

Commentary & Notes on 1 Samuel

The commentary and notes below are adapted from the teaching materials of Annie Kartoizian (1906-1989). In 1934 Annie became a missionary in China with OMS. During World War II she spent 21 months in a Japanese concentration camp as a prisoner. She was repatriated in 1943 and sailed on the famous vessel Gripsholm. In 1949 she made a miraculous last-minute escape from Beijing before it fell to Mao's Communists. When she could no longer enter China, Annie went to Taiwan. Annie and her family have been life-long friends of our family. In 1989, while pastoring with the United Armenian Congregational Church of Hollywood I had the honor of participating in her funeral. It was during those years in Los Angeles that Annie gave me her teaching notes (the commentary below) - laboriously typed on what is now yellowed paper with hand written marginal notes, many of which are in Chinese. - Pastor Steve

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Study to the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

These two books with the books of Kings were regarded as furnishing a complete history of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Originally the two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings formed one volume of four books of the Kings.

I. Name

These two books are named after Samuel, not because he was the author, but because he was the principal man of the period described. The two great institutions, the PROPHETIC ORDER and the MONARCHY, which were brought forward and established during this period, are connected closely with the history of Samuel. This explains also why this part of sacred history bears the name of Samuel.

II. Period of Sacred History Covered

A. The first book of Samuel covers a period of transition in the history of the nation. It deals with the process from the judges to the kings. The condition of the chosen people under the judges was one of terrible degeneracy. They had practically rejected God from being King. The clamor for an earthly king which followed was the natural outcome of this practical rejection.

In 1 Samuel we have the history of the people from the last of the judges, Samuel and Eli, through the troubled times of Saul, in which they learned what government by man really meant, to the beginning of the reign of the king chosen by God, David. This period extended over about one century, from the birth of Samuel (1171 or 1114 B.C.) to the accession of David to the throne (1055 or 1003 B.C.).

B. The book of 2 Samuel deals almost exclusively with the history of David. His history begins in 1 Samuel and runs on into 1 Kings, and is dealt with from another standpoint in 1 Chronicles. 2 Samuel, however, is the principal history of his kingship, and presents to us the picture of the theocratic monarchy. The people had clamored for a king. God first gave them one after their own heart; He then gave them one after His own heart. By him also the failure of mediation in government was manifested. Yet ye, by relation to God maintained even through times of sinning, contributed to the movement of history toward the one true King.

III. Author

The author of the books is unknown; but it is generally agreed that they are a compilation

from different sources, including the writings of Samuel (1 Samuel 10:25), the book of Nathan the prophet (1 Chronicles 29:29), the book of Jasher (2 Samuel 12:18) - a national anthology (a collection of ancient records of honored men or noble deeds). The later two of these books which have perished.

IV. Period of Years Covered

Roughly speaking the two books cover a period of 150 years. 1 Samuel covers about 110 years. 2 Samuel covers about 40 years.

V. Outstanding Events

1. Establishment of the monarchy

It is evident that God intended the Israelites to become a great nation living immediately under His government and knit together by faith in Him. But they proved themselves unworthy. They disregarded God's commands; fell into evil ways and were fast losing their national and religious life. It was clearly seen that for salvation from their troubles a strong union must be made. Samuel was ordered by God to accede to the people's wishes; reluctant at first, he finally yielded and anointed Saul as king.

Although the institution of royalty began in Israel during this period, it had been contemplated and prepared for from the first. Passing from the promise to Abraham (Genesis 17:6,16), with its prophetic limitation to Judah (Genesis 49:10), we find the term kingdom applied to Israel as marking its typical destiny (Exodus 19:6), centering of course in The King (Numbers 24:17,19). The character of this royalty was also clearly defined in Deuteronomy 17, while from Judges 8:23 we learn, that the remembrance and expectation of this destiny were kept alive in Israel. It was, however, during the period which is to be studied that royalty was first actually introduced in Israel. It appeared in Saul in its negative, and in David in its positive aspect. Nor is it without the deepest significance in this respect that in the books of Samuel the designation "Lord of hosts" occurs for the first time, and that Hannah who was the first to use this in her prayer (1 Samuel 1:11), prophesied of that King (1 Samuel 2:10) in Whom all Israel's hopes were fulfilled, and Whose kingdom is the subject of grateful praise alike by the Virgin-mother, and by the father of John the Baptist (Luke 2).

2. Rise of the prophetic order

One of the most striking features of these books is the order of the Prophets which suddenly presents itself. No explanation is given for its origin. Up to this time the priest had been the chosen medium through which God communicated His will to His people. Now the prophet to a great extent takes his place. This order represented the independence of the moral portion of the nation and the Divine will as distinct from government or priestly enactment.

In Samuel we see the real commencement of the Old Testament prophetic order. The idea of it was no new. We can trace it as early as in Genesis 20:7; and we find not only Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10), but even Miriam (Exodus 15:20; Numbers 12:2) designated by the title of prophet; while the characters and functions of the office are clearly defined in Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:9-22. Although Joshua was not himself a prophet, yet the gift of prophecy had not ceased in his time: Deborah (Judges 6:8; 14:4). The order of prophets as such evidently began with Samuel.

Schools were established in which the prophets were trained for their work. Such a school was established in Ramah, Samuel's home. Instruction was given in the Sacred Books and poetry. The pupils were also taught to play upon musical instruments.

VI. Leading Characters

The three leading characters are Samuel, Saul, and David. The books open with the aged priest, Eli, as the priest, judge, and leader of the people. Samuel is born in answer to prayer; he takes the place of Eli. The people ask for a king; Saul is given; Saul proving unworthy is deposed and David takes his place. The books close with the end of David's reign.

COMMENTARY AND NOTES

Outline of First Samuel

- I. SAMUEL Chapters 1-7
 - A. Preparation - Chapters 1-4:1
 - 1. Birth and Childhood - Chapters 1-2:11
 - 2. Life at Shiloh - Chapter 2:12-36
 - 3. His call - Chapters 3-4:1
 - B. Crisis - Chapters 4:1-7:1
 - 1. Eli - Chapter 4:1-22
 - 2. The Ark - Chapters 5-7:1
 - C. Judgeship - Chapter 7:2-17 (period of 20 years)
 - 1. Revival at Mizpeh - verses 2-8
 - 2. Victory at Eben-ezer - verses 9-14
 - 3. Samuel governing as prophet, priest, and judge - verses 15-17
- II. SAUL Chapters 8-15
 - A. Appointment - Chapters 8-10
 - 1. The people's demand - Chapter 8
 - 2. Samuel's search - Chapter 9
 - 3. Saul's anointing and coronation - Chapter 10
 - B. Reign - Chapters 11-14
 - 1. The kingdom established - Chapters 11,12
 - 2. Wars - Chapters 13,14
 - C. Rejection - Chapter 15
 - 1. War with Amalek - verses 1-7
 - 2. Disobedience - verses 8,9
 - 3. Rejection - verses 10-33
 - 4. Samuel mourns for Saul - verses 34,35

III. DAVID Chapters 16-31

A. Preparation - Chapters 16-20

1. Anointed - Chapter 16
2. David's progress - Chapters 17-18:5
3. David's difficulties - Chapters 18:6-chapter 20

B. David in exile - Chapters 21-27

1. David's flight - Chapter 21
2. Varied experiences - Chapters 22-27

C. David's return - Chapters 28-31

1. Saul and the witch - Chapter 28
2. Various adventures of David - Chapters 29,30
3. The death of Saul - Chapter 31

Chapter 1

Chapter Outline

- I. Hannah, the mother of Samuel - verses 1-19
- II. The birth of Samuel - verses 20-23
- III. Hannah brings Samuel to Eli - verses 24-28

Meaning of proper names

Elkanah - "the god-acquired", "purchased", "whom God possessed"

Ephrathite - Ephraimite

Hannah - "favour", "grace"

Peninniah - "pearl", "coral"

Shiloh - "rest", "Messiah"

Eli - "height", "ascension"

Hophni - "pugilist"

Phinehas - "serpent's mouth".

Ramah - "high place"

Samuel - "heard of God", "name of God"

Notes

Verse 1: Ramah is on Mount Ephraim, about thirteen miles due west from Shiloh. From Joshua 21:5 we know that, amongst others, certain districts within the tribal possession of Ephraim were assigned to the Levitical families which descended from Kohath. One of these - that of Zuph (1 Chronicles 6:1,22,27,28) - had given its name to the whole district, as the "land of Zuph" (1 Samuel 9:5). From this family sprang Elkanah, a name which characteristically occurs in the Old Testament only in Levitical families.

Verse 2: The Mosaic Law tolerated and regulated polygamy but nowhere approved of it. In practice polygamy was chiefly confined to the wealthy. Perhaps the fact that Hannah was not blessed with children may have led to this double marriage.

Verse 3: Elkanah came to Shiloh with his household for the two fold purpose of worship and of sacrificing peace-offerings according to the law (Exodus 23:15; 34:20; Deuteronomy 16:16).

Once more the sanctuary had been restored to its former and God-destined position, and Eli the high-priest judged in Israel. Since he was now old, the chief direction of the services devolved upon his unworthy sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

Verses 4,5: "*Portions*" - The parts of the peace-offerings which belonged to the offerer, and on which he feasted with his family. Note that "*portions*" are given to Peninnah and to "*all of her sons and daughters.*" Consider this allotment of "*portions*" in connection with the "*double portion*" given to Hannah. Elkanah gives "*a double portion*" to Hannah as if to indicate that he loved her just as if she had borne him a son.

Verse 6: The Hebrew word here translated "*rival*" occurs frequently in Scripture, but nowhere else does it denote a person. The KJV renders it "*adversary.*" Because of Peninnah, the time of feasting became seasons of pain and bitter emotion to Hannah; so it happened each year.

Verses 8,9: In spite of Elkanah's comfort the burden of her reproach seemed almost too heavy to bear.

Verse 9: Eli was not a descendant of Eleazar but of Ithamar, to whom the high-priesthood seems to have been transferred from the elder branch of the Aaronic family. Abimelech was the great-great-grandson of Eli (1 Chronicles 24:1).

Verse 11: From earliest childhood her child was to be attached to the house of the Lord; he should be a Nazarite, and that not of the ordinary class, but one whose vow should last for life (Numbers 6:2; Judges 13:5). The vow must have had the concurrence of her husband (Numbers 30:8). As a Levite, Samuel would have been employed, in the ordinary course of things, about the service of the tabernacle from the age of twenty-five to fifty; from his mother's vow he was to be devoted to it from childhood, besides being subjected to the discipline of a Nazarite (Numbers 4:23,30,35).

Verse 13: Literally rendered, "*she was speaking to her heart.*" Such prayers must have been rare in Shiloh; the sacrificial feasts were not unfrequently profaned by excesses for Eli interrupted Hannah's prayer on the supposition that she was drunk.

Verse 24: The period of weaning was suppose to last three years (2 Maccabees 7:27). A Hebrew child at that age would be fit for some ministry, even though the care of him might partially devolve on one of the women who served at the door of the tabernacle.

They had brought with them three bullocks - two for the usual burnt and thank-offerings, and the third as a burnt sacrifice at the formal dedication of Samuel. The meat-offering for each would have been at least 3/10 of an ephah of flour (Numbers 15:8).

Verse 28: "*Lent*" - Has the meaning "allowed to ask" and is a play on words ("*my petition*" and "*I made*" [1:27]) derived from the Hebrew root word "sha'al". "*I have lent*" is a declaration that Hannah is handing over the child she has petitioned God for rather than a statement with any future implication of the return of Samuel to her.

Comparison between Samson and Samuel, both Nazarites (see Judges 13)

Samuel's birth, like that of Samson, was Divinely announced, in Samuel's case by prophecy, in Samson's by angelic message. Samuel was God-granted, Samson God-sent; Samuel was God-dedicated, Samson was God-demanded. Both were Nazarites; but the one spiritually, the other outwardly; both prevailed; but the one spiritually, the other

outwardly. The work of Samson ended in self-indulgence, failure, and death; that of Samuel opened up into the royalty of David, Israel's great type-king.

Lessons from Chapter 1

An example of true prayer and its results.

1. Hannah prayed in earnestness of spirit - verses 10,15
2. Hannah believed - verse 18
3. Hannah rejoiced in the answer - verse 18
4. Hannah fulfilled her vow - verse 28
5. God's blessing was greater than that for which she asked - 2:21

Chapter 2

Chapter Outline

- I. Hannah's prophetic prayer - verses 1-11
- II. The evil sons of Eli - verses 12-17
- III. The child Samuel in the tabernacle - verses 18-26
- IV. The warning to Eli - verses 27-36

Notes

Hannah's prayer is not in the language of sorrow, but in that of thanksgiving and prophetic anticipation. Samuel was, so to speak, the John the Baptist of the Old Testament and it was fitting that on his formal dedication unto God, Hannah should speak words reaching far beyond her own time, and even furnishing what could enter into the Virgin-mother's song. All power, all wisdom is ascribed to God.

Verse 6: "*Sheol*" - the grave, the unseen world.

Verse 8: "*The pillars of the earth*" - Both in prose and in poetry the sacred writers speak on subjects of natural science in the ordinary language of their own age and country.

Verse 10: "*His anointed*" - This prophecy refers to that kingdom which God afterwards established in the family of David, as preparatory to the kingdom of the Messiah; a prophecy of Christ as King (Psalm 2:1-9).

Verse 13: "*The custom of the priests*" - The only portion of the peace-offering to which the officiating priest was entitled by law were the right shoulder and breast, and the cheeks and maw (Leviticus 7:34; Deuteronomy 18:3). Eli's sons not only defrauded the people, but they robbed God of His portion of the offering, which was essential to its acceptance (Leviticus 3:3-5).

Verse 17: "*For the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt*" - Numbers 15:29-31; Hebrews 10:4,26.

Verses 18,19: "*A boy clothed with a linen ephod and...a little robe*" - Ephod, see Exodus 28:4ff. The priest's robe was properly a high-priestly robe (Exodus 38:31. Of course, Samuel's was of a different material and without border.

Verses 20,21: Because Hannah gave gladly to the Lord, God repaid her richly.

Verse 23: The energy, amounting almost to severity, which, even in his old age, Eli could display, as in his undeserved reproof of Hannah, was certainly not exercised towards his sons. Such remonstrances could, of course, produce no effect upon men so seared in conscience as to be already under sentence of judicial hardening (2:25).

Verse 25: *“For it was the will of the Lord to put them to death”* - The Hebrew can be rendered, *“It pleased Jehovah to slay them.”* A man may intercede for remission of penalty due for injury to himself, but who shall venture to entreat for one who has outraged the majesty of God (Numbers 15:27-31)?

Verse 26: The man Samuel was a contrast to them. He grew in favor with God and man.

Verses 27-36: This message came through a prophet. Eli is probably about 60 to 70 years of age at this time.

“Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father” - That is, to Aaron (Exodus 28:1); he was the first high priest; the priesthood descended from him to his eldest son Eleazer, then to Phineas. It became afterwards established in the younger branch of the family of Aaron; for Eli was a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron’s youngest son. From Eli it was transferred back again to Eleazer, because of the profligacy of Eli’s sons. History makes mention of no other high priest of the line of Ithamar before Eli, so he is generally supposed to have been the first of that line who held the office. Why the change from Eleazer’s sons is not stated.

“In Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh” refers to the Egyptian bondage.

Justice would be meted out to the family which, in its pride of office, had dared to treat the priesthood as if it were absolutely its own and to degrade it for selfish purposes.

Eli and his house were to become subjects of special judgements:

1. None of his descendants, so long as they held office, should attain old age (2:31-33).
2. In punishment of their own insolence of office they would experience constant humiliation. *“In distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel”* (2:32) is a prediction amply fulfilled in the history of the priesthood under Samuel, Saul, and later under David, until the deposition of the line of Ithamar.
3. Swift destruction was to overtake the chief offenders, Hophni and Phinehas; their death would be a sign of the commencement of those judgments, which were to culminate in the time of Solomon (1 Samuel 2:34; 1 Kings 2:27).
4. Another and more faithful line of priests should fill the highest office (2:35). This sentence was fulfilled at the beginning of Solomon’s reign, by the appointment of Zakok (1 Kings 2:35) of the family of Eleazar, as high priest, and in this line the priesthood of the order of Aaron remained as long as it existed. It points for its final fulfillment to the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. The deposed family of Eli would have to seek at their hands the humblest places for the sake of the barest necessities of life (2:36).

Lesson from Chapter 2

The importance of parental control and discipline. Parents must be strong in their remonstrance against sin (2:23-25; 3:13)

Chapter 3

Chapter Heading

Samuel's Call

Notes

Verse 1: *"The word of the Lord"* by prophetic vision *"was rare in those days"* - It was rare, and prophetic vision was not *"frequent."*

Verse 3: The holy oil in the seven-branched candlestick in the holy place was burning low, but its light had not yet gone out, when a voice calling Samuel by his name wakened him from sleep. The reference to the light burning seems intended to mark the time.

Verse 5: As Eli's eyesight had begun to *"grow dim"* (3:2), so that he would require the aid of the young Levite in ministry, it was natural to infer that it was the voice of the aged high priest that had called him.

Verse 8: The high priest understood that it was not some vivid dream which had startled the youth from his sleep, but that a voice from heaven commanded his attention.

Verse 10: it is remarkable, as indicative of Samuel's reverential fear, that his reply differs from that taught him by Eli in the omission of the word "Lord".

Before he had heard but a voice, now a vision was granted to him. The "voice" had come from out of the most holy place, where the Lord dwelt between Cherubim; the "vision" of appearance, in whatever form it may have been, was close before Samuel.

Verse 13: How impressively does this history teach the importance of parental control and discipline. Eli had reprovved his sons (2:23-25), but had not done all in his power to restrain them. Had he been unable, as a father, to check them, he ought, as a priest, to have deposed them. In both capacities, through his want of moral courage though a good man, he sadly failed in his duty; and his weak administration not only involved his family in ruin, but brought the affairs of the nation to the lowest ebb.

Verse 14: An appropriate punishment must be required of those who had caused the Lord's offering to be abhorred (Numbers 15:29-31; Isaiah 22:14; Hebrews 10:4,26,31).

Verse 18: The aged priest, however weak and unfaithful, yet in heart a servant of the Lord, received it with humiliation and resignation, though apparently without that resolve of change which alone could have constituted true repentance.

Verses 19-21: By the faithful discharge of a commission so painful, and involving such self-denial and courage, Samuel had stood the first test of his fitness for the prophetic office. Henceforth *"the word of the Lord"* was permanently with him. Not merely by isolated commissions, but in the discharge of a regular office, Samuel acted as prophet in Israel. A new period in the history of the kingdom of God had commenced; and all Israel,

from Dan to Beersheba, knew that there was now a new link between them and their Heavenly King, a living center of guidance and fellowship, and a bond of union for all who were truly the Israel of God.

Lessons from Chapter 3

Who is qualified to receive God's message?

1. Those who minister daily and do God's will constantly - verse 1
2. Those who respond at once to God's call - verses 4,5,8
3. Those who quietly listen - verse 10
4. Those whom God knows will carry out His commission - verse 18

Chapter 4

Chapter Heading

The Ark Taken by the Philistines

Meaning of proper names

Philistines - "wanderers"

Ebenezer - "stone of help"

Aphek - "firmness", "strength", "fortress"

Ichabod - "no glory", "the glory has departed"

Notes

Verse 1: The text implies that the Philistines held possession of a part of the soil of Palestine (7:14). It was, therefore, as against positions which the enemy had occupied for some time that "went out to battle" in that open field which from the monument erected after the later deliverance under Samuel (7:12), obtained the name Ebenezer. This connects the subsequent history with that in Judges 16. Samson was now living.

Aphek is the same as in Joshua 15:53; but not as in 1 Samuel 29:1

These places lay a few miles north or north-west of Jerusalem but have not been absolutely identified.

Verse 5: The exultation of the Israelites and the alarm of the Philistines, when the ark was brought into the camp, indicates grow and unworthy conceptions of the Divine Being in the minds of both nations. They imagined that the outward symbol insured the actual presence and help of the Almighty. The Israelites, instead of inquiring into the causes of God's controversy with them, sought safety in having among them "*the ark of the covenant of the Lord,*" irrespective of the Lord Himself and of the terms of His covenant.

Verses 10,11: Judgment commended in the house of Eli; thus terribly did God teach the lesson that even the most sacred symbol connected with His immediate presence was in itself but wood and gold, and so far from being capable of doing wonders, might even be taken and carried away.

Verse 15: Eli was now 98 years of age.

Verse 18: The effect of the capture of the ark on his aged frame, affecting him even more

than his heavy family disasters, proves that, with all his weakness, there was a truly religious heart. With his death ended a judgeship of forty years.

Verse 21: The deepest pang which had wrought her death was, as in the case of her father-in-law, that the ark, the glory of Israel, was no more. The deaths of the aged high priest and the young mother showed at least their fidelity to their God and their heart-love for His cause and presence.

Lessons from Chapter 4

What guarantees God's presence?

1. Not the ark - verses 4,11
2. Not past blessings - verse 8

Only obedience to God and a constant walking in the light insure God's presence.

Chapter 5

Chapter Heading

The Ark of God a Curse to the Philistines

Meaning of proper names

Dagon - "fish"

Ashdod - "a stronghold"

Ekron - "eradication", "torn up by the roots"

Notes

Verses 1,2: Dagon was the deity of the Philistines; having its upper part resembling the human form, and the lower like a fish. The Philistines brought the ark into the temple of Dagon, in supposed triumph of their gods over the God of Israel.

Verses 3,4: In the East, on the coming into the presence of a superior, a person prostrates himself upon the threshold. Thus the idol had fallen into the most humbling position.

Verse 6: The people suffered physically from a disease (tumors). But, there was also a plague of field mice (1 Samuel 6:4,5,11,18).

Verses 7-12: On an appeal of the people of Ashdod, the lords of the Philistines ordered the removal of the ark to Gath, probably judging, that the calamities complained of were due rather to natural cause than to its presence. But in Gath the same consequences also followed; and when on its further transportation to Ekron the public sufferings were even greater and more sudden than before, the cry became universal to return the ark to the land of Israel.

From the text it appears that the Ekronites, immediately on the arrival of the ark, entreated its removal; but that before the necessary steps could be taken, they were visited with plagues similar to those in Ashdod and Gath, but more intense and widespread even than before. Thus the strokes fell quicker and heavier as the Philistines resisted the hand of God.

Lessons from Chapter 5

The powerlessness of heathen gods.

1. They could not protect those who worshipped them - verses 6,9,11
2. They could not protect themselves - verses 3,4

Chapter 6

Chapter Heading

The Ark Brought to Joshua the Bethshemite

Meaning of proper names

Bethshemesh - "the house of the sun"

Kirjath-jearim - "city of forest-trees"

Notes

Verse 1: The ark having been sent away in terror from the cities, is supposed to have been left in the open field which was then wasted by a large increase of field mice.

Verse 4: The experience of these seven months during which the ark had been in their land, not only convinced the lords of the Philistines of the necessity of yielding to the popular demand, but also made them careful as to the manner of handling the ark when returning it to its place.

The ancient heathen used to consecrate to their gods memorials of their deliverance representing the evils from which they were freed.

Verse 5: Philistia consisted at that time of a federation of five cities or cantons under the rule of lords or princes, with this provision, that no great public measure (such as the removal of the ark, which had been placed at Ashdod by common decree) might be taken without the consent of all.

Verses 7-9: The Philistines were not sure whether, after all, it was not mere chance that had brought the plagues upon them; and they propose a curious device by which to decide that question.

Verses 12-14: That two cows, which had never before been under the yoke, should draw quietly and keep the road without a driver, neither halting nor turning aside; and that while lowing for their calves, to which natural instinct would have led them to return, they should be nevertheless urged forward by a stronger impulse to the very place mentioned by the Philistines, and should there stop, was clearly miraculous. It had happened as the priests had suggested it would if it were God Who had smitten them.

Some think they were placed where two roads met; on going to Ekron, the other to Bethshemesh. It is possible that they were put in such circumstances as these for the greater certainty of the affair; to have turned from their own homes, from their calves and known pasture, and to have taken the road to a strange country, must argue supernatural influence.

Bethshemesh was the nearest Israelitish border city. It is fourteen miles west of

Jerusalem, on the northern boundary of the possession of Judah, about two miles from the great Philistine plain, and seven from Ekron.

Verse 15: Bethshemesh was one of the priests' towns (Joshua 21:16).

Verse 18: Evidently this stone marked the boundary line between the land of Israel and Philistia.

Verse 19: This was to gratify an irreverent curiosity respecting things which God had thought fit to conceal (Numbers 4:15,16; 1 Chronicles 13:9,10).

Verse 21: No doubt the ark was temporarily placed at Kirjath-jearim for safety until the will of God were known.

Lessons from Chapter 6

How God protects His name and His holiness.

1. He caused the cows to leave their calves - verse 10
2. He caused the cows to go the proper direction even though undirected - verse 12
3. He smote those who broke His commands - verse 19

Chapter 7

Chapter Outline

- I. The ark brought to the house of Abinadab - verses 1,2
- II. The revival at Mizpeh - verses 3-8
- III. The Israelites victorious at Eben-ezer - verse 9-14
- IV. Samuel as prophet, priest, and judge - verses 15-17

Meaning of proper names

Mizpeh - "a watch tower"
Beth-car - "the house of the lamb"
Bethel - "house of God"
Gilgal - "a circle"

Notes

Verses 1,2: The ark remained in Kirjath-jearim for a period of twenty years where it was given in charge to Abinadab who, no doubt was a Levite; his son, Eleazar was set apart to the office of guardian, not priest, of the ark.

Here the ark remained, while the tabernacle itself was moved from Shiloh to Nob, and from Nob to Gibeon, till David brought it, after the conquest of Jerusalem, into his royal city (2 Samuel 6:2,3,10,12; 1 Chronicles 13:6). Thus for all this period the sanctuary was empty of that which was its greatest treasure, and the symbol of God's personal presence removed from the place in which He was worshipped.

Special Note on verse 2: Matthew Henry - *"Twenty years of this time were passed before the house of Israel was sensible of the want of the ark. The Septuagint reads it somewhat more clearly: 'And it was twenty years, and (that is, when) the whole house of Israel looked up again after the Lord.'* So long the ark remained in obscurity and the Israelites

were not sensible of the inconvenience, nor ever made any inquiry after it, what was become of it; though, while it was absent from the tabernacle, the token of God's special presence was wanting, nor could they keep the day of atonement as it should be kept. They were content with the altars without the ark; so easily can formal professors be satisfied in a road of external performance without any token of God's presence or acceptance. But at length they began to lament after the Lord, stirred up to it, it is probable, by the preaching of Samuel."

Verses 4-6: The word "Baals" (lords), being masculine plural, intimates that the Israelites worshipped no one false god in particular, but the idols of the several tribes of Canaanites among them, who were regarded by their worshippers as deities of particular districts, from which, or from some other peculiarities, they derived their varied names; Baal-peor, Baal-zebul, etc. Ashtaroth is feminine plural, is the supreme goddess of Canaan and the female counterpart of Baal.

Verse 7: It was quite natural that when the Philistines heard of this grand national gathering at Mizpeh, after twenty years of unattempted resistance to their rule, they should wish to anticipate their movements.

Verse 9: The "*nursing lamb*" would, according to Leviticus 22:27, be, of course, seven days old. It was chosen so young as symbol of the new spiritual life among Israel.

"*A whole burnt offering to the Lord*" - points to the burnt offering as wholly consumed (Leviticus 1:9).

Samuel's prophetic commission appears to have included the temporary exercise of priestly functions (7:17; 9:13; 26:2,5).

Verse 10: The Philistines had suffered from visitation from Jehovah while the ark had been in their midst, so it was natural that they would be prepared to regard any terrible phenomenon in nature as His interposition. God's thunderings resulted in a great victory for Israel.

Verse 12: Samuel's memorial to the Lord gave to Him all the glory for the victory.

Verse 13: After Samuel's government was transferred to Saul, the Philistines soon began to regain mastery (chapters 13,17,23:27,28).

Verse 14: The Amorites, or Canaanitish tribes in that neighborhood, had withdrawn from their alliance with the with the Philistines: "*There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.*"

Verse 15: Samuel's judgeship is to be dated probably from the assembly of the Israelites at Mizpeh (7:3-5). He was then about forty years old. While the earlier judges were generally distinguished by their warlike qualities, which they employed for the deliverance of the Israelites from external oppression, Samuel is remarkable for his attention to their social order and religious improvement. His judgeship, i.e. his religious authority, continued even when Saul was king.

Verse 16: As these three places were near to one another, in the tribe of Benjamin, or its neighborhood, it seems that Samuel's regular judicial authority was exercised chiefly among the central and southern tribes.

When he was at Bethel, the tribe of Ephraim, and all the northern parts of the country,

could attend him; when at Gilgal, the tribe of Benjamin, and those beyond the Jordan might have easy access to him; and when at Mizpeh, he was within reach of Judah, Simeon, and Gad; but Ramah was the place of his abode and there he held his court for there he judged Israel. Ramah which is said to be about six miles from Jerusalem, was the seat of prophecy during the life of Samuel; and there it is probable all Israel came to consult him on matters of a spiritual nature, as there was the only altar of God in the land of Israel. It is probable that Shiloh was destroyed.

Lessons from Chapter 7

Steps in the revival at Mizpeh:

1. *"All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord"* - lamentingly entreated until they obtained (7:2).
2. They returned to the Lord with all their hearts, showing that repentance is primarily of the heart. The inward move must precede the outward move (7:3).
3. They removed their sin - they left the false gods which had been worshipped (7:4).
4. The above steps showed that they also had faith.
5. The next step was the solemn gathering in which, as on former occasions (Joshua 23:2; 24:1) they confessed their national sins and renewed national obligations towards Jehovah (7:6).
6. Confession of sin implied also a willingness to be humbled - a very necessary step in a revival.
7. *"And drew water and poured it out before the Lord"* (7:6) - a symbolic action in this case representing penitence and humiliation (1 Samuel 1:15; 7:6; Psalm 22:14; 62:8; Lamentations 2:19).

Chapter 8

Chapter Outline

- I. Israel demands a king - verses 1-6
- II. The theocracy rejected - verses 7-22

Meaning of proper names

Joel - "Jehovah is God"

Abiah (same as Abijah) - "my father is Jehovah"

Beersheba - "well of the oath"

Notes

Verse 1: This may have been done without Divine direction and approval.

Verse 3: Although not guilty of the wicked practices of the sons of Eli, yet they yielded frequently to the temptation of accepting bribes.

"Perverted justice" - a direct violation of the law in Deuteronomy 16:18,19; also translated *"They inclined or bent judgement."*

Verse 5: Similar proposals had been made to Gideon (Judges 8:22), and probably to Jephthah (Judges 11:8,11). To the people a hereditary monarchy seemed the only means of combining the tribes into one nation, putting an end to their natural jealousies, and subordinating tribal to national interests. All nations around had their kings and whether

for war or in peace, the want of a strong hand wielding a central power for the common good must have been increasingly felt.

Verses 6,7: Notice that Samuel prayed regarding the matter though it does not say that the people prayed before they made the request (8:4).

Not only did Samuel resent the proposal, but God declared it to be virtual rejection of Him.

Theocracy verses monarchy: The original constitution of the Jewish state did not require, though it would admit of, a succession of judges or generals, or a race of kings. As the appointment of the former arose from the frequent relapses of the people into idolatry, and their consequent subjugation by their enemies, so the regal institution originated in their culpable desire to resemble the nations around them (8:20). A kingly government was in no means evil in itself, and indeed it had been provided for in Deuteronomy 17:14. But for a nation to be immediately under the command of God (Exodus 19:5,6), and to be, by His special interposition, in answer to fervent prayer, rescued from peril and trouble, was far better. Instead, however, of seeking the restoration of their national prosperity by sincere repentance, the Israelites chose to give up the particular privileges of the theocracy, and to resort to the principles and policy of other nations. So naturally does man prefer his own resources to dependence upon God's help. Hitherto their deliverance had been unseen, they wanted it seen; it was only certain to faith, but quite uncertain to them in their state of mind; it was in heaven, they wanted it upon earth; it was of God, they wanted it visibly embodied in a man. Thus God characterized it as a rejection of Himself, and He directed Samuel to "*solemnly warn them*" (8:9).

Verses 11-18: In asking for a monarchy like those around them, the people were courting despotism whose intolerable yoke it would not be possible for them to shake off in the future. The royal rights which Samuel reviewed were those claimed by heathen monarchs.

Verse 19: The elders persisted in their demand. Because of their lack of faith they had failed in realizing the constant presence of God as He had planned. It was because of their failure and unbelief that the monarchy seemed to be the more desirable of the two forms of government. Man can have his way. But, there is a point at which the Spirit of God withdraws from the contest. (cf. Psalm 106:15)

Lessons from Chapter 8

What is rejection of God? - verse 7

1. To desire to obey a man rather than God - verse 19
2. To desire to be like the world - verse 20
3. To desire to have a seen deliverer rather than an unseen One - verse 20

Chapter 9

Chapter Heading

Saul chosen to be king

Meaning of proper names

Saul - "asked for"

Kish - "a bow"

Notes

Verses 1,2: The Divine direction for which prophet and people were to wait was not long withheld. The person of the new king was to embody the ideal which Israel had had in view in making their demand for a monarchy. He should possess all the natural attraction and martial qualities which the people could desire in their king; he should reflect their religious standpoint at its best; but he should also represent their national failings and its inmost defect of their religious life: that of combining zeal for the religion of Jehovah, and outward conformity to it, with utter want of real heart submission to the Lord, and of true devotedness to Him.

“Taller than any of the people” - suitable to the wishes of the people who, however, had to learn how incorrect were their notions of kingly qualities (10:23). Saul was a man after the people's own heart. The people obtained precisely what they wanted; and because he who was their king so corresponded to their ideal, and so reflected the national state, he failed. In truth, the history of Saul is a summary and a reflection of that of Israel. A monarchy such as his must first succeed, and finally fail when, under the test of trials, its inmost tendencies would be brought to light. Such a reign was also necessary in order to bring out what was the real meaning of the people's demand and to prepare Israel for the king of God's election and selection in the person of David.

Verse 4: From his home at Gibeah (10:26) Saul and his servant passed in a northwesterly direction over a spur of Mount Ephraim. Thence they turned in their search north-eastward. The whole question of the location of Ramah of Samuel and of the journey Saul is amongst the most difficult in Biblical geography.

Verse 7: Presents are considered essential to a civil and friendly intercourse in the East, particularly when an inferior approaches a superior. Articles of food are the most usual presents from the rural population (16:20). Money, however, even in small sums, is perfectly suitable. Saul, having no provision left, determined to offer Samuel a small coin.

Verse 12: Heights were the natural altars of the ancient world; and during the unsettled times of the Judges, especially after the sanctuary at Shiloh was destroyed, the worship of the people would be offered at the most accessible place. The centralization of this worship enjoined in the law (Deuteronomy 12:11-14) was brought about gradually.

Verses 14-17: The events in these verses show that Saul was indeed the one whom God chose as representative of the people's desire.

Verse 25: Samuel spoke probably, of Israel's need, of Israel's sin, of Israel's help, and of Israel's God.

Lessons from Chapter 9

Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

Chapter 10

Chapter Heading

Saul anointed king

Notes

Verse 1: Taking a vial of oil, Samuel anointed Saul, thus placing the institution of royalty on the same footing as that of the sanctuary and the priesthood (Exodus 30:22-33; Leviticus 8:10-12), as appointed and consecrated by God and for God, and intended to be a medium for receiving and transmitting blessing to His people.

This private anointing of Saul by Samuel, as in the case of David (chapter 16), was only a prophetic intimation of the Divine purpose that Saul should eventually be elected king, and would serve to teach him that, though chosen by the people, he owed his authority to God.

Verse 3: Bethel - going, probably, to sacrifice a Jacob's altar (Genesis 35:6,7; Judges 20:18), as the regular observance of the tabernacle were interrupted.

Verse 5: "*From the high place*" - Hebrew "Gibeath-Elohim" meaning "hill of God" as "Gibeah" means "the hill." This is the first allusion to the so-called "schools of the prophets" (see also 19:18-24), of which Samuel is supposed to have been the founder. In these schools a number of men were trained to discharge the duty of public teachers. A "prophet", in the Scripture sense of the word, is not only a "fore-teller," but a "forth-teller," or expounder of the truth. By the means of the Israelite prophets the law of God became more generally known, and a marked improvement in the spirit and practice of the people was the result. Besides a knowledge of the law, they were instructed in sacred psalmody, also accompanied by "prophesying" - that is, in the art of composing and singing sacred hymns, often with instrumental music.

Verse 12: This was used as a proverbial saying when any one was seen to be mingling with persons to whom he had before been a stranger, and for whose society and pursuits his previous education and habits had not prepared him.

Verse 22: "baggage" - meaning the carriages and things people brought with them and used in coming to Mispeh.

In order to assure Saul of the Divine agency in all this, Samuel gave him three signs at sacred places:

1. He was to meet two men who would inform him of the finding of the she-asses and of this father's anxiety on his account (10:2). This, as confirming Samuel's words, would be a pledge that it was likewise by God's appointment he had been anointed king. Thus the first sign would convey that his royalty was of God or from God.
2. Three men going to Bethel would salute him and, unasked, give him a portion of their sacrificial offerings - two loaves, probably one for himself and another for his servant (10:4). If, as seems likely, these three men belonged to the sons of the prophets, the act was even more significant. It meant homage on the part of the godly in Israel, yet such as did not supersede nor swallow up the higher homage due to God; only two loaves out of all the sacrificial gifts being presented to Saul. This would indicate royalty in subordination to God or under God.
3. The third sign was the most significant of all. On entering Gibeah he was to meet a band of "prophets" (10:5,6). Then the "*Spirit of the Lord*" would "*rush upon*" him, and he would be "*turned into another man*." The import of this sign, in combination with the others, would be - royalty not only from God and under God, but with God.

The Holy Spirit was peculiarly the gift of the Father and of the Son, and only granted to the Church in connection with, and after the resurrection of our Lord. Under the Old Testament, only the manifold influences of the Spirit were experienced, not His indwelling as the Paraclete. This appears not only from the history of those so influenced, and from the character of that influence, but even from the language in which it is described. Thus we read that the Spirit of Elohim "*rushed upon*" Saul, suddenly and mightily laid hold of him - the same expression being used in Judges 14:6,19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 16:13; 18:10.

The difference between Saul's experience and the "new man" experience in the New Testament centers mainly in two points: In the first it was an overpowering influence of the Holy Spirit, not the abiding presence of the Paraclete, so that moral effects produced through that influence were not primary, but secondary, and, so to speak, reflex, while those of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of God's people are direct, primary and permanent. One was the reflex influence of the spirit of man, powerfully influenced by the Spirit of God; the second the direct work of the Holy Spirit on the heart.

Verse 19: They wanted not only a king, but royalty like that of the nations around, and for the purpose of outward deliverance; thus forgetting God's dealings in the past, disclaiming simple trust in Him, and disbelieving the sufficiency of His leadership. In fact, what they really wanted was a king who would reflect and embody their idea of royalty, not the ideal which God had set before them. Saul was this desired one.

Before the lot was cast, Samuel once more presented to the people what the leadership of the Lord had been in the past, and what their choice of another leadership implied.

Verse 22: Saul's withdrawal from the assembly showed that he had some questionings or fears. The people saw nothing in his conduct which seemed strange; and so we may take it that he was just up to the level of their own conceptions, though to us it appears very different from what a hero of God would have done. The reluctance of Moses and of Jeremiah in similar circumstances afford no parallel, although that of the former, at least, was the result of weakness of faith. But the hesitation was before God, not before men.

Verse 26: The main body of the people accompanied him from the assembly.

Verse 27: "*Some worthless fellows*" (Hebrew: "*sons of worthlessness [belial]*") - "*children of Belial*" (KJV) - represented a party, possibly belonging to the great tribes of Judah and Ephraim. They narrowly escaped death for their disloyalty to God, the nation, and Saul (11:12,13).

Lesson from Chapter 10

God does not force His will upon anyone - verses 19,24

Chapter 11

Chapter Outline

- I. Saul's victory at Jabesh-gilead - verses 1-14
- II. The kingdom renewed at Gilgal - verse 15

Meaning of proper names

Jabesh - "dry"

Nahash - "a serpent"
Gilgal - "a circle"

Notes

Verse 1: From 1 Samuel 12:12 it appears that the invasion by Nahash commenced before Israel's demand for a king, and was, indeed, the cause of it; thus proving that, as Samuel charged them, distrust of their Heavenly Leader was the real motive of their movement. The expedition of Nabash had no doubt been undertaken to renew the claims which his predecessor had made, and to avenge the defeat which Jephthah had inflicted upon him (Judges 11:13,33).

Verse 4: The people of Gibeah were moved to lamentation by the news from Jabesh, but they were not roused to action.

Verse 6: Once more the Spirit of Elohim seize upon Saul.

Verse 7: A symbolic action.

Verse 8: Bezek - north-east of Shechem. It almost appears as if we here meet the first traces of separation of the people into Israel and Judah; similarly in 17:52; 18:16; 2 Samuel 2:9; 3:10; 5:1-5; 19:41; 20:2,4.

Verse 9: Little did Saul know how well the brave men of Jabesh would requite the service; how, when on that disastrous day on Mount Gilboa he and his sons would fall in battle, and the victorious Philistines fasten their dead bodies to the walls of Bethshan, these brave men of Jabesh would march all night and rescue the fallen heroes from exposure (31:8-13).

Verse 13: Saul's conduct upon this occasion would serve to increase his popularity; of which Samuel wisely took advantage, in order to obtain a solemn recognition of his royal dignity at Gilgal.

Lesson from Chapter 11

Victory is dependent upon the presence of God's Spirit - verse 6

Chapter 12

Chapter Outline

- I. Samuel's proclamation of the kingdom - verses 1-5
- II. Samuel rehearses the deliverance of Jehovah - verses 6-15
- III. The sign of thunder and rain - verse 16-25

Notes

Verse 2: Although all his lifetimes Samuel never ceased to judge Israel, yet his official work in that capacity had now come to an end.

Verses 3-5: He gave a solemn and public account of his administration, calling alike the Lord and His anointed to witness of what passed between him and the people. Leaving his sons to bear the responsibility of their own doings, he challenged any charge against

himself.

Verses 6-11: One by one he recalled to them the “righteous deed” (12:7) of Jehovah and the fulfillment of His covenant promises in the past.

Verse 11: Bedan - No judge of this name is mentioned elsewhere. Bedan and Barak are much alike in Hebrew (Hebrews 11:32). Samuel - In Hebrew Samuel is similar to Samson (Hebrews 11:32).

Verses 12-15: In contrast to Jehovah’s never failing help, he pointed to their unbelief, when, unmindful of what God had done and distrustful of what He would do, they had, on the approach of serious danger, virtually said concerning His leadership, “*No, but a king shall reign over us*” (12:12). God had granted their desire. Upon their and their king’s bearing toward the Lord, not upon the fact that they had now a king, would the future of Israel depend. This truth He would prove before them in a symbol.

Verse 17: Rain is almost unknown in Palestine during wheat harvest, which occupies the latter part of May and June (Proverbs 26:1). In predicting rain at such a time, Samuel was giving proof that he spoke by Divine authority.

Verse 18: Miracles in the Old Testament were not mere exhibitions of power without purpose or meaning. So manifest a proof of the truth of what Samuel had said, struck terror into the hearts of the people, and led to at least outward repentance.

Verse 23: In reply to their confession and entreaty for his continued intercession, Samuel assured them that he would not fail in his duty of prayer for them, nor yet God, either in His faithfulness to His covenant and promises, or in His justice and holiness if they did wickedly.

Verse 25: Samuel presents the king in his right position, as placed over Israel, but under Jehovah, the only true King of Israel.

Lessons from Chapter 12

Outward evidence of a Godly life - verses 2,3

Obedience is the price of blessing - verses 14,15

Our prayer responsibility - verse 23

Chapter 13

Chapter Outline

- I. The self-will of Saul - verses 1-7
- II. Saul intrudes into the priest’s office - verses 8-10
- III. The Divine rejection of Saul announced - verses 11-23

Meaning of proper names

Jonathan - “Jehovah hath given”

Notes

Verse 1: Part of this verse is either wanting or altered. The words in the Hebrew form the peculiar phrase always used to denote the age of a king at his accession, and the length of his reign; only some of the numbers are lost. If rendered here as elsewhere, the passage would read: "*Saul was _____ years old when he began to reign, and he reigned _____ and two years over Israel*"; compare with 2 Samuel 2:10. In Acts 13:21 a round number, 40 years, is given as the length of Saul's reign.

Verse 2: This verse begins a new portion of the narrative. Small as Saul's army was, the Philistine garrison in Geba was completely surrounded by it, since Saul with his two thousand men occupied Michmash and the hill country of Bethel to the north-east, north, and north-west, threatening their communications through the passage to Philistia, while Jonathan with his thousand men lay at Gibeah to the south of Geba.

An effort was being made to rid the people of the vexatious bondage under which they were held by the Philistines, who still maintained several garrisons in the midst of the Promised Land, from which they came forth to plunder and murder the inhabitants.

Verse 3: Jonathan took the stronghold of Geba; and Saul, desirous of following up this success by a general assault upon the enemy, summoned the people to Gilgal.

Verses 5-8: Samuel had, in the name of Jehovah, forbidden Saul to do anything until he had arrived and offered sacrifice, and he had appointed the seventh day for that purpose (10:8). In the meantime, the Philistines hearing of the movements of the Israelites, had assembled in great force (there is doubtless an error in the number here), and come up to offer battle. Their appearance occasioned a panic among the Israelites, and Saul's soldiers were deserting on every hand, so that in his view, it became necessary to act at once. On this memorable occasion, a testing time from God, Saul showed his determination to take his own way, in defiance of the commands of the Almighty.

Verse 9: Saul, thinking to stay the panic that had set in, and perhaps also imagining that he would raise himself in the estimation of the army, assumed the office of priest, and offered sacrifice with his own hands. Saul would not venture to engage the enemy without offering sacrifice, and yet he presumed to offer sacrifice himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet.

Verse 10: Samuel came within the time appointed, though not at its commencement.

Verses 13,14: Samuel denounced the folly of Saul, and his sin in disobeying the express command of the Lord, and intimated that, had he stood the test, his kingdom, or royal line, would have been established, whereas now, his throne would pass to a worthier successor. The perpetuity of the kingdom is forfeited now; personal rejection does not follow until after fresh disobedience (15:10-23).

Saul had performed the act to bring numbers to his deserting ranks or to fire them with courage; the very thing which could have fired them with courage - a belief in the help of Jehovah - was made impossible by the breach of the Divine command by Saul.

Why did Samuel delay his journey to Gilgal? His delay seems to have been intentional, quite as much as that of the Lord, after He had heard of the sickness of Lazarus, and when He knew of his death (John 11:6,14,15). If intentional, its object could have only been to test the character of Saul's kingdom.

We have seen that Saul represented the kind of monarchy which Israel wished to have established. Saul's going down to Gilgal to offer sacrifices, and yet not offering them properly; his unwillingness to enter on the campaign without having entreated the face of Jehovah, and yet offending Him by his disobedience; his waiting so long, but not long enough; his trust in the help of Jehovah, and yet his distrust when his followers left him; his evident belief in the absolute efficacy of sacrifices as an outward ordinance irrespective of the inward sacrifice of heart and will - are all exactly representative of the religious state of Israel. Although Israel had sought and obtained a monarchy, the Lord, in His infinite mercy, was willing to forgive and to turn all for good, if Israel would only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth. The Divine principle of the monarchy was that it constitute a kingdom in which the will of the earthly should be in avowed subjection to that to the heavenly King.

It will be easily understood that this great question had, if ever, to be tested and decided at the very commencement of Saul's reign, and before he engaged in any great operations, the success or failure of which might divert the mind. The sentence on Saul only embodied this principle, that no monarchy could be enduring in Israel which did not own the supreme authority of God. As Adam's obedience was tested in a seemingly small matter, and his failure involved that of his race, so also in the case of Saul. Saul's kingdom had show itself not to be God's kingdom, and its continuance was henceforth impossible. However different their circumstances, Saul was as unfit for the inheritance of the kingdom, with the promises which this implied and the typical meaning it bore, as Esau had been for the inheritance of the first-born, with all that it conveyed in the present, in the near, and in the distant future.

Verses 17-21: The only direction left untouched by the Philistines was south and southwest, where Saul and Jonathan held the strong position of Gibeah-Geba. Immense damage must have been inflicted upon the country, while a systematic raid was made upon all smithies, so as to render impossible not only to prepare weapons, but so much as to have the means of sharpening the necessary tools of husbandry.

Lessons from Chapter 13

Disobedience and its results

1. All disobedience is a choosing of ones own way in defiance of God's commands - verse 9
2. Disobedience separates from God - verse 14
3. Disobedience affects not only the sinners but also others - verse 14

Chapter 14

Chapter Heading

Jonathan's great victory

Meaning of proper names

Bozez - "shining"
Seneh - "thorny", "pointed"
Ahiah - "brother of Jehovah"
Aijalon - "place of gazelles"

Notes

Verse 1: Now the noble figure of Jonathan comes to the foreground. A more unselfish, warm-hearted, genuine, or noble character is not presented to us in Scripture than that of Jonathan.

Verses 6,7: He trusted Jehovah; his deed was a deed of faith. He took counsel neither with his father nor with any of the people. His sole companion was his armor-bearer who seems to have been not only entirely devoted to his master, but also like-minded.

Verse 11: Standing on the extreme point of Seneh, the Philistines probably saw only Jonathan with, at most, his armor-bearer; but they were ignorant of what forces might be lurking under cover of the trees.

Verse 14: As Jonathan reached the top, he threw down his foremost opponent, and the armor-bearer, coming up behind, killed him.

Verse 16: Presently the host became an armed rabble, melting away before their imaginary enemy, and each man's sword in the confusion turned against his neighbors.

Verse 24: It need scarcely be said that in this Saul acted without Divine direction. This shows the recklessness of Saul's character. As formerly, by rashly sacrificing, he incurred the displeasure of God, so now, by a rash vow, he excites the anger of the people.

Verse 31: Aijalon was nearly twenty miles west of Michmash (Joshua 10:12); it was on the way to the Philistine's own cities.

Verse 32: This was a breach of an express Divine command (Leviticus 19:26; 22:28); but it can, in fairness, be laid to the charge of Saul's rash vow. The building of a memorial altar on the spot could not be regarded as altering the character of what had taken place that day.

Verse 37: His proposal to follow the Philistines was taken up willingly by the people; the priests asked counsel of God, but no answer came.

Verse 39: This is another instance of Saul's rash haste. It was not yet known what the crime was or whether, if it really deserved death, it might not be expiated by a sin offering.

Verse 45: The people interposed; he whom God had owned, and who had saved Israel did not die. So ended in sorrow and disappointment what had begun in self-willed disobedience to God and distrustfulness of Him.

Verses 46-48: Saul's reign was now marked by wars against the various enemies of Israel, in all of which he proved victorious.

Verse 49: These are not all the sons of Saul (1 Chronicles 8:33). Ishvi may have died young, and Abinadad and Ishbosheth were probably younger.

Lessons learned from Chapter 14

The secret of victory

1. Jonathan did not rely upon man - verse 1
2. Jonathan had faith in God - verse 6

3. Jonathan was brave - verse 11

Chapter 15

Chapter Heading

Saul's incomplete obedience (see Genesis 11:31)

Meaning of proper names

Agag - "the fiery", not a personal, but an appellative name, like Pharaoh

Notes

Verse 1: God did not finally reject Saul till he had given him another opportunity of recovering His favor, by fully carrying out His commands. This was the second occasion which tested Saul; but Saul's repeated disobedience sealed his doom.

Verse 2: The Amalekites occupied the territory to the south and south-west of Palestine. They had always been enemies of Israel (Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19, etc.). From 1 Samuel 15:33 we infer that, at this time, they were not only in open hostility to Israel, but behaved with extreme cruelty.

Verse 3: In Saul's time and long afterwards, the customs of war were such that when lives were spared it was not from motives of humanity, but from avarice or lust. This command to Saul and the Israelites was not only a judicial sentence but a test of their self-denial, in giving up the slaves, the female captives, and the rest of the booty, and acting as men who fought for God only, and not for themselves.

Verse 6: The Kenites were connected with Israel by Jethro, father-in-law to Moses (Judges 1:16). Jael was also a Kenite; and the Rechabites mentioned in latter history, belonged to the same tribe.

Verse 7: Havilah appears to be the name of the whole desert south-east of Palestine as far as Chaldea.

Verses 8,9: In direct disobedience to this command, Saul spared the best of the sheep and oxen for the purpose of having a great sacrificial feast; and he spared Agag in order to have the glory of exhibiting a captive king eating as his slave. He certainly could not plead humanity as his motive, inasmuch as the women and children had been destroyed. Saul conquered Agag but disobeyed God.

Verse 11: Man's repentance implies a change of mind, God's, a change of circumstances and relations. God does not change, but is ever the same; it is man who changes in his position relatively to God. The Saul whom God had made king was not the same Saul whom God repented to have thus exalted; the essential conditions of their relationship were changed. God's repentance is the unmovedness of Himself, while others move and change. The Divine finger ever points to the same spot; but man has moved from it to the opposite pole.

Verse 12: Saul set up a memorial of his victory near Carmel.

Verse 17: Samuel's statement implies this: now that thou art great in thine own eyes, thou

are rejected, for it was God Who appointed thee, and against Him has thou rebelled.

Verse 22: In sacrifices man offers forcibly the strange flesh of irrational animals; in obedience he offers his own will, which is rational.

Verse 23: Witchcraft was a sin against which Saul zealously enforced the law (28:3). This was, therefore, a most cutting remark.

Verse 24: While confessing his fault, he excused it; his chief anxiety was to save his credit with the people (see 15:30).

Verse 33: Sin had to be dealt with according to God's command; Agag had to be slain.

Verse 35: After the first trial (chapter 13) Saul's line was rejected; after the second his own standing as theocratic king ceased. As God appointed king he was henceforth rejected; Jehovah withdrew the sanction which He had formerly given to his reign by the aid of His power and the presence of His Spirit. Henceforth there was nothing about him royal even in the eyes of men - except his death.

Samuel mourned over him; mourned as for one cut off in the midst of life, dead while living, a king rejected of God. As far as the record bears he saw Saul no more, save for a brief space at Naioth, until the night of terror and dismay at Endor, when he came forth from his grave to say to him, "*Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me*" (28:19).

Lessons from Chapter 15

Obedience must be complete - verse 9

Sins that follow disobedience

1. Hypocrisy - verse 13
2. Deceit - the hiding of real motives - verse 15
3. Blaming others - verse 21

Chapter 16

Chapter Outline

- I. The choice of David to be king - verses 1-11
- II. David anointed to be king - verses 12,13
- III. David is brought to Saul - verses 14-23

Meaning of proper names

David - "well-beloved"

Jesse - "gift". "wealthy"

Bethlehem - "house of bread"

Notes

Verse 1: The voice of God came to recall the prophet to the fact that God had anticipated the difficulties of the kingdom by the choice of a new king. Bethlehem is about 5 miles south of Jerusalem, a little east of the road that leads to Hebron.

Verse 2: Samuel's expression of fear indicates either that the mental malady with which Saul was afflicted had already begun to show itself in fierce outbreaks of passionate cruelty, or that he had somehow manifested a disregard of human life which he showed at a later date, especially when he caused the seventy priests of Nob to be put to death (22:9).

God directed Samuel to combine the anointing of Jesse's son with a sacrificial service at Bethlehem, the home of David. From this we infer that Samuel had been in the habit of visiting various places in the land for the purpose of sacrifice and instruction. At this time the ark of the covenant was not in the tabernacle, but in the city of Kirjath-jearim. Thus the tabernacle was not the only place of worship at this time in Israel's history.

Verse 4: The people probably feared that he had come to denounce them for some offence against God. It is natural for men whose consciences tell of guilt, to fear when anything reminds them of Jehovah.

Verse 10: David had not yet been introduced and was not included in this count (see 17:12). I Chronicles 2:13-15 mentions only seven sons; it is supposed that one died before David came to the throne.

Verse 11: David was called from his work (see Exodus 3:1,2; Judges 6:11,12; Judges 19:19; Amos 7:15).

Verse 13: *"In the midst of his brothers"* - We are not informed whether Samuel explained to him or to his father, the meaning of this sacred rite. But David would receive all needful knowledge from another quarter, for *"the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward."*

Verse 14: God withdrew from Saul all those special aids which, in connection with his anointing to the royal office, had been conferred upon him. This is what Paul has described as *"God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to have been done"* (Romans 1:28). Saul was now set free from all those restraining influences which had been exerted upon him and which had kept him from iniquities into which he afterward fell.

What God does not fill, Satan will. Man is governed either from the Spirit from above or the spirit from below. There is no third course.

The *"harmful spirit"* sent from God was the messenger of that evil which in the Divine judgment was to come upon Saul, visions of which now affrighted the king, filling him with melancholy, and brought him to the verge of madness - but not to repentance. The spirit which now laid hold of Saul widened and deepened the gulf of separation which already existed between him and Jehovah.

Anyone refusing the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit is in danger of being given over to the dominion of Satan.

This is similar to a case of demon possession, the root and origin of which is in the moral perversion of the soul itself.

Verse 21: Thus David was placed in circumstances in which he might learn something of war and of government, and enlarge his knowledge of human nature.

Verse 23: The Hebrew harp was a light, portable stringed instrument more like a lyre.

This shows how transient is the relief which earthly influences can give in the case of a moral and spiritual disease. David's music did not touch the root of the evil.

Lessons from Chapter 16

God's call

1. God's call depends upon the inward condition of man - verse 7
2. God's call came while David was busy - verse 11
3. God's anointing is necessary if we are to obey the call - verse 13

Earthly influences cannot cure spiritual diseases - verses 14-23

1. The relief given by earthly influences in cases of moral and spiritual diseases is transient.
2. They cannot touch the root of the evil.

Chapter 17

Chapter Outline

- I. The defiance of Israel by Goliath - verses 1-14
- II. David is sent to the army of Saul - verses 15-30
- III. David's victory over Goliath - verses 31-58

Meaning of proper names

Goliath - "an exile"

Gath - "winepress"

Ephes-dammim - "boundary of blood"

Notes

Verses 1,2: The events here most probably take place about 27 years after the Philistine attack at Michmash (chapter 13). The part of the valley where the conflict took place is about six miles west of Jerusalem. David had about twelve miles to cover between his father's house and the camp.

Verse 4: Goliath was descended from the race of Anakim, who had been almost exterminated by Joshua, but of whom a few had still remained in Gaza, Gath, and Askelon (Numbers 13:32,33; Joshua 11:21,22).

Reckoning the cubit at 18 inches and the span at 9 inches, Goliath's height would be nine feet nine inches. There are instances on record, both in ancient and modern times, of persons who have attained this stature.

Verse 5: A coat of mail was composed of plates of metal, overlapping each other like the scales of a fish. The weight was about 150-200 pounds. The weight of the spear's head was about 24 pounds (17:7).

Verse 6: The greaves (armor on his legs) were coverings reaching from the ankle to the top of the knee, and made of hide, sometimes covered with copper. The javelin of bronze was probably a light lance slung over the shoulders as in Joshua 8:18.

Verses 8-10: Such challenges were common enough in antiquity. For forty successive days the challenge had been thrown down - by implication, a defiance of the covenant people as such, and of Jehovah, the covenant God.

Verse 11: The Spirit of God had departed from their leader, and his followers seemed to share in the depression which this consciousness brought. Thus Saul and his army were content with a merely defensive position, without venturing to accept the challenge. Realizing that the sense of God's presence was wanting, the contest would only be one of strength against strength.

Verse 12: This event was the turning point in the history of the theocracy, and marked David as the true king of Israel, ready to take up the Philistine challenge of God and His people, to kindle in Israel a new spirit, and, in the might of the living God, to bring the contest to victory.

Verses 17,18: "*Bring some token from them*" - either as an assurance that they were well, or and acknowledgement of their father's present.

Verses 19,20: David, who had never been permanently in Saul's service, had, on the outbreak of the war, returned to his home.

Verse 23: David is about 22 or 23 years old at this point. He is their anointed king but not recognized yet as such.

Verse 25: "*Free in Israel*" - free from tribute and service (8:11-17).

Verses 26-28: David showed a spirit of meekness in this attitude toward the scorn and derision of his brother, Eliab (the same brother that Samuel would have chosen earlier [16:6]).

Verse 36: He speaks of two different occasions.

Verse 37: David is an example of faith and might who is fitly included in the catalogue of the faithful in Hebrews 11.

Verse 39: In fighting for God we must first be spiritual; then genuine and true, without seeking to clothe ourselves in the armor of another.

Verse 40: The shepherds in the East carry a bag for victuals, and a staff, which they hold in the middle, to beat the low brushwood into which the sheep stray. They are to this day particularly expert in the use of the sling. Even today, at the time of this writing, the bed of the stream which runs through this valley is strewn with round water-worn pebbles which would have been well fitted for David's sling.

Verse 45: So sure was he of the help of God that he was willing to stand alone as far as human help was concerned (17:47).

Verse 48: He felt no fear for his confidence was in One greater than Goliath. The Philistine did not fall by sword or spear; faith in God brought victory.

Verse 51: This was a customary token of victory in these countries, and still is so (31:9).

Verse 54: Jerusalem was on David's way home, and part of it was in the hands of the

Hebrews (Joshua 15:63).

Verse 55: How can we account for Saul's non-recognition of David after he had been in his employ in the palace?

The purpose of Saul's question was not to know who David was, but to inquire into the character and condition of his family, that he might make good the promise which he had made to the man that should slay the Philistine, to the effect that he would give him his daughter in marriage, and make his father's house free in Israel.

Perhaps in the interval between David's appearance in court and his fighting with the giant, he had passed from early youth into manhood, and so grown, as it were, out of Saul's recognition.

Perhaps also, there is a hint here that Saul began to realize that this was the one whom God had chosen to be king (13:14; 17:37b,57,58).

We infer from 18:1 that their conversation consisted of more than is recorded verbally in chapter 17.

Lessons from Chapter 17

David an example of faith

1. His faith was the result of periods of lonely meditation and fellowship with God
2. His faith had been previously tried in private - verses 34,36
3. What we are in solitude we shall be in public
4. His faith stood the test of rebuke - verse 28
5. His faith withstood the reasoning of the flesh - verse 38,39

Those who conquer in the name of the Lord - verse 45

1. They are willing to stand alone
2. They are quiet and confident - Isaiah 30:15
3. They are fearless - verse 51
4. They are more than conquerors - Romans 8:37

Chapter 18

Chapter Outline

- I. The love covenant of Jonathan and David - verses 1-7
- II. Saul's jealousy of David and his two attempts to kill him - verses 8-19
- III. Michal, Saul's daughter, given to David - verses 20-30

Meaning of proper names

Jonathan - "whom Jehovah gave"

Merab - "increase"

Michal - "brook"

Notes

Verse 1: We infer that, after David's victory over Goliath, he was taken into permanent employ of Saul. This resulted in a friendship between David and Jonathan, the king's son,

which for sincerity, constancy, and pathos, is unrivaled in the annals of history, whether sacred or profane.

Verse 4: Ancient poets represent their heroes as exchanging armor, in token of friendship; and, in Eastern countries, a prince can scarcely bestow a greater mark of his favor than by the gift of some article of his dress, especially if he has already worn it.

Verses 8-9: Saul's jealousy finally led him to concentrate in the one thought of murder. In reality it was against Jehovah that he contended rather than against David. The power of evil in its constantly growing strength casts out all fear of God or care for man.

Verse 10: "*Raved*" - indicates a highly excited stage.

Verse 12: The failure of his purpose only strengthened the king's conviction that, while God had forsaken him, He was with David. The result, however, was not repentance, but a feeling of fear.

Verse 13: He removed David from his presence, either to free himself of the temptation to murder, or in the hope, which he scarcely yet confessed to himself, that, promoted to the command over a thousand men, David might fall in an engagement with the Philistines.

Verse 25: To prove that they were not only slain, but that they were of the uncircumcised.

Verse 26: "*Before the time had expired*" - within which David was to fulfill the condition.

Lessons from Chapter 18

Jonathan an example of true friendship

1. He did not seek David's friendship because of personal gain.
2. He showed no signs of envy or jealousy.
3. He did not fear personal danger.

Chapter 19

Chapter Outline

- I. Saul's third attempt to kill David - verses 1-10
- II. David's flight - verses 11-17
- III. The Spirit of God protects David - verse 18-24

Meaning of proper names

Ramah - "high place"

Naioth - "the dwellings", "habitations"

Notes

Verse 1: Notice the progress of murderous thought in the king's mind: 1) jealousy; 2) a secret wish for the death of his victim; 3) designed exposure of his life; 4) deliberate plan for his destruction.

Verses 6.7: Jonathan's intercession for David results in temporary safety for him.

Verse 9: A marked contrast; David with the harp in his hand, and Saul with his spear.

Verse 11: Psalm 59 (cf. Psalm 59:1-3,16,17) was probably composed by David on this occasion.

Verse 13: “*An image*” - the teraphim. The women seem to have been addicted to the use of such superstitious objects. Michael probably, like Rachel, kept this unknown to her husband. See also Genesis 31:19-35; Judges 17,18; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24; Hosea 3:4; Zechariah 10:2. From these passages it appears that the teraphim were images having some sort of resemblance to the human form; that they were found as far back as the time of Jacob; that they were consulted oracularly; that their use continued down to the days of Zechariah at least; and that, though the more lax of the priests and rulers might tolerate their existence, and even employ them themselves, the prophets from Samuel downward denounced the employment of them as inconsistent with a right idea of the spirituality of God.

Verse 15: The Eastern beds consist merely of two thick cotton quilts, and in these the sick were carried when it was necessary to remove them.

Verse 17: Michal could tell lies for David, but she had not the courage and the faith to go with him into suffering, or to tell the truth for him. There was no occasion for her to resort to either teraphim or deceit, to secure his safety from her father’s murderous rage for when, shortly after, the king proposed to snatch his prey from the midst of the sacred college, and from the very presence of Samuel three sets of messengers were rendered powerless by the Divine Spirit, and an arrest was put on Saul himself, who was prostrated before the mighty impression of God’s Spirit, and lay helpless on the earth (19:24).

We are sometimes prone to imagine that the Scriptures approve all that they record, at least in the case of its worthies - unless the opposite be stated expressly. We must distinguish between the God-sanctioned and that with which He bore on account of the hardness of the heart of those who had not yet been spiritually trained or who were not spiritual.

The Old Testament never places truth, right, or duty on any lower basis than the New Testament. But while it does no lower, it does not unfold in all their fulness the principles which it lays down.

Verses 18-21: David’s destination was Ramah, the home of Samuel.

Naioth was the dwelling place of the prophets who were under Samuel’s training. “*As head over them*” (19:20) in the original reads, “*Standing as president over them.*”

These young men were disciples of the prophet; also messengers or ministers to carry out his behests. At a later date in sacred history similar establishments were to be found at Bethel and Gilgal (2 Kings 2:3,5; 5:22).

God had David under His special protection. The Divine power engaged in behalf of David could not be resisted by the king. It was vain to contend against this Spirit for He could easily lay both the messengers and Saul prostrate and helpless. This contest was not between two men, but between the king of Israel and the Lord of Hosts.

Verse 24: Saul stripped off his outer garments and lay on the ground as in a trance until the following morning.

Lessons learned from Chapter 19

God uses many methods to protect His own. When God purposes to protect a man He is a no loss for the means of carrying out His purpose.

1. The mediation of Jonathan - verse 4
2. The agency of Michal - verse 12
3. The work of the Holy Spirit - verses 18-24

God's longsuffering with sinners - verse 23

Chapter 20

Chapter Heading

Jonathan's protects David

Notes

Verse 5: A sacrifice and feast took place every new moon (Numbers 10:10; 28:11) and on such occasions David was accustomed to join the king's family.

Verse 26: Saul supposed that David's absence from the sacrificial feast was caused by some ceremonial defilement.

Verses 28,29: Jonathan suggested the false explanation which David had originally suggested.

Verse 30: It is common practice among Eastern nations to express resentment against a person by abusing his parents, especially his mother.

Verse 42: This is the close of a touching friendship - the most thrilling illustration of devoted friendship that the world has ever witnessed. The friends appear never to have met after this, except once by stealth in a wood (23:16).

Lesson from Chapter 20

God trains His men by sending them out into a land they know not (Deuteronomy 32:10,12; Hebrews 11:8).

Chapter 21

Chapter Outline

- I. David flees to Ahimelech - verses 1-9
- II. David flees to Achish - verses 10-15

Meaning of proper names

Nob - "high place"
Ahimelech - "brother of the king"
Doeg - "fearful", "anxious"
Achish - "angry"

Notes

Verse 1: Nob is suppose to have been in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, near the northern end of the Mount of Olives. It was inhabited by a colony of priests numbering more than four score. Here Ahimelech (or Ahiah, 1 Samuel 14:3),the great-grandson of Eli, ministered as high-priest.

Verses 2,3: David's conduct at Nob, and some other of his actions about this period, indicate a low state of religious feeling, and a want of that confidence in God which at other times so much distinguished him. He departed form deep spirituality through unbelief in the living God.

David told a cunning falsehood representing that Saul had sent him on a secret mission, and begged to be furnished with such provisions as might be at hand.

Verse 4: We know that it was the Sabbath because the shewbread of the previous week, which was removed on that day, had to be eaten during its course (Leviticus 24:8).

Verse 6: The shewbread taken from the table was appropriated exclusively to the priests and their families; but Moses distinctly taught that ritual observances ought to give place to moral duties. Jesus alludes to this in Mark 2:25. While sustaining the action of the high priest, the words of Jesus do not in the least degree justify the sin of David (Matthew 12:3).

Verse 7: Doeg may have been detained on this way to Gibeah by some vow of purification, or by the occurrence of the Sabbath. If David had realized that God was also there, it would have kept him from deceit, and the face of the Edomite (22:22) would not have troubled him (Psalm 7).

Verse 9: By similar pretense David obtained the sword of Goliath.

Verse 13: David's motive may have been two-fold: the reverence with which the insane are regarded in the East, and the security which would result from his being considered harmless. In either case his confidence in God is wanting.

Psalm 56 describes the feelings of David at this time of danger. Psalm 34 expresses his feelings on his deliverance (the royal Abimelech is used for the personal name Achish).

Lessons learned from Chapter 21

The bad results of losing confidence in God - 20:3

1. David lied to Ahimelech - verse 12
2. David had to resort to pretense to save his life - verse 13

Chapters 22,23

Chapter Outline

- I. David, in rejection, gathers his mighty men - 22:1,2
- II. David's wanderings and dangers - 22:3-23:29

Meaning of proper names

Adullam - "feast of water", "justice of the people"

Abiathar - "father of abundance"

Keilah - "sling"

Ziph - "flowing"

Maon - "habitation"

Sela-hammahlekoth - "rock of divisions", "rock of escape"

Notes

The eight psalms which date from the time of the persecutions of Saul are closely connected, the servant of God rising to full and triumphant anticipation of deliverance: Psalms 7; 34; 54; 56; 57; 59; 63; 142.

Chapter 22

Verse 1: Adullam was only a few hours distant from Bethlehem, and David's family, who no longer felt themselves safe in their home, soon joined him in his new refuge.

Verse 2: Some of these men were later in David's service (1 Chronicles 11:15). They were the victims of oppression rather than lawless men.

Verse 3: Ruth, one of his ancestors, had been a Moabitess (Ruth 1:22) and some of his kindred might still have existed at that time in Moab.

Verse 5: "*The stronghold*" - one of the natural fortresses either in the land of Moab or in the south-east of Judah.

Verse 8: The consciousness of his own injustice had made Saul suspicious.

Verse 15: The priest protested his innocence in language, the truth of which, could not have been mistaken by any impartial judge.

Verse 17: Callous as were Saul's men-at-arms not one of them would execute the sentence of death against the priest of Jehovah.

Verses 18,19: It was Doeg, who played the part of the informer, that executed this terrible commission. These were the consequences of the lie which David had told to Ahimelech. It shows how impossible it is to arrest the consequences of our evil actions.

Thus the Divine denunciation against Eli was fulfilled (2:31).

Chapter 23

Verse 1: Keilah was a walled city and therefore not itself in immediate danger. A town in Judah near the borders of the Philistines.

Verse 2: He inquired of the Lord probably by means of Abiathar (23:6). Some may think that it would have been better had the Urim and Thummim held their place until now. We have now the Throne of Grace, the Word of God, the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and the indications of Providence.

Verse 4: This was not due to unbelief on David's part, but to satisfy his followers and to inspire them with confidence.

Verse 12: The men of Keilah were not grateful, or were not brave enough to show their gratitude. Saul was still king and they recalled the massacre at Nob.

Verse 14: The wilderness of Ziph was part of the hilly country south-east of Hebron, in which were Maon and Carmel.

Verse 16: This interview with David (which proved to be the last) was probably sought by Jonathan at some risk to himself, in order to discharge one of the most important offices of friendship; for David at this time peculiarly required that encouragement.

Verses 27,28: David had a Protector of whom Saul took no thought. Saul returned from following David to pursue the Philistines.

Lessons learned from Chapters 22,23

The cave and its lessons

1. A rejected king was on the throne (Temporarily Satan holds the throne of the world).
2. David's kingdom, though hidden, was the true one.
3. David was content to abide in God's time.
4. David learned to praise in the dark - Psalm 34

The serious consequences of evil actions - compare 21:1-9 and 22:9-23

Songs born in the night. There are eight Psalms which date from the time of the persecutions of Saul through which David, the servant of God, sings of anticipation of deliverance: Psalms 7; 34; 54; 56; 57; 59; 63; 142.

Chapter 24

Chapter Heading

David's mercy to Saul at En-gedi

Meaning of proper name

En-gedi - "fount of the kid", "well of the wild goat"

Notes

David's wilderness experiences are recorded in psalms which borrow metaphors from the wilderness and rocky scenery: Psalms 11; 13; 17; 25; 64

Verse 1: En-gedi is situated on a very precipitous pass on the western edge of the Dead Sea. Psalm 63 has reference to David's wanderings in the wilderness of En-gedi.

Verse 3: The large caves which abound in this neighborhood are often used for sheltering cattle and sheep.

Verse 4: Their words are plausible, but not true. David had a promise of the kingdom, but no command to slay the king. The rejection of Saul and the anointing of David only

indicated that, when, in the course of providence, Saul should be removed, David would be set upon the throne.

Verse 5: Though he appealed to the fact that he had contented himself with cutting off a portion of Saul's robes, as a proof of his freedom from evil intentions (24:11), yet he felt self-reproach for an act which might be considered an insult.

Verse 8: With humility and in the most dutiful language, David told what had just happened.

Verse 17: True repentance is marked by permanence as well as sincerity. Though Saul said, "*I have sinned*", he had not repented of his transgression.

Verse 21: Saul referred to the custom prevalent in the East, of putting to death the children and relatives of the preceding monarch, if he belonged to another dynasty.

Verse 22: David swore that this Oriental vengeance would not be taken of Saul's house.

Lessons from Chapter 24

How a Christian treats an enemy - verses 5-7

1. Must not insult him by actions - verse 5
2. Must not use his own hands to harm him - verses 6,12b
3. Must not speak carelessly of him - verses 6,8,11 (Exodus 22:28)
4. Must not permit others to harm him - verse 7

Chapter 25

Chapter Outline

- I. The death of Samuel - verse 1
- II. David and Nabal - verses 2-38
- III. Abigail becomes David's wife - verses 39-42
- IV. Ahinoam becomes David's wife - verses 43-44

Meaning of proper names

Nabal - "foolish"

Abigail - "father is joy", "father of exultation"

Ahinoam - "brother of grace", "brother is pleasantness"

Notes

Verse 1: Samuel had: 1) rectified the abuses which had sprung up under the sons of Eli; 2) established the practice of holding circuit courts; 3) reorganized the Tabernacle services; 4) lifted the priestly office from the depths to which Hophni and Phineas had allowed it to sink; 5) established the schools of the prophets; and 6) lived the truth which he taught.

It was usual to bury persons on their own property, sometimes in a garden or court attached to a house. Samuel having died, David went farther south into the northern part of the desert.

Verse 3: He was a descendant of the noble Caleb, but he had none of Caleb's nature in him.

Verse 4: The annual sheep-shearing was equivalent to the harvest of the flock-masters, and was commonly finished with a joyous feast which corresponded to the harvest-home. The flock-master was commonly disposed to show more than usual kindness to all who were in need.

Verse 7: This verse taken in connection with verse 16, implies that he had protected Nabal's flocks against the incursions of hostile tribes in the border country.

Verse 11: Here is the example of Nabal's character - selfish.

Verse 13: David, in anger, ordered four hundred of his men to arm themselves and follow him. He vowed the deepest vengeance. He afterwards implied (25:32,33) that the vengeance which he contemplated was unjustifiable. We cannot vindicate Nabal, but neither can we say a word in defense of David for this vengeful purpose. No matter what the character of his victim may be, the man who takes the life of another dishonors God.

Verses 18-31: Abigail's response is impressive for at least seven reasons:

1. Her wisdom (25:18,19)
2. Her humility and tact (25:24,25)
3. The counsel she gives (25:25).
4. Her faith in God's promises and purposes (25:28,30).
5. She knew that David was God's anointed on whom the kingdom would devolve (25:28,30).
6. She believed that his present, as well as his future mission was simply to contend for God and His people (25:28).
7. She showed that David must not try to right himself, nor work his own deliverance (25:31).

Verses 32,33: Only a God-fearing woman could have managed it so as to bring David a sense of the sinfulness of the act which he had been about to commit.

Verse 37: Nabal probably went into a fit of apoplexy and, after lingering for ten days, he died. It is not often that Divine vengeance so manifestly and so quickly overtakes evil-doing.

Verse 39: David realized what a sin it would have been to have attempted to have avenged himself.

Verse 44: Saul had willfully and recklessly severed the last ties which had bound him to David.

Lessons from Chapter 25

The death of a righteous man compared with the death of an ungodly man.

1. Samuel - the whole nation gathered to weep at his tomb.
2. Nabal - he was great (25:2) yet he evil (25:3), the son of Belial (25:17), and no record is given of sorrow at his death.

The foolishness of acting under the influence of anger (cf. Ephesians 4:26).

Chapter 26

Chapter Heading

David spares Saul the second time

Meaning of proper names

Hachilah - "dark" / "the hill"

Abner - "father of light", "father is light"

Abishai - "father of a gift"

Notes

Verse 6: Abishai, Joab, and Asahel were sons of Zeruah, David's sister (1 Chronicles 2:16).

Verse 8: There are never wanting Abishais who will come and show us a short road to the attainment of our purposes. The right way may seem the longer but it is always the safer.

Verse 9: David considers that the guilt would have been equally his, although the deed had been done by Abishai.

Verse 10: "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord*" (Romans 12:19; Deuteronomy 32:35).

Verse 19: "*May He accept an offering*" - let us join in seeking His forgiveness by sacrifice.

Some suppose that one of the treacherous enemies to whom David alluded was Cush the Benjamite, mentioned in the title to Psalm 7 (see 1 Samuel 24:9). There seem to have been a the court of Saul some one whose constant design it was to paint David in the blackest colors and who, for this end, invented false stories against him. Eldersheim regards the term "Cush" - the Cushite, Ethiopian - as equivalent for "Edomite", and explains the expression "Benjamite" as referring to Doeg's identification (as a proselyte) with the Benjamites and his probable settlement among them as evidenced by 1 Samuel 22:7,9.

Verse 20: "*A single flea*" - my life.

Verse 25: Saul was not without better feelings though they had become powerless through the course of sin which he had pursued.

He and David never met again. David went his own way, preferring to commit himself to God rather than trusting man.

Lessons from Chapter 26

“Whoever believes will not be in haste” (Isaiah 28:16).

The right way may seem longer but it is always safer (26:8). Contrast this with Rebekah who thought she was taking the shortest way to get at that which God had promised (Genesis 27). In reality her son was forced to take the longest way to the birth right. Even when God may reveal to us where He is going we need to follow Him to the destination.

Chapter 27

Chapter Outline

- I. David's lapse of faith - verse 1
- II. David goes to Philistia - verses 2-12

Notes

We now come to a period of growing depression and sadness in the life of David. Some of the Psalms may be assigned to this period: 10,13,17,22,25,64, and perhaps 40 and 69.

Verse 1: David seems to have forgotten that, by the Divine command, he had been appointed to be king; and that, though Saul was faithless, God's promises could not fail. Consulting his own fears only, and not the ephod or the prophet, he took the wrong course. David's despair was deeply dishonoring to God and full of danger to himself.

Verse 2: Achish knew that David was at enmity with Saul, and seeing so many men accompanying him, he calculated on receiving substantial assistance from him in any military service in which he might engage.

Verses 6,7: This town had been allotted to the tribe of Simeon, but it seems to have remained in the hands of the Philistines until made over to David by Achish (Joshua 15:31).

Here David and his men, with their wives and children, lived for sixteen months, and hither came to him some of those who were reputed as his mighty men, helpers in war (1 Chronicles 12:1-7).

Verses 8-12: From Ziklag as a center, David made war upon the Geshurites, Gezrites, and Amalekites, living upon the spoils which he took from them, and putting to death every man, woman, and child so that no one might remain to tell where he had been.

He made Achish believe that he had been out against those who were the enemies of the Philistines, and hwo were either his own countrymen or their friendly allies. Hence Achish felt that he was a reliable supporter.

In this warfare, David seemed to have in view the future welfare of his kingdom, for he cleared all the southern district of remaining hostile tribes.

Lessons from Chapter 27

Sad results of loosing faith

1. David went to a place where he had not been sent by God (27:1). David joins the enemies of God and his country. His treatment of the enemy is inhumane and without

- Divine authority.
2. David sought his own protection rather than God's glory.
 3. David took a path which led to deceit.
 4. David used deceit.
 5. David traded God's approval for the approval of Achish.

Chapter 28

Chapter Outline

- I. David among Israel's enemies - verse 1-6
- II. Saul and the witch of Endor - verses 7-25

Meaning of proper names

Shunem - "two resting places"
Gilboa - "bubbling fountain"
Endor - "fountain of Dor (dwelling)"

Notes

Verse 1: David's false step in going to Achish now brought him into serious difficulty. Were it not for God's intervention, David would either have fought against his own king and people or would have made an ungrateful return to Achish. Achish had implicit confidence in him and offered to make him commander of his body-guard.

Verse 3: This had probably been done in Saul's better days, under the guidance of Samuel, and according to the Divine command in Leviticus 19:31; 20:6,27; Deuteronomy 18:10,11. It is mentioned here as showing Saul's wickedness and desperation in having recourse to such a person (28:7).

Verse 6: It is easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that the "dreams", "Urim", and "prophets" are a progression of revelation moving from lower to higher. But the highest state of communion with God is the indwelling Holy Spirit, when man's individuality is not superseded or suppressed but transformed and conformed to God in spiritual fellowship.

Verse 7: Such persons pretended to have intercourse with the dead. Saul did not really enquire of the Lord, in the sense of seeking direction from Him, and of being willing to be guided by it. He wished to use the Lord as the means by which to obtain his object (1 Chronicles 10:13,14). He sought the Divine through the anti-Divine (Isaiah 8:19).

Verses 11-19: The whole thing is to be traced to God. Samuel was raised neither by the power of the devil nor the incantations of the witch.

When the witch saw Samuel she was dreadfully alarmed by the spectacle. Why should she have been thus terrified if the whole matter had been only of her own upraising? The truth is, that before she had begun her enchantments, Samuel appeared and startled her out of her cool and cunning self-possession.

Why should God refuse to answer Saul through the recognized channels and then take this peculiar manner of responding to his appeal? It is to be observed that Saul asked for direction as to what he should do, and that Samuel gave no reply to that entreaty, but only uttered words of condemnation.

Just as when Ahaziah sent a messenger to inquire of the god of Ekron, Jehovah commissioned Elijah to intercept the messenger, and give His own response (2 Kings 1:2-4); so when Saul went to Endor, God anticipated the pretended powers of the witch, and sent the real Samuel to pronounce words of Doom over the disobedient monarch.

“gods” - “elohim” - this refers not to a divinity, but simply to a supernatural appearance, indicating that its character is not earthly.

Lessons from Chapter 28

Divine guidance cannot be sought through the anti-Divine (Isaiah 8:19).

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Wages are always paid at the end of a life, if not before.

Chapter 29

Chapter Heading

David providentially saved from fighting against Israel

Meaning of proper names

Jezreel - “God soweth”

Notes

Verse 1: Not Aphek in Juda, but in or near the plain of Jezreel.

Verse 6: The generous confidence of this king is worthy of note.

Verse 8: If he had fought for the Philistines, he would have fought against God and his country. If he had gone over to the Israelites, he would have deceived and become a traitor to the hospitable Achish.

Verse 9: This refers to the chiefs of the other Philistine cities; for Achish was lord of Gath only, though he seems to have been commander-in-chief of the army.

Verse 10: By God’s merciful providence, David was not only kept from fighting against his country or being false to his trust (29:8), but he also had opportunity to rescue his wives and children, and those of his followers.

Lesson from Chapter 29

An example of God’s mercy - verse 10

Chapter 30

Chapter Heading

David avenges the destruction of Ziklag

Notes

Verse 2: They were spared, not from considerations of humanity, but to be slaves. All the males capable of bearing arms were absent at the time.

Verse 6: It was bitter enough to have lost his own family, and now David was in danger of his life from the mutiny of his men.

This was the moment of David's return to God. He called to mind the providence and promise of God. What "strengthened" David are expressed in such Psalms as the third, sixth, thirteenth, seventeenth, etc.

Compare this verse with 27:1. There despair leads to prayerlessness and self-will; her faith, leads to prayer and a willingness to submit to the guidance of Jehovah.

Verses 11-14: The Cherethites were a tribe in the extreme southwest of Palestine. David afterwards had some of them as his guards (2 Samuel 8:18).

Verses 18-20: David not only recovered his own cattle, but took possession of the booty of the marauders, which he preserved for the purpose mentioned in 30:26,31. The Amalekites were under the curse of God.

Verses 24,25: David divided the spoil equally between combatants and non-combatants in the army. This custom afterwards prevailed in Israel. This law was different from that in Numbers 31:27 and Joshua 22:8; that related to the whole people, this to the soldiers only.

Verses 27-31: The places enumerated are all in the south country. Bethel in verse 27 was not in the tribe of Benjamin but in the tribe of Simeon (Joshua 19:4). During David's wanderings they had befriended him. Not only did he thus gratefully acknowledge their past aid, but he also prepared them for publicly owning him as God's chosen leader at the proper time.

Lesson from Chapter 30

An example of true faith - contrast 27:1 and 30:6.

Chapter 31

Chapter Heading

The battle of Mount Gilboa and the death of Saul

Meaning of proper names

Melchi-shua - "the king is wealth", "king of aid"
Bethshan - "house of rest"

Notes

Verse 1: 1 Chronicles 10:1-14 gives an account of the Battle of Gilboa.

Verse 4: Saul took the sword of the armor-bearer who perhaps was Doeg (according to Jewish tradition); if so, then Saul and Doeg both fell by the sword with which the priests of

God had been killed.

Verse 6: In 1 Chronicles 10:6 we read “*all his house*”; probably meaning all his personal attendants then with him. Ish-bosheth, the fourth son of Saul, appears to have been absent (2 Samuel 2:8).

Verse 9: In 1 Chronicles 10:10 it is said that they “*fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.*”

Verse 10: Bethshan is a town at the head of the Valley of Jezreel, 4 miles west of the Jordan River.

Verse 11,12: The record of this deed of gratitude connects the closing act of Saul’s life with his first brilliant deed as king of Israel. They burnt their bodies probably to preserve them from further insult (11:1-11).

2 Samuel 21:12-14 tells how David buried them in the country of Benjamin. There is no break between the two books of Samuel. In the Tanakh they are considered one continuous narrative.

Lessons from Chapter 31

Lessons from the life of Saul.

1. God looks upon the heart (1 Chronicles 28:9). There may seem to be blacker sins in David’s life than in Saul’s, but David’s sins sent him weeping to the mercy seat while Saul’s sins sent him to the cave of Endor.
2. The character of those who willfully sin deteriorates until the depths of sin are reached.