

# 1 SAMUEL

## 1 SAMUEL 1-2:11 — SAMUEL'S BIRTH AND DEDICATION

### A SORROWFUL WIFE (CHAP. 1)

Like Ruth, the opening of First Samuel deals with events in the time of the Judges, and is the book of transition from that period to the monarchy.

*Verses 1-8.* Though there is difficulty in locating the city named in verse 1, yet it appears that Elkanah was a native of Bethlehem-judah like Elimelech (see the first lesson in Ruth). He was a Levite (see <sup><1363></sup>1 Chronicles 6:33-34), and if it is surprising that he practiced polygamy (v. 2), we must remember the moral condition of the people at this time, but not imagine that God approved it.

*Verses 4 and 5* suggest a situation not unlike that of Jacob and Rachel and Leah (<sup><1295></sup>Genesis 29:15-35). The latter of the verses is rendered in the Septuagint: "But unto Hannah he gave a single portion, because she had no child; howbeit Elkanah loved Hannah." It will be recalled from <sup><1387></sup>Leviticus 3:7 and <sup><1622></sup>Deuteronomy 12:12 that the offerer received back the greater part of the peace offerings, which he and his family might eat at a social feast in connection with the act of worship, and it is to this that "portion" alludes. The "adversary" (v. 6) is translated "rival" in the Revised Version and refers to Peninnah.

*Verses 9-18.* What a beautiful illustration of <sup><1315></sup>Psalm 50:15 is found in these verses! As Hannah was the wife of a Levite, a son would in any event have belonged to the Lord (v. 11); but if this one was to be a Nazarite from his birth (<sup><1405></sup>Numbers 6:5; <sup><1715></sup>Judges 13:5) it meant that his residence and service in the sanctuary must begin at an earlier period than usual.

Eli's words in verse 17 were spoken by the Holy Spirit through him whether he were aware of it or not. And Hannah seemed to understand them as a divine answer to her prayer (v. 18).

## A JOYOUS MOTHER (2:1-11)

Hannah's song foreshadows Mary's in ~~<046>~~ Luke 1:46-55, and must not be regarded simply as a natural song of thanksgiving, although it came from Hannah's heart. It was a prophecy of the Holy Spirit within her, making her rejoice in praise for those greater blessings in Christ of which the whole race will partake, and of which Samuel's birth was an earnest and pledge.

Study the words carefully, and see how they pass over all the intermediate steps of the development of the kingdom of God, and point to the final goal when the dominion is extended over the ends of the earth.

Doctrinally considered, the song expresses joy in the power of God (v. 1); it praises Him for His holiness and faithfulness, which is as firm as a rock (v. 2); it extols His providence in His omniscience and omnipotence in dealing with the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the godly and ungodly (vv. 3-8); and finally, it bears prophetic testimony to His victory at the end and the establishment of His Kingdom on the earth through Jesus Christ (vv. 9-10).

### QUESTIONS

1. How may this book be characterized?
2. To what tribe did Elkanah belong?
3. Can you quote from memory ~~<046>~~ Psalm 50:15?
4. Have you read the law of the Nazarite in ~~<046>~~ Numbers 6:5?
5. What was the nature of Hannah's song?
6. State its scope in a sentence or two.
7. Give a theological or doctrinal exposition of the song.

## 1 SAMUEL 2:12-36 — ELI AND HIS SONS

After leaving their son with Eli in Shiloh, Elkanah and his wife returned home (v. 11). Then follows an account of how "Samuel ministered before the Lord" (vv. 18-19), and how he grew in favor with God and man (v. 26).

In the meantime other blessings had come to Hannah (vv. 20-21), a confirmation of the divine principle, "Them that honor Me, I will honor" (v. 30).

But what ministry could a child have wrought in the sanctuary? It is difficult to say, but he may have played upon the cymbals or lighted the lamps, or performed other simple tasks.

### **PRIESTLY GRAFT (VV. 12-17)**

But the burden of this lesson is the wickedness of Eli's sons, over against whom the life of Samuel is placed by contrast.

The explanation of verses 13-16 seems like this: When worshippers presented a peace offering it was brought to the priest, who caused the Lord's portion to be burnt on the altar, and whose further duty was to cause the other portions for himself and the offerer to be sodden. The priests were entitled to the breasts and shoulders of the animal (<sup><0227></sup>Exodus 29:27; <sup><073></sup>Leviticus 7:31-32), but Eli's sons demanded more, and even seized upon it before the waving and heaving before the Lord took place (<sup><073></sup>Leviticus 7:34). They added also the offense of taking up with their fork whatever portion they wanted while it was still raw, in order to have it roasted. The injustice of this must have been revolting to devout worshippers.

### **A POWERLESS REMONSTRANCE (VV. 22-25)**

But wicked as this was, the offense in verse 22 was more rank. The women referred to are mentioned in <sup><0308></sup>Exodus 38:8, but what their duties were in the sanctuary is not told. (Compare <sup><0236></sup>Luke 2:36-37.)

Eli's old age (v. 22) is named not as an excuse but an explanation of his weakness. He seems to have been an over-indulgent father, whose duty set before him in <sup><0218></sup>Deuteronomy 21:18-21, was not performed. Love triumphed over justice with the usual evil consequences to other people. It is only God who holds the balance evenly.

### ***A Good Gospel Text***

God must be the judge when man fails (v. 25), but it was not His foreordination but their willful sin which caused the destruction of these sons.

Pastors will find a text for a Gospel discourse in the former part of this verse, "If a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" The idea is that when men sin against men, God, through appointed human agents, restores the disturbed relations by composing the strife; but when men sin against God, who is there to arrange the matter? As Wordsworth puts it, A man may intercede with God for the remission of a penalty due for injury to himself, but who shall entreat for one who has outraged the majesty of God?

Who, save Him Who is Himself God, and yet made Himself of no reputation that He might take upon Him our sins, and suffer in our stead?

### **THE PUNISHMENT OF ELI AND HIS HOUSE (VV. 27-36)**

Eli is held directly responsible for the conduct of his sons (v. 29). Notice that God can change His mind when it is conditioned on the conduct of His people (v. 30). Notice further, the prophecies upon Eli and his house:

- (1) "I will cut off thine arm and the arm of thy father's house" (v. 31). This meant that the high priesthood would be taken from the line of Ithamar, to which Eli belonged, and restored to that of Eleazar, from which it had been taken previously.
- (2) "There shall not be an old man in thy house," a circumstance which lowered the respectability of a family in Israel.
- (3) "Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation" (v. 32), or as the Revised Version expresses it, "Thou shalt behold the affliction of my habitation."

Eli would not personally live to see these things in detail, but he would see enough to assure him that the rest was coming (v. 34).

But God would take care of His own, and fulfill all His promises, as indicated in verse 35, which seems like a prophecy of Christ. The following verse somewhat qualifies this application, but perhaps the prophecy finds a partial fulfillment in Samuel and Zadok (of whom we shall learn later on) and a complete and final one in Christ, which would meet the difficulty.

## QUESTIONS

1. What blessing came to Hannah as her reward?
2. What ministry could a child exercise in the sanctuary?
3. Explain the nature of the priestly graft.
4. What was Eli's fault as a father?
5. What chastisement came upon him?

## 1 SAMUEL 3-6 — ELI'S DEATH; THE LOSS OF THE ARK

### GOD SPEAKS TO SAMUEL (CHAP. 3)

"The word of the Lord was precious [or rare] in those days" (v. 1) is introductory to the record that it was now heard in the case of Samuel. It was Israel's sin that hid God's face from them and caused His voice to be silent so long — only twice heard during the period of the Judges (~~1000~~Judges 4:4; 6:8) — but He was again to be gracious unto them in this respect, and a new epoch was to open in their history.

How God spake to Samuel we are not informed, but His voice in earlier times was heard in a literal sense, and there is no good reason to doubt that it was here. Of course, God is not a man with physical organs, but who shall say that He who made man's voice is not able Himself to be heard and understood by man?

It is touching that the "man" to whom God chose to reveal Himself was a boy, and yet by this time perhaps quite a lad. How interesting that He is willing to reveal Himself to such an instrument! How it should encourage the ambition of a boy.

The revelation God gives to Samuel concerning Eli is a repetition of that of the "man of God" of the preceding lesson (2:27). And the meekness with which the old priest takes it is an evidence that his personal character was good, notwithstanding his conduct as regards his sons.

## A CRISIS IN ISRAEL (CHAP. 4)

Verse 5 furnishes another illustration of the low spiritual state of Israel at this time, and how little removed they were from their pagan neighbors. To trust in the ark of the covenant instead of the God it symbolized was scarcely different from the worship of the idols of the Philistines. It is significant that the elders and the priests were the leaders in this folly (v. 4).

Their fathers had carried the ark at Jericho, but there was a reason for it then, and God had commended it, but how different now.

What judgment fell on Israel for this! And surely as we read the chapter to the end, we can understand the prophecy, "Thou shalt behold the affliction of my habitation."

But notice how the character of Samuel as a prophet is being established (3:19-21). How sad that he had not been consulted in the case of the ark. If he had been, what a different story might have been written for Israel!

## THE ARK AMONG THE PHILISTINES (CHAPS. 5-6)

This lesson will not be too long if we add the story of the ark among the Philistines, especially as there is little requiring explanation.

"Dagon" was a heathen god represented by a human but joined to the belly and tail of a fish. The details of ~~1~~ Samuel 6:3-4 show the manner in which God was pleased to demonstrate His superiority over this heathen god, so-called. "Unto this day" (v. 5) means the date when the story was recorded, probably the later years of Samuel's life.

"Emerods" is vulgarly known as piles, which the Philistines regarded as a judgment upon them (vv. 6-12). Thank offerings were made to heathen gods for recovery from illness in the form of metal images of the diseased parts of the body, (still true in some Roman Catholic countries and in India), which accounts for the advice of the priests and diviners (6:1-6). Note verse 6, and the witness it bears that written records or tradition had kept some knowledge of the true God before the minds of these nations contiguous to Israel in all these years.

The lowing of the cattle for their young, notwithstanding that they did not turn back to recover them, shows that God was controlling their steps in another direction (vv. 10-12).

The judgment that fell on the Bethshemites (v. 19) was calculated to impress Israel anew with the sacredness attaching to the worship of Jehovah, but there seems to be an error in the translation here. Bethshemesh was only a village, and it seems unlikely that 50,070 men could have been slain there; but there is no explanation of the difficulty of which we know.

### QUESTIONS

1. Why was not God's voice heard for so long in Israel?
2. What stimulus to the spiritual life of a boy does this lesson contain?
3. Give an illustration of Eli's goodness of character.
4. What was the nature of Israel's sin in carrying the ark into the battle?
5. Tell the story of the discomfiture of the Philistines because of the ark.
6. Describe the sacrilege of the Bethshemites.

## 1 SAMUEL 7-10:16 — PASSING OF THE JUDGESHIP

### A NATIONAL REVIVAL AND ITS RESULTS (CHAP. 7)

In our last we left the ark in care of the men of Kirjath-jearim, which means "the city of woods," and is located near Bethshemesh and northwest of Jerusalem. Why the ark was not brought to Shiloh is not stated, but only that it remained in the city before-named twenty years. It would appear from <sup>1000</sup>2 Samuel 6 and <sup>1300</sup>1 Chronicles 13 that it remained there longer, but that period had elapsed when the event of this chapter began.

That event was a revival. "Israel lamented after the Lord" (v. 2), because they were suffering the consequences of His averted face, which included the oppression of the Philistines.

Samuel tells them how to find relief (v. 3). Ashtaroth was a goddess of the Sidonians, whose worship was popular in other lands, and which the Greeks and Romans knew by the name Astarte. The worship was licentiousness under the guise of religion. Baal and Ashtaroth are named together, and taken by some to represent the sun and the moon, and by others the male and female powers of reproduction. Asherah, translated in the King James Version "grove," was really an idol-symbol of the goddess.

The people listened to Samuel and gathered to Mizpah (v. 6). This refers to a public meeting for the observance of religious ceremonies, including fasting and the pouring out of water before the Lord as a token of their need for purification. Samuel seems to begin his duties as a judge or civil magistrate at this time, having only exercised the office of prophet/teacher before.

The enemy is quick to discern danger, for a return of Israel to God means a return to power, and hence they spring upon them while unprepared (v. 7). But Samuel's intercession is effective (vv. 8-10), and Israel so follows up the advantage gained by the supernatural interposition that the Philistines never fully recover the blow all the days of Samuel's judgeship.

Observe in verse 16 that Samuel was a "circuit" judge. As later we read of "schools of the prophets" in the places named in that verse, some think that Samuel was the founder of them at this time.

### **THE DEMAND FOR A KING (CHAP. 8)**

This chapter presents no difficulties. Observe how history repeats itself in the case of Samuel and his sons as compared with his predecessor (vv. 1-5). Samuel's displeasure may have been in part personal, but chiefly because of the dishonor done to God and the injury that would be wrought by such a revolution to the people themselves (v. 6). God will grant them a king in His anger (vv. 7-9, compare ~~2830~~ Hosea 13:10-11), and tells them what kind of a ruler they will have (vv. 9-18).



Seeking Asses and Finding a Kingdom (chaps. 9:1-10:16) The drama in this chapter and the next disposes itself into five scenes: We have first the country lad seeking his father's asses (9:3-5). Like the cattle on our western plains they were allowed to roam at will during the grazing season and were brought home at its close.

Secondly, there is the meeting with the prophet (9:6-21). That he should have been consulted on so trifling a matter, and that it should have been thought proper to offer him so insignificant a present as "the fourth part of a shekel of silver," perhaps fifteen cents of our money, seems strange to us; but probably we appreciate Samuel's greatness better than his contemporaries. Moreover eastern ideas are different from ours. It was probably the peace offering that was to be presented on this occasion, which under special circumstances seems to have been permitted at a distance from the sanctuary.

"Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before" (v. 15). How intimate this expression! In ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 103 it is written that God "made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel," and here He is honoring Samuel in the same way. His acts are what men see, His ways are the reason and foreknowledge of them, and to them that fear Him such secrets are still given (~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

Samuel's words to Saul in verse 20 are "a covered and indirect promise of the royal dignity that awaited him."

Thirdly, the introduction to the people (9:22-24). The things here recorded were intended to show honor to the young man, and in so far prepare the people to receive him as king. For example, his being received into the apartment assigned to the special guests, and given a high seat among them (v. 22); and his being offered the choicest portion of the feast (v. 24). The words "that which is left" should be rendered "that which is reserved."

Fourthly, the communion on the housetop (9:25-26). Oriental houses being low and flat-roofed, the roof offered the most desirable place for quiet conversation and rest in the cool of the day. Here the prophet instructed Saul in the way of the kingdom, pointing out to him, perhaps, the religious decline of the people, and the need of a leader obedient to God.

Fifthly, the anointing with oil (9:27-10:1), which was the ancient ceremony of investing with the royal office. This was followed by predictions of what

should be met by Saul on the way home, which, as they came to pass, by testifying to Samuel's authority as a prophet, would confirm Saul's reliance upon what he had declared concerning himself.

## QUESTIONS

1. Have you looked up the location of Kirjath-jearim?
2. What does "Ashtaroth" stand for?
3. In what sense was Samuel a "circuit" judge, and what institution may have grown out of that fact?
4. How would you expound ~~19307~~ Psalm 103:7?
5. In what manner does Samuel distinguish Saul at this feast?
6. What was the significance of the anointing with oil?
7. How was Samuel's authority certified to Saul?

## 1 SAMUEL 10:17-12:25 — SAUL CONFIRMED AS KING

### THE PEASANT BECOMES A PRINCE

There was one verse in the last lesson (10:6) we should think of more fully. When Samuel said the Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul and he would be turned into another man, it is not necessary to suppose it meant his regeneration. There is a question as to whether Saul ever was regenerated, for his life-story would not lead us to believe he was.

The Spirit of the Lord coming on a man is one thing, and the Spirit of Lord coming into a man is another. He comes on a man for service, He comes in him for salvation. We saw Him coming on Balaam, enabling him to prophesy, although the event shows that Balaam was not in fellowship with God, and so it may have been with Saul, and so it may be with any man. Service should not be our first desire, but salvation.

Saul had been a farmer's son, with no training for a monarch's throne, but the Spirit of God "rushed" upon him, as the word means, and endowed him to act in a manner far superior to his previous character and habits. Instead

of the simplicity of a peasant he now displayed the wisdom and energy of a prince.

### **THE CHOICE OF THE LOT (10:17-27)**

The event here illustrates of the relation of divine sovereignty to human free agency. It was God's purpose that Saul should be king as indicated in His earlier selection of him and yet, as far as we can see, the people who were ignorant of this were perfectly free in casting their lot. So in the case of our salvation. "No man cometh to the Father but by me" (~~6146~~ John 14:16), and yet, "whosoever will may take of the water of life freely" (~~627~~ Revelation 22:17).

Note that the "Magna Charta" of the kingdom was laid up "before the Lord," placed with the other sacred records for safekeeping and transmission. We mentioned earlier that this bears upon the history of Scripture.

That is a beautiful expression in verse 26, showing how God provided for the suite of the new sovereign and the dignity of the kingly state. These men feared God and honored the king (~~6127~~ 1 Peter 2:17). There were others, however (v. 27), but Saul in his treatment of them showed himself a king.

### **THE SELECTION CONFIRMED (CHAP. 11)**

This chapter divides itself into two parts: Saul's victory over the Ammonites (vv. 1-11), and the effect upon the people in reference to himself (vv. 12-15). It contains no difficulties, but it ought to be stated that the demand of the Ammonites (v. 1) was based upon a supposed right of original possession in Gilead (read Judges 11).

Notice that no appeal was sent to Saul personally for aid, indicating that the people generally had not accepted him as king. But God had chosen and equipped him, which was sufficient (vv. 6-8).

Do not pass this by without observing God's sovereignty in the deliverance of His own. The men of Jabesh-Gilead are not looking to Him but to the people to help them. And yet their only hope is in God. And when He helps them it is through the instrument they have ignored. Moreover, it is His Spirit that does the work. Where otherwise could Saul have obtained the

boldness to act as he did? And even then, would the people have had confidence to follow Him had not the Lord put His fear upon them?

What a lesson for our churches and missionary boards! How the magnitude of their work oppresses them in these days; how feeble the results in comparison with the effort and the size of the need. Why not turn to the God of Israel instead of wearing ourselves out with our own planning? Why not expect Him to carry on His work in His own way and His own time? The Spirit of God may fall upon any man He pleases, and His fear upon the people when He will, and then a revival comes and great is the accomplishment. Let us turn to Him in continual, humble and expectant prayer if we want to put the Ammonites to shame.

There is nothing so successful as success, and the enthusiasm of the people for Saul now is so strong, that with difficulty are they restrained from summary vengeance on those who would not follow him theretofore (vv. 12-13). But Saul once more shows the strong reserve of a king, and is fully confirmed in the kingdom.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF THE OLD LEADER (CHAP. 12)**

The people have no charge to lay against Samuel (vv. 1-15), but he has one to lay against them, not for himself but for God. It was wrong and ungrateful for them to have desired a human king, yet they might be spared many of the unhappy consequences of that act if, even now, they would fear the Lord and serve Him (vv. 13-15).

A sign of the authority by which he spake was needed. A thunderstorm in itself was not a miracle, but coming from a clear sky, in an unusual time of the year, and at the word of the prophet made it so (vv. 16-19).

Notice the testimony to the divine faithfulness and consistency in verse 22. How ever-recurring it is in Holy Scripture! And notice the cause of it, it hath "pleased" Him to do so. No desert on the part of His people, but just His own gracious pleasure (compare ~~4000~~ Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-12). This is humbling but assuring. If He pleases to save, He will save. And He pleases to save all who put their trust in His Son. It is the mark of the regenerated man that he submits to the Lord's pleasure always. It brings him pleasure to do so.

But do not lose the lesson of what Samuel says in verse 23. He would consider it calamitous for him to neglect the office of intercessor. Could a parent think more of his child than he of this nation? What an example for pastors! What an example for every Christian (~~4067~~ Ephesians 6:17-18)!

## QUESTIONS

1. How might one explain the reference to the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Saul in verse 10:6?
2. Which should be our first desire, salvation or service, and why?
3. What theological problem is illustrated in the choice of the lot?
4. What circumstance bears on the history of the sacred text?
5. How is God's sovereignty in salvation further illustrated in this question?
6. What made the thunderstorm in this case supernatural?
7. What lesson about prayer did we learn from Samuel?

## 1 SAMUEL 13-14 — THE MONARCHY ON ITS WAY

The period covered by these chapters is doubtless of some length, whose history is summed up in the closing verses of the second (vv. 47-52). But there are special features reported in detail which constitute the substance of the lesson.

### THE RENDEZVOUS AT GILGAL (13:1-4)

Saul's plan seems to have been not a large standing army but a small body-guard, divided between him and his son (v. 2), for the purpose of harassing the enemy in detachments.

"Garrison" (v. 3) is rendered by some "pillar" or "flag-staff." In any event Jonathan's act was a signal for battle, and the hosts gathered (vv. 3-4).

### SAUL WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING (13:5-14)

Some regard "30,000 chariots" (v. 5) as a textual error, and that it should be "3,000." But the Israelites act as though there were 30,000 (vv. 6-7),

and even Saul loses his balance (v. 9). Had he withheld his hand until the end of the seventh day Samuel would have appeared, whose delay doubtless was providentially ordered to test the king's character.

The king failed. He had no right to intrude into the priest's office. It showed a lack of faith and obedience, and a desire to get glory to himself rather than God. Moreover, under rebuke he showed no humility or penitence, but a self-justifying spirit (vv. 11-12), that led to his rejection from the kingdom and the prophecy of a successor of another type (vv. 13-14).

### **"A TREMBLING OF GOD" (14:15-18)**

The closing verses of chapter 13 depict the awful condition into which Israel had fallen under the mastery of the Philistines. They were totally disarmed. With the exception of a file for sharpening their smaller instruments of husbandry, there were weapons in the hands of none except the two named.

It is clear from this that what follows at the opening of the next chapter was supernatural. Verse 6 shows Jonathan's faith, superinduced doubtless by a special endowment of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise his conduct would have been rashness. The thought is further strengthened by the earthquake in verse 15, which contributed to the panic in the enemy's camp. "There was a trembling in the host," is in the margin, "a trembling of God," i.e., a trembling which He produced.

### **ZEAL WITHOUT WISDOM (14:19-46)**

Ecclesiastes says there is "a time to every purpose under the heaven" (3:1), and Saul thought there was a time to cease praying and begin acting for God had heard his prayer and was answering it (v. 19). The deserters were all coming back and the Lord was giving victory (vv. 21-23).

But the king had laid a foolish obligation on his soldiers, and a foolish vow upon himself (vv. 24-30). It was a case of zeal without wisdom as his son points out, and it came near costing him the loss of his son, but for the intervention of the people (vv. 36-45).

When Jonathan speaks of the honey "enlightening" his eyes (v. 29), it is another way of referring to the refreshment experienced by eating it.

The event in verse 32 took place at the end of the day's battle. With the obligation about eating removed, the hungry soldiers could wait neither to cook their meat nor properly slay their animals. The stone Saul commanded brought (v. 33) was to slaughter the animals upon, obeying the Levitical law about the blood, and seems afterward to have been used for an altar of worship.

## QUESTIONS

1. What do some think "garrison" means in this lesson?
2. What was the character of Saul's failure in this case?
3. What shows the extent of Israel's subjection to the Philistines?
4. How would you explain Jonathan's action in verse 6?
5. Tell the story of Saul's foolishness in this battle.
6. What is the meaning of "enlightening" in verse 29?

## 1 SAMUEL 15-16:13 — THE MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART

### ANOTHER COMMISSION FOR SAMUEL (15:1-9)

How long a time elapsed since the last chapter is indeterminable. Saul's victory seems to have driven the Philistines out of Israel's territory, and to have been followed by successful sallies against other enemies.

He had been warned of God that because of his presumption at Gilgal (chap. 13), the kingdom would be taken from him and given to another; but God seems willing to allow him another chance, or at least another test of his quality to be His vice-regent in Israel before God executes His purpose (v. 1).

For an explanation of verse 2, look up <sup><0708></sup>Exodus 17:8-14; <sup><0800></sup>Numbers 24:20; and <sup><0517></sup>Deuteronomy 25:17-19. We have seen the reason for God's anger against such nations as Amalek in that they represented the powers of darkness, and sought as the instruments of Satan to frustrate His purpose of redemption of the world through Israel.

## **SAUL'S REJECTION FROM THE KINGDOM (15:10-31)**

This part of the chapter requires little comment. Notice Saul's falsehood (v. 13), and his self-justifying spirit (vv. 15, 21). Notice the principle in verse 22, and the final rejection of him in verse 23. Nor is his repentance sincere, inasmuch as he is still trying to excuse himself (v. 24), and desires to make a good showing before the people (v. 30).

### *God's Repenting and Not Repenting*

Here is a seeming contradiction which needs a word of explanation. Twice is it said that it repented the Lord that He made Saul king (vv. 11, 35), and in another place that "He is not a man that He should repent" (v. 20). In the last case, "repent" is to be taken in the positive sense that God's decrees are unchangeable, which is necessary to be believed of the divine nature. But in the former case it is to be taken in the figurative sense, as explaining in terms capable of human understanding why He was about to act as He did.

He intends to alter His purpose with Saul because of the latter's wickedness. It would not have been altered but for this, and yet He foreknew in choosing Saul that this would take place. In the larger sense, He did not repent or change His mind at all, while in the narrower sense He did. But since the narrower was included in the larger, it is to be regarded as part of His original decree, from which point of view God did not repent, but carried out His purpose as from the beginning.

## **THE CHOICE OF DAVID (16:1-13)**

When in chapter 13 it was said that the Lord sought Him a man after His own heart, the reference was to David. But it is not to be supposed that David was a perfect man in the natural and moral sense, for we know to the contrary. It will be found, however, that while he was a sinner like Saul, he was a regenerated sinner while Saul was not, so far as man can judge. With all his sin, David loved God supremely, and his underlying motive was to do His will. His history, checkered as it is, establishes this fact, and the sense in which he was a man after God's own heart is seen by a comparison of his history with that of Saul.

There is nothing of difficulty in this section of Scripture.



## QUESTIONS

1. How extensive does the conquest of the Philistines seem to have been?
2. What further opportunity does God afford Saul?
3. Have you refreshed your memory concerning the history of the Amalekites?
4. Have you located them on the map?
5. Can you quote the principle in verse 22?
6. What indicates the insincerity of Saul?
7. How would you explain the apparent contradiction about God's repenting?
8. In what sense could David be said to be a man after God's heart?

## 1 SAMUEL 16:14-18:4 — DAVID BEFORE SAUL

### AS A MINSTREL (16:14-23)

When it is said that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (v. 14), we have a further illustration of the distinction between the Spirit coming on a man and the Spirit dwelling within him. In the latter case we do not think of His departing from him (<sup><6146></sup>John 14:16; <sup><6113></sup>Romans 11:29), but in the former He may do so for more than one reason, but especially when the man through disobedience has placed himself outside the pale where God cares to use him. As to "an evil Spirit from the Lord" troubling him, we are to regard it as a judgment upon him (see <sup><0023></sup>Judges 9:23; <sup><1225></sup>1 Kings 22:15-23; Job 1 and 2; <sup><4181></sup>1 Corinthians 5:1-5), in consequence of which he became "jealous, irritable, vindictive and subject to morbid melancholy." The ancients believed music had an influence in healing such disorders (v. 23).

It is easy to see why this providence came David's way (vv. 18-22), when we consider how it may have prepared him for his future position by acquainting him with the ways of the court and the business of government.

We are interested in the description of the young man David, by one who knew him well (v. 18). The word "servants" is "young men" in the Revised

Version, indicating that it may have been one of his former chums. But how could David have been a "man of war?" If not on the battlefield as yet, nevertheless in his conflicts with wild beasts (17:34, ff.), which demonstrated that he had the soldier in him when the time came.

### **AS A CHAMPION (17:1-54)**

This story is so familiar as to require little comment. The event occurred, according to the chronology in the margin of our Bibles, almost a quarter of a century after the victory over the Philistines at Michmash (chap. 14), and when that old time enemy of Israel had again become bold. The place (Shochoh) seems to have been a town in the western section of the territory of Judah.

There is no explanation of David's prowess in the presence of this strong enemy (vv. 26, 32), save the supernatural endowment of God. It was not the temporal reward that moved him, but the desire that God be magnified. This is discovered in the faith evidenced in verse 37. His success had been God's success rather than his own and would continue so to be (v. 45). And yet works wrought with his faith, since he took not only his staff but five stones, not one alone. If one failed he had others (v. 40). Surely the description of him was true, he was "prudent in matters."

But why should David have brought the giant's head to Jerusalem (v. 54)? Probably because it was the nearest city, and hence the appropriate place of deposit for such a trophy. We learned (~~15:63~~ Joshua 15:63 and ~~1:21~~ Judges 1:21) that the Jebusites possessed this city, but probably that means only the fortress on Mount Zion, while the rest was in Israel's hands.

### **AS A COURTIER (17:53-18:4)**

We are not surprised to find David a favorite at Saul's court after this, but we are surprised that he does not identify him (vv. 55-58). In explanation, remember Saul's mental condition at times, as well as the fact that time had elapsed since David's minstrel days, and the ruddy youth may have changed into the bearded man. And as to Abner, he may have been absent from court when David had been there.

In chapter 18, we have the beginning of a friendship that has gone into history as one of the most beautiful among men.

Jonathan and David were doubtless nearly of an age and, although the former had taken no notice of the minstrel, the heroic though modest warrior had commanded his admiration and affection at once, and "he loved him as his own soul" (v. 3). To receive any part of the dress worn by a sovereign or his eldest son and heir, is deemed in the east the highest honor which can be conferred on a subject. (Compare v. 4 with ~~1708~~ Esther 6:8).

## QUESTIONS

1. How are we to regard the saying that "an evil Spirit from the Lord" troubled Saul?
2. Have you read ~~488~~ 1 Corinthians 5:1-5?
3. How is David described in verse 18?
4. Where was Shocoh?
5. What was David's motive in the conflict with Goliath?
6. What do you know about the Jebusites and Jerusalem?
7. How would you explain Saul's failure to identify David the second time?

## 1 SAMUEL 18:5-20:42 — DAVID AND JONATHAN

### JEALOUSY AND FEAR (CHAP. 18)

Jonathan's love for David is put to a serious test, but is found genuine. On the homeward march from the victory over the Philistines, the women of Israel, following oriental custom, met the warriors and accompanied them along the road, singing and dancing. But their joy outran their judgment, so that they praised David more than their king. A better man than Saul could scarcely have resisted the temptation to envy, sinful as it was (vv. 6-9).

No wonder his malady returned and made him a murderer in his heart (vv. 10-11). When it is said "he prophesied," it cannot be that he was the mouthpiece of God, but as the term denotes, one under the influence of either a good or bad spirit; the probability is he was in a kind of frenzy. In religious meetings, where some have professed miraculous tongues, a similar phenomenon has been witnessed. There has been prophesying, and some have supposed it was God speaking; but events have proven

otherwise, for there are evil spirits in the universe as well as good, and, if possible, they would "deceive the very elect."

Saul would give David a military commission, but he would no longer retain him at the court (vv. 12-13). David had merited the king's eldest daughter in marriage (17:25); but this is now forgotten and, like Jacob with Laban, he must do more to obtain her. Nor is this enough (vv. 17-19). Another snare is set for him in the case of the younger daughter (vv. 20-25), for to slay one hundred Philistines, in order to their circumcision, meant a hazard that might easily have resulted in his death.

No wonder Saul was afraid of him (v. 29), for supernatural power was exerted on his behalf continually, and nothing could prevent his accession to the throne. Of course the wisdom of his behavior, the self-control he showed in the face of danger, at Saul's hands, was equally the gift of God.

### **THE STRATEGY OF LOVE (CHAP. 19)**

The story of this chapter is plain. For the incident of verse 12, compare ~~19:15~~ Joshua 2:15. Michal's subterfuge (v. 17) is justifiable though its recital in the record is not necessarily a divine approval. Look for Ramah on the map, northeast of Jerusalem and a bit south of Bethel. The meaning of "prophesied" in verse 20 may be similar to that expressed above concerning Saul; yet it is more likely that the influence of the sacred exercises produced an effect that made them unable to discharge their commission, led by a resistless impulse to join in praising God. "Stripping off his clothes" (v. 24) is to be understood of his armor and outer robes, as he lay in a trance.

### **THE FAITHFUL FRIEND (CHAP. 20)**

The beginning of a new moon was celebrated by sacrifices and feasting at which all the family were expected to be present (v. 5). But David's excuse for visiting his old home was a good one, since a "yearly sacrifice" seemed more important than a monthly one (v. 6).

Notice the renewal of the covenant between Jonathan and David at this time, and the project of its terms beyond the lifetime of the former who, with a prophet's eye, saw the outcome of the struggle in which his father and his friend were engaged (vv. 12-17).

"Clean" (v. 26) has reference to some ceremonial law such as was studied in Leviticus. The reproach of Jonathan's mother (v. 30) was not a reflection upon her character necessarily, but a stronger way of insulting the son than to fling a charge against him personally. The phrase has been rendered "thou son of perverse rebellion," with the reference to "woman" omitted. The last expression of the verse is a Middle East way of saying that the son's conduct would bring shame on the mother.

"Artillery" (v. 40) is "weapons" in the Revised Version. The French "artillerie" signifies "archery," a term still used in England of an association of archers who long since disused bows and arrows.

The closing verses are an affecting conclusion of a chapter in the lives of two of the best and greatest men who ever lived.

## QUESTIONS

1. What mistake did the Hebrew women make?
2. What is meant by "prophesied" in Saul's case?
3. What illustration of Saul's perfidy toward David does this lesson contain?
4. Did Saul's fear of David arise from natural or supernatural causes?
5. Have you identified Ramah?
6. What indicates Jonathan's conviction that David, rather than he, would ascend the throne?
7. What does artillery mean?

## 1 SAMUEL 21-24 — DAVID IN EXILE

### DECEIVING THE PRIEST (CHAP. 21)

Nob was northeast of Jerusalem and about five miles from Gibeah. David's unexpected presence there, and alone, caused alarm (v. 1). His falsehood was unnecessary and wrong (v. 2), and is not commended of God (<sup>(~~1329~~)</sup>Psalm 119:29). "Hallowed bread" (v. 4) was the shew-bread in the tabernacle, which we studied in Exodus and Leviticus. It was removed the day before the Sabbath when it became lawful for the priests to use it (<sup>(~~1349~~)</sup>Leviticus 24:9). David might have it under the circumstances, if only

he and his companions (supposed to be elsewhere) had complied with a requirement of the Levitical law. (Compare verses 4-5 with <sup><02915></sup>Exodus 19:15.) The last clause of verse 5 is in the margin thus: "especially when this day there is other sanctified in the vessel." It was the Sabbath, and with the new bread having been put on the table, there was no risk in giving David the old. (Compare <sup><02710></sup>1 Samuel 22:10 with <sup><01113></sup>Matthew 12:3, <sup><01025></sup>Mark 2:25, and <sup><01113></sup>Luke 6:3.)

Doeg, the Edomite, was a proselyte of the Jewish religion. Perhaps he was detained at Nob because of the law forbidding journeys on the Sabbath (v. 7).

David's going down to the Philistines at Gath (vv. 10-15) is unaccountable, except as he may have had special divine guidance. He was not safe in his own country. Go somewhere he must; Philistia was the less of two evils.

### LEADING THE OUTLAWS (CHAP. 22)

The cave of Adullam (v. 1) has been identified as the present Deir-Dubbon, on the border of the Philistine plain and about six miles southwest from Bethlehem. It is a location of natural pits or vaults, some of them fifteen to twenty feet deep.

It was undesirable for David to dwell in hiding if innocent, and if he desired to commend himself to the people as Saul's successor, hence Gaff's advice (v. 5).

Saul's motive in seeking to arouse Benjamin against David of the tribe of Judah is not hard to find (vv. 6-8), but it is notable that the Edomite is the first to respond (vv. 9-10).

Abimelech, whom Doeg gets into trouble, is innocent of wrong against the king. David seemed faithful; he was the king's son-in-law; why should he not aid him when asked, seeing he knew nothing of the trouble (vv. 14-15)? But his plea is in vain, though only the Edomite would lift his hand against him (vv. 16-19). Compare <sup><05211></sup>Psalm 52:1-3, and note that this slaughter of the priests was a fulfillment of the earlier prophecy against Eli.

### DEFENDING A CITY (CHAP. 23)

Keilah was southwest from Jerusalem and near the Philistine country, though not far from the wooded district of Hareth where David had

located himself (22:5). The event now recorded seems to have occurred prior to the destruction of Nob, as we judge by comparing verse 6 with the closing verses of the preceding chapter.

How David inquired of the Lord (v. 2) is not stated, but is suggested by verse 8. We have seen what the ephod was, and know from <sup><02836></sup>Exodus 28:26-30 that it contained the breastplate of the high priest in which was the mysterious Urim and Thummim by means of which God was pleased to communicate with His people (<sup><04272></sup>Numbers 27:21).

It will be interesting to read <sup><03101></sup>Psalms 31, which David is supposed to have written and which remarkably tallies with his experiences here.

### **BEFRIENDING THE KING (CHAP. 24)**

Engedi will be found southeast of Keilah on the Dead Sea.

The diversion in Saul's pursuit of David caused by the attack of the Philistines (23:27-29) has come to an end, and he is seeking him again. "To cover his feet" (v. 5) means to go to sleep.

Notice David's wonderful self-restraint and the motive for it (vv. 4-6), another illustration of his being "a man after God's own heart." (Read <sup><04120></sup>Psalms 142.)

The chapter affords a striking illustration of heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head with the promised result of overcoming evil with good (<sup><05120></sup>Romans 12:20-21). But alas! the evil did not stay overcome, nor, if we may judge by the last verse, does David expect it will.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Can you identify Nob, Hareth, Keilah and Engedi on the map?
2. What is the meaning of "hallowed bread"?
3. What prophecy did the slaying of Abimelech's family fulfill?
4. Describe the ephod.
5. Have you read <sup><03101></sup>Psalms 31, 52 and 142?

## 1 SAMUEL 25-27 — MORE BROKEN PROMISES

### DAVID AND ABIGAIL (CHAP. 25)

The romance of this chapter has a setting like this: The Wilderness of Paran on the south was a common pasture like our prairies, and for this reason open to marauders from among the Arabs.

David and his men must have been a protection to their countrymen from such incursions, and in the habit of receiving practical acknowledgments of their service.

Nabal was a rich sheep owner who must have been indebted to them, and "good business," to say nothing of gratitude, should have induced him to contribute to David's need without asking, and his refusal to do so was a violation of established custom.

This does not justify David's bloodthirsty action, but explains it.

The "bottles of wine" (v. 18) were goatskins holding a large quantity.

The "bundle of life" (v. 29) is a poetic expression alluding to the security of the person to whom it is applied.

The last phrase of verses 22 and 34 should be rendered "any man child."

When Nabal's "heart died" (v. 37), it means that he fainted at the thought of his narrow escape, the shock ultimately ending his life (v. 38).

David's taking Abigail to wife was in accordance with eastern custom. He was the head of a clan, Abigail seemed to recognize him as the successor of Saul (v. 30), and such an one fancying a woman for his wife had a right to command her submission to his will. Abigail seems to have been very willing, however.

Polygamy was wrong, (v. 44), but, because of the condition of the times, God seems to have permitted it (~~DEB~~ Matthew 19:3-9).

### DAVID AND ABNER (CHAP. 26)

Why David returns to Hachilah (see 23:19) is not clear, especially when he was near his old enemies, the Ziphites.



"Within the trench" (v. 7), means "within the place of the wagons" (see Revised Version). The encampment was a circle, the wagons and the men lining it, and the place of the leader being in the center. "His bolster" is the same as "his head."

In explanation of verse 13 we are told that the air of Palestine enables the voice to be heard at a great distance. (Compare ~~1000~~Judges 9:7.)

David's heroic strategy gave good ground for his sarcastic inquiry of Abner (vv. 14-16).

Saul repents again and makes more promises; but he has broken so many hitherto that David's confidence is not restored (v. 25).

### DAVID AND ACHISH (CHAP. 27)

David's resolution (v. 1) was probably wrong (see 22:5), but God overruled it for good by making it contribute to the final destruction of Saul.

"Achish" seems to have been another than he named in the earlier chapter, and there is likelihood that he invited David into his territory. Perhaps it was good policy to do so in view of the feud between David and Saul, and his warlike purposes toward the latter.

Ziklag belonged originally to Canaan and was given to Israel, but never conquered or occupied by the latter. It was far in the south on the border of Philistia, just northeast of Beersheba.

"*Road*" (v. 10) should be rendered 'raid.' David deceives Achish in what he says, for instead of destroying the king's enemies, he really did away with the king's allies and engaged in awful slaughter to conceal it (vv. 11-12).

As in other cases we must not suppose God endorses this because it is in the record or because it was done by one of His servants.

Some of ourselves are in point. Though redeemed by the blood of Christ, and indwelt by God's Spirit, what unsatisfactory instruments do we make in His service, and how often we bring dishonor on His name. Yet He loves and bears with us and, though He chastens, still uses us.

It is one of the proofs of the creditability of the Bible that it tells us the whole truth about a man. If it were false it would be covering over the

defects of its heroes; but as it is, both the Old and New Testament never compromise the facts for the sake of a good appearance. And very grateful we should be therefore.

## QUESTIONS

1. How may Nabal have become indebted to David?
2. How would you explain David's polygamous relations with Abigail?
3. Do you know where Paran, Hachilah, Ziph and Ziklag are located?
4. What was the name of Saul's chief captain?
5. Name a strong, incidental proof of the Bible, suggested in this lesson.

## 1 SAMUEL 28-31 — SAUL'S CAREER ENDED

### CALAMITY FORETOLD (CHAP. 28)

This chapter is important and illustrates again the deceptive character of Saul. Having professedly put the necromancers out of Israel in obedience to the divine command (<sup><BIBEL></sup>Leviticus 19:31; 20:27; <sup><BIBID></sup>Deuteronomy 18:10-11), he no sooner finds himself in straits than he seeks out one of them for his aid.

Two questions arise. Did Samuel really come forth from the dead, and was it the woman's power that brought him forth? To the first we answer yes, on the evidence of verses 12 to 16, and to the second, no. The woman was surprised to see Samuel and affrighted (v. 12), which is proof that she was not a factor in the matter, and that God brought up Samuel to rebuke Saul.

Two other questions follow. Is it possible for human beings to talk with the dead, or lawful to do so? We answer no in both cases. Spiritualistic mediums may have intercourse with demons who by their superior knowledge personate the dead, but they are not permitted of God to bring back the dead themselves. On the other hand God may be at liberty to do what He would not permit His creatures to do.

How are we to understand the words "Tomorrow shalt thou be with me." Was not Samuel one who feared God and Saul the opposite? How then could the future life of both be located in the same place? The answer is

that the Jews regarded the place of the dead as composed of two realms, one for the righteous and one for the unrighteous. Saul might be with Samuel in that he was among the dead, and yet not in the sense that he was in the company of the righteous dead.

### **THE EVIL IN OPERATION (CHAPS. 29-30)**

There is no apology for David's hypocrisy in this chapter, but the situation in which he found himself was the result of the unbelief that led him to leave the land of his fathers and throw in his lot with the Philistines (27:1).

Achish shows up better than he in this transaction, for he seemed to have confidence in David (28:1-2). And had it not been for the shrewder judgment of his princes (29:3-5), David would have been found playing the traitor to him later, for it is unlikely he would have fought for him against his own kith and kin.

Chapter 30 may be included in this division because it still has to do with David. There is nothing in it requiring explanation except the observation in verse 6, "that David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." How he did it, and what encouragement he received is indicated in verses 7-8, but why God would be willing to encourage such a man puzzles us, till again we think of ourselves. The best of us are unbelieving, mean, and hypocritical at times, and yet God's patience waits, and does not destroy and cast away. The reason is that God's love for us terminates on His own glory. He is doing these things for His Name's sake. His honor is at stake in the execution of His purposes and the fulfilling of His will. He had great plans for Israel and the world through David. And He is not measuring us by what we now are, but by what He sees us to be when the work of grace is perfected in us in the ages to come. David becomes a different man even before his earthly career is ended, and we find something of the same transformation in his career as in that of his progenitor, the supplanted Jacob who became Israel, the prince who prevailed with God (<sup>40:328</sup>Genesis 32:28).

### **THE END REACHED (CHAP. 31)**

We need not comment on the events of this chapter which tell their own story, but the following from *Illustrations of Scripture*, by Hackett, will be quickening to faith:

I venture to affirm that he who compares the Bible account of this battle with the regions around Gilboah, has the same sort of evidence that it relates what is true as a person would have concerning the battles of Saratoga, Yorktown and Waterloo, should he compare their histories with the localities where they occurred.

Some of the most celebrated battlefields of Grecian and Roman history correspond imperfectly with the descriptions of ancient writers. The writers may be trustworthy, but the villages they mentioned have changed their names or entirely disappeared. In some cases convulsions of nature have altered streams, or disturbed landmarks between hills and valleys. But Saul's battleground remains mapped out on the face of the country, almost as distinctly as if it occurred in our time, and yet it occurred in an age more remote than the founding of Rome, or the siege of Troy.

### QUESTIONS

1. How does chapter 28 illustrate hypocrisy?
2. What reason is there to doubt that the woman's power brought forth Samuel?
3. What is the nature of mediumistic power, and how is it limited?
4. How did the Jews regard the place of the dead?
5. Describe the equivocal position in which David finds himself in chapter 29, and explain it.
6. What is the secret of God's long suffering patience with His people?
7. How do present facts substantiate the story of the battle?