still the youngest,' Jesse answered. 'He is tending the sheep.' Samuel said, 'Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.' So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, 'Rise and anoint him; this is the one.' So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on, the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.' [1 Samuel 16:6-13](#)

Samuel meets some of Jesse's sons, seven in total, but only three are mentioned, Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It appears that Jesse had eight sons, but in [1 Chronicles 2:13-15](#), only seven are ascribed to him.'

Samuel saw Eliab first and was convinced he was the one whom God had chosen, [1 Samuel 16:6](#). Whilst Samuel was looking at the physical appearance of Eliab, the outward appearance, God was looking at the hearts of the men, [1 Samuel 16:7](#).

Next up was Abinadab but once Samuel saw him, he knew he wasn't the one God chose either, [1 Samuel 16:8](#). Next up was Shammah and when Sameul saw him, he was rejected too, [1 Samuel 16:9](#).

Jesse had seven of his sons brought to Samuel but none were chosen, [1 Samuel 16:10](#). If we learn anything from this, it's simply this, we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, [Matthew 7:15-20](#) / [Galatians 5:22-23](#).

After meeting Jesse's seven sons, Samuel asks if he has any other sons, [1 Samuel 16:11](#), to which Jesse tells him about David, who was the youngest of his sons. Although we don't know how old David was at this time, we do know that he was mature enough to look after his father's sheep. He was the youngest, but a very handsome young man, [1 Samuel 16:12](#).

The important point is that God knew him and knew his heart and knew what kind of a person he would become. And so, God tells Samuel to anoint David, [1 Samuel 16:12](#), as he did with Saul and all the other kings who would come. No man chose David to be king but God, later as time goes by, this would change because man would then choose a king for themselves.

Because God anointed David to be king and ruler of Israel, He was sending a clear message to all of Israel that David was His choice, and he would become king a few years from now. Although many wouldn't understand God's choosing of David, even his brothers, [1 Samuel 17:28](#), God's plan was now underway.

Notice that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David powerfully and he was blessed with wisdom and power, [1 Samuel 16:13](#) / [1 Samuel 10:6](#) / [Judges 3:10](#) / [Judges 6:34](#) / [Judges 11:29](#) / [Judges 14:18](#) / [Judges 15:14](#).

In other words, the Holy Spirit would protect David for his role as king and would help him not to become arrogant and filled with himself as Saul was. The Holy Spirit would help him to put his trust in God rather than trusting men as Saul did. He would help him to look for God's approval rather than looking for the approval of men, as Saul did.

DAVID IN SAUL'S SERVICE

'Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, 'See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better.' So Saul said to his attendants, 'Find someone who plays well and bring him to me.' One of the servants answered, 'I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him.' [1 Samuel 16:14-18](#)

THE EVIL SPIRIT

After King Saul's slaughter of the Amalekites, we are told that 'the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him' [1 Samuel 16:14](#).

Does this mean that God sent an 'evil spirit' to possess Saul? There is no doubt that this verse is often taken to mean that God actually sent an evil spirit to take possession of King Saul, and this is an idea which is both puzzling and disturbing.

But whenever we encounter difficult or strange statements in the Scriptures, we must bear in mind that, although God inspired the writers in the making of their historical records, they had to cope with the limitations of human language.

This means that often they were faced with the serious problem of trying to explain divine actions in human terms, and that could never be easy. We also sometimes experience a problem of a similar nature.

For example, how would you describe snow to people who have never seen snow? Or how would you explain to an Eskimo, who has never seen a sheep, that the Lord Jesus is 'the Lamb' of God? Whatever explanation you offer, you will only succeed in presenting a partial picture of the truth.

Therefore, when we encounter a verse such as 1 Samuel 16:14, we should not ask, How does this statement look to me? But what lies behind this statement? What is it meant to convey? What does God want us to understand? The only way of determining this is by looking at the circumstances in which the problem statement is found.

Notice that our problem verse is connected with this event recorded in 1 Samuel 15:1-35. King Saul had been given a plain command by God, a command which he had quite deliberately disobeyed. This wasn't his first act of disobedience, 1 Samuel 13:8-14. He had already been warned!

The consequence of this later offence was that God rejected him as King of His people, and, as evidence of his rejection, 'the Spirit of God left him', 1 Samuel 16:14. It's at this point that we are told that 'an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him', 1 Samuel 16:14.

There are two questions I think we should ask.

1. What is meant by 'an evil spirit'? and
2. In what sense was it 'from the Lord'?

But first, think about the event which brought this matter to a head. Saul's failure to obey God in the matter of the Amalekites, because this piece of Old Testament history has long discomfited Christians and delighted unbelievers, even though it should be noted that this is the only time that such a command was ever issued.

In other words, God meant it to be recognised as a singular, special and serious event. For God to have commanded the destruction of both Amalekite life and property has embarrassed even those who probably appreciate that the wickedness of the Amalekites constituted a danger to His people and also to the purpose He planned to accomplish through them.

But someone asks, would it not have been sufficient simply to destroy the Amalekites' army? Must everything be declared, 'herem', placed under the ban and utterly destroyed?

We must understand that this command meant that the Israelites were not ordered to engage in an ordinary conflict but were called by God to execute an act of divine judgment.

To make this absolutely clear, contrary to what would normally have happened in the time of war, they were forbidden to retain as the spoil of battle anything that belonged to the Amalekites.

In those days, a battle in which the victors did not plunder the defeated was remarkable and unusual indeed and would certainly be recognised as a significant event. This unusual behaviour would prove to Israel's neighbours that the purpose of the action really was punitive and not the seizure of property.

However, when the rest of the Canaanite tribes learned what King Saul had done, in disobeying God by keeping the best of the spoil, a quite different message was sent out.

It appeared that Israel had committed a blatant act of aggression against the Amalekites, merely for the purpose of self-gain, and this reflected badly not only on the Israelites themselves but also on their God.

It was after this act of disobedience, which misrepresented God, that Saul was judged unworthy to remain king and God rejected him. When Samuel was sent to anoint David to succeed in the kingship. 'The Spirit of God came upon David,' and 'an evil spirit' came upon Saul, 1 Samuel 16:14.

WHAT, THEN, WAS THIS 'EVIL SPIRIT'?

I think it is clear from the events which followed that, deprived of the help of the Spirit of God and abandoned by Samuel the prophet on whose support he had relied, 1 Samuel 15:31 / 1 Samuel 15:35, something terrible happened to Saul.

That expression, ‘an evil spirit’, 1 Samuel 16:14, refers to physical or mental illness, and it is such an illness which afflicted Saul. He became mentally ill and began to suffer from mental depression, which rendered him unstable and caused him to suspect and distrust everyone around him.

His ailment also brought attacks of panic, in which no one was safe. This was not ‘demon-possession’, as some have supposed, because the passage doesn’t say that he was ‘possessed by an evil spirit’.

1. We are told that an evil spirit ‘troubled him’, 1 Samuel 16:14-15.

The word ‘baath’ means ‘to terrify’. In other words, Saul began to suffer from mental depression that brought on terrible panic attacks, which caused him to ‘rave’, 1 Samuel 18:10.

2. At first, these attacks were spasmodic, and his condition could be soothed by David’s music, 1 Samuel 16:16-18. Consequently, when David played, the King was ‘refreshed’ and ‘made well again’, 1 Samuel 16:16 / 1 Samuel 16:23. This hardly suggests demon possession!

3. But gradually, and no doubt influenced by his deepening sense of isolation, Saul’s condition deteriorated to the point where the music of David failed to calm his troubled mind, and he became increasingly unreasonable and violent, 1 Samuel 18:10-11.

Saul lost all affection for David and began to see him as an enemy, 1 Samuel 18:29. Matters came to a head when it became obvious to David that, by attending to the King, his own life was in grave danger, 1 Samuel 19:8-10, and he decided it was unsafe for him to take his usual place at the king’s dinner table, 1 Samuel 20:24-27.

The psychological nature of Saul’s illness is proved by the fact that, although he had three times tried to kill David, he was genuinely surprised and puzzled by the young man’s absence! Yet, when Jonathan tried to offer an explanation, Saul became so angry that he tried to kill his own son.

IN WHAT SENSE WAS SAUL’S CONDITION ‘FROM THE LORD’?

It wasn’t ‘from the Lord’ in the sense that God deliberately afflicted Saul with insanity, but only in the sense that, when God so emphatically withdrew His endorsement and support of him, Saul became more and more depressed.

The medical word which describes his condition exactly is ‘melancholia’, which is defined as an ‘emotional mental disease marked by depression and ill-grounded fears’. This is what the Scriptures reveal in the case of Saul.

Saul began showing such great promise. He had so much ability and was blessed with so many advantages, having the help of the Spirit of God and the fatherly guidance of Samuel the prophet.

The highest possibilities were within his reach. But his life ended in depression and despair because he failed to appreciate that God looks for obedience in His people. That is the tragedy of King Saul. Even today, ‘to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams,’ 1 Samuel 15:22.

‘Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, ‘Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.’ So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Saul. David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armour-bearers. Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, ‘Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.’ Whenever the spirit from

God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.’ 1 Samuel 16:19-21

Saul sends for David, [1 Samuel 16:19](#), and he instantly liked him, [1 Samuel 16:20-21](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 16:21](#).

‘The difficulty of reconciling this verse with [1 Samuel 17:55-58](#) is met thus. The words here are the ultimate sequence of David’s first visit to Saul, and of his skill in music, and are therefore placed here; but they did not really come to pass until after David’s victory over Goliath, [1 Samuel 18:2](#). It is quite conceivable that if David had only played once or twice to Saul, and then returned to his father’s house for some months, Saul might not recognize him.’ He also requests that David stay in his service because when David plays the lyre, he gets relief from the tormenting spirit, [1 Samuel 16:22-23](#). The lyre, interestingly enough, is the oldest instrument mentioned in the Scriptures, [Genesis 4:21](#), and it appears that when David played it, Saul’s mind was soothed and helped him in his emotional state, [1 Samuel 16:23](#).

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

‘Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah. Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them. A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armour of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver’s rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him. Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, ‘Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.’ Then the Philistine said, ‘This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.’ On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.’ 1 Samuel 17:1-11

DAVID AND GOLIATH

The Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah and they pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah, [1 Samuel 17:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 28:18](#) / [1 Chronicles 11:13](#).

Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines, [1 Samuel 17:2](#). We are told that the Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them, [1 Samuel 17:3](#).

Conder, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the middle of the broad open valley, [1 Samuel 17:2](#), is a deep trench, [1 Samuel 17:3](#), with vertical sides, a valley within a valley: the sides and bed of the trench are strewn with water-worn pebbles.’

It was common practice for the Philistines to get their best fighter to intimidate and challenge an opposing army for a fight.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Gath, [1 Samuel 17:4](#).

‘Gath is one of the places mentioned in [Joshua 11:22](#), as still retaining a remnant of the sons of Anak; Gaza and Ashdod being the others. The race of giants, the Rephaim, is mentioned again in the account of David’s Philistine wars, [2 Samuel 21:15-22](#) / [1 Chronicles 20:4-8](#). It appears from these passages that Goliath had a brother, Lahmi. Four are named as being ‘born to the giant in Gath’, [Deuteronomy 2:10-11](#) / [Deuteronomy 2:20-21](#) / [Deuteronomy 3:11-13](#).’

Goliath was the Philistine’s champion who stood at over nine feet tall, [1 Samuel 17:4](#), his armour weighed around one-hundred and twenty-five pounds, [1 Samuel 17:5](#) / [Exodus 38:12](#), and his spear would have weighed around seventeen pounds, [1 Samuel 17:7](#).

This doesn’t even take into account the weight of the bronze helmet, the bronze javelin, and the brass shin guards, [1 Samuel 17:6](#) / [1 Samuel 17:45](#). The total weight may have been possibly around two-hundred pounds.

Goliath shouts to the ranks of Israel, why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me, [1 Samuel 17:8](#).

He says if he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects, but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us, [1 Samuel 17:9](#). Then the Philistine said, This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other, [1 Samuel 17:10](#).

Understandably, the Israelites were dismayed and terrified, [1 Samuel 17:11](#), not only because of the size of Goliath but also because a champion couldn’t be found among the Israelites, but because if a champion of Israel fought Goliath and lost, they would have to subject themselves again to the Philistines.

‘Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul’s time, he was very old. Jesse’s three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father’s sheep at Bethlehem. For forty days, the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand. Now Jesse said to his son David, ‘Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines.’ [1 Samuel 17:12-19](#)

Jesse, who is obviously much older now, [1 Samuel 17:12](#), has three of his sons in the Israelite army, [1 Samuel 17:13](#). The firstborn was Eliab, the second, Abinadab, and the third, Shammah, [1 Samuel 17:13](#).

David, who was the youngest, was still a shepherd who looked after his father’s sheep, [1 Samuel 17:14-15](#). Goliath came to the Israelites morning and evening for forty days to torment the Israelites, [1 Samuel 17:16](#), and it appears that Israel still didn’t find anyone brave enough to face him.

Jesse tells David to go to the front line and take some food for his brothers, [1 Samuel 17:17-19](#). This was the custom of the day to provide food for your family who was in the army, ready for war.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 17:18](#).

‘Cheeses of milk, says the margin. In the East, they do not make what we call cheese: they press the milk but slightly, and carry it in rush baskets. It is highly salted, and little different from curds.’

‘Early in the morning, David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines, and asked his brothers how they were. As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear. Now the Israelites had been saying, ‘Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel.’ David asked the men standing near him, ‘What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised

Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?’ They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, ‘This is what will be done for the man who kills him.’ 1 Samuel 17:20-27

David obeyed his father’s commands to take the food to his brothers, 1 Samuel 17:20. When he reaches the camp he sees the army going out to its battle positions, and heard the shouting of the war cry, 1 Samuel 17:20. We are told that both armies are now facing each other, 1 Samuel 17:21.

When David finally reaches the army posts, he gave the supplies for his brothers to the keeper of supplies but ran to the front line to see how his brothers were doing, 1 Samuel 17:22. On arrival Goliath once again tormented Israel and once again Israel ran away from him, 1 Samuel 17:23-24.

Saul appears to have offered a great reward for anyone who would kill Goliath: lots of wealth, along with his daughter in marriage, which would mean whoever married her would have great status in Israel, along with the bonus of not paying taxes, 1 Samuel 17:25 / 1 Samuel 8:11-17.

Notice how David describes Goliath, he calls him a disgrace and uncircumcised, 1 Samuel 17:26. It’s now that we begin to see David’s faith shining through, he calls the Israelites, ‘the armies of the living God’, 1 Samuel 17:26. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This fine expression occurs first in Deuteronomy (marginal reference), and next in Joshua 3:10, and 2 Kings 19:4. We find it twice in the Psalms of David, Psalms 42:2 / Psalms 84:2, four times in the prophets, and frequently in the New Testament. It is generally in contrast to false gods, 1 Thessalonians 1:9.’

In other words, he still believed that God was fighting for Israel. While Saul and his army were terrified, which showed a lack of faith in God, David still had great faith in God.

While the Philistines believed in dead gods, that is, idols, which can do nothing, David knew his God was very much alive. They repeated to David what they had been saying and told him, this is what will be done for the man who kills him, 1 Samuel 17:27.

‘When Eliab, David’s oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, ‘Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.’ ‘Now what have I done?’ said David. ‘Can’t I even speak?’ He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him. David said to Saul, ‘Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.’ Saul replied, ‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.’ But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.’ Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the LORD be with you.’ 1 Samuel 17:28-37

When David finally reached his oldest brother, Eliab, we would have thought that he would be grateful that David came to see how he was doing, but this wasn’t the case. Eliab burned with anger towards David and was highly offended that David would come to him and ask how he was doing, 1 Samuel 17:28.

He accuses him of being filled with pride, but the truth was, David was filled with faith, he trusted that God could help, whilst Eliab was filled with pride and didn’t even think about God helping them.

David asks his brother what he has done, and can’t he even speak, 1 Samuel 17:29. David then turns to someone else but and the men answered him as before, 1 Samuel 17:30.

Notice that what David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him, 1 Samuel 17:31. Everyone in Israel was terrified of Goliath and no one volunteered to fight him and so David who fully trusted in God to use him volunteered to fight the giant, 1 Samuel 17:32.

Saul tells David, he can't go out and fight because he's too young and Goliath is a seasoned warrior, [1 Samuel 17:33](#). David tells Saul that he is a shepherd, who fought off lions and bears and killed them when they tried to attack his father's sheep, [1 Samuel 17:34-35](#).

Notice that he gave all the credit for killing these lions and bears to God; he says if God has helped him kill those animals, He will certainly help him kill Goliath, [1 Samuel 17:36-37](#).

In a sense, God was using David's past experiences to help prepare him for this fight against Goliath. Saul then tells David to go with a blessing from God, [1 Samuel 17:37](#).

'Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armour on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. 'I cannot go in these,' he said to Saul, because I am not used to them.' So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.' [1 Samuel 17:38-40](#)

Notice that David tried on Saul's armour, [1 Samuel 17:38](#). He knew he couldn't fight with all that armour on, but maybe there's something else going on here which is often overlooked.

If David had worn Saul's armour, Saul, being the king, could have claimed a vital share of the glory of the victory. It's possible that David was aware of this and didn't want to give Saul any credit for the victory over Goliath; he wanted all the credit to go to God.

Notice also that David was also offered a sword, [1 Samuel 17:39](#), but he refused to take it. This will prove to be a significant decision later when he cuts off Goliath's head with Goliath's own sword, [1 Samuel 17:51](#).

David completely trusted in what he was familiar with: his staff, his sling, and stones, [1 Samuel 17:40](#) / [Judges 2:16](#), which were all used to defend and protect his father's sheep. He knew as long as God was with him, these would be more than enough to defeat Goliath.

WHY SMOOTH STONES?

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Had they been rough or angular, they would not have passed easily through the air, and their asperities would, in the course of their passage, have given them a false direction.
2. Had they not been smooth, they could not have been readily dispatched from the sling.

WHY DID DAVID CHOOSE FIVE SMOOTH STONES?

If David trusted God that much, why did he take five stones, [1 Samuel 17:40](#), and not just take one? We all know that God fights for us, but we still need to fight with God. Although David trusted in God, he also knew that to take on any challenge, even with God's help, he needed to be as well prepared as he could be.

Something which is often overlooked is that Goliath actually had four brothers, [2 Samuel 21:19-22](#) / [1 Chronicles 20:5](#), and David knew that when he killed Goliath, his four brothers may well want to come to the front and seek revenge. That's why David took five stones, one for Goliath and the other four, just in case his brothers came to challenge him.

‘Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, ‘Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ‘Come here,’ he said, ‘and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!’ David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.’ 1 Samuel 17:41-47

Notice that Goliath with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David, 1 Samuel 17:41. He then looks at David and sees he’s little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, but he still despised him, 1 Samuel 17:42.

He comes to David and says, am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks? And then he curses David by his gods, 1 Samuel 17:43. He teases David and invites him to come closer so that he can give David’s flesh to the birds and the wild animals, 1 Samuel 17:44.

When Goliath sees David and verbally abuses him, it’s clear that he isn’t impressed with this so-called Israelite champion. David recognises Goliath’s sword, spear, and javelin, but he isn’t impressed, and so David says he comes to Goliath in the name of the God of the armies of Israel, 1 Samuel 17:45 / Exodus 15:1-3.

It’s clear that David’s courage didn’t come from his physical strength or because of the weapons he had with him; he was courageous because God was fighting for him.

David’s confidence in God was so great, that he knew the purpose behind the victory, he says the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel, 1 Samuel 17:46.

David wasn’t full of himself, as his brother had suggested earlier, 1 Samuel 17:28, David wants everyone to know that it will be God who gives him the victory over Goliath and all the credit should be given to God, 1 Samuel 17:47 / Judges 7:1-8 / Matthew 6:1-6 / Matthew 6:16-18.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Samuel 17:47.

‘Observe the consistent teaching of such passages as 1 Samuel 14:6 / Exodus 14:13-18 / Judges 7:2 / Judges 7:4 / Judges 7:7 / Psalms 44:6, etc., and their practical use to the Church as lessons of trust in God, and distrust of ourselves.’

‘As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him. David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine’s sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp. David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem; he put the Philistine’s weapons in his own tent.’ 1 Samuel 17:48-54

As Goliath runs towards David, notice that David runs towards him too, 1 Samuel 17:48. David takes a stone from his bag and slings the stone with deadly accuracy. The stone strikes Goliath right between the eyes, on the forehead. This stuns him, and he falls to the ground, 1 Samuel 17:49-50.

Notice that David runs over and cuts off Goliath’s head, using Goliath’s own sword, 1 Samuel 17:51. This was greatly humiliating for Goliath and the Philistines, Judges 4:21.

As a result of Goliath being killed by David, the Israelites became more confident and pursued the Philistines, and the Philistines fled for their lives, 1 Samuel 17:51-53.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were panic-struck, and not being willing to fulfil the condition, which was stipulated by Goliath, they precipitately left the field. The Israelites took a proper advantage of these circumstances, and totally routed their enemies.’

Notice also that David took Goliath’s head to Jerusalem, [1 Samuel 17:54](#) / [2 Samuel 5:6-10](#), and he put Goliath’s weapons in his own tent, [1 Samuel 17:54](#). The reference to the ‘tent’ here should be understood as the tabernacle; this becomes clear when we read [1 Samuel 21:8-9](#) / [2 Samuel 6:17](#) / [Acts 15:16](#).

‘As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, ‘Abner, whose son is that young man?’ Abner replied, ‘As surely as you live, Your Majesty, I don’t know.’ The king said, ‘Find out whose son this young man is.’ As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine’s head. ‘Whose son are you, young man?’ Saul asked him. David said, ‘I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem.’ [1 Samuel 17:55-58](#)

Saul wanted to know who it was who killed Goliath, and so he asked Abner, who was the commander of Saul’s army, to find out, [1 Samuel 17:55-56](#). It appears that some time has gone by from when David first met Saul and played the lyre for him, [1 Samuel 16:19-21](#) / [1 Samuel 16:23](#), and the time here when David fights Goliath, but Saul didn’t recognise him, [1 Samuel 17:57-58](#).

WHY DIDN’T SAUL RECOGNISE DAVID?

Some commentators believe that David played behind a screen or a curtain for Saul, so Saul never actually saw David’s face. Other commentators believe that because of the distressing spirit, Saul wasn’t entirely in his right mind, [1 Samuel 16:15](#).

We do know that David didn’t spend all of his time at Saul’s palace but went home to tend his father’s sheep from time to time, [1 Samuel 17:15](#). It is also possible that David’s appearance had changed during the time when he was away from Saul, so Saul didn’t immediately recognise him. One thing is clear, though: God was preparing the way for David to take Saul’s place as king and leader of Israel.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

David had just finished defeating Goliath and was summoned to Saul, who didn’t recognise him. In this chapter, we find the beginning of a beautiful friendship between Saul’s son, Johnathon, and David, the future king of Israel. This friendship was going to be tested on several occasions, but would last for many years to come.

SAUL’S GROWING FEAR OF DAVID

‘After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.

From that day, Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow, and his belt.’ 1 Samuel 18:1-4

Johnathon and David were great companions, and they got on well together, 1 Samuel 18:1. The reason for this was that they were both extremely brave when no one else was.

Johnathon and his armour-bearer went out on their own to personally attack the Philistines, 1 Samuel 14:1-14, and David fought lions, bears and Goliath, 1 Samuel 17:28-54. Because of their common bravery, Johnathon and David became one in spirit and Johnathon loved David as himself, 1 Samuel 18:1 / John 13:34 / John 15:13.

While Saul kept David with him, 1 Samuel 18:2, Johnathon and David made a covenant with each other, 1 Samuel 18:3, the giving of the robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt were the seals of the covenant, 1 Samuel 18:4.

‘Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops and Saul’s officers as well. When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’ Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. ‘They have credited David with tens of thousands,’ he thought, ‘but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?’ And from that time on, Saul kept a close eye on David.’ 1 Samuel 18:5-9

It’s clear that David has now become Saul’s ambassador, representing Saul whenever he went into battle, 1 Samuel 18:5. We now begin to see how popular David was going to become among Saul’s army and the people in general, 1 Samuel 18:5. David conducted himself wisely in his new high ranking role and didn’t allow the position to go to his head.

As the people were dancing and singing, 1 Samuel 18:6, they sang, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands,’ 1 Samuel 18:7. Someone like Saul, who was filled with pride couldn’t handle what the people were singing, 1 Samuel 18:8.

David wasn’t intentionally becoming very popular, whereas Saul wanted to be very popular. As a result, Saul became angry and very jealous of David’s popularity, but he did know that his reign was coming to an end because God had rejected him earlier as king, 1 Samuel 15:10-35. We can see the insecurity of Saul; he was emotionally weak, he couldn’t handle being rejected by God, and he couldn’t handle being rejected by the people.

There’s a strong possibility that Saul knew that David was going to be the next king of Israel, and so, from this day forward, Saul was going to do everything he could to prevent David from becoming king. He kept a close eye on David, 1 Samuel 18:9, which basically means his jealousy and hatred of David would never come to an end.

‘The next day, an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand, and he hurled it, saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall.’ But David eluded him twice. Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did, he had great success, because the LORD was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.’ 1 Samuel 18:10-16

It appears that the more Saul grew in jealousy and hatred towards David, the more insane he became. The evil spirit which came from God, 1 Samuel 18:10 / 1 Samuel 16:14, means that God allowed Saul’s jealousy and hatred to get out of control.

It wasn’t ‘from the Lord’ in the sense that God deliberately afflicted Saul with insanity, but only in the sense that, when God so emphatically withdrew His endorsement and support of him, Saul became more and more depressed.

The medical word which describes his condition exactly is ‘melancholia’, which is defined as an ‘emotional mental disease marked by depression and ill-grounded fears’.

Notice that Saul was prophesying in his house, [1 Samuel 18:10](#). The word used here for ‘prophesying’ is the Hebrew word ‘naba’, but this doesn’t mean he prophesied the Word of God. The word suggests he was out of control, speaking gibberish at the same time.

After two attempts to kill David with a spear, [1 Samuel 18:10-11](#), Saul came to fear David because he knew God was with David and not with him, [1 Samuel 18:12](#).

Saul then made David commander of a thousand men, not because he thought David was so wonderful, but because he thought David would be killed in any battle which came up.

An army of one thousand would certainly go up against an army of a few thousand, [1 Samuel 18:13](#), and so, Saul thought the bigger the battle, the more chance that David would be killed or fail.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was under the pretence of doing him honour, when it was in effect only to rid himself of the object of his envy.’

Although Saul wanted David killed on the battlefield, God took full advantage of each military campaign and made David successful, [1 Samuel 18:14](#). God once again, proved that He was with David and once again, Saul became afraid of David, [1 Samuel 18:15](#), because he knew God was with David and the people began to fall in love with David because of his success [1 Samuel 18:16](#).

‘Saul said to David, ‘Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD.’ For Saul said to himself, ‘I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!’ But David said to Saul, ‘Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Israel, that I should become the king’s son-in-law?’ So when the time came for Merab, Saul’s daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah. Now Saul’s daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. ‘I will give her to him,’ he thought, ‘so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.’ So Saul said to David, ‘Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law.’ Then Saul ordered his attendants: ‘Speak to David privately and say, ‘Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you; now become his son-in-law.’ They repeated these words to David. But David said, ‘Do you think it is a small matter to become the king’s son-in-law? I’m only a poor man and little known.’ When Saul’s servants told him what David had said, Saul replied, ‘Say to David, ‘The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.’ Saul’s plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines. When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, David took his men with him and went out and killed two hundred Philistines and brought back their foreskins. They counted out the full number to the king so that David might become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage. When Saul realised that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days. The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.’ [1 Samuel 18:17-30](#)

Once again, we see that Saul continues plotting to get rid of David, Saul offers David, his oldest daughter Merab to David in marriage if he continues to fight against the Philistines, [1 Samuel 18:17](#), even though he had already promised his daughter in marriage to the person who would defeat Goliath, [1 Samuel 17:25](#).

He decides if he can’t kill him, then the Philistines will do the job for him, [1 Samuel 18:17](#). Here is a desperate father who is willing to use his own daughter just to get his own way. How low can one become?

Because of his humble background, David didn’t feel that he should marry into the royalty of Saul’s family, [1 Samuel 18:18](#) / [Proverbs 27:27](#). It is possible that he didn’t love Merab, and he didn’t want to marry her just for political reasons. Merab was given to Adriel instead of to David, [1 Samuel 18:19](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The five sons of this marriage perished by the hands of the Gibeonites (marginal reference), where we learn further that the name of Adriel’s father, or ancestor, was Barzillai. His birthplace was Meholah, probably the same as Abel-Meholah, 1 Kings 19:16.’

When Saul learned that his other daughter, Michal, loved David, he was pleased, 1 Samuel 18:20, but he tried to use her love for David to his advantage. Interestingly, Saul didn’t ask for a dowry from David for his marriage to Michal. Saul thought she would be a snare to David and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him and so, Saul said to David, now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law, 1 Samuel 18:21.

He then sent his attendants to speak to David privately and tell him the king likes him, and his attendants all love him, now become his son-in-law, 1 Samuel 18:22.

David tells them that he can’t become the king’s son-in-law because he is a poor man and little known, 1 Samuel 18:23 / Psalms 119:141. In an effort to have David killed by the Philistines, Saul asked for one-hundred foreskins of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 18:24-25. The dowry was a gift to the father for one’s bride, Exodus 22:16-17.

Notice that Saul’s plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 18:25. When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law, 1 Samuel 18:26, and notice it appears that David knew what Saul was up to because David brought back two hundred foreskins, 1 Samuel 18:27.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the two hundred men, 1 Samuel 18:27.

‘The Septuagint has only one hundred men. Saul covenanted with David for a hundred; and David himself says, 2 Samuel 3:14, that he espoused Michal for a hundred, hence it is likely that one hundred is the true reading.’

Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage, 1 Samuel 18:28. When Saul learned that his other daughter, Michal, loved David, this only added fuel to the fire; his hatred of David just grew stronger, 1 Samuel 18:28-29. The more Saul tried to get rid of David, the more successful David became, 1 Samuel 18:30.

It’s clear that the Lord was with David, and Saul knew it. Saul became increasingly afraid of David and hated him all the more because he probably knew by this time that David was to become his successor.

Saul’s reign as king of Israel is coming to an end, and he knows that God is behind it. God, through all these battles, was preparing and equipping David for the many years of struggles against Saul, which would also help him in his role as king of Israel.

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

As we saw in the previous chapter, Saul tried to kill David on several occasions and would go to any lengths to do so. It appears in this chapter that there’s only one thing on Saul’s mind right now, and that’s to kill David. I’m pretty sure that David is fully aware of what Saul is trying to do, but now it has become public knowledge.

SAUL TRIES TO KILL DAVID

‘Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David and warned him, ‘My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding

and stay there. I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out.' Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul, his father and said to him, 'Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?' Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: 'As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death.' So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.' 1 Samuel 19:1-7

As the relationship between Jonathan and David grew stronger, the relationship between Johnathon and his father, Saul, was becoming more stressful because of his father's plans to get rid of David once and for all.

It appears that Saul has now had enough of David and tells Jonathon and his attendants to kill David, 1 Samuel 19:1.

Jonathan had become fond of David, and so he goes on to warn him, 1 Samuel 19:1-2.

He tells David that his father is looking for a chance to kill him and tells him to be on his guard tomorrow morning, go into hiding and stay there, 1 Samuel 19:2. He says that he will go out and stand with his father in the field where you are and he'll speak to him about David and will tell David what he finds out, 1 Samuel 19:3.

Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and tells him not to wrong David because David hasn't wronged him but what David has done has benefited Saul greatly, 1 Samuel 19:4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is evident that Jonathan was satisfied that David was an innocent man and that his father was most unjustly incensed against him.'

He reminds his father that David took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine, 1 Samuel 19:5 / 1 Samuel 17:50-53, and the LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and Saul saw it and was glad, 1 Samuel 19:5.

Jonathon now asks his father the key question, why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason? 1 Samuel 19:5. On this occasion, Johnathon managed to speak some common sense to his father, which appears to calm Saul down for the moment, 1 Samuel 19:6. David was in Saul's presence again, 1 Samuel 19:7, but as we know, this calmness won't last long, and the plot to kill David will continue.

'Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him. But an evil spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the lyre, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.' 1 Samuel 19:8-10

It appears that when David is in Saul's company, Saul seems to be well for a short time, but as soon as David goes to war and wins, 1 Samuel 19:8, his jealousy and hatred of David return. The more David is successful, the more Saul wants him dead; it appears to be a popularity contest for Saul.

Saul, again, was driven by an evil spirit to kill David, 1 Samuel 19:19 / 1 Samuel 16:15 / 1 Samuel 18:10. We must understand that God didn't send an evil spirit to Saul, but He allowed an evil spirit to enter him; this was the spirit of resentment and jealousy, which comes from the devil.

After another failed attempt to kill David, 1 Samuel 19:10, David escapes 1 Samuel 19:10 / Psalms 59:3, and this would be the changing point in David's life. He now knows that whenever he's in Saul's presence, Saul will try to kill him, and from this point on, he would remain a fugitive from Saul until Saul and his son, Johnathon, died when they later fought the Philistines, 1 Samuel 31:1-6.

'Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, 'If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed.' So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head. When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, 'He is ill.' Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, 'Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him.' But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair. Saul said to Michal, 'Why did you deceive me like this and

send my enemy away so that he escaped?’ Michal told him, ‘He said to me, ‘Let me get away. Why should I kill you?’ 1 Samuel 19:11-17

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning who Saul wanted to kill David in the morning, 1 Samuel 19:11.

‘When they might be able to distinguish between him and Michal, his wife, for, had they attempted his life in the night season, there would have been some danger to Michal’s life. Besides, Saul wished to represent him as a traitor; and consequently, an attack upon him was justifiable at any time, even in the fullest daylight.’

Saul continues to try and kill David, but Saul’s daughter Michal heard what her father was up to and urged David to flee for his life, 1 Samuel 19:11. Because he fled down through a window, 1 Samuel 19:12, this suggests that David and Michal’s house was within the city walls, Joshua 2:15 / Acts 9:25.

The idol which Michal, 1 Samuel 19:13, had was probably a household idol that some Israelites kept in their houses, Exodus 20:4-6. Notice that Michal lied to her father, telling Saul’s men that David was ill, 1 Samuel 19:14 / Joshua 2:4-7; she obviously did this to protect David.

Saul sent the men back to see David and told them to bring him up to him in his bed so that he may kill him, 1 Samuel 19:15. When the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats’ hair, 1 Samuel 19:16. Saul now asks Michal why she did what she did, she lied again and said, that David threatened her with her life, 1 Samuel 19:17 / Psalms 59:1-17.

‘When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. Word came to Saul: ‘David is in Naioth at Ramah’; so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came on Saul’s men, and they also prophesied. Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied. Finally, he himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Seku. And he asked, ‘Where are Samuel and David?’ ‘Over in Naioth at Ramah,’ they said. So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel’s presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ 1 Samuel 19:18-24

After fleeing from Saul, David met up with Samuel and explained what was going on, 1 Samuel 19:18. Saul continued to try to find David in order to have him killed, 1 Samuel 19:19, but when his men met a group of prophets, everything began to change.

The text says that not only were the three different companies of messengers stopped by this outburst of prophesying, 1 Samuel 19:19-21. In other words, they were stopped in their tracks by God, John 18:6.

The reason for the prophesying was to prove, once again, that God was with David and to demonstrate that God was protecting David from Saul’s murderous plans. Saul was so focused on killing David that he totally forgot about his own relationship with God.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By bringing both him and his men thus under a Divine influence, God prevented them from injuring the person of David, 1 Samuel 10:6’

Saul then asks where Samuel and David are. To which he is told over in Naioth at Ramah, 1 Samuel 19:24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Naioth, 1 Samuel 19:24.

‘No such place as Naioth or Nevaioth is known, but the word means ‘dwellings.’ Hence, it is considered that Naioth was the name of the collegiate residence of the prophets, in, or just outside, Ramah, to which Samuel removed with David from his own house, for greater safety, owing to the sanctity of the place and company.’

Notice that even Saul himself couldn't stop himself from prophesying, [1 Samuel 19:23-24](#) / [1 Samuel 18:10-12](#). He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence, and he lay naked all that day and all that night, [1 Samuel 19:24](#).

When the people were asking, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' [1 Samuel 19:24](#), they were mocking him because they knew that Saul, as powerful as he was, became completely powerless because of the intervention of God. He was made to prophesy against his will, [1 Samuel 10:1-13](#).

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

As the relationship between Johnathon and his father, Saul, was getting weaker, the relationship between Johnathon and David was getting stronger. In this chapter, we begin to see the friendship and loyalty between Johnathon and David, and it appears that Johnathon is even willing to defy his own father for the sake of his friendship with David.

DAVID AND JONATHAN

'Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, 'What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?' 'Never!' Jonathan replied. 'You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn't so!' But David took an oath and said, 'Your father knows very well that I have found favour in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this, or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.' Jonathan said to David, 'Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you.' So David said, 'Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me. As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?' 'Never!' Jonathan said. 'If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?' David asked, 'Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?' 'Come,' Jonathan said, 'let's go out into the field.' So they went there together.' [1 Samuel 20:1-11](#)

It appears that everything that Johnathon had said earlier to his father, Saul, concerning David failed, [1 Samuel 19:1-7](#). As we go through this chapter, we see that the consequence of this was that Johnathon and David went their separate ways.

David knew full well that he couldn't remain in the presence of Saul; he could no longer play the lyre to bring comfort from the tormenting spirit. Saul's obsession with killing David had just become too much for David.

David asks Jonathan what he has done. What is his crime? How has he wronged Saul that he is trying to kill him? [1 Samuel 20:1](#). Jonathan replied, never! You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn't so! [1 Samuel 20:2](#) / [1 Samuel 19:6](#).

David now takes an oath and says your father knows very well that I have found favour in your eyes, and he has said to himself, ‘Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved, yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death, [1 Samuel 20:3](#).

Jonathan tells David he will happily do what David wants him to do, said to David, [1 Samuel 20:4](#). The new moon feast was a monthly religious festival, [1 Samuel 20:5](#) / [Numbers 10:10](#) / [Numbers 28:11-15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The months of the Hebrews were lunar months, and they reckoned from new moon to new moon. And as their other feasts, particularly the Passover, were reckoned according to this, they were very scrupulous in observing the first appearance of each new moon. On these new moons, they offered sacrifices and had a feast, as we learn from [Numbers 10:10](#) / [Numbers 28:11](#). And we may suppose that the families, on such occasions, sacrificed and feasted together. To this, David seems to refer, but the gathering together of all the families of a whole tribe seems to have taken place only once in the year. There is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family, [1 Samuel 20:6](#).’

It appears that David originally intended to sit at the king’s table for this festival, [1 Samuel 20:5](#) / [1 Samuel 20:18](#), but intentionally planned to be late so that Jonathan could observe Saul’s reaction when he noticed that David’s seat was empty, [1 Samuel 20:6-7](#).

David wants Jonathon to show kindness to David because he has brought him into a covenant with him, [1 Samuel 20:8](#). David then tells Jonathon, if he is guilty, then kill me, why hand him over to his father? [1 Samuel 20:8](#).

It appears that Johnathon was an optimist; he still believed that his father and David could be at peace with each other again, [1 Samuel 20:9](#). The problem was that this could never happen because Saul’s hatred for David was simply too great, and his relationship with God had almost become non-existent.

David asks who will tell him if Saul answers Jonathon harshly? [1 Samuel 20:10](#). Jonathon doesn’t answer the question but suggests they go out into the field, and so, they went there together, [1 Samuel 20:11](#).

‘Then Jonathan said to David, ‘I swear by the LORD, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favourably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know?’

But if my father intends to harm you, may the LORD deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness like the LORD’s kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David’s enemies from the face of the earth.’ So

Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, ‘May the LORD call David’s enemies to account.’ [1 Samuel 20:12-16](#)

Jonathan makes an oath to David, [1 Samuel 20:12](#), and tells him that he would do everything he could to protect him from Saul’s murderous plans. He says he will sound out his father by this time, the day after tomorrow, and if he is favourably disposed toward David, will he not send him word and let him know? [1 Samuel 20:12](#).

However, if Saul intends to harm David, may the LORD deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if he doesn’t let David know and send him away in peace, [1 Samuel 20:13](#). He says may the LORD be with David as he has been with Saul, [1 Samuel 20:13](#).

Johnathon pleads with David not to cut off his kindness to his family, [1 Samuel 20:14-15](#). This tells us that Johnathon knew that David was to become king of Israel, and he wanted the kindness to continue well beyond David’s reign as king.

Jonathan now makes a covenant with the house of David, saying, May the LORD call David’s enemies to account, [1 Samuel 20:16](#). This was a sign of real humility from Johnathon, unlike his father; he trusted God and wasn’t power-hungry. He was more than happy to accept that God was working through David.

‘And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself. Then Jonathan said to David, ‘Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed because your seat will be empty. The

day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. And about the matter you and I discussed. Remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever.' 1 Samuel 20:17-23

Johnathon reaffirms his oath to David because he loved him, 1 Samuel 20:17. Jonathan tells David, tomorrow is the New Moon feast and David will be missed, because his seat will be empty, 1 Samuel 20:18 / 1 Samuel 20:5.

He tells David to go to the stone Ezel and wait for him, 1 Samuel 20:19. Johnathon was going to give a signal to David by shooting three arrows to determine if it was safe for him to come or not, 1 Samuel 20:20.

Then Jonathon will send a boy and say, go, find the arrows and if I say to him, look, the arrows are on this side of you, bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, David is safe, there is no danger, 1 Samuel 20:21. However, if Jonathon says to the boy, look, the arrows are beyond you, then David must go, because the LORD has sent him away, 1 Samuel 20:22.

He reminds David that the Lord is their witness forever, 1 Samuel 20:23. The word 'forever' doesn't mean unending time, but for as long as they are alive. Johnathon is basically telling David they will be friends for life, and nothing would destroy their friendship, Amos 3:3.

'So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, 'Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean.' But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, 'Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?' Jonathan answered, 'David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favour in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table.' Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan, and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!' 'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?' Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast, he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.' 1 Samuel 20:24-34

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David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat, 1 Samuel 20:24. He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty, 1 Samuel 20:25.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It seems that there was one table for Saul, Jonathan, David, and Abner, Saul having the chief seat, that next to the wall. As only four sat at this table, the absence of anyone would soon be noticed.'

When Saul sees that David's seat is empty, he comes to the conclusion that David must be unclean, 1 Samuel 20:26. In other words, he thought David must have done something which made him ceremonially unclean, Leviticus 13:1-46 / Leviticus 14:1-32.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The new moon being a religious feast, and the meat to be eaten being peace-offerings, no one could assist at the feast who had any ceremonial uncleanness upon him.'

The next day, David's place was empty again, and so Saul asked Jonathan, Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today? 1 Samuel 20:27.

After Johnathon explains to his father why David wasn't there, [1 Samuel 20:28-29](#), it didn't take long for Saul's anger to show itself again, but this time it was against Johnathon, [1 Samuel 20:30](#).

The reason for his anger is because he now knows that Johnathon was protecting David and he was more loyal to David than he was to his father and he blames Johnathon's mother for his rebellion, [1 Samuel 20:30](#) / [Job 30:8](#). Saul believed that Johnathon would take over as king of Israel when he died, [1 Samuel 20:31](#), but how wrong he was. He tells Johnathon that he would never become king, but Johnathon had no intention or desire to become king. Like any king, he wanted his son to continue in his footsteps, but he soon realised that this wasn't going to happen because Johnathon was more loyal to David than he was to his father.

Saul demands that David be brought to him so that he can kill him, but Johnathon courageously asks his father why should he be put to death? What has he done? [1 Samuel 20:31-32](#).

Just like he did with David, [1 Samuel 19:10-12](#), Saul now hurled a spear at his own son, [1 Samuel 20:33](#). I'm pretty sure that Johnathon saw this kind of outburst behaviour time and time again, especially with David.

When the spear was thrown at him, Johnathon knew from that moment on that there was no chance of there being any kind of peace between his father and David. Johnathon was so upset that he didn't eat anything at the feast and was deeply grieved because of his father's attitude towards David, [1 Samuel 20:34](#).

This shows us how much he loved David; his father just had an outburst of rage and threw a spear at him, but all Johnathon was concerned about was David. God was going to use both these men to bring about His will, that is, David becoming king and ruler of Israel, [1 Peter 3:8](#) / [Philippians 2:2](#).

'In the morning, Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, and he said to the boy, 'Run and find the arrows I shoot.' As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, 'Isn't the arrow beyond you?' Then he shouted, 'Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!' The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. (The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, 'Go, carry them back to town.' After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most. Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.' Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.' [1 Samuel 20:35-42](#)

These verses are heart-breaking because we read about how Johnathon and David were to go their separate ways, thinking that they would never meet again, [1 Samuel 23:16](#).

Johnathon goes to the place where he arranged to meet David, [1 Samuel 20:35](#) / [1 Samuel 20:19](#), and gave him the signal of the arrows which he planned, [1 Samuel 20:36-40](#) / [1 Samuel 20:20-22](#).

After receiving the signal, David ran to Jonathon and bowed before him three times with his face to the ground, [1 Samuel 20:41](#). This was David's way of paying his respect to him.

Kissing each other was a sign of respect for one another, and they wept together because David knew that Johnathon would lose his right to become king after Saul had died. If Saul was a good king, then Johnathon would have been his successor, but because Saul was an evil king, this wasn't going to happen.

I guess most people would have become angry that they wouldn't become king after their father died, but Johnathon wasn't like his father; he wasn't interested in power and popularity. He was more like David; he loved God and wanted to respect God's will for Israel, and he put God's will ahead of his own will.

Johnathon wanted the friendship between himself, his household and David to remain for as long as they all shall live, [1 Samuel 20:42](#). As they separated from each other, [1 Samuel 20:42](#), I'm pretty sure that they both must have felt that they would never meet again.

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

‘David went to Nob, to Ahimelek the priest. Ahimelek trembled when he met him and asked, ‘Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?’ David answered Ahimelek the priest, ‘The king sent me on a mission and said to me, ‘No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.’ As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find.’ But the priest answered David, ‘I don’t have any ordinary bread on hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here— provided the men have kept themselves from women.’ David replied, ‘Indeed, women have been kept from us, as usual, whenever I set out. The men’s bodies are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!’ So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.’ 1 Samuel 21:1-6

DAVID AT NOB

After saying his heartbreaking goodbyes to Johnathon, David goes to a place called Nob, [1 Samuel 21:1](#) / [Isaiah 10:28](#) / [Isaiah 10:32](#) / [Nehemiah 11:32](#). There were eighty-five priests who lived at Nob, serving the tabernacle, [1 Samuel 21:1](#), which had been set up there following the Philistines’ destruction of Shiloh.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nob was a city of the priests, the high priest resided there, and the tabernacle was pitched there, [1 Samuel 21:4](#) / [1 Samuel 21:6](#) / [1 Samuel 21:9](#) / [1 Samuel 22:10](#). It was situated on the road from the north to Jerusalem, near Anathoth, and within sight of the holy city, [Isaiah 10:32](#) / [Nehemiah 11:32](#). But the site has not been identified with certainty.’

Although Ahimelek the priest trembled when he met David and asked why he was alone, [1 Samuel 21:1](#), David goes on to say he’s on a secret mission and asks for some bread, [1 Samuel 21:2-3](#).

Ahimelek tells David he has no ordinary bread, and the only bread he did have was consecrated bread, which was used for sacred things and only to be eaten by the priests, [1 Samuel 21:4](#) / [Exodus 25:30](#) / [Exodus 35:13](#) / [Leviticus 24:9](#).

This is a reference to the Showbread or the bread of the Presence as prescribed in the Mosaic Law, [Exodus 24:5-9](#). The bread was a featured provision of the tabernacle and was replaced each week with hot bread. It was holy because it was being used in the tabernacle, and only the priests were qualified to eat it.

However, Ahimelech was willing to allow David and his men to eat the bread if they had kept themselves from women, [1 Samuel 21:4](#) / [Leviticus 15:18](#). David says, indeed, women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men’s bodies are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today, [1 Samuel 21:5](#).

The priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away, [1 Samuel 21:6](#).

Jesus refers to this event in [Matthew 12:3-4](#) / [Mark 2:23-28](#). Jewish tradition regarding the Sabbath Day prohibited all activity, including plucking grain to eat, but Jesus and His followers ignored these cherished doctrines.

When the Jewish officials criticised the disciples, Jesus defended their actions by noting His opponents’ inconsistency; they justified David when he broke God’s law, [Leviticus 24:5-9](#), but they condemned Jesus when He merely violated men’s traditions.

Then He explained that God had intended for the Sabbath command to provide relief for man, not be an additional burden. Finally, Jesus proclaimed His authority over the Sabbath, saying that He Himself was Lord of the Sabbath.

If Jesus created the Sabbath, surely, He knew what activities violated it. The Sabbath was supposed to be a day of blessings and relaxation, free from work, but the Jews had turned it into a bunch of rules which consisted of dos and don'ts, and with over six hundred and thirteen laws, they always found a way around them.

‘Now one of Saul’s servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul’s chief shepherd. David asked Ahimelek, ‘Don’t you have a spear or a sword here? I haven’t brought my sword or any other weapon because the king’s mission was urgent.’ The priest replied, ‘The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one.’ David said, ‘There is none like it; give it to me.’ 1 Samuel 21:7-9

Doeg, the Edomite, was one of Saul’s servants, [1 Samuel 21:7](#) / [Psalms 52:1](#), and Ahimelech’s action toward David would eventually lead to his death by Doeg, whom Saul later commanded to kill him, [1 Samuel 22:11-23](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Doeg being detained, [1 Samuel 21:7](#).

‘Either to fulfil a vow, [Acts 21:23-27](#), or on account of uncleanness, or under the law of lepers, [Leviticus 13:4](#), [Leviticus 13:11](#) / [Leviticus 13:21](#), or as a proselyte. It is not impossible that Doeg may have been in custody or in sanctuary for some crime.’

David’s recognition of him meant that David was required to get out of Nob as quickly as possible because he knew that Doeg would certainly have notified Saul of David’s presence there.

David needed a weapon, [1 Samuel 21:8](#), and the only one he wanted was Goliath’s sword, the very sword with which he defeated Goliath, [1 Samuel 21:9](#) / [1 Samuel 17:51-54](#).

DAVID AT GATH

‘That day, David fled from Saul and went to Achish, king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, ‘Isn’t this David, the king of the land? Isn’t he the one they sing about in their dances: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’? David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands, he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard. Achish said to his servants, ‘Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?’ 1 Samuel 21:10-15

David fled from Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath, [1 Samuel 21:10](#). Gath was a Philistine city, and all those who lived in Achish were well aware of David and his many victories.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was the worst place to which he could have gone: it was the very city of Goliath, whom he had slain, and whose sword he now wore, and he soon found, from the conversation of the servants of Achish, that his life was in the most imminent danger in this place.’

The servants of Achish recognised David, [1 Samuel 21:11](#), and assumed that he was king of Israel on the basis of that song sung by the women of Israel, [1 Samuel 21:11](#) / [1 Samuel 18:7](#).

As a result of knowing who he was, they were all afraid, they were afraid that David would do to them what he had done to so many others. [Psalm 34](#) / [Psalms 52](#) / [Psalm 56](#) are written based on what happens here.

David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath, [1 Samuel 21:12](#). It appears that David was afraid of them and pretends to be insane, [1 Samuel 21:13](#). While he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard, [1 Samuel 21:13](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 21:13](#).

‘Literally, made marks, namely, the mark of the ‘tau’ (t), which in the ancient Hebrew and Phoenician was in the shape of a cross, [Ezekiel 9:4](#). The gate of Achish’s palace-yard or court, in which the attendants waited. The house itself stood in this court, [Esther 2:19](#) / [Esther 2:21](#).’

Achish says to his servants that David is insane and then asks why they brought David to him? [1 Samuel 21:14](#). He asks is he so short of madmen that they have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house? [1 Samuel 21:15](#).

This was a wise move on behalf of David because now wasn’t the time to get into another battle, and more importantly, he was able to continue to hide from Saul, whilst staying in this Philistine city for protection. This would be the last place Saul would go looking for David.

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

‘David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father’s household heard about it, they went down to him there. All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him. From there, David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, ‘Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?’ So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold. But the prophet Gad said to David, ‘Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah.’ So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.’ [1 Samuel 22:1-5](#)

DAVID AT ADULLAM AND MIZPAH

After David’s encounter with Achish, the king of Gath, [1 Samuel 21:10-15](#), he left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam, [1 Samuel 22:1](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was in the tribe of Judah, and, according to Eusebius and Jerome, ten miles eastward of what they call Eleutheropolis.’

It wasn’t long before those who were in need, around four hundred men, came to join him, [1 Samuel 22:2](#). This number would grow to six hundred men a little later, [1 Samuel 23:13](#).

It’s possible that these men fled because of Saul’s mental condition and couldn’t handle his fits of rage. It’s also possible that some fled because they supported David, and anyone who supported him was seen as Saul’s enemy.

David now goes to Mizpah in Moab, [1 Samuel 22:3](#). David's father was the grandson of Ruth, who was from Moab, [Ruth 1:22](#) / [Ruth 2:2](#) / [Ruth 2:6](#) / [Ruth 2:21](#) / [Ruth 4:5](#) / [Ruth 4:10](#). It's possible that David found some relatives in Moab with whom he could place his father and mother, [1 Samuel 22:3](#).

This is the first mention of 'the prophet Gad', [1 Samuel 22:5](#), in the Scriptures, and Samuel may have commanded him to join David. In fact, the whole prophetic community of Israel automatically became allies of David following the tragic slaughter of the priests by Saul.

Later, Gad became the king's seer after David was king, [2 Samuel 24:11](#), and he rebuked David for the sin of numbering Israel. After David's death, he wrote a history of that monarch's reign, [1 Chronicles 29:29](#), and he appears to have been concerned with arranging the temple services, [2 Chronicles 29:25](#).

Notice that Gad told him not to stay in the stronghold, [1 Samuel 22:5](#), that is, Mizpah. He encourages David not to be intimidated by Saul but to go and live in the land of Judah, [1 Samuel 22:5](#). In other words, God wanted David in the land of Judah, probably to protect the people who lived there.

SAUL KILLS THE PRIESTS OF NOB

'Now Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered. And Saul was seated, spear in hand, under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with all his officials standing at his side. He said to them, 'Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? Is that why you have all conspired against me? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie in wait for me, as he does today.' But Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's officials, said, 'I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelek son of Ahitub at Nob. Ahimelek inquired of the LORD for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine.' Then the king sent for the priest Ahimelek, son of Ahitub and all the men of his family, who were the priests at Nob, and they all came to the king. Saul said, 'Listen now, son of Ahitub.' 'Yes, my lord,' he answered. Saul said to him, 'Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?' Ahimelek answered the king, 'Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father's family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair.' But the king said, 'You will surely die, Ahimelek, you and your whole family.' Then the king ordered the guards at his side: 'Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me.' But the king's officials were unwilling to raise a hand to strike the priests of the LORD. The king then ordered Doeg, 'You turn and strike down the priests.' So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day, he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys, and sheep.' [1 Samuel 22:6-19](#)

These verses show us just how far Saul had fallen as the king of Israel; he knows no moral boundaries, he's totally out of control and has no relationship with God. He doesn't care about the preciousness of life and shows no remorse for killing God's priests.

Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered and notice that Saul was seated, spear in hand, under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with all his officials standing at his side, [1 Samuel 22:6](#) / [1 Samuel 18:11](#). He tells the men of Benjamin to listen and asks, will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? [1 Samuel 22:7](#). He also asks is that why you have all conspired against me? [1 Samuel 22:8](#). He says no one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie in wait for me, as he does today, [1 Samuel 22:8](#).

We also see the true character of Doeg the Edomite, [1 Samuel 21:1-9](#) / [1 Samuel 21:7](#), who tells Saul a complete lie. He tells him that Ahimelek appeared to be helping David when he was fleeing from Saul [1 Samuel 22:9-10](#), but the truth was, David had actually told Ahimelek that he was on a mission from the king, [1 Samuel 21:2](#).

Saul thought that Ahimelek was rebelling against him by giving David the showbread, [1 Samuel 22:11-13](#), but he wasn't; he acted out of ignorance, [1 Samuel 21:1-6](#).

Ahimelek wasn't acting in rebellion but helping David. As far as he was concerned, he thought that if he helped David, he was indirectly helping Saul with David's secret mission, [1 Samuel 22:14-15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He probably means that his inquiring now for David was no new thing, having often done so before, and without ever being informed it was either wrong in itself, or displeasing to the king. Nor is it likely that Ahimelech knew of any disagreement between Saul and David. He knew him to be the king's son-in-law, and he treated him as such.'

Saul goes ahead and orders that Ahimelek and all the priests be killed, [1 Samuel 22:16-17](#). This shows us just how deranged his thinking had become. Notice he even calls them 'priests of the Lord', [1 Samuel 22:17](#). He didn't care about the preciousness of life; he didn't care about the Lord, [1 Samuel 2:27-36](#).

Saul wasn't brave enough to do this murderous deed by himself; he asked a foreigner, an Edomite, to do the murder for him, [1 Samuel 22:18](#). On this day, eighty-five priests were murdered, and the city of Nob, with all its inhabitants, was totally destroyed, [1 Samuel 22:18-19](#) / [1 Samuel 15:3](#) / [Joshua 6:21](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'We are not to suppose that Doeg killed them all with his own hand. He had a band of men under his command, many, or all of whom were perhaps foreigners like himself, and very likely of a Bedouin caste, to whom bloodshed would be quite natural, and the priests of the Lord of no more account than so Early sheep or oxen.'

Saul's paranoia was so great that he thought that every priest, from Samuel to these priests here, was conspiring against him. This act shows us how much of a dictator Saul had become, he ruled by instilling fear into people, and if anyone conspired against him, then death was the penalty.

It's difficult to understand why God would allow such a murderous act to happen in the first place, but we mustn't lose sight of the fact that Saul's time is coming, [1 Samuel 31:1-6](#) / [Revelation 6:10](#).

We must always remember that God is preparing Israel for a new king and He sees the bigger picture, the longer goal. Israel would eventually see how deranged Saul would become, which would pave the way for David to become their king and lead them in God's ways.

'But one son of Ahimelek, son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to join David. He told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. Then David said to Abiathar, 'That day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of your whole family. Stay with me; don't be afraid. The man who wants to kill you is trying to kill me, too. You will be safe with me.' [1 Samuel 22:20-23](#)

Abiathar, who was one of Ahimelek's sons and managed to escape, [1 Samuel 22:20](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This man carried with him his sacerdotal garments, as we find from [1 Samuel 23:6](#) / [1 Samuel 23:9](#).'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'He may have remained at Nob to take care of the sanctuary when the other priests went to Saul, and so escaped. He continued David's faithful friend throughout his reign, [1 Samuel 23:9](#) / [1 Samuel 30:7](#) / [2 Samuel 15:24](#) / [2 Samuel 15:29](#) / [2 Samuel 15:35](#), but gave offence by taking Adonijah's part against Solomon, [1 Kings 1:7](#) / [1 Kings 1:19](#) / [1 Kings 1:42](#), and in consequence was deprived of the high priesthood, [1 Kings 2:26-27](#).'

Notice David's reaction when he was informed of what Saul had done to all those who lived in Nob, [1 Samuel 22:21](#). David showed great sorrow because of the report. He took it personally; he thought it was all his fault for convincing Ahimelek to give him some bread in the first place, [1 Samuel 22:22](#) / [1 Samuel 21:1-6](#). David encourages Abiathar to stay with him for protection, [1 Samuel 22:23](#). It's interesting because later, when David does become king, he will become one of Israel's high priests, [1 Samuel 23:9](#) / [1 Samuel 30:7](#) / [2 Samuel 14:24](#).

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

'When David was told, 'Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors,' he inquired of the LORD, saying, 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' The LORD answered him, 'Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah.' But David's men said to him, 'Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!' Once again, David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, 'Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand.' So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines, and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah. (Now Abiathar, son of Ahimelek, had brought the ephod down with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)'
1 Samuel 23:1-6

DAVID SAVES KEILAH

Keilah, [1 Samuel 23:1](#), was a fortified city allotted to Judah, [Joshua 15:44](#), and it was located near the Philistine border. In the time of Nehemiah, the city was reoccupied by the Israelites returning from the captivity in Babylon, [Nehemiah 3:17-18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the threshing floors, [1 Samuel 23:1](#).

'The 'threshing floors' were the natural objects of plunder, [Judges 6:11](#).'

After hearing reports about the Philistine's fight against Keilah, David inquires of the Lord if he should attack them, God tells him to go and attack them, [1 Samuel 23:2](#), but in response, his men objected, [1 Samuel 23:3](#).

This was possibly because they didn't want to fight against the Philistines and fight against Saul's army at the same time. David inquires of the Lord again, and God tell him that He is going to give the Philistines into his hand, [1 Samuel 23:4](#). And after doing so, his men are now convinced that this is God's will, [1 Samuel 23:5](#).

Since Abiathar, a priest, one of Ahimelek's sons, [1 Samuel 23:6](#), was now with David's army, [1 Samuel 22:20-23](#), they gave them the chance to inquire of the Lord, concerning decisions that were made.

The ephod was worn by the Levitical priests, and inside the pockets of the ephod, there would be the Urim and Thummim. This was how they received the 'yes' or 'no' answers to their questions from the Lord, [1 Samuel 14:19](#).

SAUL PURSUES DAVID

‘Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, ‘God has delivered him into my hands, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars.’ And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, ‘Bring the ephod.’ David said, ‘LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant.’ And the LORD said, ‘He will.’ Again, David asked, ‘Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?’ And the LORD said, ‘They will.’ So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.’ 1 Samuel 23:7-13

Here again, we see just how delusional Saul has become; he thinks that God had delivered David into his hand, 1 Samuel 23:7, but the truth is that Samuel categorically told him that God had rejected him because of his sins, 1 Samuel 13:13-14 / 1 Samuel 15:23 / 1 Samuel 15:26.

After hearing that David was in Keilah, Saul called his army together, 1 Samuel 23:8. His reason for doing so was to get his army to go against David and his men. When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he asked Abiathar the priest for the ephod, 1 Samuel 23:9.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It seems as if David himself, clothed with the ephod, had consulted the Lord, and 1 Samuel 23:10-12, contain the words of the consultation, and the Lord’s answer, 1 Samuel 23:2.’

David now inquires of the Lord concerning Saul coming to Keilah to destroy the town on account of him, 1 Samuel 23:10. He asks will the citizens of Keilah surrender him to Saul? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? And God says, he will, 1 Samuel 23:11. David asks God the same question and received the same answer, 1 Samuel 23:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The conduct of the men of Keilah would be like that of the men of Judah to Samson, their deliverer, Judges 15:10-13.’

David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place and when Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there, 1 Samuel 23:13. It’s clear that the men of Keilah feared Saul more than David, despite David delivering them out of the hands of the Philistines, 1 Samuel 23:5.

‘David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day, Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands. While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ he said. ‘My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.’ The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.’ 1 Samuel 23:14-18

David is now hiding in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph, 1 Samuel 23:14. Located five miles south southeast of Hebron, was a town called Ziph which was in the hill country of Judah, Joshua 15:55.

It was founded by Mesha, a son of Caleb, 1 Chronicles 2:42, and it was near this place that David twice hid from Saul, and the citizens of this place twice betrayed the secret of David’s hiding place to Saul, 1 Samuel 23:19 / 1 Samuel 26:1.

Ziph, at this time in history, was covered with a great forest, along with many caves, which was the perfect hiding place for David and his six-hundred men from Saul and his army.

Saul was searching for him and notice the reason, God dint give David into Saul’s hands, 1 Samuel 23:14. While David was hiding in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life, 1 Samuel 23:15.

Notice that Johnathon went to David helped him find strength in God, [1 Samuel 23:16](#), and encouraged him in three ways. He reminds David that Saul wouldn't be able to find him because God would protect him, David would become king, and he tells him that Saul knows this full well, [1 Samuel 23:17](#).

Even though he was the son of Saul, he knew that David would become king of Israel. This again shows us Johnathon's humility in accepting God's will for David to be Israel's future king.

They renewed their covenant agreement with each other as before, [1 Samuel 23:18](#) / [1 Samuel 18:3](#) / [1 Samuel 20:8](#), but sadly, this would be the last time the two of them would see each other.

'The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? Now, Your Majesty, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for giving him into your hands.' Saul replied, 'The LORD bless you for your concern for me. Go and get more information. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah.' [1 Samuel 23:19-23](#)

The Ziphites tell Saul, who is very crafty, where David is located, [1 Samuel 23:19](#). They invite Saul to come down whenever it pleases him, and they will be responsible for giving David into Saul's hands, [1 Samuel 23:20](#).

Saul asks God to bless them and then asks them to reconfirm his location because he knows that David is very wise and cunning, [1 Samuel 23:21-23](#). Saul says when they find out where he is then he will go with them and if he is in the area, he will track him down among all the clans of Judah, [1 Samuel 23:23](#).

The reason for the Ziphites betrayal was because of their zeal for Saul or the fact that David levied protection money against them as he did against Nabal, [1 Samuel 25:1-44](#). This whole shameful episode is recorded by David in [Psalm 54:1-7](#).

'So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon. Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David. Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, a messenger came to Saul, saying, 'Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land.' Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth. And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.' [1 Samuel 23:24-29](#)

The Ziphites now set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul, [1 Samuel 23:24](#). David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon, [1 Samuel 23:24](#).

Maon is a city in the hill country of Judah, and the home of Nabal the wealthy flock master, [1 Samuel 25:4](#). David knows the best way not to be found by your enemy is to keep moving, keep changing your location.

Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon, and when Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David, [1 Samuel 23:25](#).

While Saul and his men went along one side of a mountain, David and his men were going the other side of the mountain, [1 Samuel 23:26](#). Saul and his men were closing in on David, but he received a message informing him that the Philistines were raiding the land, [1 Samuel 23:26](#).

Notice that Saul had to call off the search for David and his men because the Philistines were attacking the land, [1 Samuel 23:27](#). Because of this they called the place, 'Sela Hammahlekoth', which possibly means 'Rock of Smoothness', [1 Samuel 23:28](#), because it was slippery, or it could mean, 'Rock of Division' because it was the place which came between Saul and David.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘See the providence of God exerted for the salvation of David’s life! David and his men are almost surrounded by Saul and his army, and on the point of being taken, when a messenger arrives and informs Saul that the Philistines had invaded the land! But behold the workings of Providence! God had already prepared the invasion of the land by the Philistines, and kept Saul ignorant of how much David was in his power; but as his advanced guards and scouts must have discovered him in a very short time, the messenger arrived just at the point of time to prevent it. Here David was delivered by God, and in such a manner too as rendered the Divine interposition visible.’

David and his men went on to live in the strongholds of En Gedi, [1 Samuel 23:29](#), which was a safe hiding place for now. It was here that David would wait, as he said, until he saw what God was going to do for him, [1 Samuel 22:3](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning En Gedi.

‘En-Gedi was situated near the western coast of the Dead Sea, not far from Jeshimon. It literally signifies the kid’s well, and was celebrated for its vineyards, [Song of Solomon 1:14](#). It was also celebrated for its balm. It is reported to be a mountainous territory, filled with caverns, and consequently proper for David in his present circumstances.’

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

‘After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, ‘David is in the Desert of En Gedi.’ So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. The men said, ‘This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’ Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. He said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.’ With these words, David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.’ [1 Samuel 24:1-7](#)

DAVID SPARES SAUL’S LIFE

After chasing off the Philistines, [1 Samuel 23:28](#), Saul picked up where he left off in pursuit of David, who was at En Gedi, [1 Samuel 24:1](#), which was an oasis some six hundred feet in elevation above the western shore of the Dead Sea. In his pursuit of David with his three thousand men, Saul goes near the Crags of the Wild Goats, [1 Samuel 24:2](#). When he gets to the sheep pens along the way, there’s a cave where he goes into to ‘relieve himself’, [1 Samuel 24:2](#), which, as some commentators suggest, could mean he went in to masturbate or, more likely, he went in because he needed the toilet, [Judges 3:24](#).

Notice that it was David’s men who were at the back of the cave with David, [1 Samuel 24:3](#) / [Psalms 67:1-7](#). They came to the conclusion that it was God who provided a way to kill Saul, [1 Samuel 24:4](#), but David himself didn’t believe that.

David then sneaks up to Saul and cuts off a corner of his robe, 1 Samuel 24:4, but it's clear that David's heart was bothering him. Even the cutting of a small corner of the clothing of God's anointed king greatly affected David, 1 Samuel 24:5. This shows us how much respect David had for God and God's anointed king.

David goes on to speak to his men, because they appear to be motivated by selfishness, 1 Samuel 24:6. On one side, if they killed Saul, they wouldn't have to live on the run anymore, but David saw things differently, he knew that it would be better to live on the run than be guilty of killing God's anointed king, 1 Samuel 24:6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'However unworthily Saul was now acting, he had been appointed to his high office by God himself, and he could only be removed by the authority which placed him on the throne. Even David, who knew he was appointed to reign in his stead, and whose life Saul had often sought to destroy, did not conceive that he had any right to take away his life; and he grounds the reasons of his forbearance on this: He is my master, I am his subject. He is the Lord's anointed, and therefore sacred as to his person in the Lord's sight. It is an awful thing to kill a king, even the most untoward, when he has once been constitutionally appointed to the throne. No experiment of this kind has ever succeeded; the Lord abhors king killing. Had David taken away the life of Saul at this time, he would, in the sight of God, have been a murderer.'

David then rebukes his men because they appear to be motivated by selfishness, and Saul leaves the cave, 1 Samuel 24:7. David once again was showing wisdom and setting the example that he wanted not only his men to follow but all who would follow later when he became king. David would later write about this event in Psalms 57:1-11.

'Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, 'My lord the king!' When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He said to Saul, 'Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? This day, you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD's anointed.' See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe, but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you. 'Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.' 1 Samuel 24:8-15

David's respect for Saul is seen when he calls him 'my lord the king', 1 Samuel 24:8, after Saul and David left the cave. Notice there's even more respect for Saul when Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground, 1 Samuel 24:9.

David asks Saul why does he listen when men say, David is bent on harming you'? 1 Samuel 24:9. David gives Saul the benefit of the doubt and assumes that he had been misinformed about David's motives by those who wanted to remain in favour of Saul for their own selfish ends. In other words, if Saul were killed, they would lose their prominent positions of power and wealth.

He tells him that he has seen with his own eyes how the LORD delivered him into David's hands in the cave, 1 Samuel 24:10. David was honest enough to tell Saul that even some of his own men wanted David to kill him but he spared him.

He said, he will not lay his hand on his lord, because he is the LORD's anointed, 1 Samuel 24:10 / 1 Samuel 24:6. Notice he calls Saul 'father' and then invites Saul to look at the piece of the robe he removed earlier from Saul, 1 Samuel 24:11.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Samuel 24:11.

'The respectful address of a junior and an inferior, 2 Kings 5:13 / 1 Samuel 24:16 / 1 Samuel 25:8.'

David tells him he has nothing in his hand to indicate that he is guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion and says he hasn't wronged him, yet Saul is hunting him down to take his life, [1 Samuel 24:11](#).

He tells Saul may the LORD judge between them both and may the LORD avenge the wrongs Saul have done to him, but David's hand will not touch Saul, [1 Samuel 24:12](#).

David tells him an old saying, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' [1 Samuel 24:13](#), which basically means that people behave according to their character. David is saying that if he were that evil, then he would have killed Saul when he had the chance in the cave.

Notice that David uses two metaphors, 'a dead dog' and 'a flea', [1 Samuel 24:14](#) / [2 Samuel 16:9](#). The dog and the flea are absolutely insignificant compared to David, the next king of Israel. In other words, David is saying, doesn't Saul have something more important to be getting on with than chasing a flea, which is a metaphor for David himself. Once again, David says he's happy for God to judge them both and decide between them and may God consider David's cause and uphold it and may God vindicate him by delivering him from Saul's hand, [1 Samuel 24:15](#).

'When David finished saying this, Saul asked, 'Is that your voice, David, my son?' And he wept aloud. 'You are more righteous than I,' he said. 'You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family.' So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.' [1 Samuel 24:16-22](#)

Saul, in his mental decline, doesn't appear to recognise David until David speaks and when he did, he wept aloud, [1 Samuel 24:16](#). He's obviously overwhelmed with the mercy which David has shown him, he appears to be in shock as he realises that the person he's been trying to kill, could have easily killed him in the cave.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning [1 Samuel 24:16](#).

'David had called Saul his master, lord, and king. Saul accosts him here as his son, to show that he felt perfectly reconciled to him, and wished to receive him as formerly into his family.'

He tells David that he is more righteous than he is, [1 Samuel 24:17](#) / [Genesis 38:26](#), which was very true. David was way more dignified than Saul was, [1 Samuel 24:17](#).

He knew that David's actions towards him were more righteous and just than his actions toward David, [1 Samuel 24:18](#). Saul says when a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward David well for the way he treated Saul today, [1 Samuel 24:19](#).

Saul, by this time, knew that David would become the next king of Israel, [1 Samuel 24:20](#), but there's a possibility that Saul thought that Johnathon, his son, would take over his reign after his death, despite being told otherwise by Samuel, [1 Samuel 15:16-23](#).

Saul wants David to swear to him that he will not cut off his descendants, [1 Samuel 24:21](#) / [1 Samuel 20:15](#). Cutting off the king's descendants was to become common practice for Israel in the years ahead.

The reason was simple: the son of a king couldn't presume to become the next king. David had no desire to do such a thing, and so, he promised Saul that he wouldn't cut off his descendants, [1 Samuel 24:21](#). He could think about what he liked, but the truth was that God had already decided who was going to become Israel's next king.

David gave his oath to Saul, who returned home, and David went to the stronghold of En Gedi, [1 Samuel 24:22](#), which was around seven hundred feet below sea level, in the highlands of southern Judah.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Saul does not appear to have invited David to return to Gibeah, or to have given him any security of doing so with safety. David, with his intuitive sagacity, perceived that the softening of Saul's feelings was only momentary, and that the situation remained unchanged.'

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

‘Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah.’ 1 Samuel 25:1

THE DEATH OF SAMUEL

The chapter begins by informing us about the death of Samuel, the prophet and judge, and it’s clear that a lot of people loved him because all of Israel gathered and mourned for him.

It’s interesting that although Samuel was a great prophet and judge, only one verse in the whole of the Bible covers his funeral, [1 Samuel 25:1](#). Just because he ceased to exist physically doesn’t mean he ceased to exist. In other words, he will continue to live in heaven.

Samuel was buried in his home in Ramah; this isn’t speaking about his house because if he had been buried in his house, then his house would have become unclean. It’s likely he was buried in the garden or courtyard of his home, [2 Chronicles 3:20](#) / [2 Kings 21:18](#) / [John 19:41](#).

DAVID, NABAL, AND ABIGAIL

‘Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran. A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal, and his wife’s name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite. While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. So he sent ten young men and said to them, ‘Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. Say to him: ‘Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours! ‘Now I hear that it is sheepshearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel, nothing of theirs was missing. Ask your own servants, and they will tell you. Therefore, be favourable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.’ When David’s men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David’s name. Then they waited.’ 1 Samuel 25:2-9

After the death of Samuel, David moved towards the Desert of Paran, where he met Nabal, a man who had property at Carmel and was very wealthy, [1 Samuel 25:2](#).

This Carmel isn’t the Mount Carmel most people have heard of, which was located to the north and on the west coast of Palestine. This Carmel is located at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Nabal’s wife was called Abigail, who was intelligent and beautiful, [1 Samuel 25:3](#), unlike her husband, who was offensive and corrupt, [1 Samuel 25:3](#). Nabal’s name means ‘fool,’ or ‘stupid,’ and he certainly lives up to his name. Notice also that he was a Calebite, [1 Samuel 25:3](#). The Calebites were attached to the tribe of Judah and since Judah would be the tribe most loyal to David, Nabal had evidently inherited the great estate of his ancestor Caleb, but sadly, he didn’t inherit the type of character that belonged to his distinguished ancestor.

David sends out ten young men to ask Nabal to show some hospitality towards them, 1 Samuel 25:4-6. This was a reasonable request from David because he and his men had protected Nabal's sheep from raiders that came from the desert, 1 Samuel 25:7 / 1 Samuel 25:15-16 / 1 Samuel 23:1-5 / 1 Samuel 30:1-2.

It was also a feast day, 1 Samuel 25:8, which meant there would have been more than enough to go around. David's messengers gave Nabal the message in David's name, and then they waited, 1 Samuel 25:9.

'Nabal answered David's servants, 'Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?' David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. David said to his men, 'Each of you strap on your sword!' So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.' 1 Samuel 25:10-13

After making the request to Nabal to show some hospitality, it is now that we see Nabal's true character in his response to David; he is disrespectful and cruel. Nabal appears to be oblivious as to who David is and says there are many servants who are breaking away from their masters these days, 1 Samuel 25:10. He asks why he should give food to anyone whom he doesn't know, where they came from, 1 Samuel 25:11.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Nabal's answer shows the surliness of his disposition. It was unjust to refuse so reasonable a request, and the manner of the refusal was highly insulting. It is true what his own servants said of him, He is such a son of Belial that one cannot speak to him, 1 Samuel 25:17.'

David understandably wasn't very happy with his response, 1 Samuel 25:12, and so, he gathered four-hundred of his men, each of them strapped with swords to punish Nabal for refusing to help God's anointed, 1 Samuel 25:13.

Because David gathered four-hundred men, this tells us that Nabal had a large army around him.

'One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, 'David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them, nothing was missing. Night and day, they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him.' 1 Samuel 25:14-17

Word of Nabal's response got back to Abigail through one of the servants, and the servant told her that Nabal had insulted David with his words, 1 Samuel 25:14. 1 Samuel 25:15-16 tells us that David and his men had guarded Nabal's flocks of sheep indeed for a long while, 1 Samuel 23:1-5 / 1 Samuel 30:1-2.

It appears that even the servant knew that things weren't going to end well with Nabal and his household, 1 Samuel 25:17. The servant knew that he was an evil, self-centred man, whom nobody could talk to because everyone is afraid of him, 1 Samuel 25:17. The good news is that the servant knew that Abigail was approachable and could confidently speak with her.

'Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, 'Go on ahead; I'll follow you.' But she did not tell her husband Nabal. As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. David had just said, 'It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!' 1 Samuel 25:18-22

It's clear that Abigail believed every word the servant told her concerning her husband Nabal, and she believed that things weren't going to end well with Nabal and his household, 1 Samuel 25:17. Notice Abigail acted quickly to take David and his men some supplies, 1 Samuel 25:18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Now, all this provision was a matter of little worth, and had it been granted in the first instance, it would have perfectly satisfied David, and secured the good offices of him and his men. Abigail showed both her wisdom and prudence in making this provision. Out of three thousand sheep, Nabal could not have missed five; and as this claim was made only in the time of sheep-shearing, it could not have been made more than once in the year: and it certainly was a small price for such important services.’

Abigail tells her servants to go ahead of her, and she’ll follow behind, [1 Samuel 25:19](#), and notice she did not tell her husband, [1 Samuel 25:19](#). She meets David, and David had just finished saying, It’s been useless, all his watching over this fellow’s property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid him back evil for good, [1 Samuel 25:20-21](#).

Because David knew that he was anointed by God to be king of Israel, he knew that what he was about to do was God’s will because Nabal had gone against God by going against David, [1 Samuel 25:22](#). It’s clearly evident from David’s response that he at this time was assuming the responsibility of being king over Israel, even though Saul was still alive as king.

‘When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said: ‘Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live, since the LORD has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you. ‘Please forgive your servant’s presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord because you fight the LORD’s battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. When the LORD has fulfilled for my lord every good thing, he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.’ [1 Samuel 25:23-31](#)

When Abigail saw David, she bowed before him with her face to the ground, [1 Samuel 25:23](#). This is where we see her wisdom. She pleads with David and tells him that her husband Nabal is living up to his name, that is, he is foolish and a rebellious person, [1 Samuel 25:24-25](#).

Her argument was exactly the same argument that David himself had used in his efforts to discourage Saul from trying to kill him, [1 Samuel 24:14](#). The argument was basically this: Nabal wasn’t important enough to warrant David’s taking vengeance upon him, and it was contrary to God’s law for David so to do.

David lived under God’s protection, [1 Samuel 25:26](#), and notice how Abigail gives him a gift, [1 Samuel 25:27](#).

Notice she tells that that he is fighting the Lord’s battles, [1 Samuel 25:28](#).

This tells us that all of Israel had now accepted David as a defender of Israel and all of Israel should be grateful to him for defending them. If it weren’t for David, then Nabal wouldn’t be living in freedom.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Abigail’s firm persuasion of David’s kingdom stands upon the same footing as Rahab’s conviction of God’s gift of Canaan to the Israelites, [Joshua 2:9-13](#). Both testified to God’s revelation and their own faith. This is doubtless the reason why Abigail’s speech is recorded.’

There will come a time when David will be ruler and king over Israel, [1 Samuel 25:29-30](#), and Abigail in her wisdom, [Psalm 141:5](#), didn’t want David to regret any action which would lead to the killing of innocent people, [1](#)

Samuel 25:31. In other words, just because Nabal was a rude, evil man, didn't mean that everyone in his household was too, 1 Samuel 25:31.

‘David said to Abigail, ‘Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.’ Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, ‘Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.’ 1 Samuel 25:32-35

The humility of David is seen here, as he takes the advice of a woman who is married to a fool. He recognises that Abigail was sent from God, 1 Samuel 25:32, and he thanks her for her wisdom, 1 Samuel 25:33. He also recognises that she is a genuine person with no hidden agendas, and notice she doesn't ask him to deliver her from her cruel husband.

David tells her that if she didn't come out to meet him, then not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak, 1 Samuel 25:34. David accepts her gift, 1 Samuel 25:18 / 1 Samuel 25:27, and assures her that he will grant her request, 1 Samuel 25:35.

‘When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until daybreak. Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him, and he became like a stone. About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal, and he died. When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, ‘Praise be to the LORD, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head.’ Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife. His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, ‘David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife.’ She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, ‘I am your servant and am ready to serve you and wash the feet of my lord's servants.’ Abigail quickly got on a donkey and attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife. David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both were his wives. But Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Paltiel, son of Laish, who was from Gallim.’ 1 Samuel 25:36-44

When Abigail went home, it appears it was party time in the house of Nabal, and he was very drunk, 1 Samuel 25:36. Abigail waited until morning to tell her husband that she had met David, 1 Samuel 25:36-37. This really shocked Nabal, and his heart failed, and he became like a stone, 1 Samuel 25:37 / Jude 1:12.

The news that Abigail brought her husband was just too much for him and ten days later he died at the hand of the Lord, probably from a heart attack or stroke 1 Samuel 25:38.

Please note this wasn't David's judgment upon Nabal, this was the Lord's judgment upon Nabal because he refused to help God's anointed, 1 Samuel 25:39.

David sends word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife and so, his servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, ‘David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife, 1 Samuel 25:39-40.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is likely that he had heard before this that Saul, to cut off all his pretensions to the throne, had married Michal to Phalti, and this justified David in taking Abigail or any other woman, and, according to the then custom, it was not unlawful for David to take several wives. By his marriage with Abigail, it is probable he became possessed of all Nabal's property in Carmel and Maon.’

She bowed down with her face to the ground and said she was their servant, she is ready to serve and wash the feet of her lord's servants, 1 Samuel 25:41. After Nabal died, David took Abigail as his wife, 1 Samuel 25:42.

He must have seen her wisdom and loyalty, even to her cruel husband. She was fit to be the next king's wife. Notice also that he married Ahinoam of Jezreel, 1 Samuel 25:43.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the list of David’s wives, Ahinoam is mentioned first, 2 Samuel 3:2 / 1 Chronicles 3:1. But this may be only because her son was the firstborn. David’s taking two wives was an indication of his growing power and importance as a chieftain. The number was increased to six when he reigned in Hebron, 1 Chronicles 3:1, and still further when he became king of all Israel, 2 Samuel 5:12-13 / 1 Samuel 1:2.’

The polygamy of David was one of his many sins, but in the customs of the day, such marriages were generally accepted. When David later had the power, he took Michal, Saul’s daughter, 1 Samuel 25:44, back as his wife, 1 Samuel 18:27 / 2 Samuel 3:14-16.

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION

‘The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, ‘Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?’ So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.’ 1 Samuel 26:1-

4

What happens at the beginning of the chapter concerning the Ziphites is similar to what happened earlier, 1 Samuel 23:10-24:22. Once again, they reported to Saul where David was located, 1 Samuel 26:1. They obviously didn’t believe that David would become king because of their loyalty to Saul.

Notice how many selected men Saul had with him, three thousand, 1 Samuel 26:2. He always appears to have this number of men around him, 1 Samuel 13:2 / 1 Samuel 24:2.

When Saul was informed about David’s location, he once again went out to find him and kill him. He appears to have forgotten that David spared his life earlier in the cave of En Gedi, 1 Samuel 24:1-22.

While Saul camped on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, David stayed in the wilderness, 1 Samuel 26:3. When David saw that Saul had followed him, he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived, 1 Samuel 26:4.

DAVID AGAIN SPARES SAUL’S LIFE

‘Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner, son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him. David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai, son of Zeruah, Joab’s brother, ‘Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?’ ‘I’ll go with you,’ said Abishai. So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him. Abishai said to David, ‘Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t strike him twice.’ But David said to Abishai, ‘Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the LORD lives,’ he said, ‘the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let’s go.’ So David took the spear and water jug near Saul’s head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.’ 1 Samuel 26:5-12

David heads out to get Saul and when he does he sees where Saul and Abner, the commander of the army, had lain down, 1 Samuel 26:5. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him, 1 Samuel 26:5. David then asks Ahimelek and Abishai if they were willing to go to Saul's camp with him and they agree, 1 Samuel 26:6. Abishai, along with Joab and Asahel, were children of Zeruiah, who, according to 1 Chronicles 2:16, was a sister of David. Abishai saved David's life in one of the Philistine wars, 2 Samuel 21:17, was implicated in the murder of Abner, 2 Samuel 3:30, and remained faithful to David during the rebellion of Absalom.

When David arrived at the camp with Abishai, they found Saul and his spear stuck in the ground near his head, 1 Samuel 26:7. Abishai eagerly wanted to kill Saul, but David stopped him, because Saul at this point was still, the Lord's anointed, 1 Samuel 26:8-9 / 1 Samuel 24:5 / Romans 13:1. Once again we see David's respect for Saul and God.

David knew that the Lord Himself would strike Saul, he knew that when God judged His anointed, as He did Saul, then it was the Lord's business to remove His anointed, not David's, 1 Samuel 26:10.

They managed to get in and out with the spear and water jug without waking anyone because the Lord had put Saul and his men into a deep sleep, 1 Samuel 26:11-12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the deep sleep, 1 Samuel 26:12.

'It is the same word, which is used, Genesis 2:21, to describe the sleep which God caused to fall upon Adam, when he formed Eve out of his side.'

'Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. He called out to the army and to Abner, son of Ner, 'Aren't you going to answer me, Abner?' Abner replied, 'Who are you who calls to the king?' David said, 'You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your lord, the king? Someone came to destroy your lord, the king. What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men must die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?' 1 Samuel 26:13-16

David now crosses over to the other side and stands on top of the hill some distance away. There was a wide space between them, 1 Samuel 26:13. He calls out to the army and to Abner and says aren't you going to answer me, Abner? And Abner replied, who are you who calls to the king? 1 Samuel 26:14.

David says, You're a man, aren't you? and asks him, 'Who is like you in Israel?' 1 Samuel 26:15. This was a high compliment that David paid to Abner, and it was sincere, which is fully shown in David's song at Abner's death, 2 Samuel 3:31-34 / 2 Samuel 3:38.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'This incidental testimony to Abner's great eminence as a warrior is fully borne out by David's dirge at Abner's death, 2 Samuel 3:31-34 / 2 Samuel 3:38, as well as by his whole history. At the same time, David's bantering tone in regard to Abner, coupled with what he says in 1 Samuel 26:19, makes it probable that David attributed Saul's persecution of him to some degree to Abner. Abner would be likely to dread a rival in the young conqueror of Judah, 2 Samuel 2:8.'

David here rebukes Abner because he wasn't doing his job properly in protecting the king. He deserved the death penalty because he failed to protect Saul, the Lord's anointed, 1 Samuel 26:15-16. The proof that he didn't do his job was in the fact that David had Saul's spear and water jug, 1 Samuel 26:16.

'Saul recognised David's voice and said, 'Is that your voice, David my son?' David replied, 'Yes, it is, my lord the king.' And he added, 'Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.' Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains.' 1 Samuel 26:17-20

Saul once again recognised David's voice as he did earlier, 1 Samuel 26:17. The difference is found in David's response. Earlier at En Gedi, David addressed Saul as 'my father', 1 Samuel 24:11, and Saul here sought the same kind of response from David, but David no longer used that terminology.

Saul had given his wife Michal to Palti, 1 Samuel 25:44, and there were no grounds whatever, either for Saul's words, 'my son', or for David's responding with, 'my father'. It's possible because Saul uses these words that David sees how much of a hypocrite Saul has become.

David replies to Saul and calls him his lord, the king, 1 Samuel 26:17, and David once again proclaims his innocence, 1 Samuel 26:18, and once again he encourages Saul to think about what he is doing, 1 Samuel 26:19 / 1 Samuel 16:1 / 1 Samuel 16:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'David advises Saul to seek God's pardon and, as a consequence, the removal of the evil spirit by offering a sacrifice. But if the persecution was the consequence of the false accusations of slanderers, then 'cursed' be his enemies who, by their actions, drove David out from the only land where Yahweh was worshipped, and forced him to take refuge in the country of pagan and idolaters, compare Deuteronomy 4:27; Deuteronomy 28:36.'

He was searching for an insignificant flea, 1 Samuel 24:14, or a single partridge in the mountains, 1 Samuel 26:20. In other words, David rebuked Saul for wasting his time chasing and hunting down David. David's confidence was in God, and he knew that God would deal with Saul on His own timetable, so there was no point in taking his life.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the partridge, 1 Samuel 26:20.

'It is worthy of remark that the Arabs, observing that partridges, being put up several times, soon become so weary as not to be able to fly; they in this manner hunt them upon the mountains, till at last they can knock them down with their clubs. It was in this manner that Saul hunted David, coming hastily upon him, and putting him up from time to time, in hopes that he should at length, by frequent repetitions of it, be able to destroy him.'

'Then Saul said, 'I have sinned. Come back, David, my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong.' 'Here is the king's spear,'

David answered. 'Let one of your young men come over and get it. The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.' Then Saul said to David, 'May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph.'

So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.' 1 Samuel 26:21-25

Saul's confession of sin, 1 Samuel 26:21, isn't the same but similar to the same confession he made after David had the chance to kill him at the cave of En Gedi, 1 Samuel 24:17-21.

Saul here admits he acted like a fool and had got David all wrong, 1 Samuel 26:21, but he doesn't appear to be truly repentant. David shows Saul the spear he took earlier, 1 Samuel 26:12, and invites one of Saul's young men to come over and get it, 1 Samuel 26:22.

David says the LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness, and the LORD delivered Saul into his hands today, but he wouldn't lay a hand on the LORD's anointed, 1 Samuel 26:23. He says as surely as he has valued Saul's life today, so may the LORD value his life and deliver him from all trouble, 1 Samuel 26:24.

Saul couldn't handle David's kindness and just behaviour because David was everything he wanted to be and was supposed to be. He tells David that he will do great things and surely triumph, 1 Samuel 26:25. It appears that Saul was speaking prophetic words but didn't realise it.

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

‘But David thought to himself, ‘One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.’ So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish, son of Maok, king of Gath.

David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal.’ 1 Samuel 27:1-3

DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES

In this chapter, we see the wisdom of David as he deliberately goes into the land of the Philistines. He knew that Saul wouldn’t go here in case a war broke out. David knew he would be safe in this land, 1 Samuel 27:1.

Although David had been warned on another occasion when he was in Moab to return to Judah, 1 Samuel 22:5, it doesn’t appear that it was God’s will for David to dwell in Philistia at this time.

David and six hundred men went over to Achish, son of Maok, king of Gath and settled in Gath with Achish, 1 Samuel 27:2-3. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal, 1 Samuel 27:4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘So it appears that the men who consorted with David had wives and families. David and his company resembled a tribe of the wandering Arabs.’

‘When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. Then David said to Achish, ‘If I have found favour in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?’ So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.’ 1 Samuel 27:4-6

David’s plan to go to the land of the Philistines worked, as Saul called off his search for him, 1 Samuel 27:4. David wants a place where his men wouldn’t cause any confrontation with the soldiers of Achish, 1 Samuel 27:5.

In other words, he could still be far enough away from the Philistines, without getting involved with them and at the same time, be far enough away from Saul and his army. In doing so, he could pretend to Achish that he was on the side of the Philistines because the Israelites were against him.

On that day, Achish gave David Ziklag, 1 Samuel 27:6. This tells us that the date of writing of 1 Samuel was sometime after the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms. The south was called the kingdom of Judah.

The division took place after the death of Solomon and continued until the captivity of the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. Ziklag was an ideal location for David; it was around twelve miles north-northeast of Beersheba. Ziklag was assigned to Simeon but later incorporated into the territory of Judah, Joshua 19:5.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ziklag was at first given to the tribe of Judah, but afterwards it was ceded to that of Simeon, Joshua 15:31 / Joshua 19:5. The Philistines had, however, made themselves masters of it, and held it to the time here mentioned; it then fell into the tribe of Judah again, and continued to be the property of the kings of Judah. This verse is a proof that this book was written long after the days of Samuel, and that it was formed by a later hand, out of materials which had been collected by a contemporary author.’

David needed to be at a distance from the observation of Achish in order to carry out his plans for deceiving the king of Gath.

‘David lived in Philistine territory for a year and four months. Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times, these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish. When Achish asked, ‘Where did you go raiding today?’ David would say, ‘Against the Negev of Judah’ or ‘Against the Negev of Jerahmeel’ or ‘Against the Negev of the Kenites.’ He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, ‘They might inform on us and say, ‘This is what David did.’ And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. Achish trusted David and said to himself, ‘He has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life.’ 1 Samuel 27:7-12

David lived in Philistine territory for a year and four months, 1 Samuel 27:7, during which he raided desert tribes to the south that were still within the territory that God had originally given to the nation of Israel as part of the Promised Land.

David and his men raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites and we are told that from ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt, 1 Samuel 27:8.

Although there’s no record of the Geshurites, we do know that the Amalekites were supposed to have been destroyed by Saul in his early reign, 1 Samuel 15:1-35.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Geshurites bordered upon the Philistines, and lived in the mountainous district which terminates the desert on the northeast. They were a different tribe, or, at least, a different branch of it, from the Geshurites who lived on the northeast border of Bashan, and were Arameans, 2 Samuel 15:8. The Girzites may be connected with those who gave their name to Mount Gerizim.’

David didn’t leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes, and then he returned to Achish, 1 Samuel 27:9. It appears that Achish didn’t understand why David was raiding the desert tribes, 1 Samuel 27:10.

The word ‘Negev’ 1 Samuel 27:10, literally means ‘the dry country’. The Negev of Judah was the tribe of Judah itself, the Negev of Jerahmeel was one of the prominent clans of Judah, 1 Chronicles 2:9 / 1 Chronicles 2:42.

The Negev of the Kenites had been associated with Israel since the days of Moses, whose father-in-law Jethro was of the Kenites. Also, Jael, who destroyed Sisera, was a Kenite, Judges 4:17.

David knew exactly what he was doing, 1 Samuel 27:10-11. He was doing what his forefathers failed to do in removing the Canaanites from the land, Joshua 17:12-13 / Judges 1:19 / Judges 1:28. If David had actually raided these people, as he said he did, Achish’s belief that Israel at that time hated David would have been true, 1 Samuel 27:12.

CHAPTER 28

INTRODUCTION

One of the most fascinating events in the Scriptures is when Saul goes to visit a witch who lives in Endor to ask if she could speak to Samuel, who is now dead. This text, for many people, brings up all sorts of questions, and as a result, many have come up with all kinds of strange interpretations and others are left confused.

WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG FOR SAUL

Things started to go wrong for King Saul when he rebelled against God, and then God went on to reject him as king. This was really difficult for Saul to accept, especially since God had removed His Spirit from Saul, **1 Samuel 16:14**. It's at this point in Saul's life that he recognised that he was left without any guidance from God and as many people do today when they are looking for guidance they look in all the wrong places and go to the wrong people.

When Saul became king, the Spirit of God did come upon him, he was capable of prophesying and was said to be 'among the prophets', **1 Samuel 10:11-12 / 1 Samuel 19:20**. He looked to God for guidance on such things as when and if to enter into battles, **1 Samuel 14:37**.

When God removed His Spirit, Saul found himself without such guidance from God. We read that 'he inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him in dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets', **1 Samuel 28:6**. In a state of desperation, Saul looked for guidance somewhere else.

If you remember, Saul had already been looking elsewhere; that's what got him into this trouble in the first place. He listened to the people even when they were going contrary to God's specific commands. He looked at himself and tried to justify his disobedience with human reasoning.

Now in **1 Samuel 28**, he turns to the witch of Endor. Remember that God had warned Israel in the law that they were to look only to Him for spiritual guidance and teaching, **Deuteronomy 18:9-12 / Leviticus 19:31 / Leviticus 20:6-7**. Notice that they were specifically forbidden from trying to talk with the dead and seeking a medium. Yet when Saul found himself without the Spirit, he rebelled further against God and sought out the witch of Endor, so she could talk with the dead, Samuel, **1 Chronicles 10:13-14**.

'In those days, the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, 'You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army.' David said, 'Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do.' Achish replied, 'Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life.' **1 Samuel 28:1-2**

The Philistines provoked another war with Israel, and although Achish asked David to join in the battle, **1 Samuel 28:1**, David evaded the request by offering himself as the bodyguard of Achish, **1 Samuel 28:2**. In this way, David wouldn't have to fight against Israel.

SAUL AND THE MEDIUM AT ENDOR

'Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land. The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets.' **1 Samuel 28:3-6**

Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah, 1 Samuel 28:3 / 1 Samuel 25:1. At one time in the life of Saul, and while Samuel was still alive, he rid the land of all spiritists and cults associated with practices of sorcery and witchcraft, 1 Samuel 28:3 / Exodus 22:18 / Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

But on this occasion, when the Philistines assembled and set up camp at Shunem, Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. He was afraid, 1 Samuel 28:4-5, and thus turned to any source for comfort.

When men are terrified, in their desperation, they often resort to their most primitive beliefs. Since the Spirit of the Lord had already left Saul, he grasped for any reassurance that might bring him relief from his fear, but God didn't answer him, 1 Samuel 28:6 / 1 Chronicles 10:14.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He used the three methods by which supernatural intelligence was ordinarily given.

1. Dreams.

The person prayed for instruction and begged that God would answer by a significant dream.

2. Urim.

This was a kind of oracular answer given to the high priest when clothed with the ephod, on which were the Urim and Thummim. How these communicated the answer is not well known.

3. Prophets.

Who were requested by the party concerned to consult the Lord on the subject in question, and to report his answer. The prophets at that time could only be those in the schools of the prophets, which Samuel had established at Naioth and Gibeah. These were the only successors of Samuel that we know of.'

'Saul then said to his attendants, 'Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.' 'There is one in Endor,' they said. So, Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. 'Consult a spirit for me,' he said, 'and bring up for me the one I name.' But the woman said to him, 'Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?' Saul swore to her by the LORD, 'As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this.' Then the woman asked, 'Whom shall I bring up for you?' 'Bring up Samuel,' he said. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!' The king said to her, 'Don't be afraid. What do you see?' The woman said, 'I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth.' 'What does he look like?' he asked. 'An old man wearing a robe is coming up,' she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.' 1 Samuel 28:7-14

We must remember that this was a unique incident in history, but it is often misunderstood. A correct understanding begins by knowing that God was in complete control of the events that transpired.

Some people believe that this was Satan or a demon pretending to be Samuel, but the work of Satan is nowhere mentioned in the text and nowhere in Scripture do we see any evidence that departed spirits may roam at will among the living.

In view of this, we can only conclude that God was working in these events in order to leave us a record of the tragic end of the life of Saul and the extent to which he had digressed in his faith before his death.

He wants to find a medium so he can inquire of her, 1 Samuel 28:7. A medium was one who supposed he or she had contact with the spirits of the dead. The Hebrew word 'ob' means 'prattling' or 'mumbling.' The word was used to refer to those who were in a self-hypnotic state of behaviour, and thus presumed to communicate with the spirits of the dead.

Over the years, I've come to the conclusion that these so-called mediums and spiritists today totally deceive themselves into thinking they can actually speak with the dead.

There is one in Endor he is told and so he disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman, 1 Samuel 28:8. Saul asks her to raise someone up for him from Sheol, the place of the dead, Numbers 16:30 / Psalm 63:9 / Ezra 31:14 / Ezra 32:18. He wants her to consult a spirit and bring up for him the one he names, 1 Samuel 28:9.

She knew that her practice was against the wishes of the king, 1 Samuel 28:9. By the instructions of Samuel, Saul had eradicated mediums and witches from Israel, 1 Samuel 28:3, but this action was taken when Samuel was still alive. We would conclude, therefore, that under the direction of Samuel, the prophet of God, those who practised sorcery were false religious leaders in Israel, for what they were practising wasn't supernatural.

As long as Samuel was alive, and Saul followed his spiritual leadership, Saul drove out those who adhered to any of the Canaanite religious practices; the witch of Endor was an indication of Canaanite religiosity. Saul assures her that she won't be put to death, and then the woman asks who she should bring up for him, to which he replied Samuel, 1 Samuel 28:10-11.

As soon as Saul made the request in 1 Samuel 28:11, notice that 'she cried out at the top of her voice,' 1 Samuel 28:12. Samuel must have appeared in 1 Samuel 28:12 because the text indicates that the woman had never before performed any such incantations, 1 Samuel 28:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'That Samuel did appear on this occasion is most evident from the text; nor can this be denied from any legitimate mode of interpretation: and it is as evident that he was neither raised by the power of the devil nor the incantations of the witch, for the appearances which took place at this time were such as she was wholly unacquainted with. Her familiar did not appear, and from the confused description she gives, it is fully evident that she was both surprised and alarmed at what she saw, being so widely different from what she expected to see.'

Saul asked her what she saw, and she replied she saw a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth, 1 Samuel 28:12. Saul then asks her to describe this figure, and she says it's an old man wearing a robe coming up, 1 Samuel 28:13. Straight away, we can see that she is very vague in what she describes.

The request of Saul was immediate, but it was God, not the medium, who brought Samuel to life in the mind of the woman. The fact that the medium cried out in terror is evidence that she had never experienced something like this before, thus indicating that she had nothing to do with Samuel coming to life.

She was only a bystander to the work of God to communicate to Saul that his days were numbered. Please note that Saul didn't see in his mind what the medium envisioned. Since Saul saw nothing, we must conclude that God brought the woman into a state of vision, in which experience, what she saw was lifelike.

In a state of vision, the beholder couldn't tell the difference between that which was real and that which was the product of a God-inspired experience in one's mind.

In this case, Samuel wasn't actually incarnated into the flesh of a man, nor was a spirit of his appearance revealed that could be seen by the medium or Saul. The bringing up of Samuel was only in the mind of the woman, and notice that it was Saul who said it was Samuel who appeared, 1 Samuel 28:14, not the woman.

Earlier, Saul asked her to bring up Samuel, 1 Samuel 28:11, but here she described this person as old and wearing a robe, 1 Samuel 28:14. Well, that could be anybody, as most men wore robes in Old Testament times, and so she relies on Saul to fill in the gaps.

Notice she didn't say who it was; it was Saul who said it was Samuel, **1 Samuel 28:14**, but how did he know? He couldn't see a thing. Because Saul came believing that she could speak to the dead, his mind was already made up about who this ghostly figure was. The truth was, she was as much a fake as those who practice these things today. We need to remember that Saul was mentally unstable at this stage of his life, the only comfort he had from the 'evil' spirit which God gave him, **1 Samuel 16:14 / 1 Samuel 16:23**, was when David played the harp for him, **1 Samuel 16:23**, but by the time we get to this event, I would imagine he's all over the place mentally, hence why he goes to see this witch.

'Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' 'I am in great distress,' Saul said. 'The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So, I have called on you to tell me what to do.' Samuel said, 'Why do you consult me now that the LORD has departed from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbours—to David. Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. The LORD will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.' **1 Samuel 28:15-19**

We aren't told whether Samuel spoke through the medium or directly to Saul, **1 Samuel 28:15-19**. We assume that the speaking was direct to Saul, but not necessarily through the incarnation of a body or the apparition of a spirit. It's simply stated that a conversation went on between Saul and Samuel.

The conversation was in a vision, for Samuel's mouth wasn't incarnate in order for him to converse as people do in life. The vision at this moment in the experience had possibly gone from the medium to the mind of Saul. As I mentioned earlier, Saul's state of mind was unstable. I think it's reasonable to believe that Saul believed this was really going on, but it was all in his mind.

Samuel asks Saul why he has disturbed him and Saul replies that he is in distress because of the Philistines and despite consulting God he had no answer, **1 Samuel 28:15**.

He tells Saul when the Lord becomes your enemy, one's existence and work are over, **1 Samuel 28:16 / James 4:4**.

Notice that Samuel didn't tell him anything he didn't already know, his time was up, **1 Samuel 28:17**. God became the enemy of Saul for two reasons.

1. Saul didn't obey the Lord, **1 Samuel 28:18**.

2. He didn't eradicate the Amalekites who had taken advantage of the weakness of Israel when the nation came out of Egyptian bondage, **1 Samuel 28:18 / 1 Samuel 15:1-9**.

Saul previously knew that God had given the kingdom to David, for he knew from the time of Samuel that David had been anointed to be the king of Israel. But the reality of the end of his own kingship, and the death of his sons, **1 Samuel 28:19 / 1 Samuel 31:8 / 2 Samuel 1:10**, which would terminate the lineage of his family as kings of Israel, was made vividly real by this vision.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Samuel telling Saul that he and his sons will be with him, **1 Samuel 28:19**.

'Does not this mean that they were to go to paradise? I suppose it means no more than that they should all die.'

The reality was too much for an old man whose hopes had now been totally dashed by the words of Samuel. Saul realised that his end had come, **1 Chronicles 10**. Samuel also says that God will give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines, **1 Samuel 28:19**.

I believe that Samuel's appearance was a great surprise to her, and thus take it as an indication that she had, before this, only faked the ability to talk with the dead.

There is no other occasion recorded where the dead came back to give information. In **Luke 16**, the request of the rich man to have someone go back to the living and warn his brothers was denied.

‘Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel’s words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and all that night.’ 1 Samuel 28:20

Saul obviously understood what Samuel had said to him, hence why he fell and was filled with fear and left with no strength because he hadn’t eaten anything that day and night, 1 Samuel 28:20.

TODAY

Amazingly, people still look to the wrong source for spiritual guidance, not only do we have the huge businesses of astrology, but the ever common ‘spiritualist’ market.

There are tarot cards, palm readers, crystal balls, séances, etc. Not much has changed in human nature. We know we need spiritual guidance, as Jeremiah stated long ago, ‘it is not in man who walks to direct his steps,’ **Jeremiah 10:23**. God has given us His word, and so, let’s be content to learn and walk by what He has revealed. Since the time that man first started practising witchcraft, it has been an abomination in the sight of God.

The first mention in the Bible is in **Exodus 22:18**, again, in **Leviticus 19:31**, and in **Leviticus 20:27**. Witchcraft includes the whole family of magic, fortune-telling, and predictions of the future.

WHY WOULD GOD HAVE THIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THESE PEOPLE?

The main reason God has this attitude towards mediums and spiritualists, etc., is because He is God and He can adopt any attitude He might choose. But God’s laws always have a practical reason.

There is no doubt that there are many witches, fortune tellers, and familiar spirits today who believe they have these powers, and they believe they can tell you facts lost in your subconscious mind, but they’re making it all up in their minds, and more importantly, they can’t tell the future. This is a privilege God reserves for Himself, and He’s very jealous when man tries to invade His territory, **Isaiah 41:21-24**.

Equally as strong a reason for God’s hatred of witchcraft is that in His infinite wisdom, He knew that it could and would become a form of idolatry, and He knew that it would cause some not to inherit eternal life in heaven, which is ultimately more serious, **Galatians 5:19-21 / Revelation 22:15**.

Sadly, many people today put their hopes and dreams in these people, and just like Saul, when things get desperate, they will go anywhere, except to God, to find comfort and answers to life’s questions.

People so desperately miss their loved ones who have passed on, they will go anywhere just to have one last ‘conversation’ with them and in the ‘medium’s mind,’ just like the witch of Endor, they truly believe they are communicating with the dead.

CAN THE DEAD COMMUNICATE WITH THE LIVING?

According to the Bible, No! If there is any supernatural activity in a séance, for example, it's certainly not the spirit of the departed one speaking through the medium.

It's not possible, according to the Scriptures, to contact the spirits of the dead. Jesus made this very clear with the account of the rich man and Lazarus. **Luke 16:19-31**.

Two things need to be noted about this passage: there is a great gulf fixed between the abode of the righteous dead and the unrighteous dead, which no one can cross.

The dead, in other words, are limited in their movement. The rich man was refused permission to warn his five brothers of their impending fate if they didn't repent. The passage indicates, along with the rest of the Scripture, that the dead aren't allowed to speak to the living on any matter.

'When the woman came to Saul and saw that he was greatly shaken, she said, 'Look, your servant has obeyed you. I took my life in my hands and did what you told me to do. Now please listen to your servant and let me give you some food so you may eat and have the strength to go on your way.' He refused and said, 'I will not eat.' But his men joined the woman in urging him, and he listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the couch. The woman had a fattened calf at the house, which she butchered at once. She took some flour, kneaded it, and baked bread without yeast. Then she set it before Saul and his men, and they ate. That same night, they got up and left.' 1 Samuel 28:21-25

The woman now comes to Saul and sees that he was greatly shaken. She tells him that she has obeyed him, and she took her own life into her own hands by obeying him, 1 Samuel 28:21. She then pleads with Saul to eat so that he can go, 1 Samuel 28:22, and notice he refused to eat, 1 Samuel 28:23.

Saul, by this time, already knew that David was to be God's anointed king of Israel because Samuel told him earlier, but here it appears the reality of this was taking its toll on Saul as he realised that his reign as king was coming to an end, and his family wouldn't continue as kings of Israel.

All his hopes and dreams for his family to continue in his kingship came crashing down with the words of Samuel. He refused to eat, but when his men joined the woman in urging him, he listened to them, got up from the ground and sat on the couch, 1 Samuel 28:23. The woman goes ahead and butchers the fattened calf that she had, 1 Samuel 28:24. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The ancients used great despatch in their cookery. In hot countries, they could not keep flesh meat by them any length of time; hence they generally kept young animals, such as calves, lambs, and kids, ready for slaughter; and when there was occasion, one of them was killed, and dressed immediately.'

The woman also took some flour, kneaded it and baked bread without yeast, 1 Samuel 28:24. She obviously made the bread without yeast because she didn't have time to make leavened bread, as she wanted Saul and his men away from her house as soon as possible. Then she set it before Saul and his men, and they ate, and that same night they got up and left, 1 Samuel 28:25.

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION

'The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. The

commanders of the Philistines asked, ‘What about these Hebrews?’ Achish replied, ‘Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul, king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him.’ But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, ‘Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master’s favour than by taking the heads of our own men? Isn’t this the David they sang about in their dances: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?’’ 1 Samuel 29:1-5

ACHISH SENDS DAVID BACK TO ZIKLAG

David’s faith in God is very evident in this chapter as he continually refused to be tempted to join Achish and fight against the Israelites, [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) / [Psalms 26:4-5](#).

The Philistines gathered all their army at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel, [1 Samuel 29:1](#). As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish, [1 Samuel 29:2](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The military divisions of the Philistine army were by hundreds and by thousands, like those of the Israelites, [1 Samuel 8:12](#). David and his men formed a bodyguard to Achish, [1 Samuel 28:2](#).’

The use of the word ‘Hebrews’, [1 Samuel 29:3](#), was used in an insulting way, and although Achish was loyal to David and his men, the other Philistine leaders didn’t agree with his association with the Hebrews, [1 Samuel 29:3-4](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is strange that they had not yet heard of David’s destruction of a village of the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites, [1 Samuel 27:8-9](#). Had they heard of this, they would have seen much more cause for suspicion.’ David’s reputation was so great not only among his own people but these other Philistine leaders appeared to recognise David and even quote the song which the Israelites sang concerning David killing tens of thousands, [1 Samuel 29:5](#).

Because David had been with Achish for over a year, [1 Samuel 27:7](#), he seems to think that they could become friends with the Israelites but history shows that this would never happen.

Willis, in his commentary, gives us four reasons as to why the leaders of the Philistines rejected the intention of Achish to take David and his men into the battle against Israel.

1. The long enmity between the Philistines and the Hebrews had resulted in deep mistrust on both sides.
2. In the battle of Geba, [1 Samuel 14:21](#), the Hebrews who had deserted to the Philistines defected to their fellow Israelites and aided Saul in destroying the Philistines.
3. If David and his men decided to go back to Saul, they would easily do so by slaughtering the Philistines, any great number of them, and taking their heads to Saul.

An opportunity like that, the lords of the Philistines were determined not to put into the hands of David.

4. David had a reputation of having slain ‘tens of thousands’ of Philistines, and the lords of the Philistines were not about to forget it.

‘So Achish called David and said to him, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until today, I have found no fault in you, but the rulers don’t approve of you. Now turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine rulers.’ ‘But what have I done?’ asked David. ‘What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you

until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?' Achish answered, 'I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, 'He must not go up with us into battle.' Now get up early, along with your master's servants who have come with you and leave in the morning as soon as it is light.' So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.' 1 Samuel 29:6-11

Even though Achish thought that David was reliable, 1 Samuel 29:6, he goes on to apologise to David and tells him to go home, but don't upset the Philistine rulers, 1 Samuel 29:7. David asks what it is he has done that he can't go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king? 1 Samuel 29:8.

Achish tells David he has been as pleasing in his eyes as an angel of God, 1 Samuel 29:9 / Zechariah 12:8. It must be noted that he didn't use the name Yahweh; he uses the phrase 'ha Elohim', which is a general reference to 'the gods'. Achish then tell him, 'Get up early, along with your master's servants', 1 Samuel 29:10 / 1 Chronicles 12:19-21.

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

'The way to understand it is found in 1 Chronicles 12:19-21, where it appears that a considerable number of Manassites fell to David just at this time, and went back with him to Ziklag.'

Because David had dealt fairly with Achish, Achish returned the favour. And so, David accepted and followed his advice and returned home, 1 Samuel 29:11, knowing that he wouldn't go to war against his fellow Israelites.

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

'David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, and had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old. They killed none of them but carried them off as they went on their way. When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David's two wives had been captured—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.' 1 Samuel 30:1-6

DAVID DESTROYS THE AMALEKITES

After the events with Achish in the previous chapter, we read here that the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag, 1 Samuel 30:1. This problem should never have happened if Saul had done what he was supposed to do, 1 Samuel 15:1-33.

The Amalekites took full advantage of the chance to capture and burn Ziklag whilst David and his men were away, 1 Samuel 30:2. After seeing what the Amalekites had done, 1 Samuel 30:3, David and his men wept until he couldn't weep anymore, 1 Samuel 30:4.

The grief was so great that there was talk of rebellion among David's own men, 1 Samuel 30:5, but David finds strength from the Lord, 1 Samuel 30:6. As is often the case, those who find themselves in leadership positions, find themselves very alone at times, but they have learned to trust God to help them through those lovely and difficult times.

‘Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, ‘Bring me the ephod.’ Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the LORD, ‘Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?’ ‘Pursue them,’ he answered. ‘You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.’ David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Valley, where some stayed behind. Two hundred of them were too exhausted to cross the valley, but David and the other four hundred continued the pursuit. They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat—part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights. David asked him, ‘Who do you belong to? Where do you come from?’ He said, ‘I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago. We raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag.’ David asked him, ‘Can you lead me down to this raiding party?’ He answered, “Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them.’ 1 Samuel 30:7-15

David asks Abiathar the priest to bring me the ephod, [1 Samuel 30:7](#), and David once again inquires of the Lord, [1 Samuel 30:8](#). This was usually done using the Urim and Thummim, [Exodus 28:20](#) / [Numbers 27:21](#) / [1 Samuel 22:10](#) / [1 Samuel 28:6](#) / [1 Samuel 30:8](#).

David asks God if he should pursue this raiding party? Will he overtake them? And God tells him to go, he will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue, [1 Samuel 30:8](#).

David continues to pursue the Amalekites with six hundred men whilst leaving two hundred men behind, [1 Samuel 30:9-10](#). These were probably the older men because they couldn’t keep up with the younger men, [1 Samuel 30:21](#).

Notice David meets an Egyptian who was a slave of the Amalekites, [1 Samuel 30:11-13](#). This again reminds us just how ruthless the Amalekites were. This poor Egyptian was basically left for dead as it appears that the Amalekites were in a hurry to get back to return to their territory before the Philistines returned from their battle with Israel.

He tells David what they did when they raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb and burned Ziklag, [1 Samuel 30:14](#).

David then asks him if he can lead him down to the raiding party? And the Egyptian says to David, swear to me before God that he will not kill him or hand him over to his master, and he will take you down to him, [1 Samuel 30:15](#).

‘He led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking, and revelling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder, or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, ‘This is David’s plunder.’ 1 Samuel 30:16-20

Because of their success with all the raids they carried it, it appears it’s now party time, a time to celebrate, [1 Samuel 30:16](#). David took advantage of their drunken state and killed everyone except for four-hundred men on camels, [1 Samuel 30:17](#).

The good news is that everyone who was taken captive earlier was now freed, [1 Samuel 30:18](#), and David and the men managed to retrieve all the spoils that the Amalekites had taken from the Philistines and Israelites, [1 Samuel 30:19-20](#).

‘Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor Valley. They came out to meet David and the men with him. As David and his men approached, he asked them how they were. But all the evil men and troublemakers among David’s followers said, ‘Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go.’ David replied, ‘No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike.’ David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this. When David reached Ziklag, he

sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, 'Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies.' David sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev, and Jattir; to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa and Rakal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where he and his men had roamed.' 1 Samuel 30:21-31

When David and his men returned to the two hundred men he had left behind earlier, 1 Samuel 30:10, some of David's men didn't want to share any of the spoils with them, 1 Samuel 30:21-22.

But notice that those who complained about this were evil men and troublemakers, 1 Samuel 30:22, but David, in his wisdom, disagreed, 1 Samuel 30:23.

David explains the principle by which all his battles would be governed, 1 Samuel 30:24-25. In other words, as far as David is concerned, those who are on the front line are just as important as those who aren't on the front line, Numbers 31:27-47 / Joshua 22:8.

Notice also that David sent some of the spoils to the elders of Judah who were his friends, 1 Samuel 30:26. We must understand that David wasn't trying to bribe them, the tribe of Judah had always been his friend, 1 Kings 12:20.

David's gift to them and all the surrounding towns was a way of expressing his thanks for their loyalty, 1 Samuel 30:27-31, and their recognition that David was God's choice to be the next king of Israel.

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

'Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armour-bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.' But his armour-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armour-bearer and all his men died together that same day. When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.' 1 Samuel 31:1-7

SAUL TAKES HIS LIFE

The Philistines' fight against Israel was a bloody mess, many of the Israelites fled and many died, 1 Samuel 31:1 / 1 Chronicles 10:1-12. When Achish had previously requested that David not go with the Philistines in this battle against Israel, 1 Samuel 29:6-11, he actually did David a huge favour.

It was during this series of battles that David's dear friend Jonathan was killed by the Philistines, along with Saul's other sons, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua, 1 Samuel 31:2.

It's clear this was all a part of God's plan; now it was time to end the rulership and kingship of Saul and his son Johnathon. Saul, now being seriously injured, calls his armour-bearer to kill him, 1 Samuel 31:3-4, because he didn't want to be tortured by the Philistines.

However, his armour-bearer refused to do so because he knew that Saul was God's anointed king. As a result of his armour-bearer refusing to kill him, [1 Samuel 31:4](#), and so, Saul takes his own life, as does his armour-bearer, [1 Samuel 31:4-6](#) / [1 Chronicles 10:6](#).

There are five suicides recorded in the Scriptures, we have Saul and his armour-bearer and three others which are found in [2 Samuel 17:23](#) / [1 Kings 16:18](#) / [Matthew 27:5](#).

Saul's three sons died too and although Johnathon deeply loved David, he remained true to his father, even when his own father condemned him to death, [1 Samuel 14:36-43](#), and threw a spear at him to kill him because he refused to listen to him when he spoke about David, [1 Samuel 20:33](#). Because of this event, the Israelites were terrified and abandoned their cities and fled into the wilderness as fugitives, [1 Samuel 31:7](#) / [1 Chronicles 10:7](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'They appear to have been panic-struck, and therefore fled as far as they could out of the reach of the Philistines. As the Philistines possessed Beth-Shan, situated near the Jordan, the people on the other side of that river, fearing for their safety, fled also.'

In a sense, they had reaped what they sowed, [Galatians 6:7-8](#). The very people who made David and his men fugitives were now fugitives themselves.

'The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off his head and stripped off his armour, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. They put his armour in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.' [1 Samuel 31:8-13](#)

Make no mistake about what we read here, the men of Jabesh Gilead were extremely brave and courageous in their actions here, especially when we remember that at the beginning of Saul's reign, he had delivered the Jabesh Gileadites from the insulting intention of the Ammonites to make slaves of all of them and also to put out their right eyes, [1 Samuel 31:8-13](#)

The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa, [1 Samuel 31:8](#). Notice after cutting off Saul's head and stripping off his armour, they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people, [1 Samuel 31:9](#) / [1 Chronicles 10:10](#).

They placed his armour in the temple of Ashtaroath, [1 Samuel 31:10](#). This was probably the temple of Venus in Ashkelon, [2 Samuel 1:20](#). The idea behind it was that it was put on display as a trophy, just like David did with the head of Goliath, [1 Samuel 17:54](#) / [2 Samuel 31:12-14](#).

They also fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan, [1 Samuel 31:10](#) / [1 Chronicles 10:10](#) / [1 Samuel 5:1-5](#) / [2 Samuel 21:12](#) / [Judges 16:27](#) / [Judges 16:30](#). This was done as a warning to all of their enemies, especially the Philistines that they would have the same fate if they came against them.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The placing of Saul's armour as a trophy in the temple of Ashtaroath was a counterpart to the placing Goliath's sword in the tabernacle, [1 Samuel 21:9](#). In [1 Chronicles 10:10](#), it is added that they 'fastened Saul's head in the temple of Dagon,' probably either in Gaza, [Judges 16:21](#), or in Ashdod, [1 Samuel 5:1-3](#). This was, perhaps, in retaliation for the similar treatment of Goliath's head, [1 Samuel 17:54](#). The variations seem to imply that both this narrative and that in [1 Chronicles 10:1-14](#) are compiled from a common and a fuller document.'

When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, whom Saul had initially saved in his early years, 1 Samuel 11:1-5, heard of the desecration of Saul and his sons, they secretly came at night and burned the bodies at Jabesh, 1 Samuel 31:11-12. Cremation was very unusual, if not actually forbidden, among the Jews. God pronounced a severe judgment against Moab because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom, Amos 2:1.

The difference here is that the bones of Saul and his sons weren't burned, 1 Samuel 31:13. Perhaps they burned the bodies to prevent any further display of them by the Philistines, or perhaps because their natural decomposition had reached a state that made it necessary so to do.

They buried the bones of Saul and his sons under the tamarisk tree, 1 Samuel 31:13. This isn't the same tree that Saul ordered the slaughter of the priests of Nob, 1 Samuel 22:6.

It was the same kind of tree, but in two different locations. It was later when the bones of Saul and his sons were buried in a family tomb in Zelah, 2 Samuel 21:12-14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'But in this case, from a pious desire to disguise the mutilation of the headless corpses, and exempt them from any possible future insult, the men of Jabesh burned the bodies, yet so as to preserve the bones, 1 Samuel 31:13 / 2 Samuel 21:12.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This act of the men of Jabesh-Gilead was an act of gratitude due to Saul, who, at the very commencement of his reign, rescued them from Nahash, king of the Ammonites, 1 Samuel 11:1, and by his timely succours saved them from the deepest degradation and the most oppressive tyranny. This heroic act, with the seven days' fast, showed that they retained a due sense of their obligation to this unfortunate monarch.'

As a result of Saul's obsession with trying to kill David and ignoring God's will, and going to mediums, this was now the end of Saul and his kingship, paving the way for David to become king of Israel.