

Dickson Old Testament Commentary

1 SAMUEL

WRITER

Common Jewish tradition attributes most of the writing of the book to Samuel, a prophet and judge of Israel. However, since portions of the book were written concerning the death of Samuel, we would assume that these portions were not written by Samuel, but by another writer after the death of Samuel (1 Sm 25:1). Some have suggested that in view of the statements of 1 Chronicles 29:29,30, Nathan and Gad may have participated in the writing of some portions of this book, though the support for this conclusion is weak.

Samuel was born of Elkanah (1:1,2) in answer to a prayer by his mother, Hannah (1:9-20). He was of the tribe of Levi, and thus dedicated to the service of the tabernacle by his mother according to the law (1:24-28). He is considered the first of a succession of Old Testament prophets who ministered the word of God to the nation of Israel. However, in view of the actions of the “man of God” in 2:27-36, there may have been others who functioned as prophets in Israel, but were not recorded before the coming of Samuel. Samuel was the only person who functioned as a judge, prophet and priest for Israel (See 1 Sm 2:35).

DATE

In view of statements made in 1 Samuel 5:5; 6:18; 27:6, it seems that the book was written sometime after the reign of Solomon, but before the Babylonian captivity. Thus the date would be sometime between 931 B.C., the time Israel divided into the northern and southern kingdoms after the death of Solomon, and 586 B.C., the date of the Babylonian captivity of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel.

The books of 1 & 2 Samuel cover a period of about 105 years, from the birth of Samuel around 1115 B.C. to the ascension of David as king of Israel around 1010 B.C. Depending on which Bible historian is consulted, this period of time may vary from one author to another. We must keep in mind that the biblical writers were not concerned with establishing dates in reference to Jewish history. Their concern was only with the recording of events of the work of God in bringing about the divine scheme of redemption, and the influence of the chosen people through whom God worked to accomplish His plan. Establishing dates in the Old Testament in reference to our calendar today is often difficult. For this reason the biblical interpreter should not frustrate himself by seeking to establish exact dates for books events and characters of the Bible. The information that is given concerning the time of writing of any piece of sacred literature was given for the benefit of the first recipients.

Unfortunately, these dates are often obscure for the modern student of the Bible. Our interpretation, therefore, should not be influenced by exact dates.

Samuel's Ministry In Theocratic Israel

(1:1 – 7:17)

Outline: (1) Birth of Samuel (1:1 – 2:11), (2) Early apprenticeship of Samuel (2:12 – 3:21), (3) National disasters in Israel (4:1 – 7:1), (4) Reformation under Samuel (7:2-17)

Chapter 1

BIRTH OF SAMUEL

1:1-3 This book begins with a history of the end of the period of the judges. It is a record of the beginning of the era of the prophets, which prophets would guide Israel until the time of Malachi, the last prophet of Israel. **Elkanah:** He was of the tribe of Levi (See 1 Ch 6:33-38). **Two wives:** Elkanah was a polygamist, which thing God permitted only because of the hardness of men's hearts (Dt 21:15). We must always keep in mind that it was always God's plan that there be one man for one wife (Mt 19:8). In this case, the typical social conflict within polygamist marriages was manifested. There were hard feelings and favoritism manifested among the three who were involved. Wives in a polygamist marriage are always struggling for the love of the husband. **Shiloh:** Contrary to the original plan of God, the tabernacle had remained in Shiloh since the days of Joshua (Ja 18:1). God originally planned that it be moved among the tribal territories in

order that no tribal group be continually too far from it for the annual offering of their sacrifices. **Eli:** He was the high priest at this time. **Hophni and Phinehas:** These two sons of Eli were known for their corruption (2:12-17,23-25; 3:13).

1:4-11 Shut up her womb: It was an embarrassment in Israel for a woman to be childless. **Worthy portion:** Or, "double portion." **Adversary ... provoked:** Such is the social environment in polygamist marriages between the wives. There is always jealousy, and someone is usually in grief. **Vow:** In this case the mother made the Nazarite commitment to the Lord for her son (Nm 6:5). Though a Nazarite vow could be for a specified period of time, in this case Hannah committed her son for life. As the son of a Levite, and according to the law, this commitment of a son was assumed.

1:12-20 Wine: This word is from the Hebrew word *yayin*, which refers to that which is pressed from grapes. **Strong drink:** This word is from the Hebrew word *shekar*, which refers to intoxicating drink that is derived from the processing of grains, honey or fruits. **Poured out my soul:** These are precious words in reference to one's dedication in prayer (See comments Cl 4:12). **Belial:** The meaning is "worthlessness," "wickedness," or "rebellious." **Gave birth to a**

son: God specifically answered the prayer of Hannah. God can open the womb of a woman in order that she bear a son. In this case, the mother asked that a son be given to her in order that the son be totally committed to the work of the Lord. **Samuel:** The name means, “name of God” or “a godly man.”

1:21-28 Yearly sacrifice: As all Israelites, Elkanah gave his yearly offerings to the Levites as a tithe to the Lord. When the parents took Samuel to be given to Eli, they took a very generous offering in order to support Eli in his care for Samuel. **Weaned:** This took place from two to three years after birth. **I have also dedicated him to the Lord:** Or, “I have returned him to the Lord.” As a Levite, Samuel was already dedicated to the Lord. However, in this case the dedication was probably to the tabernacle service under the care of Eli.

Chapter 2

2:1-11 Verses 2-10 are in beautiful Hebrew poetry. In these words, Hannah expresses great thanksgiving to the Lord. She prayed that she not become arrogant with the rival wife concerning the birth of Samuel. **Rock:** See 2 Sm 22:2,3; Ps 18:2; 28:1; 62:2,6. **Talk no more:** This is directed to Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife, who formerly taunted Hannah concerning her inability to bear children before she gave birth to Samuel. **Seven:** That is, seven children. **His king:** This may be prophetic, though Israel sought for a king in Gideon (Jg 8:22). The yearning of Israel to have a king over them as the nations around them started long be-

fore Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel. **His anointed:** The word used here (*mashiach*) first referred to an anointed king. The word was later used in reference to the Messiah, meaning “anointed one.”

EARLY APPRENTICESHIP OF SAMUEL

2:12-17 Did not know: Hophni and Phinehas had no personal relationship with God in worship and ministry. They became corrupt and wicked in character by taking advantage of those who sought to be obedient to God in offering their required sacrifices. **Men abhorred the offering of the Lord:** The Israelites were to bring their offerings to the priests in support of the Levites (Lv 7:28-34). Unfortunately, Hophni and Phinehas took advantage of the people. They took more than the portion that was allotted to them. They took advantage of the religious responsibilities of the people. Their greed was satisfied in the sincere offerings of the people. In this way, they were sons of Belial.

2:18-21 After the dedication of Samuel to the tabernacle service, the annual visits of Samuel’s mother and father became precious for two reasons. Not only did they fulfill their obligations to bring their offerings to the Levites, they were also able to visit their son, Samuel. God’s special blessing for Elkanah and Hannah was the birth of three more sons and two daughters.

2:22-25 The wickedness of the sons of Eli was to the degree that they committed fornication with women even at

the tabernacle. God was forbearing with their sin until the time that they were slain for their wickedness. Though Eli's sons behaved wickedly, Eli was in favor with the Lord. Unfortunately, Eli's behavior was not followed by his sons who chose to live unrighteously. The sons were to be judged by God because of their own unrighteousness. They were responsible and accountable for their own sins. Regardless of any failings on the part of the parents, each person must give account of his own sins before the Lord (2 Co 5:10). God does not hold parents accountable for the sins of children who are at and beyond the age of being accountable for their own sins.

2:26-36 *There came a man of God to Eli:* This would be an unnamed "man of God" through whom God worked among Israel at this time. If we would refer to this person as a "prophet," then Samuel would not be the first known prophet in Israel. It would be this "man of God," and possibly others like him through whom God was working. In this context he was functioning as a prophet of God. *The house of your father:* This would be a reference to the Levites who were represented by Moses and Aaron while they were still in Egypt. *Kick at My sacrifice:* Hophni and Phinehas were despising the offerings to the Lord because they were not satisfied with their share of the offerings that was to be given to the Levites. They wanted more. *I will cut off your arm:* The house of Eli had been unconditionally chosen for ministry at the tabernacle. But because of the wickedness of Eli's sons, his election for

service would be terminated. *And any of your men whom I do not cut off:* Reference here is to Abiathar who escaped the slaughter of the priests of Nob (See 22:18-23; 1 Kg 2:26,27). God would raise up a faithful high priest in Samuel, as well as priest through Zadok (2 Sm 8:17; 15:24). Those descendants that would be left of the house of Eli would look to Samuel and his descendants.

Chapter 3

3:1-9 *The word of the Lord was rare:* The Hebrew word here is *yaqar*, meaning "rare," though sometimes translated "precious." The meaning could be that there were few prophets who spoke the word of God (See 2:27-36). *Lamp of God:* See Ex 27:20,21. The time would be just before dawn. *Did not yet know the Lord:* He had personal knowledge of the Lord, but not personal experience. No prophetic visions or dreams had yet come to the young Samuel.

3:10-18 *Came and stood and called:* It would seem that this was a visional appearance before Samuel. In such an experience, words could be heard or things seen that were not physical. We would not assume that an incarnation of the Lord took place. The Lord told Samuel that the ministry of Eli was coming to an end. *Ears ... tingle:* This was the hearing of something that was dreadful (See 2 Kg 21:12; Jr 19:3). What was told Samuel was that Eli, though a righteous man, had to pay the price for the wickedness of his sons. He had to because he did not with the authority he had as their father, correct them in their de-

filement of the tabernacle services. The price he paid was the termination of the priesthood from his lineage. **Forever:** The meaning is that with certainty the judgment would come upon the house of Eli. The impenitent rebellion of Eli's sons brought an end to the priesthood of Eli's house.

3:19-21 Fall to the ground: That is, the Lord did not fail to bring about the fulfillment of what Samuel spoke. **Dan even to Beersheba:** This was the typical manner by which the totality of the land of Palestine was described by its northern and southern extremities (Jg 6:8). **A prophet:** The law had already been revealed to Israel. However, in their often apostate state of mind, prophets were sent to teach the word of God. Through the prophet, God told them what would happen if they did not repent. And in order to repent, they had to listen to the instructions of the prophet whom God proved to be His messenger among them. In this way, the prophet was established as the authority of God in Israel. Since the Lord spoke through the prophet, the people were to look to the prophet for instructions, which instructions came from God. If they rejected the approved prophet of God, they were rejecting God.

Chapter 4 NATIONAL DISASTERS IN ISRAEL

4:1-4 It appears that the reputation of Samuel as a leader throughout all Israel intimidated the Philistines. As long as Israel was divided, she posed no threat to the Philistines. But when the Lord's

work through Samuel brought the tribal groups together as one nation, the Philistines knew that they were in trouble. So the Philistines initiated the aggression in this context in order to disrupt the unification of Israel. They thus camped at Aphek and initiated an attack against the Israelites. **Ark of the covenant:** The ark was to remain in the tabernacle. It was never to be used as a good luck charm or fetish as the Israelites were here using it in their battle against the Philistines. Since the presence of God was associated with the ark, the Israelites assumed that the presence of God would be with them through the ark as they fought against the Philistines.

4:5-11 Upon hearing the great shout of the Israelites as the ark of the covenant came into their camp, and because of their polytheistic thinking, the Philistines believed that the great gods had come to help Israel. **Smote the Egyptians:** Though Israel's deliverance out of Egypt took place about 400 years before this event, the story of the plagues of Egypt were still in the minds of the people, having been orally handed down to them from one generation to another. **Hebrews:** This term was originally used by the Philistines as a derogatory reference of the Israelites. **Israel was smitten:** The use of the ark of the covenant as a fetish did not help Israel. God is concerned about the hearts of men, not symbols of religiosity. Since Israel's heart was not right with God, God did not fight for them on this occasion.

4:12-18 Clothes torn ... dirt on his head: This was an Israelite action of

great grief and mourning. When Eli heard the report of the taking of the ark and the death of his sons, he was stunned. He subsequently fell backward from his seat and broke his neck.

4:19-22 *Ichabod*: This name means “no glory.” The death of Eli’s sons carried over into the death of the wife of Phinehas’ while she was in childbirth. Before she died, she named the son “Ichabod” as a reminder of the tragedy of the events that took place in the fall of Israel to the Philistines.

Chapter 5

In the history of the life and work of Samuel, chapters 5 & 6 are a parenthetical record of the problems that prevailed among the Philistines with the ark of the covenant in their presence.

5:1-5 *Ashdod*: This was one of the principal cities of Philistia. It was the religious seat of the area where the great idol of the Philistine god, Dagon, was placed. ***Dagon*:** The archaeological discovery of the Ras Shamra tables in 1929 on the Mediterranean coast revealed that Dagon was believed to be the father of Baal. In the events that took place here in reference to the demise of the statue, God illustrated that the religious imaginations of man as represented by the Dagon idol, were no match for His direct intervention. The Philistines correctly assumed that if Dagon were the father of Baal, then there was a God behind Baal who was beyond their imagination (See comments At 17:22-29).

5:6-12 Because the presence of the ark had caused great sickness in Ashdod,

Gath and Ekron, the Philistines decided that they had to return it to the Israelites. Evidently, they concluded that it did not represent many gods as they previously stated. They only referred to it as the “ark of the God of Israel.” Their deduction was correct, for there is only one true God. He is greater than the imagined “gods” of men. He is the God who cannot be controlled by the whims of men who seek to create their own gods after their own imaginations.

Chapter 6

6:1-9 *Priests ... diviners*: Every religion of man has those who take advantage of the religious inclinations of man. In this case, even the Dagon worshipers had their priests and diviners. The diviners were magicians or fortune tellers who teased the superstitious beliefs of people by their incantations. The priests functioned in the capacity of ministering the religious rites and ceremonies of the religion. ***The Egyptians and Pharaoh*:** About 400 years after the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the people still understood the truth that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God. Even these pagan religious people understood the fact that it was not God who directly hardened Pharaoh’s heart. God only presented the opportunity for Pharaoh to harden his own heart against the will of God. ***Cows ... cart ... calves*:** This was a test the Philistines made in order to determine if there was supernatural power at work in reference to the ark. If the cows smashed the cart in order to return to their calves, then the presence of the

Israelite God was not with the ark of the covenant.

6:10-16 *Lowing as they went:* Against their nature, the cows proceeded on the designated route while lowing for their calves that they left behind. ***The Levites took down the ark:*** As the Philistines looked on, the Levites took charge of the ark. The Philistines certainly concluded that there was a God behind the presence of the ark that they did not fully understand. They concluded, however, that the ark was now in the hands of those to whom it was sanctified 400 years before at Mt. Sinai.

6:17-21 – 7:1 *Seventy:* There is a textual variant of this passage in various manuscripts. The original KJV reads 50,070. However, the reading of some manuscripts that God struck down 70 men of the people should be the favored reading. ***The people mourned:*** They were terrified at the awesomeness of God. Since God punished those who were curious and looked into the ark, they concluded that the ark was to be handled according to the instructions of God. ***Take it:*** The men of Beth Shemesh could not bear the presence of the ark. The men of Kirjath Jearim then came and took the ark. They placed it in the house of Eleazar, whom they consecrated to care for it. This was not the proper location for the ark, since it was to be located in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle.

Chapter 7

REFORMATION UNDER SAMUEL

The event of verse 1 should be the conclusion of what took place in refer-

ence to the return of the ark to the Israelites.

7:2-8 *Twenty years:* The ark seems to have stayed in the house of Abinadab until the beginning of the reign of David (See 2 Sm 6:3,4). The 20 years could have been the time between its arrival at the house of Abinadab until the time of the restoration of Israel that was led by Samuel beginning in verse 3. Instead of being in the tabernacle where it belonged, it was in the house of a man. ***Return to the Lord:*** On this occasion Samuel assumed the work of the judges. In calling the people to repentance, he militarily organized the people to deliver them from the oppression of the Philistines. The condition for accomplishing this feat was that they had to give their hearts totally to the Lord. In doing this they had to put away all the idols and idolatrous practices that were associated with the worship of pagan gods. If we would accomplish any restoration to the will of God, we have to do as Israel did in this context. They first lamented after the Lord. They then carried out the destruction of those things that stimulated idolatrous religious beliefs and practices. They then took action to deliver themselves from the oppression of the Philistines. ***Baals ... Ashtaroths:*** The Baals were the imagined gods of the Canaanites. The companion goddess, Ashtaroth, represented the fertility of crops, animals and man, and thus involved the religious behavior of the people. This deity was also known as Astarte, who was worshiped by the Phoenicians and Canaanites. This was Venus of the Greeks, the goddess of sex

and fertility. **Gather all Israel to Mizpah:** Samuel knew that the gathering of Israel would arouse the Philistines to attack. So when the Philistine army gathered for attack, fear came upon the Israelites. Their turn to Samuel to plead to the Lord for them indicates that Samuel had by this time been completely accepted as the judge who would lead them and plead their case before God.

7:9-14 They were smitten before Israel: Even as the sacrifice of Samuel was being offered, the Philistines attacked. However, a supernatural thundering came from the Lord which terrified the Philistines. The result of the battle was that Israel beat the Philistines to as far as Beth Car which is about 8 kilometers west of Jerusalem. **Ebenezer:** Raising a stone as a monument was a common practice among the Israelites (See Gn 28:22; 31:45; 35:14; Ja 24:26). Ebenezer, meaning “stone of help,” signified that the Lord had helped Israel to gain their victory over the Philistines. In order to receive God’s help to this point in their struggle against Philistine oppression, they had to recognize their sins, confess before God, and then follow God’s designated leader, Samuel. **Came no more:** Because of the victory of Israel that was led by Samuel, the Philistines did not come again into any territory that was controlled at that time by Israel.

7:15-17 Circuit: As a prophet and judge, Samuel gave himself to teaching the people. He did not expect the people to come to him at one location, but compromised in that he went to three key cities to which the people could come. In

this way he kept Israel’s mind and heart focused on the law of the Lord. When God’s leaders move among the people in their teaching of God’s word, the people are guarded from apostasy.

Rise Of The Monarchies In Israel (8:1 – 15:35)

Outline: (1) Rejection of God as king (8:1-22), (2) Anointing of Saul (9:1 – 10:16), (3) The election of Saul (10:17-27), (4) Defeat of the Ammonites (11:1-15), (5) Samuel’s farewell address (12:1-25), (6) War against the Philistines (13:1 – 14:52), (7) Saul is rejected (15:1-35)

Chapter 8

REJECTION OF GOD AS KING

Chapter 8 records a transition in the history of Israel. There was a transition from the period of the judges in Israel to the rule of the kings. Primarily, this was the end of the direct theocratic rule of God over His people to His rule through a king with the exhortation of the prophets.

8:1-5 Samuel was old: When Samuel was old he entrusted the work of God into the hands of his sons Joel (“the Lord is God”) and Abijah (“the Lord is Father”). As the sons of Eli, they too were tempted to use their positions for corruption, and thus turned to dishonest gain by taking advantage of the offerings that were brought to them by the people. They dishonored the name of their father by taking bribes, and thus gave twisted judgments. **Make us a king:** Because Samuel was old and his sons did not follow after the tradition of his spiritual

leadership, the people sought for a king to whom they could transfer their allegiance. By this time in the history of Israel, the Israelites' sense of security had shifted from God to a man. ***Like all the nations:*** Israel wanted a centralized leader as the nations around them. This desire manifested their weakened faith in how God had established and maintained them as a nation, that He only be their king. For almost 400 years they had been governed directly by God. But now they wanted to conform to the political systems of man.

8:6-9 *Harken to the voice of the people:* This statement reveals how God dealt with Israel in reference to many of the Israelites' desires. He was not changing His law in order to conform to the wishes of the people. He was simply accommodating their increasing hardness of heart in order to maintain a greater purpose. He allowed their apostate thinking to prevail, but He had not changed His original purpose for Israel. He used their rebellious desire in order to carry on with His eternal plan of bringing the Savior into the world through Israel in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). ***They have rejected Me:*** Because Samuel was God's appointed leader, the people were actually rejecting God's theocratic rule of the people. Their faith was weak in that they wanted a tangible leader they could see instead of a God of spirit they could not see. But we must not assume that God was here changing His rule. Israel's desire for a king on earth instead of the King in heaven was only accommodated. But

with the concession, God gave laws for the behavior of the earthly king. Because there was a king on earth did not mean that God terminated His kingship from heaven.

8:10-18 *The behavior of the king:* It is here that Samuel prophesied how the monarch would treat the people. The earthly king would demand soldiers from the people (vss 11,12), force upon them labor for his benefit (vss 12,13), take their property for his purposes (vs 14), and heavily tax the people (vss 15-17). All these demands of the king would become a burden to the people. However, the generations to come would have to bear the burden of this centralized government for which Samuel's generation cried. Once the monarchy of kings was started in the history of Israel, it could not be stopped by the people. Only when a foreign power invaded Israel was the succession of Israelite kings terminated. This took place first in the conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721/22 B.C. by the Assyrians, and then in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians' captivity of the southern kingdom, Judah.

8:19-22 *Refused to obey:* In his old age, the people became stubborn and refused to heed the warnings of Samuel. Though warned concerning the demands that a king would bring upon them, they persisted. This was a turning point in the history of Israel. The socioeconomic environment did not get better with the appointment of a king. It became worse. It was a time when God knew that His rejection of their desires for an earthly king could not be answered in words of proph-

ecy, but with centuries of experience at the hand of unrighteous kings. Their first king, Saul, was an example of many kings to come.

Chapter 9

ANOINTING OF SAUL

9:1-5 *Mighty man of power:* Reference could be to wealth or social prestige, or both. Saul came from a family of leadership and influence. However, he had a sense of insecurity, always wanting the approval of the people. ***Handsome young man:*** Saul was one who made a good impression on others. He was a physical stalwart and handsome. The occasion for his meeting with Samuel took place when he sought some straying sheep of his father.

9:6-10 *A man of God:* This was Samuel whom Saul hoped would tell him the way to go to find the sheep. ***What will we bring:*** It was customary that when one sought advice from the man of God he was to give something to his spiritual leader (Compare comments G1 6:6). ***Shekel of silver:*** When studying the history of Israel, we must keep in mind that there was no such thing as coins in the economy. Payments were made either in livestock or weights of metals. Coins did not come into the economy of Israel until the days of the Roman Empire when Rome introduced Roman coins. ***Seer:*** Reference was primarily to prophetic pronouncements. ***Prophet:*** The function of a prophet was to proclaim the word of God, though at times the prophet would foretell the future.

9:11-14 *The high place:* These were

places of worship, which worship was frequently focused on the idol gods of one's own mind. ***To eat:*** Offerings were brought to the high place of worship where the people ate (See Ex 29:13,22; Lv 3:4,10,15). It was customary among the Israelites to bring their offerings for eating when they worshiped together. This custom was carried over into the assembled worship of the early church (See comments 1 Co 11:13-34; 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12).

9:15-21 *Captain:* Prince, chief or head man. ***Reign:*** This word assumes that Saul was to be anointed as a king. ***Desire of Israel:*** The desire of Israel was to have a king reign over them as the nations around them. In this case, the desire was to Saul, though Saul had no idea what Samuel was saying. ***The least of all the families:*** Saul expressed his lack of confidence to Samuel by saying that he was not only from the least tribe of Israel, Benjamin, but also from an insignificant family of that tribe. Beginning from this humble statement of Saul, the Bible student must follow the digression of Saul into a twisted personality that often had psychotic fits of rage wherein he became murderous.

9:22-24 *The shoulder:* This special part of the offered animal was reserved for the priest. In presenting it to Saul, Samuel was giving him great honor. Samuel was ceremonially exalting Saul because he had been chosen by God to be the first king of Israel.

9:25-27 It was a time when the wise Samuel talked with Saul concerning things that affected the Israelites. Samuel

would want to know of Saul's religious convictions, as well as his thoughts concerning the state of Israel. It was surely at this time that Samuel wanted to begin a long relationship with Saul, who in the future would go through many trials in leading Israel.

Chapter 10

10:1-8 Oil: Oil was used in the official anointing of Saul and all God-anointed kings after him (See Ex 28:41; 1 Kg 19:16). In this case there was a private anointing by Samuel that was later followed by a public and official coronation (10:17-25; 11:14,15). **The Lord has anointed you:** For one to be God's official representative as a king on earth, his anointing had to be from God, not man. No king in the future of Israel would be a representative of God's will unless he was officially anointed by God. **His inheritance:** Israel belonged to God because He gave birth to her. He delivered her from Egyptian bondage and brought her into the land of promise. Israel would not have existed if it were not for the direct work of God. **When you have departed from me:** Samuel prophesied signs that would transpire in the very day when Saul left his presence. The fulfillment of these prophecies was to reaffirm to Saul that he was the chosen one of God to be the first king of Israel.

10:9-16 Spirit of God came upon him: He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak forth the word of God. We are not told how the beholders determined that he so spoke, only that it was evident that Saul was speaking as the prophets

spoke to the people. What is here revealed is that God, through the prophets, was speaking to the people. The prophets were the "living Bibles" among the Israelites. At this time in the history of Israel, there were other prophets than Samuel, for the word "prophets" is in its plural form. These prophets were possibly associated with the school of the prophets that was led by Samuel. **The son of Kish:** Those who knew the humble estate in which Saul had grown up were amazed that such a one would prophesy among the prophets.

THE ELECTION OF SAUL

10:17-27 In this public coronation of Saul, Samuel reminded the people how God worked among them as their king. By reminding them of how God worked in Israel in the past, they should have reconsidered why they wanted a king they could see in the present. **Rejected your God:** With the anointing of an earthly king, Israel was rejecting God's theocratic rule from heaven. **Hid among the equipment:** Saul hid himself because he was modest and shy. Unfortunately, this nature of his character drastically changed in the years to come. **God save the king:** This was the people's proclamation that they accepted Saul as their king. They thus committed themselves to pay homage to him and be loyal to his command. However, there were the sons of Belial who rebelled against the anointing of Saul. At this time they did not see in him the character of a king. Though they showed contempt for Saul's anointing, Saul held his peace in reference to

their rebellion. Though the anointing of a king in Israel was not in God's original plan, He accommodated the wishes of the people. But when the king was officially anointed by God, then the people were to submit to his rule. If one rebelled against God's anointed, he was rebelling against God.

Chapter 11

DEFEAT OF THE AMMONITES

11:1-11 It was not long after Saul was anointed that his leadership was tested by the demands of Nahash in reference to the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead making a covenant with him. **Jabesh Gilead:** The close relationship between the Benjamites and those of Jabesh was in the fact that when Israel almost annihilated the Benjamites, 400 men from Jabesh were given to the women of Benjamin in order to preserve the tribe (Jg 21:8-14). **The Spirit of God came on Saul:** The empowering of the Holy Spirit generated anger in Saul concerning the demands of the Ammonites (Compare Jg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29). What the Ammonites demanded was both cruel and unjust. **Fear of the Lord:** When Saul made the call to all Israel, the response was fear in the hearts of the people. The result of the call was the assembly of 330,000 men ready for war. Because of this great army of Israelites, the Ammonites were completely overwhelmed.

11:12-15 **Salvation in Israel:** The nation was saved from the oppression of the Ammonites because of the leadership of Saul. This was the first event in the life of Saul that presented an occasion

for all Israel to unite behind him as their king. The great victory of Israel emboldened them to subject any who would not submit to Saul. They were willing to find the rebellious ones who initially rejected Saul's kingship and put them to death (10:27). But Saul showed mercy, knowing that through their united victory over the Ammonites all Israel would come together as one under his reign. He had illustrated his ability to lead Israel into battle, and thus was confirmed by his leadership to be the king of Israel.

Chapter 12

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

12:1-5 At the time when Saul was confirmed as the king of Israel, Samuel used the occasion to give his farewell to the people (Compare Dt 31; Ja 24). **Witness:** Both God and Saul were witnesses that Samuel had conducted himself with integrity among the people. He had not taken bribes.

12:6-15 **Righteous acts of the Lord:** This was the work of God in bringing Israel out of Egyptian captivity over 400 years before this time. Because He had established a covenant with Abraham and Israel, God was found just (righteous) in that He fulfilled His promises. However, regardless of the righteous work of God, Israel turned to the Baals and Ashtaroths (See 7:3,4). Nevertheless, God continued to deliver them out of the hands of her oppressors when they cried out in repentance (Jg 6:28-32). **Bedan:** This name does not appear in Judges (See 1 Ch 7:17), though it appears in the text of the Septuagint with the spelling, "Barak"

(See Hb 11:32). The name could be another name for Obdon (Jg 12:13). But it could also be another name of a judge who is not mentioned in Judges. **Nahash ... the children of Ammon:** It may have been the threat of the Ammonites that encouraged the people to ask for a king. **Fear the Lord ... obey His voice:** In Samuel's concluding speech he wanted to remind the people that God was still their king. His law was that He still be the Eternal King of Israel regardless of the people's desire to have an earthly king. Nevertheless, their cry for a king on earth still manifested their disloyalty to God's theocratic reign directly from heaven.

12:16-26 *The people greatly feared:*

In order to instill a final warning in the hearts of the people, Samuel called on God to evidence Himself through great thunder and rain. The result of the supernatural events was fear in the hearts of the people. They were to continue in their fear of the Lord. The thunder and rain was a sign of God's displeasure of their desire to have a king on earth to reign over them. Nevertheless, God accommodated their desires by working through kings that He anointed. **Vain things:** They were not to turn to the useless idols that they presumed would protect them (See Is 44:9). All such fetishes were presumed to have power because of the wayward imaginations of men. Men's faith in idols and fetishes is proof of their wayward thinking to do according to their own desires. **The Lord will not forsake His people:** For the sake of His name, He would not forsake them.

The problem, however, is that the people often forsake God. When they do, they bring the name of God into shame among unbelievers. In this way they violate the commandment not to take the name of God in vain (See Ex 20:7). If one lives unrighteously while claiming the name of God, he has taken the name of God in vain. He has brought shame on the name of God by his unrighteous behavior. **Ceasing to pray for you:** It would have been sin for Samuel not to pray for the people. **Consider what great things He has done:** When we remember the great things that God has done for us, we are motivated to remain faithful to His will. We serve, therefore, in thanksgiving. In this case, Samuel was embarrassing Israel by challenging them to remember the great things that God had done for them in the past. He was asking them to consider why they wanted an earthly king when God had worked so well for them in the past. **You will be consumed:** Israel did not serve in thanksgiving until the time of their captivity. They were thus consumed into the captivities of Assyria (721/22 B.C.) and Babylon (586 B.C.). Only a remnant remained after their consumption by the nations, which remnant never asked God again for a king to reign over them.

Chapter 13 WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

13:1-7 The text does not give the age of Saul when he began to reign. Nevertheless, we could assume that he was about 40 since he had a son, Jonathan,

who was already old enough to be a great warrior in Israel. **Abomination:** The Israelites were offensive, or odious to the Philistines. In every way, culturally and religiously, Israel was different from the Philistines. **The people were distressed:** When Israel saw the great army of the Philistines, they were so afraid that they hid in caves. We must keep in mind that Israel was a farming culture that took up arms only when they had to deliver themselves from their enemies. On the other hand, the Philistines were a warrior people who farmed for their subsistence.

13:8-15 Samuel did not come: For some reason, Samuel did not come to offer the sacrifice. Saul then took things into his own hands. He offered the sacrifice because the people were scattered. **I forced myself:** Saul offered this excuse to Samuel for offering the sacrifice. He told Samuel that he did it reluctantly. But Saul sinned, for it was not his duty to offer sacrifices. He did a foolish thing in breaking the commandment of the Lord. The consequence of Saul's deed was that there would be no kings coming from his lineage. His lack of respect for the commandment of God cost his heritage the opportunity of kingship. It cost the kingship of his son, Jonathan.

13:16-18 Gibeah: This was probably Gaba where Jonathan had earlier routed the Philistines. The Philistines were at this time camped at Michmash from where they periodically raided Israel.

13:19-23 Verses 19-23 are a parenthetical historical statement. The information that is stated here is given in or-

der to reveal the depressed state in which Israel was during the oppression of the Philistines. It was because of this oppression that Jonathan initiated a personal attack against the Philistines.

Chapter 14

14:1-14 Since Saul's men were down to about 600 men, Jonathan took the initiative to go out by himself. He went out secretly in order to teach the "uncircumcised" Philistines a lesson. With his armorbearer, he made a surprise attack on the Philistine garrison. He killed 20 Philistines. **There is no restraint to the Lord:** This was the motive for Jonathan's exceptional bravery. He knew that when the Lord was with one, he could do great things. Jonathan's confidence to carry out this individual attack against the camp of the Philistines was based on this belief that God was working with him. He knew that Israel needed an illustration of how God works with His people. The success of his venture, therefore, was to encourage the Israelite soldiers to take up arms against the Philistines.

14:15-23 The earth quaked: God was at work in this battle to discomfort the Philistines. **Melted away:** Saul's watchmen reported that the Philistines fled in confusion. The Hebrew text here states that they were going back and forth. They were in confusion, attacking one another in the middle of the night. **Withdraw your hand:** This was a command of Saul that the priest withdraw from the pocket of the ephod the Urim and Thummim. These were the lots, or counters, by which the will of God was determined.

It is not revealed how these two objects were used to determine the will of the Lord. They were possibly drawn from the pocket of the ephod in order to determine “yes” or “no” answers. ***For the ark of God was at that time with ... Israel:*** This statement indicates a date of writing when the ark was possibly placed permanently in the temple in Jerusalem during the reign of Solomon. ***All the men of Israel:*** Saul took advantage of the confusion in the Philistine camp that was caused by the earthquake. All the soldiers of Israel were encouraged by the leadership of Jonathan and Saul. As a result of God’s help, Israel was delivered on this occasion from the oppression of the Philistines. ***Hebrews:*** Verse 21 indicates that the writer made a distinction between the Hebrews and the Israelites. The word “Hebrews” referred to the Israelites who had been conscripted into the army of the Philistines, whereas the word “Israelites” referred to those who were with Saul and Jonathan.

14:24-30 *Cursed is the man who eats:* Saul had unwisely placed the soldiers under an oath not to eat until the battle was finished. Jonathan had not been informed concerning the fast. The unwise oath that was imposed on the people is revealed in the fact that they had no strength to inflict a greater victory over the Philistines.

14:31-35 *The people rushed on the spoil:* The result of the hunger of the people was that they ate the food of the Philistines without preparing it for consumption according to the law (Lv 17:10-14; 19:26; Dt 12:16).

14:36-46 *Let us draw near to God:*

It seems that Ahiah, the priest, determined that the people should consult God before they ventured on in the battle against the Philistines. When they did inquire of God, God did not answer. The lack of an answer from God led Saul to conclude that there was sin in his camp. An effort was then made to find the one who sinned, which eventually revealed Jonathan who had eaten against the oath by which Saul had made the people swear. ***Though it be in Jonathan my son:*** The foolishness of Saul was now being revealed. He was a person of great stature, and at first humble before God. But now his folly was manifested by a rash statement that he would command that his son be put to death if the oath of the fast had been broken. ***So the people rescued Jonathan:*** This was a time when the will of the people prevailed over the senseless statements of a king. The word “rescue” is from *padah*, meaning “to ransom” or “to redeem.” The people rescued Jonathan from the unrighteous schemes of the king. As in the case of many leaders who become dictators, this event probably aided in changing Saul’s personality to being harsh against any who opposed him, which behavior was manifested in the latter part of his reign.

14:47-52 Saul was successful in his military ventures in delivering Israel from the threat of the surrounding nations. His kingship accomplished its purpose in the fact that he rid Israel of the oppressing raids and invasions of those who took advantage of Israel. ***Abner:*** Saul’s uncle became the captain of his army. Though Saul was victorious over the majority of

Israel's enemies, the warlike Philistines were a persistent thorn in his flesh. Throughout his reign, he had numerous battles with the Philistines. **Any valiant man:** According to the prophecy of Samuel in 8:11, Saul conscripted every valiant man into his army.

Chapter 15

SAUL IS REJECTED

15:1-6 I remember what Amalek did to Israel: The punishment of Amalek came over 400 years after his sins against Israel. When considering the judgment of God, time does not diminish just judgment. The Amalekites attacked the weak stragglers of Israel when she came out of Egyptian captivity (Ex 17:8-13; Dt 25:17,18). They again attacked Israel at Hormah (Nm 14:43-45). And again, they joined with Eglon, the king of Moab, in an attack (Jg 3:13). They are also listed with the Moabites in their raids on the crops of Israel (Jg 6:3-5,33; 7:12; 10:12). **Utterly destroy:** It was now time for the Amalekites to be completely annihilated from world societies. As with Jericho, all living creatures were to be destroyed (See Ja 6:17-21). There was to be no spoil taken. It was judgment time for a nation of people who had fought against God's eternal scheme of redemption through the nation of Israel. The judgment was harsh because of their harsh behavior toward God's anointed nation.

15:6-9 Kenites: These people, who were related to the Midianites, dwelt among the Amalekites. Saul warned them to separate themselves from the Amalekites in order that they be spared

from destruction. **The people spared Agag:** This was rebellion against the command of God. Not only did they keep the king of the Amalekites alive, they also took spoil from them. Both actions were against the command of God.

15:10-16 During the time of his kingship, Saul digressed from the humble character of a lowly Benjamite family to one who willingly disobeyed the commandment of God. He became arrogant in his status as king of Israel. In assuming absolute power of the nation of Israel, the power absolutely corrupted his character. **I regret that I have set up Saul:** The original KJV reads that it "repented" God that He set up Saul. This word is not used in reference to God making a mistake. God does not "repent" as men repent. The meaning is "to change." The setting up of Saul was the occasion for God to change from the family of Saul as kings of Israel to another family lineage. The word "repent" focuses on the past, as well as the future. **I have performed the commandment of the Lord:** Saul was arrogant when he made this statement. His arrogance had blinded him to what the original commandment was concerning the destruction of the Amalekites. **The people spared the best:** Saul would not take responsibility for his own actions. If he was the leader, then he had to assume the responsibility for the actions of the people.

15:17-23 To obey is better than sacrifice: Sacrifice was certainly commanded by the Lord. However, one's obedience in one area of God's com-

mandments does not justify disobedience in another. We cannot atone for sin by obedience to law or doing good works. Partial obedience to law does not give one the right to sin in reference to other laws of God. Sacrifice was a specific law, but obedience is a general principle of the godly life. Though Saul obeyed the law to sacrifice, he was disobedient to the law to destroy the Amalekites.

15:24-35 *I have sinned:* We would question the sincerity of this confession in view of the fact that Saul seems to be more concerned about his reputation in reference to the people than the commandment of the Lord that he disobeyed (Compare vs 25 and 30). ***The Lord has torn the kingdom ... from you:*** The tearing of Samuel's robe was an illustration of the tearing of the kingship lineage from the house of Saul. ***Better than you:*** The kingship of the house of David would be better than the kingship of Saul because David would be a person after God's own heart. David would sin, but he would take responsibility for his own sin and not blame it on others. He would seek the approval of God over the approval of man. ***Saul worshiped the Lord:*** In view of Saul's behavior with reference to the commandment concerning the destruction of the Amalekites, and his later life of disobedience, we would conclude that this worship was only from the lips (Compare comments Mk 7:1-9). ***Strength of Israel:*** This is the only time this phrase is used in reference to God. He was the Strength of Israel in that Israel would not have existed without His help. ***Samuel mourned for Saul:***

Samuel was sorely disappointed in Saul as Saul digressed from his humble character to one who arrogantly disobeyed the will of God.

Decline Of Saul And Rise Of David (16:1 – 31:13)

Outline: (1) Selection of David (16:1-13), (2) David introduced to Saul (16:14-23), (3) Prominence of David (17:1 – 18:9), (4) David and Jonathan (18:1 – 20:42), (5) David as a fugitive (21:1 – 27:12), (6) Final days of Saul (28:1 – 31:13)

Chapter 16

SELECTION OF DAVID

Beginning with this chapter, the book of 1 Samuel covers God's appointment of David as the new king of Israel and the subsequent struggle between David and Saul. Saul knew that he was rejected as king, and thus carried out his rejection against David.

16:1-5 *I have provided for Myself a king:* God exhorted Samuel in order that he cease mourning over Saul. It was not a time for mourning, but a time to look to the future. God was telling Samuel to get over the past and focus on the future. There was to be a new king in Israel, one from the house of Jesse. ***Jesse:*** Jesse was in the lineage of Boaz and Ruth (Rt 4:17), and in the lineage of the Messiah to come. Boaz was from the lineage of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho (Mt 1:5). ***Elders of the town:*** Typical of all the cities and towns of Israel, there were elders of the city. ***Do you come peacefully:*** These elders feared the Lord and

the authority of the Lord as it was manifested through Samuel. ***Sanctify yourselves:*** They were to consecrate, or set themselves apart for the work of the Lord. In this case, the small town, or village, of Bethlehem was about to be made a historical site in reference to the lineage of the Messiah (See Mc 5:2).

16:6-13 *The Lord looks on the heart:* If we would be as the Lord in our relationships with one another, then we also must look on the hearts of men, not the outward appearance. Appearances should never be the foundation upon which we judge someone. However, we do determine the heart of one by his fruits (behavior). ***There remains yet the youngest:*** We do not know the exact age of David at this time. He was old enough to watch the sheep. He was the youngest of Jesse's sons. He was a good looking young boy. However, God knew his heart and what this heart would produce in the years to come. ***Anoint him, for this is he:*** It was God's original plan to choose and anoint all the kings of Israel. At this time, it was the Lord who made the choice of David, not Samuel or the people, though this would change in the future when the people would determine their own kings. Eventually, kings would be chosen by foreign powers who dominated Israel. The anointing of David was the signal to others that God had made His choice in David as the new king. The anointing took place while David was young, though he did not become king until many years later. In view of their consternation with David as expressed in 17:28, even his brothers did not realize

the reason for this anointing. We would assume, therefore, that this anointing was for the sake of Samuel in order that he cease from his mourning over Saul. ***The Spirit of the Lord:*** From the time of this anointing, the Holy Spirit endued David with wisdom and power. We would assume that the Spirit worked to protect David. Contrary to the character of Saul, as David grew he did not become arrogant. His confidence remained in the Lord, not in the approval of the people, which approval Saul often sought. David would be a king who always focused first on God's will, not the will of the people.

16:14-18 *The Spirit ... departed from Saul:* The vacuum that was left by the departure of the Holy Spirit from Saul was filled with an evil spirit, which spirit originated from Saul's own misguided desires. As David grew in the Spirit, Saul digressed into an evil spirit. ***From the Lord:*** That is, the Lord allowed the Devil to have his way with Saul. It could be that Saul digressed at times into a state of insane behavior, often becoming irrational. He could not handle his rejection as king. Dictators often become as Saul when they are rejected by the people. ***A mighty valiant man:*** Since the text states that this servant of Saul referred to David as a man, we would assume that this event took place some time after the anointing of David as a young man. At least enough time had transpired to where David had established himself as a valiant and wise man of war. It was evident to everyone that David was one through whom the Lord was working. ***Harp:*** The playing of this oldest mentioned instrument in the

Old Testament soothed the mind of Saul. The music was medicine to his mind, and thus stabilized his emotional state.

Chapter 17

THE PROMINENCE OF DAVID

17:1-11 There was enough time that elapsed between David's first encounter with Saul, and David's killing of Goliath in this context, that Saul did not recognize David when he presented himself in order to confront Goliath. **Goliath:** In accordance with a common practice of ancient armies, the champion of one army would challenge the champion of an opposing army. Goliath was over nine feet tall. His armor weighed about 150 pounds. The head of his spear was about 20 pounds. **Dismayed ... afraid:** They were dismayed for the simple reason that if a champion of Israel fought Goliath and lost, Israel would be subject again to the Philistines. They were afraid because no one in the camp of Israel could win in an individual struggle against Goliath.

17:12-19 At this time, Jesse was old in age. Three older sons of Jesse were in the army of Saul. As a young man, David was still a herdsman of his father's sheep. **Take now for your brethren:** It was customary for the families of the sons in the army of Israel to send food to their sons while they were in combat. **Forty days:** Goliath taunted the Israelite army for 40 days. Throughout this time, Israel failed to produce anyone who would accept the challenge of Goliath.

17:20-27 *Armies of the living God:* This statement of David in verse 26 manifests the faith of David, that he believed

that God still fought for Israel. The fact that the present army of Saul was in fear of the Philistines, revealed their unbelief. As a result, Israel was shamed by the taunt of Goliath and the intimidation of the Philistine army. **Living God:** This phrase in reference to God is used in contrast to those gods that men created after their own imaginations. Imagined gods do not exist because they are invented by the thoughts of man. The living God exists apart from man, for He existed before the creation of man.

17:28-37 *Pride and insolence of your heart:* David's eldest brother was offended by David's coming and questions. His attitude was twisted in reference to David's motives. He thus twisted David's sincere faith into being pride and his confidence in God's help into insolence. **Lions ... bears:** Though these animals do not now exist in Palestine, and have not for centuries, they were evidently quite common during the days of Israel's early possession of the land. In this case, David's faith rested in the fact that he was able to kill both a lion and a bear. He gave credit to God for this, and thus concluded that God would also deliver Goliath into his hand. God's work in his life in the past gave him strength to deal with the challenges of the future.

17:38-47 *Armor:* In this case, David's victory would not be dependent on the armor of man. He trusted only in God. His weapons would be only those of a shepherd boy, which was a staff, a sling, and five smooth stones that would fly straight in the air. The sling was the shepherd's weapon to protect the sheep.

In order to master the art of using a sling, David surely practiced many hours while caring for his father's sheep. ***I come to you in the name of the Lord of armies:*** David's courage did not rest in armor and physical stature. Neither did it rest in previous experience as a warrior. His confidence rested in the fact that God was with him at this time when the God of Israel was challenged by those who had created gods after their own desires. ***Lord of armies:*** Or, "Lord of hosts." God is master of both heavenly and earthly armies who represent Him (See Ex 15:1-3; Ja 5:14). ***So that all the earth may know:*** David's motive was not according to the accusation of his eldest brother, that he was proud and insolent. His motive was apologetic, that is, he wanted to prove that God was the force behind the strength of Israel.

17:48-54 The stone of David's sling stunned the giant by striking him between the eyes. David then killed him by cutting off his head with his own sword. When the champion of the Philistines was killed, the Philistine army could no longer trust in Goliath for their victory against Israel. They realized that the killing of Goliath placed them on the same level of strength as Israel. And since the Israelite army was encouraged by the death of Goliath, they fled.

17:55-58 The fact that Saul did not recognize David indicates that it had been some time since David was in Saul's court as a musician (See 16:23).

Chapter 18

DAVID AND JONATHAN

18:1-4 ***Jonathan was knit with the soul of David:*** These two young men were companions in courage. They were young men of self-initiative who were brave against great odds. Jonathan and his armorbearer made a personal attack against the Philistines. David fought a lion, bear and Goliath. Their personalities bonded because they were of the same character. ***Made a covenant:*** David and Jonathan entered into a covenant with one another, and sealed it with the exchange of gifts.

SAUL'S JEALOUSY AND HOSTILITY

18:5-9 David became the envoy of Saul, representing him to the people and in battle. Because he was a part of Saul's court, and behaved wisely in the sight of all, he became popular among the people. ***David his ten thousands:*** Egocentric people who have dominant personalities cannot deal with competition. Saul thus became jealous of David. Because of David's popularity with the people – one thing that Saul always craved – David became the envy of Saul. But Saul also knew that the posterity of his reign had been rejected by God and would come to an end at the end of his life. Saul was not emotionally strong enough to handle the rejection of God, as well as the rejection of the people. ***Saul looked with suspicion:*** He kept an envious eye on David.

When one is envious of another, he is always jealous of the one of whom he is envious.

18:10-16 *Evil spirit:* This was a psychotic state into which Saul was driven by his rage (16:14). The evil spirit is stated to have come from God because God allowed Saul's jealous emotions to run out of control. ***He raved:*** The root Hebrew word here, *naba*, does not refer to prophecy of the word of God as some translations render it. It refers to a state of hysterical frenzy that results in an individual. Such is manifested by uncontrollable gibberish, or ecstatic utterances from one's mouth. ***Captain over a thousand:*** This move by Saul was possibly an effort to bring about the death of David in a battle with a much larger army of his enemies. One thousand men would be a very small army that would face an enemy of thousands. But all efforts used by Saul to eliminate David were used by God to prove that He was with David and his small army.

18:17-30 *Oldest daughter Merab:* In order that David lead his small army against the Philistines, Saul promised his oldest daughter to David. ***Who am I:*** Because of his humble background, David did not feel that he should marry into the royalty of Saul's family. Or, the meaning may be that David did not love Merab, and thus would not marry for political reasons. ***Dowry:*** This was a gift to the father for one's bride. In this case, Saul did not seek a dowry from David for his marriage to Michal. In an effort to have David killed by the Philistines, he asked for 100 foreskins of the

Philistines. But the scheme did not work, for David brought 200 foreskins of the Philistines. Because David returned before the required time with 200 foreskins of the Philistines, we would assume that he knew of Saul's scheme to have him killed in some battle with the Philistines. ***The Lord was with David:*** Saul could clearly see this. He was thus enraged with jealousy, and became the enemy of David. We see the Lord working for the success of David in order that Saul be eliminated from the kingship of Israel. The termination of Saul's kingship, therefore, was emotionally painful. He did not just die a peaceful death, whereupon David succeeded him as king. The transition from the kingship of Saul to David was directed by God, but it was painful on the side of both Saul and David.

Chapter 19

19:1-7 *Kill David:* It seems that Saul's previous attempts to kill David were cunning and known only to himself, though David surely knew of Saul's goal to kill him. But now it was made public. Jonathan's loyalty to David over his father would be greatly tested because of this change in the efforts of his father to eliminate David. ***Good toward you:*** When jealousy reigns in the hearts of men, no matter how much good one can do, he will be criticized. Saul's jealousy toward David had maddened him. Saul's power was challenged, and thus he could think of nothing else than to rid the kingdom of his competition. ***Saul harkened to ... Jonathan:*** At this time in the drama between Saul and David, Saul's jealousy

was calmed by the words of Jonathan. Saul recanted the command to kill David. Unfortunately, this calming of Saul did not last long. In his heart, Saul still wanted to kill David.

19:8-10 Saul's rage against David was calmed as long as there was no occasion for David to be proved stronger than Saul. But war again presented the opportunity for David to gain honor in the sight of the people. And so, Saul, as before, was driven by an evil spirit to kill David (See 16:15; 18:10). **David fled:** This was a change in the life of David. Because he knew that his life was in danger while in the presence of Saul, David became a fugitive. He remained a fugitive from Saul until the death of Saul and Jonathan in a battle against the Philistines.

19:11-17 Kill him: Kings that have been twisted by power are often driven to commit murder. In this case, Michal learned of the murder plot of Saul against David, and thus she urged her husband to flee. Michal's lie was recorded in this text as a matter of fact, for she lied in order to protect God's anointed, David. **An image:** This was a *teraphim*, or household idol that some Israelites kept in their houses (Ex 20:4-6).

19:18-24 And they prophesied: We must keep in mind that the Hebrew word *nada* is used for both ecstatic gibberish, which is a natural phenomenon that comes from the mouth of those who are caught up in self hypnotic hysteria, and also to those who are actually speaking the word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (See 18:10-12). In this con-

text, it was surely the inspiration of the Spirit that moved these messengers. The reason this is the correct interpretation of this event was that the prophesying proved that God was with David to protect him from the murderous schemes of Saul. At this time in the relationship between Saul and David, Saul was evidently so removed from his relationship with God that he was oblivious to the work of God. He had hardened his heart and was driven by his obsession to kill what he thought was a challenge to his power in the kingdom. When hardened dictators feel threatened they will resort to murderous schemes to protect their power.

Chapter 20

20:1-11 This chapter reveals the extent of loyalty that can exist between two friends. In this case, Jonathan was more loyal to his friend, David, than to his father. All of the efforts of Jonathan to mediate between his father and David had failed. This failure set the stage for the tragedy of this chapter, where two loyal friends had to depart from one another. **A step between men and death:** Though true of all people, David realized that his presence with Saul could no longer continue. His time in the court of Saul was over. He had to become a fugitive because of the resentment of Saul. **The new moon:** This was the monthly religious festival (See Nm 10:10; 28:11-15). David originally intended to sit at the king's table for this festival, but planned a delay in order that Jonathan determine the reaction of Saul when David's seat was vacant. It seems that Jonathan still felt that there was

hope in reconciling his friend and father. But such hope was futile in view of the fact that Saul was hardened against both God and David.

20:12-16 *May the Lord do so to Jonathan:* Jonathan here made an oath to David that he would seek to protect him from the schemes of his father. ***You will not cut off your kindness from my house:*** Jonathan knew that God would establish the kingship of David. He knew that this kingship would exist beyond the life of himself and David, and thus asked that David not cut off his house when he came to the throne of Israel. The humble nature of Jonathan was herein revealed because he did not presume to follow his father as king. He trusted in the anointing of David as the next king of Israel. His faith was in God, not in any thirst for power. The opportunity that Jonathan had to assume the power of his father, but refused to do so, reveals the godly nature of Jonathan. His faith in the work of God through David was greater than any thirst for power.

20:17-23 *Stone Ezel:* Or, “the stone of departure.” After the signal was worked out as to how Jonathan would inform David that there would be no peace between him and Saul, Jonathan stated that regardless of what happened, he and David would be bonded as friends in the Lord. ***The Lord is between you and me forever:*** The word “forever” is used here as it is often used in the Old Testament. Emphasis is not on unending time, but on the surety of existence throughout time. Jonathan was saying to David that nothing would ever destroy

their bond of friendship, though they would not be in the presence of one another in the future. They had a “forever” friendship, and thus on this occasion made a “forever” covenant. Regardless of the circumstances or environment, good friends are friends for life.

20:24-34 *He is not clean:* In order to partake of the festival, one had to be clean (Lv 13,14). Saul assumed that something had happened in the life of David that made him unclean, and thus he could not sit at the king’s table to partake of the feast. ***Saul’s anger was kindled:*** In this case Saul’s anger was against Jonathan. His anger was kindled because he assumed that Jonathan had schemed with David to protect David’s life. Saul realized that Jonathan was more loyal to David than he was to him as his father. ***You will not be established nor your kingdom:*** What Saul did not understand about his son was that Jonathan had no intention of assuming the throne of his father. Saul’s dreams of having his son reign after him were thwarted by Jonathan’s loyalty to David and belief that God had anointed David to be king. Saul thus railed against Jonathan for his loyalty to David. ***Saul cast a javelin:*** Jonathan now had firsthand knowledge of the extent of the rage that Saul harbored against David. Saul’s casting of a spear toward Jonathan in an uncontrollable rage finally convinced Jonathan that there was no hope of reconciliation between his deranged father and David. ***He was grieved for David:*** We must not underestimate the genuine character of Jonathan. After being hu-

miliated with statements of anger and rage, and an attempt made on his life by his father, he was more concerned for David than himself. Both he and David were bonded in friendship because both were of the same heart. They were men after God's own heart, and thus God worked in their lives to carry out the anointing of David to be the king of Israel.

20:35-42 This is the account of a painful separation of two devoted friends. It was a time when these two friends thought that they would never meet again, though they had a brief encounter later in life (See 23:16). **Fell on his face:** This action on the part of David indicates his homage that he paid to one who was robbed of his kingship by the hardened heart of an ungodly father. If Saul had not become twisted in his heart and disobedient to God, Jonathan would surely have been the second king of Israel. But Jonathan's kingship was stolen by a father who turned his heart from God because of his craving for power. We would think that Jonathan would be a bitter person. But because he and David were of the same heart, he was more concerned about the will of God being carried out in the life of David, than his own aspirations to be a king. Not enough honor has been given to this man in the annals of history.

Chapter 21

DAVID AS A FUGITIVE

21:1-6 Nob: See Is 10:28,32; Ne 11:32. This was one of the cities that was given to the Levites. It was a natural place to which fugitives could flee.

What do you have on hand: The only bread that was available was that which was to be eaten by the priests alone (Ex 25:30; 35:13; Lv 24:9). In this case, Ahimelech was willing to allow David and his men to eat the bread if they had kept themselves from women (See Lv 15:18). By allowing David to eat the bread, Ahimelech understood the nature of the law of God. The law to preserve the anointed of God was more important than the law that only the priests were to eat the showbread (See comments Mt 12:3). **Bread is ... common:** Though David and his men were on a secular mission, the bread that was used for sacred things would not be defiled if he and his men ate of it.

21:7-9 Doeg, an Edomite: Ahimelech's action toward David would eventually lead to his death by Doeg, whom Saul later commanded to kill him (See 22:11-23). **Detained before the Lord:** His detention could have been because he was ceremonially unclean for some reason, or for punishment for doing something wrong. **Sword of Goliath:** See 17:51-54.

21:10-15 The king of the land: The residents of Achish knew of David's previous military victories. Because they knew of his military feats in the past, the inhabitants of Achish were afraid that David would do to them as he had done to others. **Gath:** This was a Philistine city. **Acted insanely:** In order not to fall victim to those he had previously conquered in battles, David behaved as if he were insane. The deception worked, and thus David was able to hide from Saul in

a Philistine city, to which Saul would never have thought that David would flee for protection.

Chapter 22

22:1-5 While hid in a cave, others came to David who were in some need. This group eventually grew to about 600 men (23:13). It could have been that many of these had fled from the revenge of Saul who had become emotionally twisted, and thus sought to kill any who would align themselves with David. Others may have come to David who were simply fugitives from just judgment. We are told later that some of these men were unscrupulous. If Saul would become so enraged to throw a spear at Jonathan, then we must assume that there were many in Israel who had fled from the sight of Saul simply to escape the rage of an unrighteous king. **King of Moab:** David's father was the grandson of Ruth who was from Moab. It could have been that David found some relatives in Moab with whom he could place his father and mother. **Stronghold:** Or, Mizpeh. David was encouraged by the message of the prophet not to be intimidated by Saul. He was thus told to dwell in the land of Judah. It could have been that there was a new threat from the Philistines in the land possessions of the Israelites, and thus God wanted David in the land in order to protect the people.

22:6-19 This incident reveals the moral degradation into which Saul had fallen as king of Israel. He had little sanctity for life, and in this case, no remorse about killing the priests of God. **Doeg:** See 21:1-9. The report of Doeg made

Ahimelech appear to be an accomplice to David's flight from Saul. The truth was that David had said to Ahimelech that he was on a mission from the king (21:2). **You conspired against me:** Ahimelech had in ignorance given David the showbread. But there was no conspiracy in his heart. In his own defense, Ahimelech reviewed the loyalty of David to Saul, and thus hoped that Saul would conclude that he also showed loyalty to Saul by his deeds for David. **Slay the priests of the Lord:** The severity of this insane action on the part of Saul was manifested in the fact that he even called them the "priests of the Lord." It was as if in his savage rage that he did not care if they were God's priests. Exercising fear not to touch God's priests, Saul's own soldiers would not carry out the slaughter. Saul then asked a foreigner, an Edomite, to do the deed. Eighty-five priests were murdered and the city of Nob, with all its inhabitants, was destroyed. Since God through Samuel had anointed David to be the next king of Israel, we would assume that Saul felt that all priests were conspiring against his kingship. The Bible interpreter would not be wrong to conclude that Saul was paranoid. In order to bring all priests under subjection by fear of him, Saul did what all tyrannical dictators do. He instilled fear in the priests of Israel by killing all the priests of Nob. We wonder why God would allow such a deed to be done, but we must not forget that God was preparing Israel for the reign of David. He was allowing Saul to digress in his reign to the lowest moral level pos-

sible in order that when it was time for David to reign, the people would gladly accept him with open arms. The people were denied the kingship of Jonathan because of Saul's sin. But in David, they would have one after God's own heart, a relief for a people who had been terrorized by their own king. Ruthless dictators often lead the way for those rulers who have a heart for the people.

22:20-23 When Abiathar reported all that Saul had done to Nob and its inhabitants, David was greatly sorrowed. He assumed the responsibility for the massacre because he had convinced Ahimelech to give him the showbread to eat. David invited Abiathar to remain in safety with him. When David eventually became king, Abiathar became the high priest of Israel (23:9; 30:7; 2 Sm 14:24).

Chapter 23

23:1-5 *I will deliver the Philistines:*

In response to the first time David went to the Lord concerning an attack against the Philistines, his men objected. From their point of view, they did not want to be fighting both the Philistines and the army of Saul. But when David inquired of the Lord again, they were convinced that attacking the Philistines was the will of God. **Ephod:** Since Abiathar was now with the army of David, they had the opportunity to inquire of the Lord concerning decisions that were made. The ephod was worn by the Levitical priests. It was possibly used in a way whereby the Urim and Thummim were drawn from a pocket in the ephod to receive "yes" or "no"

answers from the Lord (14:19). Determining whether the "yes" or "no" answer was from the Lord depended on the faith of the one who sought an answer from the Lord.

23:6-13 *Saul secretly plotted evil:*

When Saul heard that David was in Keilah, he called his army together. We would assume that the army came together because they thought they were going up against the Philistines. However, Saul's real purpose was to call them together to go up against David and his men. Unfortunately, when David inquired of the Lord concerning the possibility that the men of Keilah would deliver him to Saul, he immediately left Keilah. The men of Keilah feared Saul more than their gratitude they had for David for delivering them out of the hand of the Philistines.

23:14-18 *Wilderness of Ziph:* This was hill country southeast of Hebron. At the time it was covered with great forest, and thus offered an ideal place for David and his 600 men to hide from Saul. In the hills were many caves in which David could also conceal himself. **Jonathan ... went to David:** This covert visit of Jonathan with David was the last time the two would see one another. **I will be next to you:** Jonathan, though the son of Saul, knew that David would be king in Israel. It was only his desire to sit next to David in his position as the king. Jonathan's respect for the anointing of David as king, and his humility not to be jealous, has exalted him to be one of the great spiritual warriors of Israel.

23:19-23 *He is very crafty:* Saul had been informed by the Ziphites con-

cerning the location of David. But he asked them to reconfirm David's location because he knew that David was very cunning. David was a survivor because of his wisdom.

23:24-29 The best way to stay at a distance from one's enemies is to move continually from one location to another. By the time the Ziphites had returned to confirm the location of David and his men, David had moved his camp to Maon. Fortunately, because of an attack of the Philistines, Saul had to divert his army away from pursuing David in order to defend the land.

Chapter 24

24:1-7 After defending Israel from an attack by the Philistines, Saul resumed his pursuit of David who was at Engedi. **To cover his feet:** Or, to relieve himself. Since David and his men were further back in the cave where Saul was, they interpreted the occasion as a providential work of God to deliver Saul into their hands. However, David did not come to this conclusion. **Skirt of his robe:** He cut off the edge of Saul's garment. **David's heart bothered him:** Even the cutting of a small edge of the clothing of God's anointed king greatly affected David. His respect for God was so great that even touching the clothing of an emotionally twisted king who was anointed by God troubled his conscience. **David restrained his servants:** David's men surely had some selfish intentions. If they killed Saul, then their living on the run would certainly have come to an end. Nevertheless, David, in respect of

God's anointed, thought it better to be a fugitive than to desecrate the anointed Saul by putting him to death. David respected Saul as he would later want others respect him.

24:8-15 My lord the king: Once Saul left the cave, David emerged with the piece of Saul's garment. David showed respect to Saul. He assumed that Saul had been told lies concerning his motives by those who sought to remain in favor with Saul for their own selfish ends. If Saul fell as king, they would lose their positions and wealth that came with being loyal to the king. For this reason, they surely continued to slander before Saul the actions and motives of David. **Wickedness proceeds from the wicked:** That is, men behave according to their character. If David was wicked, then he would have performed wickedly toward Saul by killing him in the cave.

24:16-22 Saul ... wept: Being presented with such an obvious act of mercy on the part of David, we cannot doubt the sincerity of Saul's response. Undoubtedly, Saul was quite shocked that he had come so close to death by the hand of one whom he had probably been told would have taken any opportunity to slay him. **More righteous:** Saul confessed that David was more dignified and just than he. David's actions toward Saul were more righteous than his own actions toward David. **Swear ... you will not cut off my seed:** A common practice that prevailed in Israel in the years to come was that when a king succeeded another king, the succeeding king would kill all the descendants of the previous king. This was

done in order that one of the sons of the previous king not assume to reign in competition to the succeeding king. Since David had no desire to do such a thing, he willingly promised Saul that he would not cut off his lineage. Though Saul recognized that David was anointed to be the next king of Israel, Saul possibly thought that there might be a chance that Jonathan would eventually be a king of Israel. But such was not in the plan of God. Saul was formerly told by Samuel that none of his family would reign as kings of Israel.

Chapter 25

25:1-9 *Then Samuel died:* This was certainly a major event in the history of Israel since all Israel gathered for the funeral. Samuel was a great judge and prophet of Israel. But only one verse of the Bible is here given to the event of his funeral. God does not dwell on the death of His righteous servants simply because they have transitioned into a heavenly dwelling. In the minds of men, the funeral was a great event because men often focus more on the body of the person than the spirit that has returned to God. But in the eyes of God, the dead saint did not cease to exist, but only came into His presence. *Carmel:* This Carmel is at the southern end of the Dead Sea. It is not the Mt. Carmel to the north and on the west coast of Palestine. *Abigail:* She was intelligent and very beautiful. However, her husband was crude and dishonest. *David sent out ten young men:* It was reasonable for David to make this request of Nabal because David had pro-

tected the herds of Nabal from raiders that came from the desert. This was also a feast day, and thus it would have been hospitable on the part of Nabal to share with David and his men. *Nabal:* This person lived up to the definition of his name, which means “fool,” “stupid,” or “evil person.”

25:10-13 Unfortunately, Nabal’s response to David was contemptuous and harsh. Nabal’s response was answered by David assembling 400 of his men to punish Nabal for his refusal to help God’s anointed. The great number of David’s men to punish Nabal indicates that the clan of Nabal was large, and thus a large army was needed to carry out the destruction of Nabal’s heritage.

25:14-17 *He reviled them:* Or, he railed at them. Nabal’s response was an expression of his uncouth and rude character. The servant also told Abigail that the result of this railing would be the calamity of Nabal. His contempt and ungrateful response to David would certainly lead to the termination of his heritage.

25:18-22 After being informed of Nabal’s response to David, the quick response of Abigail indicates that she perceived that the end of Nabal was coming. Though she was married to a worthless person, she still sought to protect him from the judgment of David. *The enemies of David:* David realized that he was anointed by God to be king of Israel. His judgment against Nabal, therefore, was a judgment of God against one who had set himself against God. It is evident from this response of David that

he at this time was assuming the responsibility of his kingship over Israel, though Saul still remained alive as the acting king. All knew that Saul had been rejected. They were just waiting for the time when God would providentially remove Saul and allow David to reign unhindered as king of Israel. But at this time, David is assuming the responsibility of a king in his judgment of those who would oppose God's anointed.

25:23-31 *She fell before David:* The legacy of Abigail is her wisdom. ***As his name is:*** Nabal behaved according to the definition of his name, that is, he behaved foolishly as an evil man. He was a "son of Belial," or a rebellious person. ***Fighting the battles of the Lord:*** It seems that all Israel had accepted David as the one who was defending Israel from her oppressors. Since this was so, then all Israel should have been grateful to David and his men for protecting the freedom of Israel. Unfortunately, rebellious and ungrateful people as Nabal refused to give credit to David for their freedom which he preserved. ***Bound in the bundle of the living:*** David's life was in the safekeeping of God's protection. ***No grief to you:*** When David would eventually become the uncontested king of Israel, Abigail did not want him to regret any rash actions on his part that would lead to killing innocent people. In this case, the rest of the clan of Nabal would have been innocent victims of the unrighteous Nabal.

25:32-35 David sensed that Abigail was sent to him by God, for he expressed gratitude to her for her wise advice. The

tender heart of David is here revealed because he accepted the advice of a woman who pled for the case of her foul husband. David certainly saw in Abigail a genuine person for she maintained her dignity though she was married to an uncouth and rebellious husband. She did not seek deliverance from her husband, but that her husband be delivered from the judgment of David.

25:36-44 *His heart died:* When Nabal had recovered from his drunkenness in the morning, Abigail informed him of her encounter with David and his men. The news struck terror in the heart of Nabal. It was as if he knew he was a walking dead man, for surely, he must have reasoned that his sin would eventually be punished. ***The Lord smote Nabal:*** The news of Abigail was so striking to Nabal that he must have had a stroke or heart attack. Whatever the case, the Lord was given credit for bringing judgment directly upon Nabal for his refusal to help God's anointed in a time of trouble. ***Take you as his wife:*** Because of her wisdom and undeserved loyalty to her unscrupulous husband, David saw in Abigail one who was fit to be a king's wife.

Chapter 26

26:1-4 *The Ziphites:* Here is a similar event as that which took place in 23:10 – 24:22. The Ziphites again reported to Saul concerning the whereabouts of David. They possibly believed that they must stay on the good side of Saul, for they did not believe that David would be king of Israel. Upon learning where David was, Saul again sought him in order to kill him. It seems

that Saul had forgotten the remorse he experienced when David had spared his life in the cave of Engedi (See 24:1-22).

26:5-12 *Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed:* When one was anointed by God in Israel, that person represented God's will on earth. If one struck the anointed of God, then it was as if he struck God (24:5). The godliness of David was revealed in the fact that he dared not strike the anointed of God lest he eventually pay for such a sin. ***The Lord will smite him:*** When God judged His anointed, as He did Saul, then it was the Lord's business to remove His anointed. ***Deep sleep from the Lord:*** This event was under the control of God. If their sleep were natural, then surely someone would have awakened and alerted the rest of the army. But because the Lord brought everyone into a deep sleep, David and Abishai were safe in the midst of an army of sleeping enemy warriors. God can do things beyond our comprehension.

26:13-16 *David said to Abner:* David addressed Abner in order to rebuke him for not caring for the safety of his king. Abner was worthy of death because he did not protect the anointed of God.

26:17-20 In his plea to Saul, David again proclaimed his innocence. He exhorted Saul when he said that he was out as one searching for an insignificant flea or a lone partridge in the mountains. In other words, David chided Saul for wasting his time in pursuing one who was insignificant in reference to challenging his kingship. David knew that God was working events to remove Saul. By trust-

ing in the work of God, David was satisfied to wait on Him to carry out his providential work in the life of Saul. David was willing to allow Saul to live out his kingship without challenging his rule. David understood that these things were in the hand of God. They would thus occur according to God's schedule.

26:21-25 *I have sinned:* This was the same thing Saul proclaimed at the cave of Engedi when David at that time had the opportunity to kill him (See ch 24). During this encounter with David, Saul confessed that he had exceedingly gone astray. It seems that he was behaving as a schizophrenic, that is, behaving as two different people, depending on the situation in which he was at any particular time. This time he had become the repentant Saul, and thus invited David to return to his court to enjoy the fellowship of the royal family. But David's reply was to leave everything to the providential work of God. David had no thirst for power as Saul presumed. ***You will ... surely prevail:*** These words of Saul were prophetic. Saul knew that David would become king. It seems that he was intimidated by the goodness and just behavior of David. Saul was a person who always wanted the approval of the people. Unfortunately, he did not have a character as David that drew people to him. In his frustration he unleashed his inferiority complex on David in order to rid society of the one to whom the people were attracted.

Chapter 27

27:1-3 David knew that Saul would

not pass into the land of the Philistines, lest he generate a war with the Philistines. He thus saw the territory of the Philistines as a place of safety from the pursuit of Saul.

27:4-6 *Some town in the country:*

David wanted a place where his men would not generate any confrontation with the soldiers of Achish. He could thus dwell separate from the Philistine culture, but at the same time not go to war with the Israelites. Such would give the pretense to Achish that he had sided with the Philistines because the Israelites were against him. ***Unto this day:*** This indicates a date of writing for the book of 1 Samuel sometime after the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms. The south was called the kingdom of Judah. The division took place after the death of Solomon and continued until the captivity of the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. The book would thus have been written after the division of Israel, but before the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

27:7-12 During the time David and his men were in residence at Ziklag, they raided desert tribes to the south that were still within the territory that God had originally given to the nation of Israel as part of the promised land. There is no record in history of the Geshurites. The Amalekites were supposed to have been eradicated by Saul in his early reign (15:1-35). Though Achish did not understand the raids of David, we must conclude that he was continuing his responsibility of eradicating the Canaanites from the land, which his forefathers had failed to do. While in Ziklag, therefore,

and in order to maintain favor with the Philistine king, Achish, David continued God's work to cleanse the land. In view of his kingship over the land that was yet in the future, David simply carried on as a king, but under the guise of being a refugee in Philistine territory, which territory was also a part of the land that God had given to Israel as the promised land.

Chapter 28

FINAL DAYS OF SAUL

28:1,2 The Philistines provoked another war with Israel. Though Achish asked David to join in the battle, David evaded the request by offering himself as the bodyguard of Achish. In this way, David would not have to fight against Israel.

28:3-6 *Saul put away ... those who had familiar spirits and the wizards:* At one time in the life of Saul, and while Samuel was still alive, he rid the land of all spiritists and cults associated with practices of sorcery and witchcraft (See Ex 22:18; Dt 18:9-12). But on this occasion, which is often the case, he was afraid, and thus turned to any source for comfort. When men are terrified, in their desperation they often resort to their most primitive beliefs. Since the Spirit of the Lord had already left Saul, he grasped for any reassurance that might bring him relief from his fear.

28:7-14 This was a unique incident in history that is often misunderstood. A correct understanding begins first by knowing that God was in complete control of the events that transpired. The work of Satan is nowhere mentioned in

the text. Nowhere in Scripture do we see any evidence that departed spirits may roam at will among the living. In view of this, we can only conclude that God was working in these events in order to leave us a record of the tragic end of the life of Saul and the extent to which he digressed in his faith before his death.

Woman who is a medium: Or, a woman with a “familiar spirit.” A medium was one who supposed he or she had contact with the spirits of the dead. The Hebrew word *ob* means “prattling” or “mumbling.” The word was used to refer to those who were in a self-hypnotic state of behavior, and thus presumed to communicate with the spirits of the dead.

Conjure up for me: That is, bring up from Sheol, the place of the dead (See Nm 16:30; Ps 63:9; Ez 31:14; 32:18).

You know what Saul has done: She knew that her practice was against the wishes of the king. By the instructions of Samuel, Saul had eradicated mediums and witches from Israel. But this action was taken when Samuel was still alive. We would conclude, therefore, that under the direction of Samuel, the prophet of God, those who practiced sorcery were false religious leaders in Israel, for what they were practicing was not supernatural. As long as Samuel was alive, and Saul followed his spiritual leadership, Saul drove out those who adhered to any of the Canaanite religious practices. The witch of En Dor was a vestige of Canaanite religiosity. **She cried with a loud voice:** As soon as Saul made the request in verse 11, Samuel appeared in verse 12. The text indicates that the woman had

never before performed any such incantations. The request of Saul was immediate. It was God, not the medium, who brought Samuel to life in the mind of the woman. The fact that the medium cried out in terror is evidence that she had never experienced something as this before, thus indicating that she had nothing to do with Samuel coming to life. She was only a bystander to the work of God to communicate to Saul that his days were numbered. **Gods:** This word is from the Hebrew *ha elohim*, a reference in this context to false gods, angels, and even men of authority on earth. In this case, it would refer to godlike beings. **What is his form:** Saul did not see in his mind what the medium envisioned. **What did you see:** Since Saul saw nothing, we must conclude that God brought the woman into a state of vision, in which experience, what she saw was lifelike. In a state of vision, the beholder could not tell the difference between that which was real and that which was the product of a God-inspired experience in one’s mind. In this case, Samuel was not actually incarnated into the flesh of a man, neither was a spirit of his appearance revealed that could be seen by the medium or Saul. The bringing up of Samuel was only in the mind of the woman.

28:15-19 Samuel said: We are not told whether Samuel spoke through the medium, or directly to Saul. We assume that the speaking was directly to Saul, but not necessarily through the incarnation of a body, or the apparition of a spirit. It is simply stated that a conversation went on between Saul and Samuel. The

conversation was in a vision, for Samuel's mouth was not incarnate in order for him to converse as people do in life. The vision at this moment in the experience had possibly gone from the medium to the mind of Saul. **The Lord ... has become your enemy:** When this happens, one's existence and work are over (See comments Js 4:4). God became the enemy of Saul for two reasons. First, Saul did not obey the Lord, and second, he did not eradicate the Amalekites who had taken advantage of the weakness of Israel when the nation came out of Egyptian bondage.

28:20-25 Saul immediately fell ... on the ground: Saul previously knew that God had given the kingdom to David, for he knew from the time of Samuel that David had been anointed to be the king of Israel. But the reality of the end of his own kingship, and the death of his sons, which would terminate the lineage of his family as kings of Israel, was made vividly real by this vision. The reality was too much for an old man whose hopes had now been totally dashed by the words of Samuel. Saul realized that his end had come.

Chapter 29

29:1-5 What are these Hebrews doing here: The term "Hebrews" was not meant in a kind way. It was the Philistines' derogatory term that was used in reference to the Israelites. Though Achish was loyal to David and his men, the other Philistine leaders did not agree with his association with the Hebrews. Of course, they were right. Achish was

wrong because history had proven that there never was any real friendship between the Philistines and Israel. **These years:** It had been about a year and four months (See 27:7). **Is this not David:** David's reputation as a successful military leader of Israel was well known among the Philistines.

29:6-11 The lords do not favor you: Achish apologized to David and sent him home. David had dealt honorably with Achish, and Achish had returned the favor. However, David accepted the advice of Achish to return home, knowing that he would not go to war against his fellow Israelites. **As an angel of god:** In this statement Achish did not use the name *Yahweh*, the Israelite name used in reference to the God of Israel. He used the phrase *ha elohim*, a general reference to "the gods."

Chapter 30

30:1-6 Amalekites had invaded: The sin of Saul in not destroying the Amalekites resulted in tragedy in reference to God's anointed David. While gone from Ziklag, the Amalekites took advantage of the opportunity to capture and burn Ziklag. **No more power to weep:** They exhausted themselves with grief over the capture of their wives and children. The grief was so great that there was talk of mutiny among David's own men. **David encouraged himself in the Lord:** Great leaders often stand alone at the front. Because they are leaders, they must take responsibility for tragedies as this that are mentioned in this historical context. Nevertheless, great spiritual

leaders find their encouragement in their relationship with God, since those they lead often offer little encouragement. For this reason, those who would lead God's people must have a strong dependence on God in order that they might find comfort in Him.

30:7-15 *Two hundred remained behind:* We could assume that the older men remained behind because they could not keep up with the younger men. *An Egyptian:* The Amalekites were a ruthless people. In this case, they were in a hurry to return to their territory before the Philistines returned from their battle with Israel. They were in such a hurry that this young servant was left for dead in the wilderness.

30:16-20 Because of their great victory in the raids on territory in Philistia and Judah, the Amalekites were celebrating with a drunken party. As a result, they were caught off guard by David and his men. Except for 400 men on camels, the rest of the Amalekites were killed. All the captives were rescued, plus all the spoil that the Amalekites had taken from the Philistines and Israelites. In reference to the spoil, David and his men actually ended up with more than they had lost, for they were able to capture the spoil that was taken by the Amalekites from the Philistine cities.

30:21-31 *We will not give them any of the spoil:* This complaint came from wicked and worthless men of the 400 who went with David to engage the Amalekites in battle. But in verse 24 David explained the principle by which all his battles would be governed. Those

who support the frontline soldiers are as important in any victory as those who directly engage the enemy in battle (See Nm 31:27). From this victory, therefore, David established a principle for his army, as well as for those who followed him. *He sent of the spoil to the elders ... friends:* It was not that David was buying their loyalty. They had already been his friends throughout his time as a fugitive from Saul. The gift of the spoil was in appreciation for their loyalty and their recognition that he was the anointed king of Israel.

Chapter 31

31:1-13 (1 Ch 10:1-12) *The battle went fierce against Saul:* When Achish had previously requested that David not go with the Philistines in this battle against Israel, he actually did him a great favor. It was during this series of battles that David's beloved friend Jonathan was slain by the Philistines. It was a series of conflicts wherein Israel was totally defeated. We could assume that this was a providential victory of the Philistines over Israel because God had by this time determined that Saul and his sons were to be terminated from the leadership of Israel. *Saul said to his armorbearer:* Being mortally wounded, Saul asked for death from his armorbearer because he did not want to suffer the humiliation of being tortured to death by the Philistines. But because his armorbearer would not raise his hand against God's anointed, Saul had to commit suicide. *They forsook the cities and fled:* Fear gripped Israel in this dark period of their history.

They abandoned their cities and fled into the wilderness as fugitives. Those who had made David a fugitive, were now themselves fugitives from the Philistines. They reaped what they had sown. ***Fasted his body to the wall of Beth Shan:*** Stripping and hanging the body of the conquered on a wall was a show of disdain toward one's enemy. In this case it was a demonstration of the Philistines' total contempt for the Israelites. ***Inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead:*** When those

whom Saul had initially saved in his early years (11:1-5) heard of the desecration of Saul and his sons, they secretly came at night and burned the bodies. A few years later, the bones of Saul and his sons were buried in a family tomb in Zelah (2 Sm 21:12-14). The end of Saul's kingship had come to a tragic end because he left the direction of God through His word and followed after mediums and soothsayers.