

The Establishment of the Kingdom



SENIOR NOTES — 15 Years and over

STAGE TWO OF FIVE STAGES

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 20, MODBURY NORTH 5092, SOUTH AUSTRALIA



*"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield;
but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of Hosts." 1 Samuel 17:45*

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

SENIOR NOTES — STAGE 2

FOREWORD

The lessons for this year take us from the time when Israel sent the 12 spies into the promised land right up to the period when David was made king and given the promise of a sure house. These notes endeavour to draw out the lessons especially relevant to the last perilous days of the Gentiles in which we live. We must make the effort of applying instruction to our own lives now if we would share the glory the Father has laid up for His children. As a help to this end, there is a section at the end of each lesson entitled "Lessons For Us". The questions too, at the end, bear largely upon the way in which we can profit today from the examples of the past. As Christ is the central pivot of God's purpose, wherever possible the types of him have been brought to your attention.

We have also striven to make the lessons as lively and vital as possible. We hope that you will find them easy to understand and enjoyable to read. Use your imagination and transport yourself back to the actual event and so re-live the drama. The maps should help to this end.

Above all things, let us realise that the present determines the future — today is the important time so far as we are concerned. We either learn the instruction of God's Word or, through inattention, fail in the test before us. We must as individuals take the lessons to ourselves. May the rich blessing of our heavenly Father be upon us as we contemplate these compelling examples from the past which He has preserved for us.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

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Section 1

FAILURE IN THE WILDERNESS

In this bracket of four lessons we cover the tragic history of Israel's failure in the wilderness following their departure from Mt. Sinai. They were separated from the land of promise by a journey of only eleven days. But their faithless attitudes and failure under trial saw them rejected and made to wander for a total of 40 years in the wilderness. In this time a generation perished.

How God dealt with His people then is instructive for ourselves today as we seek to serve and please Him. Israel's history is not like that of other nations because Yahweh was involved and He guided events. For this reason it is of the greatest interest and relevance to us: we can learn vital lessons from their experiences. It was for precisely this reason that the apostle Paul said of Israel's wilderness wanderings: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types); and they are written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11).

1. WHY ISRAEL FAILED

“Who shall give us flesh to eat”

It was a scene of glory when Israel left Mt. Sinai after a stay of about twelve months (cp. Ex. 19:1; Num. 10:11). Here was “the ecclesia in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) to whom “the gospel was preached” (Heb. 4:2). A journey of only eleven days separated them from the Promised Land, but within a few days the people had become dispirited by the hard, tiring walk through the barren and desolate wilderness. Israel soon forgot that the Land of Promise was just ahead of them and that they had the power to overcome their present problems to possess it. They allowed their problems to get the better of them and so lost their zeal for the purpose that God had with them. Instead of taking them eleven days, faithlessness brought condemnation and over 38 years passed by before they crossed over Jordan.

Our aim in this lesson is to see the disasters and disappointments that can come if we lose sight of the hope of the promised land before us.

Numbers 10:11 - 12:16

DEPARTURE FROM SINAI (Num. 10).

Summoned by the blast of the trumpets, Israel departed from Sinai as an army, with the standards of the tribes waving proudly to the sound of marching feet. The cloud of glory, the symbol of Yahweh’s presence, went on before them (vv. 11-13), and the nation marched in four divisions, under the leadership of Judah (v.14), Reuben (v. 18), Ephraim (v. 22) and Dan. (v. 25).

In the centre of the marching tribes came the Tabernacle carried by the Levites. A prefabricated structure, it could be quickly dismantled or erected during the journeyings of the children of Israel.

The entire scene was one of orderliness and confidence. The day’s march began and ended with a prayer (vv. 35-36). Israel had the power to conquer and they had the invitation of God to enter the Land. A journey of only eleven days lay before them (Deut. 1:2, 8).

THE PEOPLE MURMUR AT TABERAH (Num. 11:1-3). ²⁰¹

Between Sinai and Kadesh, the Israelites had to pass through “that great and terrible wilderness” (Deut. 1:19). In these appalling conditions the people soon began to complain (Num. 11:1). This was the start of a general apostasy from God’s way. We should always remember that ‘grumbling’ can set a bad example to others. To work in the Truth is a great privilege and all such opportunities to serve our Master should be accepted cheerfully and gratefully (cp. Phil. 2:14; 4:11). (267)

Fire from God consumed many of the complainers at this spot, which afterwards became known as Taberah, i.e. “burning”. Our God is “a consuming fire” to those who refuse to obey Him (Heb. 12:29).

DISCONTENTMENT AFTER TABERAH (Num. 11:4-15).

As they journeyed on in this wilderness, it was the “mixed multitude” who could no longer endure the hardships. These were the Gentiles who had come out of Egypt with Israel (Ex. 12:38). They looked back instead of forward. They longed for the spicy diet of Egypt and loathed the manna of God’s providing which they considered monotonous and tasteless (Num. 11:5-6). Their cry at this time was “Give us flesh” (v.13), and they led the people of Israel into the same attitude.

We too can exemplify the cry, “Give us flesh”, if we consider the Word of God dull and uninteresting, and seek the things that are palatable to our fleshly instincts. It is far better to stay with the wholesome words of Truth as our staple diet (cp. Ps. 119:97-103). We can see, too, that complaining produced a chain reaction and affected many others. But zeal also is contagious: if we are enthusiastic for the things of God we will encourage and build up our fellow pilgrims.

PROVISION OF QUAILS (Num. 11:16-35).

The Israelites desired flesh and God said that He would provide the same, but in a way that would teach them a grim lesson (vv. 18-20). God caused a wind to blow and with it came vast flocks of quails which settled round the camp. The people thought that this was the answer to their prayers. With greedy expectation they rushed out of doors to gather the quails so abundantly supplied. For a full day and a night, plus all the next day, they stood up and gathered the quails (v. 32).

They had no desire for the food of God’s providing, but found no difficulty in staying up all night to gather that for which “flesh” craved. In their greed and haste to gather as much as possible, there was not a single thought for the Giver of it.

Retribution was swift and decisive. While the flesh was in their mouths, they were smitten down with a deadly plague. The name of the burial plot, Kibroth-hattaavah, memorialised the sin and the lesson, for it means “the graves of the greedy” (vv. 33-34). The Psalmist, commenting upon this incident, says, “God smote the fattest of them” (Ps. 78:29-31).

What a grim lesson is this. Do we ever think that instruction drawn from the Bible is dry and boring? Do we sometimes wish for the spicy things of life? Do we find it difficult to sit through a spiritual exercise, but easy to listen to or look at that which panders to our lusts and emotions? The only cure to an answer of “yes” is to contemplate the utter vanity of all the ways of men and flesh and to turn to God. The Bible alone

supplies the answer for our greatest need — salvation and eternal happiness. When this is understood, study of the Word becomes vital and interesting. “Blessed are they that do **hunger** and **thirst** after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6; cp. Psa. 119:20).

ENVY IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF MOSES (Num. 12).

After leaving Kibroth, the Israelites had not gone far when they were further delayed. Miriam, the sister of Moses, a prophetess (Ex. 15:20), and one of the three leaders, deprecated Moses and demanded a greater share of the authority and power (Num. 12:1-2). Aaron too became involved.

God had selected Moses as the leader because he had the essential qualifications for leadership: he was meek above all men, a quality which was especially noticeable when God at first called him (v.3; Ex. 3:11; 4:10-17; cp. 1 Pet. 5:1-3).

God moved swiftly to vindicate Moses. He, Miriam and Aaron were commanded to appear before the Tabernacle. The angel of God came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the Tabernacle. Miriam and Aaron were singled out and called forth. They were solemnly reminded of Moses’ unique and close relationship with God. Whereas God would reveal Himself to a prophet in a vision or dream, Moses would enjoy a more intimate relationship: “with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches”. Finally they were challenged, “Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (vv. 4-9).

Furthermore God smote Miriam, and the dreadful plague of leprosy covered her flesh, humiliating her before the people (v. 10). Both Moses and Aaron pleaded for her, but for seven days God made a public example of her. Her sin was repugnant to God. Woman’s position before man is one of submission — so God had ordained in the beginning (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:7-12). In this the modern women’s liberation movement defies the will of God and is likewise odious before Him. Therefore for seven days Miriam remained outside the camp, in which time the children of Israel “journeyed not”.

KADESH REACHED.

The Israelites passed through the wilderness of Paran and at last they came to Kadesh (Num. 12:16; 13:26), south of the land of promise. The word Kadesh means “sanctuary”. Sometimes called Kadesh Barnea (Deut. 1:19), it was an oasis in the harsh wilderness, a place of beauty at the edge of a region of complete and utter desert. For the first time the Israelites had a glimpse of the glorious land that God had promised them.

THE CAUSE OF FAILURE.

The writings of the apostles show that the basic cause of Israel's failure was faithlessness: they did not believe the Word which was preached unto them. Thus they lacked the vision of the promised land and instead turned back in their hearts to Egypt (Acts 7:37-39; Heb. 3:19; 4:1-2, 6).

Worldly attractions are likewise a temptation today. The pressures and influences of the world can produce in us an "unwillingness to hear". This in turn can cause us to put our trust in our own ability to provide for ourselves, rather than turning to our God for strength (cp. James 1:17). In our hearts there can be a "mixture" of pride and fleshly desire instead of a mixture of the Word of God and faith in that Word. We can fail for the same basic reasons as Israel did.

LESSONS FOR US:

- Like "the ecclesia in the wilderness", we are being taken by God out of "Egypt" and are preparing for an entrance into the Kingdom of God.
- We should therefore "forget" the things behind us and "reach forth" to the great vision before us (Phil. 3:13-14).
- Rather than complain, we should be thankful for all we have (1 Thess. 5:18).
- A longing for the passing excitement of the flesh will bring disaster to us, as it did to Israel (1 Cor. 10:6-11).
- Envy and jealousy must be put aside by the disciple of Christ (Gal. 5:20-22).

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield) —Vol. 2, No. 4, 5
- "Where It Happened" (I. Collyer)—Chapter 6
- "Moses My Servant" (H. Tennant)—Pp. 105-114
- "The Wilderness of Life" (J. Martin)—C.S.S.S. Study Notes

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

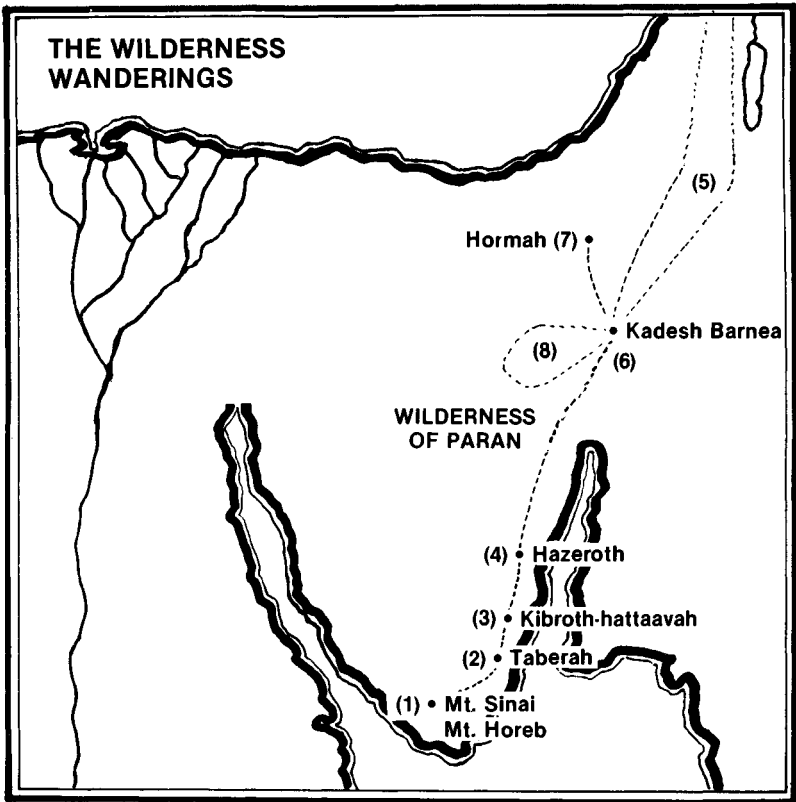
1. *What was the basic cause of Israel's failure in the wilderness?*
2. *Only an 11 day journey stood between Israel and the Promised Land. Mention three events which delayed them.*
3. *Describe the incident involving quails at Kibroth Hattaavah.*
4. *How did Miriam delay Israel's journey? What lessons do we learn from this?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Describe how Israel failed after they left Mt. Sinai.*

- e 2. *In what ways can we fail on our journey towards God's Kingdom — the Promised Land? Compare our experiences with those of the children of Israel.*
3. *Compare our journey to the Kingdom of God with the wilderness journey of Israel after they left Mt. Sinai.*

Nom 11:4



- (1) After a stay of about twelve months, Israel leaves Mt. Sinai, led by the pillar of cloud (Num. 10:11-13).
- (2) Complaining at Taberah brings destruction by burning (11:1-3).
- (3) The people cry for flesh and quails are provided, quickly followed by a plague (11:4-35).
- (4) Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses. Miriam is smitten with leprosy and Israel is delayed seven days (12:1-16).
- (5) Twelve men are sent from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land (13:1-26).
- (6) The report of ten faithless spies causes Israel to rebel and seek to return to Egypt under a new leader (14:1-10).
- (7) Following the declaration of God's punishment, the people seek to enter the land, but are driven back by the Amalekites and Canaanites at Hormah (14:40-45).
- (8) During the 38 years further wanderings, Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebel against Moses and Aaron, and are swallowed up by the earth (16:1-35).

2. TWELVE SPIES IN THE LAND

“We were in our own sight as grasshoppers”

Two years after their deliverance from Egypt, Israel arrived at Kadesh-Barnea. Again they manifested a faithless attitude by asking for the land to be spied out. Their search of the land verified two principles: (1) It vindicated the faithfulness of God by proving that the land was indeed as He described; (2) It proved their faithlessness for they chose to walk by sight rather than by faith.

Their failure came to such a climax at Kadesh that the long-suffering of God was exhausted. They were refused an entrance into the Promised Land and were condemned to 38 more years of hopeless wandering, until their carcasses should fall in the wilderness (Num. 32:13).

Our aim in this lesson is to see the need to maintain a confidence and conviction in the ability of God to help us through life.

Numbers 13 & 14; Deuteronomy 1:20-46

THE SENDING OF THE TWELVE SPIES (Num. 13:1-20).

Arriving at the borders of the Promised Land, the people requested that spies be sent to investigate and report upon the land (Deut. 1:22). God had already promised them that it was a land “flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:17). Not only that, but He had already “spied out the land” for them and declared it to be “the glory of all lands” (Ezek. 20:6, 15). Israel was thus walking by sight and not by faith.

Although it was not Moses’ idea to send spies, he agreed with the request, then approached God and obtained His approval (Deut. 1:22-23; Num. 13:1-3).

Accordingly twelve rulers were chosen, one from each tribe. If these men failed to manifest faith and courage, then poor indeed would be the “sheep of the flock” (cp. 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:7). Among these were Caleb and Joshua (Num. 13:6, 8 ‘Joshua’ here is called ‘Oshea’). Their commission from Moses was to report on:

- (a) the people dwelling there — “whether they be strong or weak, few or many” (v.18);
- (b) the nature of their dwellings and defences (v.19); and
- (c) the land itself, its fertility, trees and fruits (v. 20).

THE LAND SPIED OUT (Num. 13:21-25).

For 40 days (a period associated with testing and proving of faith) they searched out the land, traversing it from north to south (v.25). At Eschol

(meaning “grape cluster”) they collected, as symbols of the fruitfulness of the land, pomegranates, figs and a cluster of grapes so big that it took two men to bear it on a staff (v. 23).

At Hebron they saw the sons of Anak, men of giant stature. They saw also mighty cities, “walled up to heaven”, or so it appeared to them. Archaeologists have unearthed many of these and they testify to their great strength.

As the spies looked at these mighty fortifications, these well-built tall inhabitants, they reflected on their lack of weapons and weakness. They forgot that God was with them and that in Him was strength adequate for every need. The defeatist attitude asserted itself once more. How could they possibly succeed against such great odds?

The cluster of grapes, so great that it had to be carried between two upon a staff, testified to the beauty and fertility of the land — but oh, the difficulties! The desirableness of the land became obscured by the difficulty of possessing it. They forgot that God was on their side. Faithless people always see the problems and grumble because they forget the vision of the promise and the strength of God.

THE SPIES' EVIL REPORT (Num. 13:26-33).

The spies reported back to Moses all they had seen; the beauty and fertility — the fruits being shown as evidence (v. 27). They then added words that conveyed their fears and their weakness. “NEVERTHELESS the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great. MOREOVER we SAW the children of Anak” (v. 28).

The people were discouraged and agitated. Faithful Caleb sought to reassure them: “Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.” But the other spies challenged him: “we be not able to go up against this people” (vv. 30-31). They deliberately misrepresented the character of the land in order to discourage the people: “the land eateth up (R.S.V. “devours”) the inhabitants”. Their next words show just how much they were guided by sight and not faith: “all the people that we SAW in it are men of great stature. . . we SAW the giants. . . and we were in our own SIGHT as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight” (vv. 28, 32, 33; cp. 2 Cor. 4:18).

Such a discouraging report was considered an “evil report” by God (v. 32). As far as He was concerned they had “despised” the land and brought a “slander” upon it (Num. 14:31, 36; Psa. 106:24-25). Their lack of confidence led them to doubt God’s ability to give them the land and so they sinned in “limiting the Holy One of Israel” (Ps. 78:41).

How serious therefore is anything that discourages the servants of God

from serving Him in faith. We may ourselves be active in God's service and yet discourage others by complaining of the bitterness of the way. Let us beware, lest the fearful implications of such an attitude be laid at our feet in the day of judgement.

THE PEOPLE REBEL (Num. 14:1-20).

The people were dismayed. Behind them was the terrible wilderness; in front the powerful enemies. They were caught in a trap. They gave way to bitter weeping. If only they had remembered. A few months earlier they had sung praises to the mighty God of their salvation (Ex. 15:1). Now they wept (Num. 14:1). But it was they, not God, who had changed. God, who had within very recent memory destroyed Pharaoh's host, could have defeated the Canaanites just as easily. But the people lacked faith. They rebelled against Moses and Aaron and against God. They wanted a different leader to lead them back to Egypt and its slavery (vv. 2-4).

Moses pleaded with them (cp. v.5 with Deut. 1:29-31), Joshua and Caleb sought to strengthen them, but the people angrily turned on these men of faith and threatened to stone them. Then Yahweh intervened calling upon Moses to stand aside so that He might smite the people and disinherit them. Moses pleaded with Yahweh whose wrath once more was stayed and the nation was saved (vv. 13-20).

GOD'S TWO IRREVOCABLE OATHS (Num. 14:21-39).

God would preserve the nation but He would not forgive that generation which had seen the wonderful miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness (v. 22). God sealed His purpose with the nation and the faithless generation by two irrevocable divine oaths:

1. His divine purpose — despite their failure: "*As truly as I live* all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh" (v. 21).
2. The divine sentence of condemnation: "*As truly as I live* . . . your carcases shall fall in the wilderness" (vv. 23, 28, 29).

When God swears an oath by His existence, His words are unchangeable (cp. Heb. 6:13-17; 7:21). God's purpose would not fail (Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14), but a complete generation of Israelites would lose forever their chance of the Kingdom of God (Ps. 95:11; cp. Heb. 3:16-18).

What a dreadful warning is this. The comparable words to those who will be rejected by Christ will be, "Depart from me ye cursed" (Matt. 25:41).

For forty days the spies had searched the land. Therefore, on a day for a year principle, Israel had to wander forty years in the wilderness (v. 34). Having already spent two years wandering in the desert, they were now to

complete 38 years extra (Deut. 2:14). Excepting only Joshua and Caleb, all adults of that faithless generation were to die in the wilderness and then their children would inherit the land (v. 31). The ten spies who had brought back their faithless report were destroyed by plague (v. 37).

The people, hearing Yahweh's words and seeing His anger revealed, considered the decreed punishment upon them and recognised their folly. They acknowledged they had sinned (v. 40), but now they became determined to enter the land. Moses tried to dissuade them, telling them God was not with them (vv. 41-43), but they ignored him (v. 44). As a result the people suffered a crushing defeat at Hormah ("utter destruction", v. 45, cp. 21:3).

It can well be said that "it took 40 hours to take Israel out of Egypt, but 40 years to take Egypt out of Israel". The attitudes of Egypt needed to be purged out from the nation.

LESSONS FOR US:

- In Hebrews 11:1 faith is defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". Without it we cannot please God for it is faith that conquers (1 John 5:4). If we refuse to walk by faith, we will not gain the inheritance set before us (Heb. 3:19; 4:1-2).
- Faith provides us with a sustaining vision of our future inheritance — things as yet unseen (Heb. 11:1; Prov. 29:18).
- If we carry out God's terms and conditions, the inheritance will be ours, just as God gave Caleb his portion (Num. 14:24; Josh. 14:9-14).
- Israel's failures are not recorded so that we might condemn them, but so that we might learn from them and thus be assisted in our walk to the Promised Land (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 5
- "The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts)—Chap. 17
- "Where It Happened" (I. Collyer)—Chap. 6
- "Moses My Servant" (H. Tennant)—Pages 115-125
- "The Wilderness of Life" (J. Martin)—C.S.S.S. Study Notes

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

- Q1. *Supply a good definition of "Faith".*
2. *What lesson should Israel have learned from the experiences of the 12 spies?*
3. *What two oaths did God utter when the 12 spies returned from the land?*
4. *"Walk by faith, not by sight". Discuss this principle by referring to the incident of the 12 spies.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *How did Caleb and Joshua differ from their generation? Refer in your answer to the incident of the 12 spies.*
2. *Why did God condemn Israel to wander forty years in the wilderness? Illustrate your answer by describing the nation's reaction when the 12 spies returned from searching the land of Caanan.*

Num 13:2

3. KORAH, DATHAN AND ABIRAM

“The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up”

Following their defeat by the enemy as they tried to force their way into the Promised Land, the Israelites returned to Kadesh, dejected, angry, and inclined to blame Moses for the failure of their venture. Moses had refused to go with them, knowing that God was not with them.

It was therefore a complaining and bitter nation that left Kadesh to wander in the wilderness for thirty-eight years (Deut. 2:14). Typical of this was the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, when they tried to oppose the principle of the Divine selection of Israel’s priesthood.

The aim of this lesson is to see that God’s arrangements and appointments must be respected.

NUMBERS 16 & 17

YEARS OF WANDERINGS.

Altogether, Israel was condemned to wander 40 years in the wilderness. They had already been two years there when the spies returned with their evil report (cp. Num. 1:1; 9:1). Then, turned away from the Land of Promise, they were to wander in the wilderness for 38 years until all those over 20 years old had perished from among them, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua (Deut. 2:14). This did not mean that God had left His people: He still spoke with them through Moses (Num. 15:1, 17, 35); fed them with manna daily; supplied them with water and clothed them (Deut. 8:2-4; 29:5-6).

But it made little difference, for still they continued to disobey God. The Law was broken — the rite of circumcision was discounted (Josh. 5:4-8); the Passover was put aside; the sabbaths were profaned (Num. 15:32; Ezek. 20:10-26); and idolatrous practices were persisted in. Whatever the current difficulties, they could then at least have looked forward to the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham. They could have lived in hope of resurrection to life eternal. But, by and large, they seemed unable to rise above the difficulties of their present circumstances.

MOSES AND AARON CHALLENGED (Num. 16:1-17).

The disappointment at having been turned back to wander in the wilderness created a tense atmosphere. Moses had apparently failed and a situation had arisen in which ambitious men could easily fan the flames of sedition. Korah, a prominent leader and cousin of Moses (Ex. 6:18, 21), seized the opportunity along with Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben. The conspiracy soon gained momentum as 250 princes,

“famous in the congregation”, defected from Moses. The popular cry was, “Ye take too much upon you (Moses and Aaron), seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them.” Soon the whole congregation was in rebellion against Moses and Aaron (v. 19). Like communism today, they pandered to the people by telling them they were all equals. But their motive was not equality. They envied Moses and Aaron and yearned for pre-eminence (v. 7; Psa. 106:16). They had not learned the lesson that had been so dramatically spelled out to Miriam and Aaron so shortly before (Num. 12).

Moses was dismayed by the challenge and fell upon the ground. He called upon the conspirators to appear before the Tabernacle on the morrow with censers, incense and fire. There and then Yahweh would reveal whom He had chosen. He reminded Korah and the Kohathites of the great honour which was theirs in being separated for the service of the Tabernacle and to minister on behalf of the congregation (Num. 4:4-20). Placing his finger on the true motive, he said, “seek ye the priesthood also” (v. 10).

Dathan and Abiram refused to come to the Tabernacle. They were completely faithless towards God and imputed carnal motives to all Moses had done on behalf of Israel. The promise of a land flowing with milk and honey was, they argued, only an allurement on Moses’ part, so that he could bring them into the wilderness and make himself a prince over them. Moreover, they refused to come out to the Tabernacle because they adjudged he was going to cruelly punish them himself, “wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?” (v. 14).

EVENTS OF THE MORROW: MOSES VINDICATED (Num. 16:18-40).

In the meantime Korah had rallied the support of the congregation and assembled them at the door of the Tabernacle. Then the glory of Yahweh appeared before all the congregation and Yahweh called upon Aaron and Moses to separate themselves from the congregation that He might consume them in a moment. They fell on their faces and appealed to Yahweh to spare the congregation: “shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?” (v. 22).

Yahweh spared the congregation and commanded them to remove themselves from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Moses declared that Yahweh would prove that he had been divinely commissioned by the unnatural death of the rebels: “If these men die the common death of all men. . . the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up. . . then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD” (vv. 28-30). When Moses finished these words, there was an immediate response by God in

exactly the way Moses had prescribed. The earth clave open beneath the rebels and all that pertained unto them went down into the pit. Their cries struck terror in the hearts of Israel. How easily they could have suffered the same fate. Moses' prayer had saved them (v. 22). While the congregation fled, a fire came out from Yahweh and consumed the 250 princes who offered incense on brasen censers.

God commanded Moses to take up their brasen censers and to make with them "broad plates for a covering of the altar" (i.e. the brasen altar). He purposed that they would be a "sign unto the children of Israel" that "no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD" (v. 40).

The lesson emerging from this is respect for authority. We are called upon to respect and give honour to those who hold positions of authority, both in the world and in the ecclesia (cp. 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). Above all we must respect the Lord Jesus Christ and His Father. We can show this by our attention to the Word and our obedience.

FURTHER REBELLION (Num. 16:41-50).

Even these remarkable happenings did not humble Israel. The people blamed Moses for the calamity, probably feeling pity for Korah. Crowding up to the Tabernacle with hearts full of anger and full of complaints against the leader appointed by God, they were smitten by God with a plague so that 14,700 died. The plague was only stopped by the intercession once more of Moses and Aaron (vv. 46-48).

How graphically Aaron foreshadowed the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest to come. There in the midst of the congregation (cp. Heb. 2:14 — Jesus, born with the same mortal nature), he offered incense (i.e. prayer, Psa. 141:2; Heb. 7:25), and made atonement (cp. Rom. 5:11), standing as a mediator between the dead and the living (cp. 1 Tim. 2:5).

AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDED (Num. 17). *Revel*

To stop all further murmuring, and to show once and for all that He had selected Aaron as High Priest, God instructed each tribe to select a rod and to write on each rod the name of the leader of the tribe.

These were placed before the Tabernacle. On the next day it was seen that Aaron's rod alone had budded, brought forth blossoms and yielded almonds (v. 8). This showed conclusively that he was the man of God's appointment and that divine authority rested in him.

The budding almond rod was a token against the rebels to stop all murmuring against the authority of Aaron (v. 10). By it, the children of Israel

knew that they would die if they tried to approach God other than through the High Priest He had appointed (v. 12).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROD THAT BUDDERD.

In this incident a dead rod sprang to life by God's power and so attested who was God's High Priest. Here is a graphic foreshadowing of the appointment of Christ as the only mediator or high priest between God and man. He was dead but is now alive for evermore (Rev. 1:18); he is the "first-fruits" of them that slept and this fact assures us that he is the true Melchizedek priest (1 Cor. 15:23; Heb. 7:20, 23-28). The almond is the first tree to blossom. So was the Lord the first begotten from the dead (Jer. 1:11; Rev. 1:5). Moreover the rod reproduced fruit after its own kind and, in like fashion, the Lord will have many spiritual children who strive to uphold his way of life (cp. Num. 17:8; Isa. 53:10-11). Aaron's rod was kept in the ark in the Most Holy Place (Num. 17:10; Heb. 9:4), and in like manner Christ has ascended to "heaven itself" and sits in God's presence (Heb. 9:24; Psa. 110:1).

LESSONS FOR US:

- God finds pleasure in those who endeavour to give of their best in the things of the Truth — there is no room for the envious spirit of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.
- We must learn to submit to authority and not assert ourselves (1 Pet. 5:1-6). We must be humble and not presumptuous, "esteeming others better than ourselves" (Phil. 2:3).
- The rulers of the Kingdom of God will not be appointed by the voice of the people or majority vote, but by the divine selection of God, even as was the house of Aaron in Israel.
- Those who obey the Truth have in heaven a high priest who acts as their mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1).

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 6
"The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 18
"Moses My Servant" (H. Tennant)—Pages 125-141

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What punishment did God bring on Korah, Dathan and Abiram?*
2. *Give two examples of times when Moses and/or Aaron prayed for the people so that God would not destroy them.*
3. *How did God use Aaron's rod to show who was the divinely appointed High Priest?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

- 0 1. *What were the causes of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram in Israel?*
2. *What was the result of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and what lessons do we learn from their rebellion?*
3. *In what way does Aaron's rod that budded relate to Christ?*

4. THE DEATH OF MOSES

“His eye was not dim nor his natural force abated”

At Kadesh, God commanded Moses to speak unto the Rock that it might bring forth water. Moses disobeyed God in smiting the Rock and so was not allowed to enter the land.

“For unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48). The importance of our careful attention to God’s Word is emphasised in this incident in the life of the great man Moses.

This incident, together with the death of Aaron and Miriam, also highlights (in type) the fact that the Law cannot give life; it is through Jesus (Joshua) that entrance into the Land of Promise will be gained.

The aim of this lesson is to see how God’s care of His people in the wilderness pointed forward in many ways to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Numbers 20 & 21:4-9 | Deuteronomy 34

MOSES PUNISHED (Num. 20:1-13).

For 38 years Israel wandered in the wilderness between Kadesh and Elath. As the time of wandering came to an end, they again moved north to Kadesh. There Miriam died (Num. 20:1). The people complained to Moses because of the lack of water. He was told to take Aaron’s rod and SPEAK to the rock. Instead he SMOTE the rock and said, “Must WE bring water out from thence” (Ps. 106:32-33). Thus he not only disobeyed, but spake inadvisedly with his lips.

Paul says that the rock represented Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Earlier, at Rephidim, Moses had been told to smite the rock in order to provide life-giving water (Ex. 17:5-6; refer Stage 1, Lesson 19). A second smiting of a rock at Kadesh was inappropriate as far as the type was concerned, for Christ was only once crucified, when the serpent power bruised him, and now all that was necessary was to “speak to the rock”.

God punished Moses for his action. He told him that he would not enter the Land of Promise. In doing this, God emphasised to the people the importance of obedience. If a man like Moses, so faithful and earnest, was thus punished, how circumspect they must be.

The lesson is no less important for us. The Word of God demands that we obey its commands implicitly if we desire to enter the Kingdom. And as the Israelites then had to look to a new leader (Joshua) to bring them into the Promised Land, so likewise we look to Jesus (the Greek equivalent of ‘Joshua’) to bring us, through obedience to the Gospel, into the Kingdom of God.

DEATH OF AARON (Num. 20:14-29).

Following this incident at Kadesh, the children of Israel were refused passage through Edom (vv.14-21). Therefore they journeyed southward toward the Gulf of Elath.

This took them past Mt. Hor (v.22), a barren rugged mountain from which a remarkable view of the harsh wilderness can be seen. Here Aaron died. His priestly garments were given to Eleazar his son and, ascending Mt. Hor, from which he could have one last look at the wild region in which the Israelites had wandered to and fro for so long, he passed to his rest.

FIERY SERPENTS IN THE WILDERNESS (Num. 21:4-9).

The journey was very dismal. Perhaps the people thought, when the King of Edom refused to give them passage, that they would perish in the wilderness like their fathers. In any case, they became “much discouraged because of the way” (v. 4). They felt that they were at the point of death, and were tired of the monotonous diet of manna. Were they to be as faithless as the previous generation?

God punished them by sending serpents among the people, which bit them so that many died (v. 6). The people saw this as the punishment of God — that death came because of sin. (“The sting of death is sin”, 1 Cor. 15:56). “We have sinned”, they declared and they asked Moses to help them by interceding with God (v.7).

Moses did so. He was told by God to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole. All who looked at the serpent of brass would live. But they had to look upon it in faith — they had to believe it would save them. If they did not look upon the serpent of brass in faith, then it would be of no use to them — they would die.

Many years later, the Lord Jesus referred to this incident as a type of his death (John 3:14-15). And what a wonderful lesson it teaches when seen as that. It takes us back to the promise of Eden (Gen. 3:15), and it takes us forward to the offering of the Lord Jesus.

How does it apply to Jesus? We can liken human nature to the serpent. Jesus called the Scribes and Pharisees “serpents” (Matt. 23:33). They were like serpents with poison in their fangs, poisoning the minds of those who listened to them. Jesus was of the same nature as they were, of the same nature as we are (Heb. 2:14), but he did no sin. He was therefore represented by a serpent — not by a real serpent which stung and brought forth death, but rather by the brasen serpent which was “lifted up”, just as he was lifted up for all to see in his crucifixion.

As the Israelites looked at the serpent of brass in faith and lived, in spite of having been bitten by the real serpents, so we who have been “bitten” by human nature must look at the crucified Jesus if we would live. We must “crucify the flesh” with its affections and lusts and so overcome (Gal. 5:24).

Hence, in this journey towards the Promised Land, Israel was taught to look to the means God would provide to conquer sin and death.

TOWARDS THE PROMISED LAND.

At the top of the Gulf of Elath, Israel turned east and, after skirting the border of Edom, marched north to the range of forest and pasture lands on the east of Jordan. As they neared the Land of Promise the excitement of the people grew, and their joy found expression in poems of triumph and happiness. The desert was left far behind, and on the eastern side of the Jordan they could see the real beauty of the land they were to inherit.

Two kings opposed them — Sihon, the Amorite and Og, king of Bashan (Num. 21:23, 33) — but these were destroyed in pitched battles. The king of Moab employed the Babylonian prophet, Balaam, to curse Israel, but his curse was turned into a blessing and Moab, together with Balaam, was punished.

At last Israel stood on the borders of the Promised Land and made ready to enter into their inheritance.

DEATH OF MOSES (Deut. 34).

The book of Deuteronomy contains the last message of Moses, delivered during the last month of his life. He recapitulated to Israel all that had happened to the nation. He called upon them to “be strong and of good courage” (Deut. 31:6), telling them to put their trust and faith in God who would not fail them. He warned them of apostasy (Deut. 31:29), telling them that the time would come when they would depart from the ways of God, and this would be a challenge to those in their midst who desired to continue in the ways of righteousness.

The new leader, Joshua, was appointed (Deut. 31:7-8), and he was commanded to put his trust in God, to be “strong and of good courage”, for he “must go with this people unto the land.” Moses assured Joshua that God would not fail him.

At last the time came for the great leader to die. His physical strength was unaffected (Deut. 34:7), but his work was finished. Leaving the camp of Israel, he ascended Mt. Nebo, probably a mountain in the range of Pisgah. There before him was the Promised Land. Beneath him was the camp of Israel stretching out in its four divisions, awaiting the order to march. On the other side of Jordan could be seen the fortress of Jericho (key to the land of Palestine), the valley of Esdraelon, the twin hills of Ebal and Gerizim, the fertile valley of Shechem. There were the hills of Judea with the powerful fortress of Jebus standing out upon what was later called Mt. Zion. As Moses gazed over this scene he knew that, although he was not to lead the people into the land, one day he would

stand within its borders. With Abraham and the other worthies, under the leadership of the Lord Jesus, he will enter his inheritance. Like so many others, Moses “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. . .” (Heb. 11:13). He died in confidence of his future inheritance and glory.

So passed to his death a very noble man. In leading Israel, in caring for the people, in interceding on their behalf, in bearing with their sins, in supporting them, in guiding them through the desert towards the Promised Land, in teaching them God’s laws, in baptising them in the Red Sea — in all the many, many ways, we see him as a type of the Lord Jesus (see Deut. 18:18-19). But the type was not complete in Moses, and thus another man was selected to lead Israel over Jordan — Joshua, the man of faith.

And as God buried one of His workmen, so another took up the task. For though the workmen die and lay down their tools, the work must go on.

LESSONS FOR US:

- As Moses experienced to his great sorrow, God requires that we follow His Word faithfully. Salvation and entry into “the Promised Land” will not come to those who distort His commands.
- Like the children of Israel, we must look to a new leader (Jesus/Joshua) to bring us into the Kingdom. This is something which the Law of Moses could never do.
- Salvation from the sting of sin requires faith or belief in “Christ crucified” and the work of atonement wrought through him. God gave His only beloved son “that **whosoever believeth in him** should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-17).
- “Be strong and of good courage” is advice which Moses gave to Joshua, which David later gave to young Solomon, and which is applicable to any young person today facing the issues of truth and the world.
- Israel’s experiences constituted a parable of our walk to the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 10:1-11). We must come out of the world, be baptised into Christ, hearken to His word, be tested under trial, and submit to the Judgment at which some will be rejected and others accepted.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 19
- “The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, Nos. 8 & 9
- “Moses My Servant” (H. Tennant)—Pages 148-165

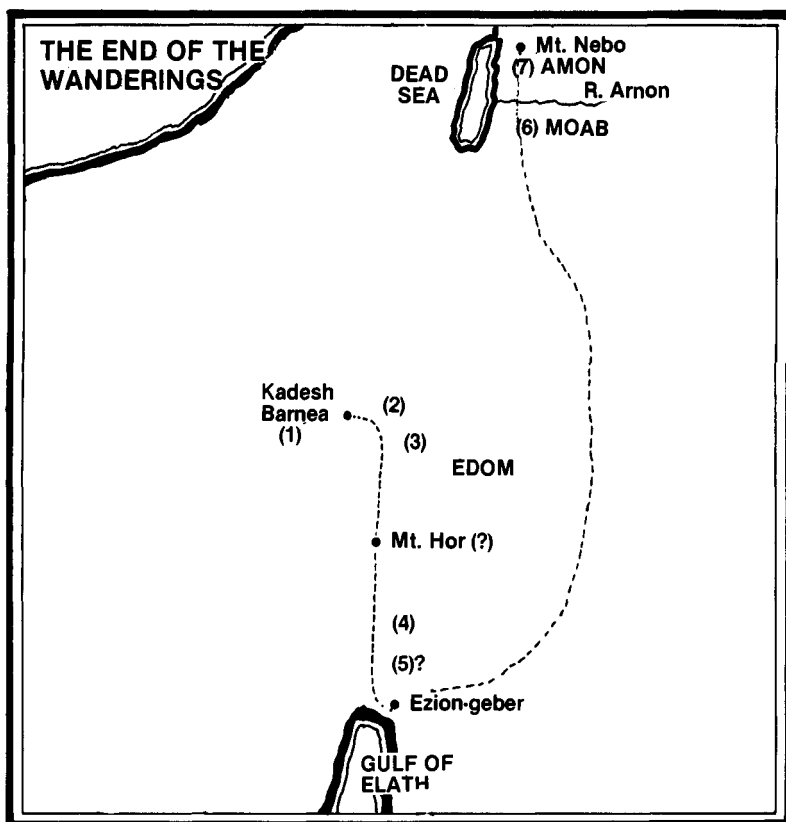
PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What lesson do we learn from the punishment God inflicted upon Moses?*
2. *In what ways was the brazen serpent a type of Jesus?*
3. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them”. How does Moses fit this description?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Why was Moses not allowed to enter the Promised Land? What lesson do we learn from this?*
2. *Describe the incident of the fiery serpents and show how this points forward to Christ’s work in overcoming sin and death.*
3. *How were Israel’s wanderings and final entrance into the Promised Land a parable of our walk to the Kingdom?*

Deut 34:7



- (1) At the end of the wilderness wanderings, Israel returned to Kadesh where Miriam died (Num. 20:1; 33:16-36).
- (2) Moses sins in striking the rock to provide water (20:2-13).
- (3) The king of Edom refuses Israel passage through his land, so Israel must detour south to skirt the land of Edom (20:14-22; 21:4; Deut. 2:8).
- (4) Aaron ascends Mt. Hor on the border of Edom and dies (Num. 20:23-29).
- (5) The people complain again and God sends fiery serpents, from whose bite those who look to the brazen serpent on a pole can be healed (21:4-9).
- (6) Israel, climbing the rugged canyon of Arnon, obtained a great victory over Sihon king of the Amorites and then Og king of Bashan (21:13).
- (7) Moses ascends Mt. Nebo, from whence he views the whole promised land, and then dies (Deut. 34:1-8).

Section 2

CONQUEST OF THE LAND

In Lessons 5 to 10 the Book of Joshua is under consideration. We shall learn about the triumphant entry into the Promised Land and the fall of the gateway city, Jericho.

Following a central campaign, two further campaigns were conducted by Joshua against the confederated forces of the Canaanites in the south and also in the north. The strong nations were subdued and it remained for the individual tribes to move to their allocated territories and to wipe out the remaining pockets of resistance. God had thus honoured His promise to take Israel out of Egypt and bring them into Canaan.

But the conquest was not without salutary lessons — at Ai and later in connection with the Gibeonites. Though successful, the Israelites still needed to defer to Yahweh in all their decisions. Failure to do that was fraught with peril. On the positive side we find that greater, faithful men were rewarded — Joshua and Caleb received their promised inheritance.

The Section closes with Joshua's last words to the nation he had served so faithfully. He reminded them of the indisputable blessings showered on them as a nation from the call of Abraham onwards. God had guided the course of their national life, saving and delivering them in times of peril. This realisation is made the basis of his final plea to his people to serve Yahweh in spirit and in Truth. So there is much in this section to learn and be admonished by.

5. ENTERING THE LAND

“Be strong and of a good courage”

The crossing of the Jordan was important to the development of Israel as a nation. It ended the wilderness wanderings and commenced a new beginning as the nation entered its inheritance.

Prior to the death of Moses, Joshua had been selected as leader. “Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land,” he was told (Deut. 31:6). He had the qualifications of courage, faith, wisdom and experience. The meaning of his name (Yahweh is salvation) indicated his mission. The Greek “Jesus” in the New Testament is the equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua”. Joshua was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who is our “Saviour” and the “Captain of our salvation”.

Our aim in this lesson is to see the triumph of faith and obedience in Israel’s crossing of the river Jordan and to see the types shown in this incident.

Joshua 1, 3 & 4

JOSHUA’S COMMISSION (Josh. 1:1-9).

“Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people”, was God’s instruction to the new leader Joshua (v.2). Before them lay the challenge of a land which would be theirs, if only they had the courage to go in and possess it. Joshua was assured of God’s help (v. 5), and given his guide for success: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success” (v. 8).

THE PEOPLE INSTRUCTED (Josh. 3:1-13).

For three days Israel camped near the banks of the river Jordan. There they were commanded to sanctify themselves — to prepare themselves and set their minds on the great wonder that God was about to do. Officers were sent through the whole camp to instruct the people on what was required of them (vv. 1-5). How careful each one would be to carry out Joshua’s command on the joyous day when their wilderness wanderings would be over — remembering that their parents had perished in the wilderness because they had disobeyed Moses’ commands.

Then the nation was given the assurance of victory in the land. So great would be the display of God’s mighty power when He took them across Jordan, they could rest confident in His ability to drive out the nations before them (vv. 7, 10).

CROSSING THE JORDAN (Josh. 3:14-17).

Since the people had now been carefully instructed as to what should be done, the crossing could now commence.

First the Ark, carried by the priests, took the lead (instead of being in the centre of the tribes as before — Num. 10:21), and went ahead of Israel by “about two thousand cubits” (v. 4).

The tribes followed the Ark. They saw the priests come to the swiftly flowing waters of the Jordan. As the priests stepped in, the waters began to boil and foam, being drawn back by God’s great invisible power. The people looked with amazement at the wonderful sight as the waters of the river banked up, and then slowly began to flow backwards (Ps. 114:3-5).[•] A great valley of dry land appeared where once there was a river in flood.

North of where the Israelites were, there was a town called Adam. Usually the waters descended swiftly from Adam to the Dead Sea further south. But now the waters “rose up upon an heap” and began to flow as far back as Adam towards the “Living Sea”, the Sea of Galilee (v. 16; Ps. 114:3). The natural law was reversed. The waters south of the point of crossing emptied into the Dead Sea (v. 16).

See
p 20

While the priests, holding aloft the Ark, remained in the midst of the dry river bed, the people of Israel hurried across (v. 17; 4:10). They were led by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, who had been given an inheritance on the east of Jordan, but who now were showing their willingness to fulfil their vow to help the other tribes obtain their inheritance, before entering into their own (4:12; 1:12-18).

A MEMORIAL ESTABLISHED (Josh. 4:1-18).

Once the people had crossed, Joshua again instructed them. As a memorial of the wonderful miracle, Israel was told to appoint twelve men of Israel to take twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan and set them up on the western bank of the river as a lasting memorial of the wonderful miracle. They would teach future generations the great things God had done by arousing the curiosity of the children (vv. 6-7).

Math 3:9

In addition, twelve stones were taken from the land and placed in the river where the priests stood. When the priests left the river-bed, the river flowed once more.

As Yahweh had promised him, Joshua was “magnified in the sight of all Israel” as the result of the miracle (v. 14, cp. 3:7). It was even more amazing than the crossing of the Red Sea. The crossing had taken place when the river was in flood, and at a place where the water is both deep and rapid. On this occasion, unlike the crossing of the Red Sea, there was no mighty wind to drive the water back; no reflux of the tide upon which doubters might fix to deprecate the miracle. Nobody could doubt the

divine power manifested in it. Certainly there was no doubt among the surrounding nations who witnessed in broad daylight this incredible event. No wonder their hearts “melted” (5:1).

CIRCUMCISION AND PASSOVER (Josh. 5:2-12).

The crossing took place on the 10th day of the first month, the day when the Passover Lamb was selected, thus speaking of deliverance (4:19; Ex. 12:3). And the place of the crossing was called Gilgal, meaning “rolling”. There Yahweh “rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off Israel” (v. 9), for the children of Israel were circumcised — the rite had been discontinued since leaving Egypt (v. 5)—and thus they entered into complete covenant with Yahweh.

There on the plains of Jericho, across Jordan, Israel celebrated the Passover on the 14th day of the month — 40 years after being delivered from Egypt. The corn of the land was eaten and the manna ceased. Gone were the days of wandering; ahead was a new life (vv. 10-12).

THE AMAZING TYPE.

The whole incident is wonderful in itself but made even more so when the hidden message conveyed by it is revealed.

The Ark points forward to the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:11). Previously hidden in the midst of Israel (Num. 10:21), it was now brought to the very head, entering the river about 2000 cubits before the rest of the tribes.

In the type, the passing over the river points forward to the passing over of believers from a state of mortality to one of immortality — from the “wilderness of life” to the “promised land”. Jesus did that “about 2000 years ago” and has taken the head of affairs (see Matt. 28:18).

The word “Jordan” means “Descender”, and its waters descended from out of the Sea of Life (Galilee), through the town “Adam” to the Sea of Death (the Dead Sea). But when the Ark, held aloft by the priests entered the river, the same waters flowed back as far as Adam towards the Sea of Life. The tide of mortality which flowed from the first man Adam has been driven back through our Ark, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12, 17). It is also the case in prospect with ourselves when we embrace the things of Christ. We enter upon a way of life, in place of the way of death in which most people walk.

Moreover, Israel as a nation was subjected to two “baptisms”. When they crossed the Red Sea they were “baptised into Moses” (1 Cor. 10:1-2) and became the nation of the “old covenant” (2 Cor. 3:14); and now they had passed through water again. Why? To typify the change which all true believers must experience. When we pass through the waters of baptism, we experience a change of relationship to God, for we enter into

covenant relationship with Him. But when we are approved at the judgment seat, and enter our inheritance, we shall experience a change of nature, from that of mortality to that of immortality.

The water of the Red Sea was salt water, but the water of the Jordan was fresh, or "living water". The latter is used as a symbol for the Spirit of God (John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39), so that in crossing the Jordan, the people foreshadowed the change to spirit-nature or immortality (see 1 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:44).

As soon as Israel crossed the River Jordan they were circumcised in obedience to the word of Yahweh (5:2). Circumcision was the token of the Abrahamic covenant. It involves the cutting-off of the flesh and speaks eloquently of the repudiation of confidence in the flesh, just as baptism does (cp. Col. 2:11-12; Phil. 3:3). It was to be performed on the eighth day after the birth of male children. Eight is the number of a new beginning. Thus in this command, too, the repudiation of the flesh and the change from mortality to divine nature is prefigured.

In the transition too from the manna to the corn of the land, there was the giving up in symbol of the things of the Law for the true bread from heaven, "Christ our Passover" (John 6:30-35; 1 Cor. 5:7).

How much more interesting the Bible becomes when the lesson behind the event is considered. When the wonderful miracle is matched with the amazing type, the whole account becomes vital and interesting.

LESSONS FOR US:

- Joshua 3 shows that great difficulties were overcome by the power of Yahweh: "Is anything too hard for Yahweh?"
- Joshua 4 reveals that we should keep in memory the wonderful works of God, teaching them to our children.
- The world mocks at such stories as the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, but events just as miraculous are happening in the world today: Israel is back in the land again — God predicted it; the world thought it impossible; powerful rulers tried to defeat it; but it has come to pass.
- By entering into covenant relationship with God through the one appointed—our Joshua, the Lord Jesus — we have the hope of a change from mortality to immortality.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapters 12-13
- "The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 21
- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 9
- "Joshua" (J. Ullman)—Chapters 1, 3-5

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What instruction was Joshua given when he was appointed as Israel's new leader?*
2. *When Israel crossed Jordan, the waters were driven back as far as the town Adam towards the Sea of Galilee. What lesson does this teach us?*
3. *At the time when the children of Israel crossed Jordan, the Ark went ahead of the people by about 2,000 cubits. Who does the Ark represent and what is the significance of "about 2000 cubits"?*
4. *Why were 12 stones taken from Jordan when Israel crossed the river?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

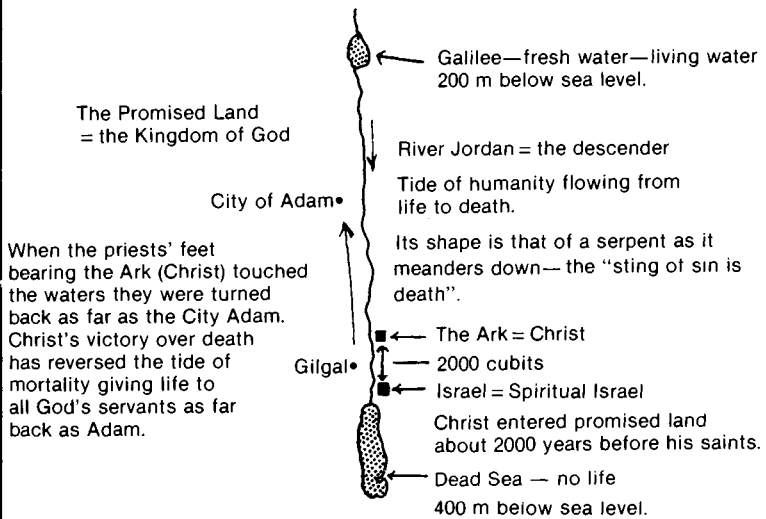
1. *Briefly outline the manner in which Israel crossed the Jordan and comment upon the types which were shown in this event.*
2. *How does the crossing of the Jordan prefigure the change from mortality to immortality?*
3. *In what way was Joshua a type of the Lord Jesus Christ?*

BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

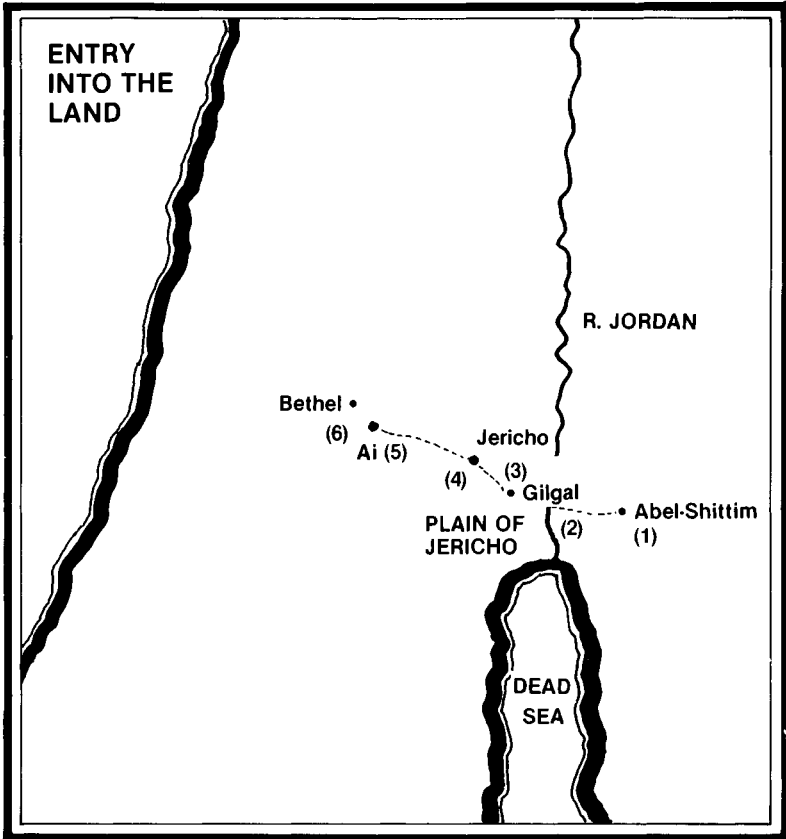
Joshua 3, 4 & 5; John 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:50-56

The crossing of the river Jordan is an enacted parable teaching in many ways the change from mortality to immortality (baptism of the Spirit) which the "Israel of God" will experience when they enter the "Promised Land".

Joshua (Heb.) = Jesus (Gk.) = God shall save.



When Israel entered the land they were circumcised. Circumcision speaks of "the cutting off of the flesh", and in the ultimate sense it refers to the change from mortality to immortality when the Kingdom is established.



- (1) Two spies are sent by Joshua from Shittim to reconnoitre Jericho (Josh. 2:1).
- (2) Led by Joshua, the Israelites leave Shittim and cross the Jordan, the flow of which miraculously ceases (3:1).
- (3) Israel encamps at Gilgal where they are circumcised and where the manna ceases and they eat of the corn of the land (4:19; 5:9-12).
- (4) Jericho is besieged and taken after its walls miraculously collapse (6:1).
- (5) A force of 3,000 men is sent to Ai, but they are repulsed because of Achan's sin (7:1-4).
- (6) By setting an ambush of 5,000 men between Bethel and Ai, and drawing out the men of Ai from the city by his other men, Joshua overcomes Ai and destroys it (8:12-21).

6. THE FALL OF JERICHO

“All the inhabitants of the land faint because of you”

Joshua, having received his divinely appointed commission in the plains of Moab (Num. 27:15-23), responded by totally dedicating himself to the service of Yahweh and His people. His first major work had been to exhort and encourage the people (1:10-15) and then to convey them safely across the fast-flowing Jordan — a task that could only be accomplished by divine miracle. Now the land itself lay ahead to be conquered. Guarding the land stood the fortified city of Jericho.

In this lesson we firstly move back to Joshua chapter 2 which deals with the sending of spies to Jericho — an event which occurred prior to the crossing of Jordan — before moving on to the actual fall of Jericho in Joshua 6.

The aim of this lesson is to see how faith triumphs over the power of sin.

Joshua 2; 5:13-15 & 6

SPYING OUT JERICHO (Josh. 2).

Adopting the rule of an intelligent military leader, Joshua sent two men to “spy secretly” the geographical situation and defences of Jericho (v. 1). These two men were to pay particular attention to the psychological state of the people (2:11); such knowledge being of significance in the planning of a successful military operation (cp. v.11 with v.24).

The two chosen men left Shittim quietly (v.1, cp. 3:1), and made their way across the Jordan to the city of Jericho, a distance of about 20 kilometres. Of that city, Stanley wrote: “Jericho stands at the entrance of the main passes from the valley of the Jordan into the interior of Palestine, the one branching off to the south-west towards Olivet, the other to the north-west towards Michmash, which commands the approach to Ai and Bethel. It was thus the key to Palestine to any invader from this quarter” (“Sinai and Palestine”, p. 305). Jericho was situated 11 kilometres north of the Dead Sea, and 8 kilometres west of the Jordan and was 270 metres below sea level. It is called “the city of palm trees” (Deut. 34:3; 2 Chron. 28:15; Judg. 1:16).

No doubt using disguise, and exercising every care, the two spies came to the city and entered within the gates. However, their presence had not gone unnoticed (v. 2). News reached the King of Jericho that spies had entered the house of Rahab the harlot and so she was commanded to bring them forth. Showing an astonishing degree of faith, in a spirit of selflessness, she agreed to hide the spies in the roof of her house (vv. 4-6),

and in due course caused them to escape down the outside of the city wall from a window in her house (v. 15).

Rahab believed in God — that He was the great God in heaven above, who had been with the children of Israel in bringing them across the Red Sea 40 years before and was surely with them as they were coming against the inhabitants of Canaan (vv. 9-10). She expressed her faith and conviction, as well as the fears of the people, when she told the spies, “As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath” (v. 11).

RAHAB'S CHANGE OF CHARACTER.

Rahab was a harlot — of that there can be no doubt, in spite of attempts often made to represent her in some other light (cp. Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). It must be remembered that to Rahab and her contemporaries there would be nothing wrong in such a way of life, for they did not acknowledge morality in the sense that Israel did (cp. Deut. 9:5). But a knowledge of the truth changed all that for Rahab. Examine carefully the words of the Lord Jesus upon this subject in Matt. 21:28-31. He taught that the “respectable” religious leaders of his day would be rejected — because the truth was not really in their hearts — but those despised by them, “the publicans and the harlots”, would be accepted. They made no pretence like the hypocrites, knowing that they were sinners (cp. Luke 18:9-14). Such a humble disposition is susceptible to conversion, thus explaining the changed character of Rahab. Compare also 1 Cor. 6:9-11. It is not **what we were** that is important, it is **what we become**, after the Word of God has changed and transformed us.

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH AND WORKS.

Pera 1
Rahab was justified by faith and by works. The writer to the Hebrews lists Rahab in his great catalogue of the faithful (Heb. 11:31), while James takes Rahab as an example of the principle: “by works was faith made perfect” (James 2:22, 25). She **believed** (or had faith in) God and she **showed** her faith **in action** by receiving the spies and sending them out another way.

Later, Rahab married Salmon, son of Nahshon, head of the tribe of Judah, and so became an ancestor of King David through Boaz and Ruth. The Lord Jesus Christ himself was therefore a direct descendant of these two remarkable women of faith from the Gentiles (cf. Matt. 1:5 where “Rachab” = Rahab), thus emphasising the point that it is not fleshly relationships but spiritual relationships based on belief of God which count.

Rahab's practical faith was demonstrated when she asked the spies that her family might be preserved and sought for a token that this would be

so (2:12-13). Such was the gratitude of the two spies, and their admiration for her display of faith, that such an assurance was readily given. They laid down these conditions:

1. She must "not tell of the agreement" (v.14, Jerusalem Bible).
2. She must "bind a scarlet thread in the window" when Israel came in to the land. This would plainly identify the house to be spared (v.18).
3. She and all her family must remain inside the house (v.19; cp. Ex. 12:22).

The spies returned to Joshua jubilant. The hearts of the Canaanites fainted because of them, they told Joshua. The land was theirs, for already its inhabitants had been defeated psychologically (v.24).

Para
2

THE CAPTAIN OF YAHWEH'S ARMY (Josh. 5:13-15).

Joshua then went forth, quietly and alone, to meditate upon the impending conflict against Jericho — a fortress of flesh, barring the way to the Israelites' entry of the land, and therefore an obstacle which had to be destroyed. Suddenly, there appeared "a man. . . with his sword drawn in his hand." Joshua reacted instantaneously: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The lesson is clear. In the warfare of faith there can be no compromise. There are only two classes: "them" and "us". To Joshua, there could be no neutral position. But he had not anticipated the identity of his visitor, nor his reply: "Nay, but I, as prince of the host of Yahweh, have now come" (v.14 Roth.).

Para 3

The angel was probably the angel of God's presence who bore His name and appeared to Moses at the bush (cp. v.15 and Ex. 3:5; 23:20-23; Isa. 63:9). Israel's angel or "prince" is later identified by another angel as Michael and Jude tells us that he is the archangel or chief angel (Dan. 10:13, 21; Jude 9).

Joshua prostrated himself upon the ground and then complied with the angelic instruction to take off his shoes for the place where he was standing was holy ground (vv. 14-15). Joshua then learned that the coming conflict was not his own war, nor was it to be Israel's war. It was Yahweh's war — a war against sin, in which Yahweh would surely be the victor (6:2; cp. 6:16).

THE PLAN OF ATTACK (Josh. 6:1-7).

The city of Jericho covered only some 2 to 3 hectares surrounded by a 2 metre thick wall, and an inner wall — 4 to 5 metres back — which was 4 metres thick and 9 metres high. The city was "straitly shut up" (v. 1), indicating that it was virtually sealed from within. The inhabitants were in a state of fear and alarm, awaiting the inevitable attack from the Israelites.

The procedure which Israel was to follow was quite unmilitary in character — it was to be a religious exercise, an exhibition of faith in

Yahweh, and not a display of fleshly might (vv. 2-5).

For six days the men of Israel were to march once a day around the city of Jericho — silently, and without any flamboyance. Then on the seventh day they were to march seven times around the city. The order of the march was to be the same each day: firstly, armed men who preceded seven priests bearing and blowing seven trumpets; then came the ark of the covenant; finally the “rearguard” (v.9, Roth.). On the first six days no shouting or noise was permitted (cp. Prov. 13:3). But on the seventh day, at the completion of the seventh circuit, all would shout and the priests would blow the trumpets — at which point Yahweh’s power would be seen in operation and the walls of the city would fall down flat.

THE FALL OF JERICO (Josh. 6:8-25).

To an experienced military tactician, such a formula of attack would appear ludicrous. But Joshua was first and foremost a man of faith. He obeyed the Captain of Yahweh’s army and exhorted Israel to do likewise. Imagine the faith required to keep up this apparently futile command for 6 days, day after day. But faith was the key to victory and so the lesson is drawn out: “*By faith* the walls of Jericho fell down, *after* they were compassed about 7 days” (Heb. 11:30).

Everything in the city was to be “devoted” (v. 17 A.V. mg.); for Jericho was a kind of “firstfruits” of Israel’s entrance into the land. Only the silver, gold, brass and iron was to be retained and deposited into Yahweh’s treasury. All else was to be utterly destroyed (cp. Deut. 7:1-2; 9:3-5).

Thus the city was delivered into the hands of the Israelites, because they carefully followed Yahweh’s instructions. Victory came on the seventh day. Herein is typified the six 1,000 year “days” of warfare against sin. On the seventh day —at the commencement of the millenium — Yahweh will give the victory to those who have proven faithful. In the campaign against Jericho, the Israelites were to stand back while God caused the walls to collapse, thus showing that flesh is powerless in the warfare against sin. Only Yahweh could give the victory. We too must surrender ourselves to God so that He can work through us (Eph. 2:10; Gal. 4:19).

We must be engaged in the warfare against sin. The apostle Paul says, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Cor. 10:4). In the following verse he describes those strong-holds of sin which must be overcome in our lives: “Casting down imaginations (mg. reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Essay
2

Essay
3

Para 4
Essay
4

LESSONS FOR US:

- Though part of a wicked society, Rahab believed God: she believed that one day God would certainly intervene in that society, devoting it to destruction. Our belief of God's Word gives us the confidence to believe that God will shortly do the same with modern society.
- Despite her former life, Rahab's contact with the God of Israel caused her to have faith in God and then to show that faith in action. Because Rahab obeyed and honoured the terms which the spies agreed with her, she was preserved. We, too, must act in accordance with God's will if we would be saved.
- Just as the angel of God's presence was near at hand to Joshua, so God uses his angels to protect the saints today.
- Israel's faith had to be shown in the (humanly speaking) pointless marches around Jericho before the city fell "by faith". We must show our faith in God's saving arm by being baptised — another event which to the world seems ridiculous, but which to us is the only means of salvation.
- Our "warfare" is a warfare not against "flesh and blood", but against the strong-holds of human reasoning and seeking to walk in accordance with our knowledge of God. (Eph. 6:11-19; 2Cor 10:4-5). Take note of the "armour of God" which we can "put on" to gain the victory in our battles.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 12
"The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 9
"Joshua" (J. Ullman)—Chapters 2, 6

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

- ✱ 1. *What lesson did James draw from the life of Rahab?*
2. *What good report did the two spies take back from Jericho to Joshua?*
3. *Describe Joshua's meeting with the captain of the host of Yahweh.*
4. *Like Joshua, we have a "warfare" before us. Describe what our "warfare" is today. How does the Book of Joshua help us in our "warfare"?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Explain how Rahab was justified by faith and then by works.*
2. *Describe the fall of Jericho. What lessons does this incident teach us?*
- ✱ 3. *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Heb. 11:30). Explain the meaning of these words and relate them to our own situation.*
4. *Explain the nature of the warfare saints are engaged in today. Give some specific examples from your own life. What is the "armour of God" with which to equip yourself to ensure "the victory"?*

7. DEFEAT AT AI

“They have even taken of the accursed thing”

The Israelites had established a firm bridgehead in the land with the victory over Jericho. It is not difficult to imagine the atmosphere among the people of Israel at that time. Overjoyed at the miraculous turn of events when Yahweh triumphed over the fortified city of Jericho, they would be enthusiastic at the prospect of further similar victories. But they were now to suffer their first stunning reverse. And out of that experience they were to learn that Yahweh required more from them than faith and courage. As desirable as those qualities are, they must be blended with one other all-important element: that of obedience.

The aim of this lesson is to show that God's laws must be completely obeyed.

Joshua 7 & 8

AI BARS THE WAY.

The defeat of the Canaanites throughout the Land of Promise was to be accomplished by brilliant tactical assaults, carefully planned and executed, coupled of course with help from God. Joshua purposed to subdue the land in three major campaigns. Firstly, the Israelites would strike through the centre of the land, thus establishing a firm wedge which the Canaanites would find extreme difficulty to dislodge. Then with the land cut in two so that the Canaanites could not move their forces north and south, they would attack the south, mopping up all organised resistance in that area. Finally, they would meet the strong forces in the northern part of the land.

With the defeat of Jericho, Joshua's army moved against Ai, a royal city of the Canaanites, situated about 20 kilometres from Jericho, west and slightly to the north. Ai was a city of great antiquity (Gen. 12:8).

DRAMATIC REVERSAL (Josh. 7:1-5).

But all was not well in Israel. They had “committed a trespass” which had been covered up and which, of necessity, had to be brought to the light of day. Israel was to learn that all sin must be treated in this way (cp. Ps. 32:1-5).

One in Israel had partaken of “the accursed thing”, against which they had been warned before the fall of Jericho (6:18). The word signifies “something devoted”; it must be remembered that everything in Jericho was “devoted” to destruction, as a sort of offering of the firstfruits of the land. The only exceptions were to be “the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron” which were to be devoted unto the treasury of Yahweh

(6:19). This had been a clear-cut instruction and every man in Israel was expected to be obedient to it. But one man had failed to honour the word of God, thus “the anger of Yahweh was kindled” (7:1).

Joshua sent scouts out to reconnoitre the vicinity of Ai. Their report was most enthusiastic: “Spare the whole people such a toil; the enemy are not many” (v. 3 Jerusalem Bible).

But Israel’s confidence was shortlived. Upon attacking the city, Joshua’s reduced army “fled before the men of Ai” (v. 4). “The hearts of the people melted and became as water” — thus, in a dramatic overturn of fortunes, the Israelites found themselves in the same state as the Canaanites had previously been (2:11).

JOSHUA SEEKS GUIDANCE (Josh. 7:6-15).

Joshua was both grief-stricken and non-plussed. Deeply humiliated and distressed, he sought to discover the reason for the disaster (vv. 7-9).

God answered the plea of His faithful servant: “Israel hath sinned” (v.11). The nation was found guilty on four counts:

1. They had broken a solemn vow;
2. They had stolen that which was not theirs;
3. They had acted deceitfully;
4. They had taken possession of that which belonged exclusively to God.

Thus Israel had become “devoted” to destruction; a threat already partially carried out, in that 36 men had died in the attack upon Ai; but further calamity would surely follow, “except” they “destroy the accursed” from among them (v. 12). They were thus reminded that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9).

Under these circumstances, Joshua was required to act, and act quickly, that the nation might repudiate the evil. “Up, sanctify the people”, was God’s immediate demand. “Sanctify” means “to make or pronounce clean”. Israel were to learn that outward ritual is useless without inner cleansing.

The tribes were to be called upon to assemble and take part in a most solemn ceremony. They were to gather according to their tribes, and then Yahweh would begin to mark the tribe, then the family clan, then the household, wherein the “accursed” one was to be found. Then it would be a case of “he that is taken. . .” (v.15). What a sobering effect the ritual of this ceremony would have upon all Israel. They would appreciate the awfulness of sin and the individual responsibility of each person.

The guilty one was to be “burnt with fire” — it was as though the fate of Jericho clung to him (cp. 6:24 with Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29; Lev. 10:2).

This was a form of judgement which was exercised only in cases of extreme sin (Lev. 20:14; 21:9).

THE GUILTY ONE REVEALED (Josh. 7:16-21).

The tribe of Judah was taken, then the family clan of the Zarhites, then the household of Zabdi. And finally, inexorably, the lot fell upon Achan, whose name appropriately means “trouble”. What a hush would have fallen upon all the tribes. Silently, fearfully, expectantly, they had watched the unfolding of events. And finally the truth was revealed: Achan’s guilt was known. This was a miraculous exhibition of the all-seeing eyes of an omnipotent and omnipresent God who misses nothing. No sinner can hide his sin from the Mighty God of Israel (Prov. 15:3; Jer. 32:19).

The hapless and now dispirited Achan was brought before Joshua. Under Joshua’s instruction, he confessed. He had fallen victim to the lust of the eye: “I **saw**. . . I **coveted**. . . , and **took**. . .” (cp. the stages of Eve’s sin in Gen. 3:6 and James 1:14-15). He had kept for himself, from the ruins of Jericho, a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. And his crime was compounded by the fact that the last two items should have been delivered into the treasury.

Remember, he had hidden the “devoted” objects in the earth, in his tent. This tells us that Achan was well aware of what he was doing. This was a calculated sin, and he well knew it. And so did his family. Therefore they were found guilty and punished with Achan.

THE VERDICT AGAINST SIN (Josh. 7:22-26).

Thus the dreadful verdict was passed and the judgement inflicted. Achan and all his family, together with all their possessions, were taken out to the valley of Achor. The judgement administered was to be a national repudiation of sin. They stoned them with stones until they died and then burnt them with fire. “The LORD shall trouble thee”, were the words which accompanied the carrying out of the sentence, showing that God is the One who will destroy sin.

Significantly, the valley was named Achor (a similar word to Achan), thus providing reminder to the effect that Yahweh will continue to “trouble” sin until it is finally destroyed. But in the Kingdom Age this valley will become known as Pethach Tiqvah (“door of hope”), thus teaching the mortals who pass that way on their journey up to the Temple, that Yahweh will fight against and destroy sin — and that if they surrender themselves to His will, He will open to them a “door of hope” whereby they might eventually attain to divine nature (Hos. 2:15; Isa. 65:10).

RETURN TO AI (Josh. 8:1-14).

Now that His word had been upheld, God promised victory to Israel (vv. 1-2).

Joshua again marched on Ai. Employing skilled tactics, he despatched his army to manoeuvre into position during the darkness of night. He divided his forces, setting portion of the army in ambush, while openly displaying the rest to the view of the men of Ai. To this part of his army he said: “We will flee before them, for they will come out after us” (vv. 5-6). Joshua understood human nature. He knew that the men of Ai would be filled with confidence after their earlier victory over the Israelites and would be ready to administer another defeat by coming out of their city.

True to form, the men of Ai observed the army of Israel and were quite prepared to fight. They “rose up early” to make their preparation and, at a time appointed by the king of Ai, they went out to battle not knowing of the ambush behind the city (v. 14).

VICTORY THROUGH FAITH AND OBEDIENCE (Josh. 8:15-29).

As the confident Canaanites poured out from their stronghold, the men of Israel “made as if they were beaten” (v. 15). They “fled”, leading the men of Ai away from the city — and the faster the retreat of Israel, the greater became the confidence of their enemies. So certain did victory appear that every able-bodied person left in the city was called upon to join in the pursuit, to ensure absolute victory. But in doing so, “they left the city open”. Joshua gave a signal to the men lying in ambush. They “arose quickly”, entered the city and took it (v. 19).

The men of Ai, in their headlong pursuit of the retreating army of Israel, faltered, sensing that all was not well. They turned, and a chilling, unbelievable sight met their gaze — their city was on fire. Panic gripped them. Suddenly, at the decisive moment of the battle, they had no power (v. 20). The supposedly retreating army of Joshua turned and fell upon the bewildered men of Ai. This crucial moment also provided a further signal for the Israeli troops within the burning city, for they now rushed to the battle. The nonplussed army of Ai was caught between the two divisions of Joshua’s army. The result was now inevitable. “They let none of them remain or escape” (v. 22), thus fulfilling the requirement of the Law (Deut. 7:1-2).

With the completion of the victory, the King of Ai was slain and hanged on a tree (v. 29). Ai means “ruin” and this King is a type of ‘King Sin’, who desires to reign over us (Rom. 6:12). But in our warfare of faith, he must be slain and brought to “ruin” rather than be let “ruin” us. The fact that the King of Ai was “hanged on a tree” makes the incident a clear symbol of crucifying the flesh, the means by which sin is overcome and finally destroyed, through the mercy of God (Gal. 5:24).

LESSONS FOR US:

- Achan's sin was the coveting of material things — clothes, silver and gold — probably thinking that these could give him security in life. Jesus' command was rather to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:19-21, 31-34).
- Achan hid his sin from his brethren, but he could not hide it from God. The fact that God knows our very thoughts as well as our actions should influence the way we think and act (Heb. 4:13).
- Sin may seem pleasant to the flesh for a time, but it inevitably brings "trouble" (Achan) and will lead to our destruction, as Achan found when he was taken out to the valley of Achor ("trouble") and stoned.
- The call to go against Ai and its king (a type of 'King Sin') was expressed in the words, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed. . . arise, go up" (Josh. 8:1). These words encourage us to constantly renew the warfare against sin with the help that God has given us.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 9, 10
- "The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 21
- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 12
- "Joshua" (J. Ullman)—Chapters 7-8

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What is meant by the expression "the accursed thing" at Jericho and why were the Israelites forbidden to partake of it?*
2. *What was the sin of Achan? Include in your answer the three steps in his sin and compare these with the sin of Eve.*
3. *In the Kingdom Age, mortals will approach the Temple through the valley of Achor. What will they learn from that experience?*
4. *The King of Ai was slain and hanged on a tree. Explain the symbolic significance of this.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Describe how Achan troubled Israel and how his sin was revealed. What lessons do we learn from this?*
2. *Why did God withdraw His help from Israel in their first attempt to conquer Ai, and what should we learn from their failure?*
3. *Outline how the city of Ai was eventually taken and its king destroyed. Refer in your answer to the lessons we can take from this incident.*

Josh 7:11

8. GIBEON AND THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN

“The men asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD”

The fall of Ai caused consternation among the inhabitants of the southern part of the land of Canaan. The kings of these nations began confederating and co-ordinating their plans to attack Joshua and stop the victorious Israelites before they could advance any further into the land (Josh. 9:1-2).

However, before their plans were effected, an event took place which was to again drive home the fundamental lesson to Israel concerning the need for obedience to God’s commandments and the need to avoid making superficial judgement based on a purely fleshly appraisal of a situation. This event was the visit of the Gibeonites to deceive Israel into making a peace agreement with them.

Our aim in this lesson is to see the need to consistently seek God’s guidance in our warfare against the world.

Joshua 9 & 10

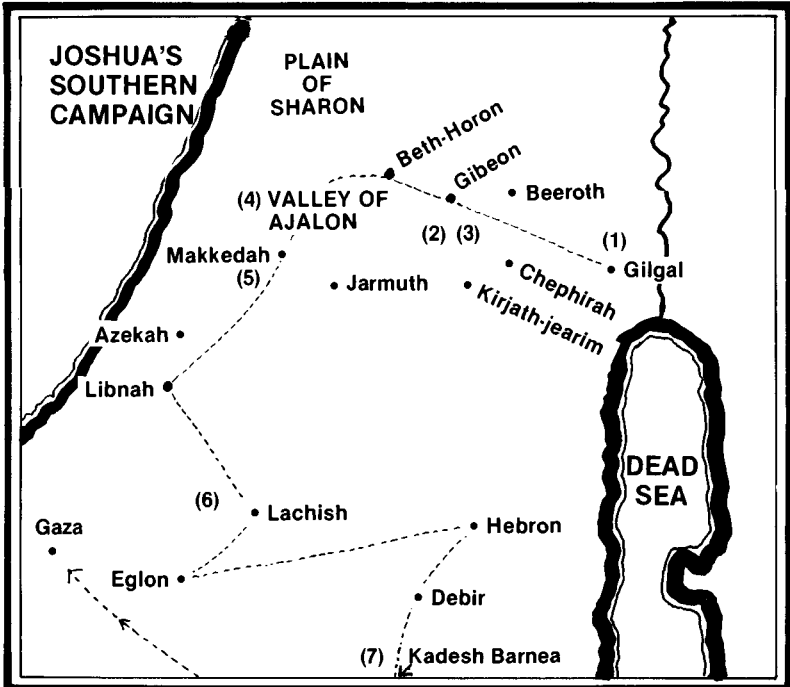
THE LEAGUE WITH THE GIBEONITES (Josh. 9:3-15).

Gibeon was the next important town in Joshua’s advance from Ai. The Pass of Ai was situated opposite the Pass of Beth-horon which was the gateway to the south of the country. At the head of the Pass of Beth-horon was set the city of Gibeon, a great city of renown and inhabited by some of the mightiest of the Hivite peoples (10:2). Together with Chephirah, Beeroth and Kirjath-jearim it made up a group of Hivite cities set among hills, valleys, and springs of waters so typical of the land flowing with milk and honey promised to the children of Israel (Deut. 11:1-12).

The crushing defeat of Ai a few kilometres away convinced the Gibeonites that it was futile to resist the Israelites. In fact the Gibeonites had watched Israel’s progress right from Egypt and their campaign east of Jordan (vv. 9, 24).

Hence with subtle strategy and elaborate preparation they clothed themselves with old garments, patched (“clouted”, v.5) shoes and furnished themselves with stale mouldy bread in old sacks and wine skins, torn and mended (vv. 4-5). They claimed to be ambassadors from a far country who had heard of God’s purpose with Israel and wished to make an agreement with Joshua and the people of Israel to live at peace (vv. 9-13).

God had given specific instructions to utterly put away and make no alliances with the Canaanites — the Hivites being specifically included



- (1) The men of Gibeon, faced with the evidence of Israel's success at Jericho and Ai, make a league with Joshua (Josh. 9:1-6).
- (2) Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, together with the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon, move to smite Gibeon because of its league with Joshua (10:1-5).
- (3) With an overnight march from Gilgal, Joshua comes to the rescue of the Gibeonites (10:9).
- (4) After a great battle at Gibeon, Joshua chases the armies of the five Amorite kings through the pass of Beth-Horon, down the steep valley of Ajalon (where many are slain by hailstones) and on to Makkedah and Azekah (10:10-11).
- (5) The five kings are discovered hiding in a cave at Makkedah. Joshua comes and slays them (10:17-27).
- (6) In a great thrust southward, Joshua subdues Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron and Debir (10:28-39).
- (7) All the centre of the land and the southern regions to Kadesh Barnea and Gaza are now under Israel's dominion and Joshua returns to Gilgal (10:41-43).

(Ex. 23:32; 34:10-17; Deut. 7:1-5). In Deut. 20:10-20 further details are given. The seven nations of Canaan are again listed for utter destruction, but cities “very far off from thee” (20:15), which voluntarily made peace could be spared. The Gibeonites claimed to come “from a very far country” and their carefully prepared clothes and victuals lent apparent proof. Perhaps they had heard the law recorded in Deuteronomy 20.

Joshua and the princes succumbed to the deception and agreed to make a league with them. It is obvious that they put the Gibeonites in the class of those from a “far country”. They believed the sight of their eyes and the hearing of their ears, but verse 14 clearly highlights what they omitted to do, namely, they “asked not (counsel) at the mouth of the LORD”. In contrast, the second ‘Joshua’, the Lord Jesus Christ “shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears”, but will be guided by divine counsel and wisdom (Isa. 11:2-3).

THE DECEPTION DISCOVERED (Josh. 9:16-27).

What a shock for Israel three days later when the army of Joshua came to the cities of the Hivites and found that their visitors from a “far country” were Gibeonites from a few kilometres away who would have been next in line for destruction. The camp was divided: the people murmured against the princes because of their foolhardy action (vv. 18-21). Their word however was their bond and the Gibeonites, were spared. They were though, put to servitude, performing menial tasks such as hewing wood and drawing water (v. 27). These tasks were normally done by servants (Deut. 29:11). Thus the Gibeonites were punished and Israel was taught the lesson of the need to seek God’s guidance, as well as the need to abide by an oath.

THE ATTACK ON GIBEON (Josh. 10:1-8).

The alliance with the Gibeonites lent urgency to the plans of the other Canaanites in the south to unite, not only against Israel, but against the Gibeonites as well. Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, moved to unite the five Amorite kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon with himself to firstly attack Gibeon (vv. 1-5).

The Gibeonites appealed to Israel for help. It would appear that this time Joshua asked counsel of Yahweh and was told to attack (v. 8). The Amorites were the most formidable and organised of the Canaanitish peoples. Their political dominance and iniquity was prophesied to Abraham when God told him of His purpose to bring his descendants into the land after their sojourn in Egypt (Gen. 15:16). They occupied the mountainous areas of the land (v. 6) and were distributed on both sides of the Jordan as far north as Mt. Hermon (Deut. 3:8).

THE BATTLE OF BETH-HORON (Josh. 10:9-14).

In Deut. 20:1-9 we read of the instructions which were given to Israel to prepare them for battle. No doubt they would have been carried out on this occasion. Then, having received his instructions from God, Joshua made a dramatic overnight forced march from Gilgal to Gibeon of some 40 kilometres (v. 9).

With the rising sun behind them, Israel came upon the confederated armies which had besieged Gibeon with startling suddenness. The Canaanite army broke down with the onslaught and scattered with Israel in pursuit (v. 10). Opposite Gibeon was the descent of Beth-horon, which was rocky and difficult, but when traversed opened the way to the valley of Ajalon which descended down to the Plain of Sharon on which the enemy could escape with minimum losses (see map on page 46).

Suddenly, as the enemy fled, God caused a tremendous storm to break out upon them. Trapped on the slippery descent into Ajalon, the enemy were slain by gigantic hailstones (v. 11).

By now the day was wearing on and the broken remnants of the Canaanite host were scattered as far as Makkedah and Azekah to the southwest, while the survivors of the hail were trapped in the valley of Ajalon. Joshua was anxious to complete the conquest and besought Yahweh for an extension of daylight in order to accomplish this. In a unique intervention, God, Who created and appointed the sun and moon (Gen. 1:16), stayed their courses so that for almost a further full day the men of Israel were able to complete their task (vv. 12-14). This was indeed an awe-inspiring event and one which the prophets indicate will be paralleled in the future when Yahweh will again fight against the confederated enemies of Israel when they besiege Jerusalem (Hab. 3:11; Zech. 14:3). Among the heavenly artillery which God will bring to bear against these forces will be great hailstones similar to those He rained against the enemies of Joshua in the valley of Ajalon so long ago (Ezek. 38:22).

THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN (Josh. 10:15-43).

The five Amorite kings had in the meantime fled to a cave in Makkedah and were discovered there (v. 16). The cave was sealed until the slaughter of the Canaanites was completed. When Joshua and the people of Israel returned, the five kings were brought forth. Joshua invited the captains of the hosts to place their feet upon the necks in a token of complete victory (v. 24; cp. Psa. 110:1; 1 Cor. 15:24-25). Joshua's words in v. 25 are those with which Moses counselled him in Deut. 31:6-7 and which were an inspiration to Joshua and became his motivation throughout life (cp. Josh. 23:6, 1:7). The kings were then executed, hanged on trees till sun-down, and afterward buried in the cave which had been their refuge previously.

In successive onslaughts against Makkedah (v. 28), Libnah (v. 29), Lachish (v. 31), Eglon (v. 34), Hebron (v. 36), and Debir (v. 38), Joshua subdued the entire southern part of Canaan so that from the centre of the land, south to Kadesh-Barnea and west to Gaza, the land was now under Israel's dominion. All organised resistance in the south had been broken and only pockets of the enemy remained.

LESSONS FOR US:

- The deception of the Gibeonites is an object lesson to heed carefully the instructions of our God (Prov. 16:9). We may feel sympathy for Israel in being duped by such a clever ruse, but the commandment was clear: "Thou shalt make no covenant with them" (Ex. 23:32).
- Likewise today the truth must be sought in the way God has appointed — belief in the gospel and baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:27-29). We cannot offer or accept the truth on our own terms.
- Israel "asked not counsel at the mouth of Yahweh" in the incident with the Gibeonites, but Jesus continually sought his Father's counsel (Mark 1:35; John 8:28), and we should do likewise through the Word of Truth and the power of prayer.
- Like the Canaanites of old, the iniquity of the Gentiles in these perilous last days has come to its full measure and challenges us. Our zeal for Yahweh must equal that of Joshua in a spiritual sense.
- We slay the wicked by separating ourselves from the world and putting worldly thoughts, words and actions to death in ourselves (cp. 2 Cor. 6:14, 17; Rom. 6:6). As Paul shows Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:3-4, these are the basic attributes of a soldier of Christ Jesus.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 12
- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 10
- "Joshua" (J. Ullman)—Chapters 9-10

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *How were the Gibeonites punished? What lessons were Israel taught by this incident?*
2. *It is said of Jesus that he does not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. In what way did Joshua fail to do the same?*
3. *Why was the battle of Beth-horon important to Joshua's campaign?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Describe how Israel was deceived by the Gibeonites? What lessons do we learn from this incident?*
2. *What general principles regarding our life do we learn from Joshua's warfare against the Canaanites?*
3. *Outline the events in the battle of Beth-horon. In what way was it typical of another conflict in the future?*

9. THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN— THE LAND AT REST

“He left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses”

Before the tribes could settle in their inheritance the power of the Canaanites had to be broken in the north. This was accomplished after a decisive victory over a confederacy of six nations at the Waters of Merom. Through such campaigns Joshua made it possible for Israel to enter into their inheritance in the land promised to Abraham. He did his part faithfully and the people had only themselves to blame for not capitalising on this initial work. They failed to secure their own lot and compromised with the nations round about which they did not utterly destroy (Josh. 17:13).

The Lord Jesus Christ has similarly made it possible for us to gain an eternal inheritance, but we must be obedient to God's commandments if we are to ultimately gain that reward (Heb. 2:9-10, 14-15; Col. 3:24).

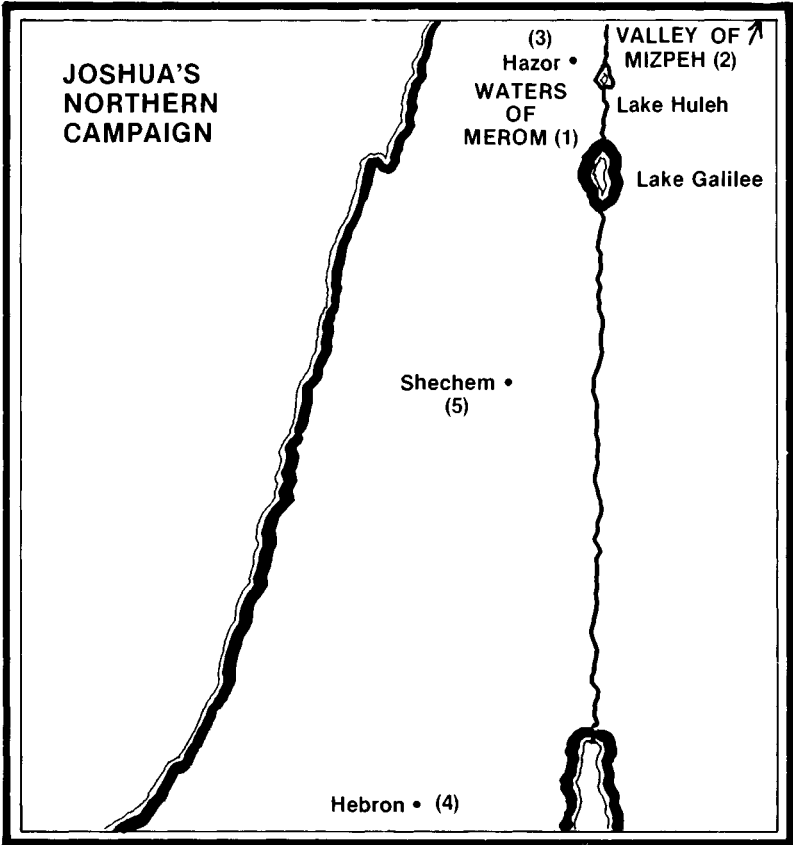
Our aim in this lesson is to see the need to continue daily in our warfare against sin.

Joshua 11 & 14:6-15

THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN: JABIN AND HIS CONFEDERACY DESTROYED (Josh. 11).

The destruction wrought by Israel on the southern section of Canaan had its effect in the north. Jabin (“the Wise”), king of Hazor, moved to confederate the kings of the nations in the north from the Mediterranean seaboard across to Mt. Hermon (vv. 1-3). A massive host assembled at the Waters of Merom near Lake Huleh equipped with formidable weapons of war including horses and chariots (vv. 4-5). In the south, at Gibeon, Joshua's forces had fought a predominantly Amorite force who were mountain dwellers and chariots were of no use in this type of terrain. At Merom where the country was flatter the Canaanite chariots made their appearance. The celebrated plain of Esdraelon nearby was the site of numerous chariot battles in the years that followed (e.g. Judges 4).

Here then, was Israel's greatest challenge since entering the land. Yahweh spoke to Joshua, assuring him of victory and prophesying that, by the same time on the morrow, the enemy would be slain and his chariots and horses destroyed (v. 6). This signal destruction of the implements of war, including the horses, was to be an object lesson to Israel who were continually taught by God not to be impressed with the war-horse and chariot, nor to trust in them for their own deliverance (Psa. 20:7; 33:16-17; Deut. 17:16; 20:1-4).



- (1) Jabin king of Hazor assembles at the Waters of Merom the kings of the nations in the north of the land to fight against Israel (Josh. 11:1-5).
- (2) Joshua suddenly marches his army to the Waters of Merom and routs the kings, chasing them as far as the valley of Mizpeh (11:7-9).
- (3) Hazor is burnt and its king is slain (11:10-11). All the northern section of the land as far as Mt. Hermon is now under the control of Joshua (11:16-17).
- (4) Joshua divides the land and Caleb seeks for an inheritance in Hebron (14:12-13).
- (5) At the end of his life Joshua gathers the tribes to Shechem for his final words of instruction and exhortation (24:1).

Joshua once again employed a forced march and the resultant element of surprise to come upon the Canaanite camp at the Waters of Merom (v. 7) (see map on page 52).

The Canaanite forces were scattered by the fury and suddenness of the Israelites' attack. They had no time to mobilize their chariots or mount their cavalry and Israel pursued them to utter annihilation across the entire north of the land, from the sea-coast to the Valley of Mizpeh in the East completely destroying them (vv. 8-9).

Jabin the king of Hazor was put to death, the inhabitants of Hazor were slain, and the city was utterly destroyed by fire.

In verses 12-15 we are told of how faithfully Joshua carried out Moses' earlier instructions to completely destroy the Canaanites. The fortified cities were left intact but the inhabitants destroyed (vv. 13-14). After a protracted campaign across the northern region, Joshua subdued the remaining pockets of resistance (vv. 16-17), so preparing the entire land for settling by the tribes of Israel (v. 23).

THE LAND AT REST.

The military campaigns had been triumphant and God's promise to Moses to drive out the organised resistance had been fulfilled (Ex. 23:23). The record emphasises the sweeping effect of Joshua's work by the frequent use of the phrase "utterly destroyed" (10:28, 35, 37, 39, 40; 11:11, 12, 20, 21). The responsibility now lay squarely with each tribe, family and individual to secure their inheritance. The remaining Canaanites, while not a military or organised threat, still needed to be dispossessed and this required faith and courage on the part of each member of the nation. Unfortunately Israel's failure to meticulously obey Yahweh's instructions to destroy the Canaanites, and their inability to overcome some of the last pockets of resistance, caused the seeds of later tragedy to be sown. Such examples are seen in Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12; 13; 18:3.

In Hebrews 4:8-11 Paul shows that the promised rest was not secured by Joshua for that generation ("Jesus" in v.8 should instead be "Joshua"—refer margin). Like their fathers in the wilderness, they failed through lack of faith (Heb. 4:1-2). We have now the opportunity for an inheritance in the promised land under Jesus, the antitypical Joshua.

CALEB'S INHERITANCE: THE REWARD OF FAITH (Josh. 14:6-15).

A notable exception, however, was the case of the faithful Caleb. Though an old man of 85, he came to Joshua and spoke to him concerning the promise made to him 45 years previously when he was one of the 12 spies. This promise was that he would inherit the land because of his

faith in bringing back a good report, disregarding the obstacles to Israel taking the land (Deut. 1:36). Now, demonstrating the same disregard for difficulties and the same faith in Yahweh, he asked Joshua for the very tract of territory where he had seen the giant sons of Anak when they had entered the land to spy it out (v. 12).

The contrast between Caleb's attitude and that of others in Israel is emphasised by the fact that later Joshua had to remonstrate with seven tribes who had failed to secure an inheritance (18:3). Furthermore, the part of the land requested by Caleb was not an easy part to conquer or hold. Joshua appointed him the hill country of Judah, including the city of Hebron, and Caleb had to drive out three giant sons of Anak in order to possess it (15:13, 14).

WHY GOD WAS JUST IN DESTROYING THE CANAANITES

In the destruction of the Canaanites and the systematic conquest of the land we have a section of God's Word much criticised and misunderstood by those not understanding the Truth. Such people cannot understand a God Who directs the slaughter and destruction such as that upon Hazor and other cities of Canaan. Nor can they understand statements such as that in Josh. 11:20: "For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts. . ."

We need to see things from God's point of view. In Gen. 15:16 we learn that the nations of Canaan were already in iniquity and yet God did not judge them for another 400 years. The iniquity which came to fulness in Joshua's time included idolatry, immorality and perversions of the grossest type, which formed the basis of their religious worship such as human sacrifice, cruelty and animalism of the type found only where flesh is allowed to gratify its own desires without any restraint (see Rom. 1).

The children of the Canaanites were also slain because they were the seed of a generation of "serpents" (cp. Ex. 20:5). Modern research has taught us of the importance of the first 4 or 5 years of a child's life in determining attitudes and behavioural patterns. God with his infinite wisdom knew that the products of such a generation could not be changed. In another sense this too was merciful, as it was not God's purpose to make of Canaan a nation of orphans who would ultimately be Israel's responsibility (read Deut. 20:10-18).

Yahweh was just in destroying them, but most importantly, He was showing great care, love and mercy to His people of Israel. How could Israel be expected to live as a holy nation amidst such temptation and distraction? They were warned that to preserve the Canaanites would be to their disadvantage and ultimate ruin (Deut. 7:1-6; 18:9; Num. 33:55). God has commanded us to be separate from the world around us for the same reason: "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19) and the

Lord Jesus Christ prayed that we might be kept from its evil (John 17:15, 16).

Though the servants of God do not now physically resist evil in the same sense, the time will come to cleanse the land of Israel of its enemies and to establish the kingdom of God. Then, like Joshua of old, the Lord Jesus Christ and his saints will destroy the wicked (Psa. 149:5-9; Zech. 14:3, 5, 21; Rev. 2:26, 27; John 18:36).

The hardening of the hearts of the Canaanites was a similar case to that of Pharaoh (Josh. 11:20; Ex. 9:34-35), where the manipulation of circumstances and events by God produced a response which was quite predictable knowing the pride and stubbornness of the people concerned.

LESSONS FOR US:

- Joshua is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in his work of conquest and the gaining of the inheritance of the Land of Promise.
- Our entry into the “promised land” requires diligent obedience on our part and the sort of faith and courage which was displayed by Caleb.
- This faith disregards present difficulties and adversity and keeps the ultimate goal and objective in sight —principles followed by Caleb.
- We need similar clarity of vision and purpose that we too might secure the promise of a place in God’s Kingdom: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “Elpis Israel” (J. Thomas)—Pages 300-301
- “The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 21
- “The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Volume 2, No. 11
- “Joshua” (J. Ullman)—Chapters 11, 14

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *How did Joshua deal with the kings in the north?*
2. *In what ways did the life of Joshua point forward to Christ?*
3. *What parallels are there between our walk in the Truth and Israel’s destruction of the Canaanites under Joshua?*
4. *God was just in commanding the total destruction of the Canaanites. Discuss this statement.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Joshua succeeded in his campaigns, but Israel failed to consolidate their position. What was the consequence of their failure and what do we learn from this?*
2. *Describe Caleb’s faithful action in requesting his inheritance. What do we learn from such action?*
3. *What is the “rest which remains to the people of God” and how can we attain to it?*

10. THE LAST WORDS OF JOSHUA

**“Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you
Yahweh, to serve Him”**

As the end of a long and fruitful life in God’s service approached, Joshua saw the need to leave the people of Israel a final exhortation and warning. This he did in an address to the nation assembled at historic Shechem as recorded in Joshua 23 and 24.

At the beginning of his work, upon the death of Moses, God had exhorted Joshua in certain terms (Josh. 1:7). Now the same advice, to which was added the experience and example of Joshua himself, was to be passed on before he died. The Lord Jesus Christ similarly left his final messages for his disciples before his death (John 13 to 17), after his resurrection (Acts 1:1-11) and in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1).

It is a solemn warning to us that the effects of these warnings were short-lived in each case and the advice and direction was not heeded.

Our aim is to see the need to serve God in both sincerity and truth.

Joshua 23 & 24

JOSHUA ASSEMBLES ISRAEL (Josh. 23:1-2).

In Joshua’s call of Israel and the leaders together, we are immediately impressed with his true greatness. Here, at the culmination of a life in which he had performed all that Yahweh had asked him (11:15), Joshua avoided any self-praise and instead directed the people’s attention back to serve God in faithfulness and truth. In reviewing the experiences of life from his old age (v. 2), he could clearly see the issues confronting them and he warned them accordingly.

His address can be summarized in these main sections:—

1. Praise and thanksgiving for the things God had done for Israel (vv. 3-5).
2. Exhortation and encouragement (vv. 6-10).
3. A final warning (vv. 11-16).

THANKSGIVING, ENCOURAGEMENT AND WARNING (Josh. 23:3-16).

On the basis of Yahweh’s past goodness toward them, His faithfulness in performing all that He had promised and the great benefits which He had bestowed upon them, Joshua assured them that God’s promises could be confidently trusted (v. 5). Joshua reiterated the words addressed to him by God when he took over the work from Moses: “Be ye therefore very courageous” (v. 6, cp. 1:7). To heed the commandments given in the

book of the Law would require courage, because the influence of the nations round about would be an ever-present distraction. Hence Joshua exhorted them to single-mindedness — “that they might not turn aside therefrom to the right or the left”.

He encouraged them to cleave unto Yahweh and so avoid the pitfalls of association with the Gentile nations around them. The word “cleave” in v. 8 has the idea of a very close association and is used in Gen. 2:24 (a man should “cleave unto his wife”), and in Ruth 1:14 (describing the association between Ruth and Naomi). Such an association must be motivated by a deep love and Joshua exhorted them in verse 11 to reveal this love towards God. This is the key to all success and is the first and greatest commandment (Deut. 6:4-5; Psa. 18:1).

The alternative was to “cleave” to the nations round about. (Joshua used the same expression in v. 12). This association would result in their love being directed toward these peoples and intermarriage which would bring disaster for them as an holy nation (vv. 12-13).

Separateness is the first requirement for us too, as it was for Israel. We are told not to love the world or the things in the world (1 John 2:15), and to be a separate people (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Perhaps the shortest route to disaster in the Truth is the cultivation and fostering of friendships with the opposite sex outside of the Truth. This leads to deeper relationships and even marriage as Joshua warned Israel.

Joshua further encouraged the children of Israel by reminding them that because God had been with them to that point, they had been invincible (vv. 9-10). Moses had foretold that one man of Israel would chase a thousand (Deut. 32:30). However disobedience would reverse this situation (Isa. 30:17).

God had warned Israel through Moses that to leave the Canaanites among them would be like leaving thorns and briars to constantly pick and irritate (Num. 33:55). Joshua reiterated this in verse 13. Jesus taught us that the “thorns and briars” with which we contend will, like the Canaanites in Israel’s case, eventually choke the growth of the seed of the Word of God. Our “thorns” are the “cares and riches and pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14). Moses had been told that all the evil which God sought to bring upon the Canaanites would be visited upon Israel if they disobeyed, and Joshua repeated this warning (v. 15; Num. 33:56; Lev. 26:14-16; Deut. 28:15, 16, 63).

Joshua concluded with a solemn warning which had a note of inevitability about it: “when ye have transgressed the covenant. . .” (v. 16).

JOSHUA GATHERS THE TRIBES TO SHECHEM (Josh. 24:1-13).

It was to Shechem that Abraham first came to receive the promise

concerning the land. God said to him there, “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen. 12:7). We are told the Canaanite was then in the land, but Abraham remained separate and looked to the future fulfilment of the promise (Heb. 11:8-10).

It was to Shechem also that Joshua first led Israel after the fall of Ai in obedience to the command of Moses (8:30-35; Deut. 27:4-26). There the blessings of the Law were read from Mount Gerizim and the curses from Mount Ebal. The whole Law was read to Israel and written upon stones, and sacrifices were offered on an altar of unhewn stone.

So at the end of his life, Joshua again assembled the tribes at Shechem to renew the covenant they had made with God (Ex. 24:7-8). He fittingly began by taking them back in thought to Abraham’s call out of an idolatrous civilization (vv. 2-3). He reminded Israel of the great deliverance from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings, and how God had been with them in defeating the Amorites on the east of Jordan and how Baalam’s intention to curse Israel had been frustrated (vv. 5-10).

The more recent history of the conquest of the land was brought before Israel to impress them with the faithfulness and power of Yahweh their God (vv. 11-13). Notice how many times “I” is found in verses 1 to 13, so emphasising God’s loving care and deliverance of Israel.

THE CALL TO SERVICE (Josh. 24:14-31)./

Having laid his foundation, Joshua came to the purpose of the assembly, namely to exhort and warn Israel: “Now therefore fear Yahweh and serve him in sincerity and in truth” (v. 14). (The Hebrew word translated “sincerity” has the sense of giving oneself completely). At this very spot the Lord Jesus Christ later told a Samaritan woman, whose religion was a mixture of truth and error, that the Father should be worshipped in “spirit and truth” and that “salvation was of the Jews” (John 4:22-23; cp. 2 Kgs. 17:32-33, 41).

It comes as something of a shock to realise that already the contact with the nations of Canaan had begun to erode the truth in the “ecclesia” of Israel, for Joshua urged them to put away idols from among them (v. 14). Sincerity and truth demanded a decision and Joshua delivered an ultimatum to the people to make their choice that day. . . . Yahweh or the gods which their fathers had forsaken and rejected. Joshua had made his choice: “as for me and my house we will serve Yahweh” (v. 15). Joshua practised what he taught and he had the courage to stand alone if necessary.

The people protested their innocence (vv. 16-18), but Joshua refused to be distracted and firmly stated that they could not serve Yahweh unless absolutely committed and prepared to do so in singleness of mind (vv. 19-20). He reminded them of the jealousy and holiness of God’s

character which had been revealed to Moses when, on an earlier occasion, idolatry had been present in their midst (Ex. 32:1; 34:6-17).

Israel again protested their fidelity and desire to serve Yahweh (v. 21). So Joshua called them to witness against themselves. To test their sincerity, he challenged them to put away the strange gods which were among them and to serve Yahweh with their whole heart (v. 23).

The people agreed and thus Joshua made a covenant with Israel. To impress the occasion upon them, he wrote the words in the book of the Law and placed a great stone under the oak at Shechem where Abraham had received the promise and made an altar (Gen. 12:7), and where the idols of those who came with Jacob when he returned from Padan-aram were hidden (Gen. 35:1-5). Thus Shechem came to symbolise resolution and rededication to Yahweh: their idols were cast away and God was served in spirit and in truth.

Our idols can be anything at all which competes for our love for God. In today's world, pleasure, entertainments, social and community interests, sport, ambition and many other aspects of the carefree, casual life which is characteristic of our age, can be very detrimental to our spiritual development. They blur our vision and perception of the coming kingdom, and rob us of valuable time which should be used in God's service. Let us not be like the Israelites who protested their allegiance to the Truth whilst secretly serving idols. Paul tells us that covetousness, for example, is idolatry (Col. 3:5). In today's world we need the courage of Joshua. Yahweh's standards remain the same. It is only ours that are liable to change. Joshua exhorted a singleness of mind and we are reminded of the need for this characteristic by the Lord Jesus Christ: "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24); and by James: "a double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8).

The final public act of Joshua was a fitting close to his life. The greatest testimony to him is in verse 31: "Israel served Yahweh all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who overlived Joshua".

LESSONS FOR US:

- To stand apart from worldly ways and fight the warfare against sin requires courage and determination — "be ye very courageous", was Joshua's exhortation.
- Close associations with and cultivation of friends in the world easily lead us from the Truth. Marriage outside the Truth was wrong in the days of Joshua and remains so.
- God requires that we worship Him "in spirit (sincerity) and in truth".

- We need to join with Joshua in declaring emphatically, to all who would hear, “as for me and my house we will serve Yahweh”

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

“The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 11
“Joshua” (J. Ullman)—Chapters 23-24

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. Name three things that happened at Shechem in the early history of the nation of Israel and its patriarchs.
2. Joshua told the people to serve God “in sincerity and in truth”.
○ What did he mean by this and who said later that God must be worshipped “in spirit and in truth”?
3. What was the main warning contained in Joshua’s last address to the nation? How does this affect us?

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. Why was it necessary for Joshua to address his last words to the people of Israel? What did he impress upon them?
2. Joshua said, “As for me and my house we will serve Yahweh”. When did he say this, who did he say it to, and what lesson was he trying to teach?
3. Joshua impressed Israel with the need for separateness. How were they to keep separate? What are the things in the world that we should remain separate from?
○

Joshua 23:6

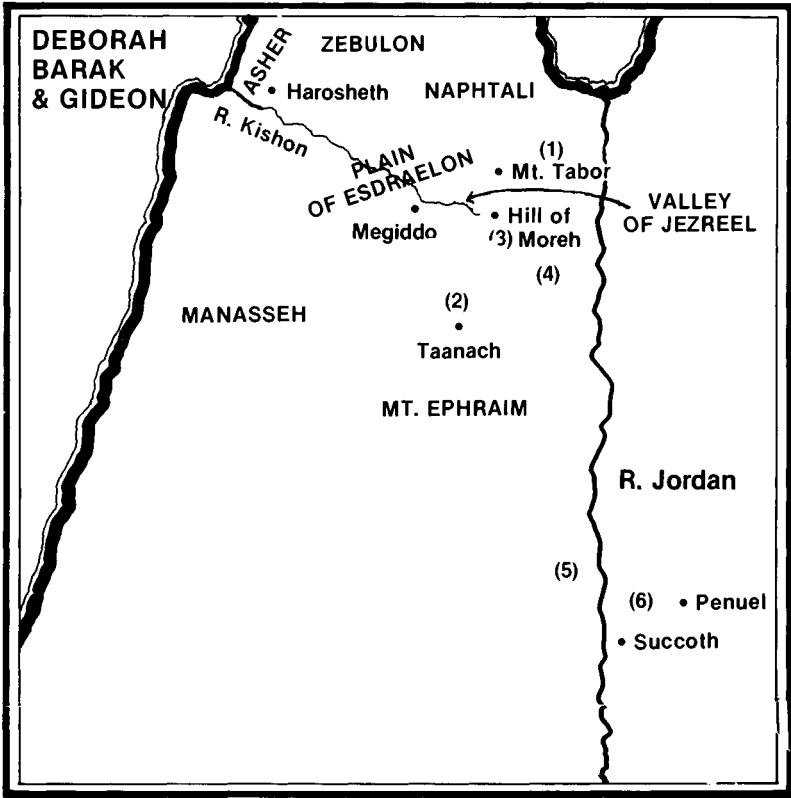
Section 3

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

This section covers a period of some 450 years of Israel's history. In this time Israel was not an organised and united nation as in the period of the Kings which followed. For this reason chaos often prevailed as all went their several ways. The fear of Yahweh declined and this led to invasion by the surrounding nations and the subduing of Israel. In His mercy God raised up men of faith who delivered the nation from their oppressors. Some of these great characters and their circumstances we shall consider: Deborah, Gideon and Samson. In each case of deliverance we shall find that God's strength was made perfect in weakness; He used insignificant means to bring about the deliverance lest Israel should claim victory for themselves. Thus He was impressing the lesson upon them that He alone can overcome their enemies and provide salvation.

The period of the Judges gives way to the reign of kings and this change was bridged by the last of the Judges and first of the prophets, even Samuel.

The last lessons in this section deal with Samuel's birth and mission and the eclipse of the house of Eli.



- (1) Deborah calls Barak to assemble on Mt. Tabor with 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun (Judges 4:6).
- (2) They fight Sisera's army at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo. The chariots of the Canaanites are bogged as the river Kishon suddenly floods and they flee before Barak unto Harosheth (4:15-16; 5:19-21).
- (3) The Midianites and the Amalekites gather at the valley of Jezreel by the hill of Moreh (6:33; 7:1).
- (4) Gideon summons the tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Zebulun together with his tribe of Manasseh (6:34-35). He chooses a small force of 300 men which routs the Midianites (7:22).
- (5) Gideon appeals for help from the tribe of Ephraim to cut off the retreat of the Midianites at Jordan (7:24).
- (6) Gideon pursues the Midianites across Jordan and on his return punishes the towns of Succoth and Penuel for not assisting his work (8:1-17).

11. CHAOS IN ISRAEL

“But every man did that which was right in his own eyes”

Judge 21:25

Faithful, courageous Joshua had developed around him a generation of God-fearing elders who, upon his death as the leader of the nation, were able to maintain the spiritual tone of the people (Josh. 24:31; Jud. 2:7). This generation was blessed in that they had witnessed the great wonders and miracles that God had shown before all the children of Israel during their exodus from Egypt and entry into the Promised Land. But the next generation was different: “they knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Jud. 2:10). No doubt their faithful parents had declared His wonderful works as they were commanded (Deut. 31:13; 32:7; Psa. 78:4), but their children indulged themselves with the blessings of their new land, with its cities, houses and vineyards for which they had laboured not! (Deut. 6:10-11). They “forgot Yahweh” and refused to set their hope in Him.

The aim of this lesson is to show the continuous failure of men when they compromise God’s ways and the untiring strength, mercy and faithfulness of God towards those who call upon Him.

Judges 2 (3/2)

THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL’S FAILURE.

In Psalm 106:34-36 there is a summary of the process that led to the failure of this new generation when it entered the land: “They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.”

One point led them to another and the opening chapters of the Book of Judges plot this course.

1. They did not destroy the nations of Canaan — see Judges 1.
2. Arising from this, they became associated with these wicked people — see Judges 2:1-4 where the angel came up from Gilgal (which symbolised to an earlier generation the destruction of carnal ways, Josh. 5:8-9) to Bochim and denounced Israel for making a league with the inhabitants of the land.
3. The final step followed naturally when they worshipped the gods of their heathen friends — see Judges 2:11-13.

Each step was a flagrant breach of repeated commandments of God through Moses and Joshua concerning the nations of Canaan. “And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; . . . thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt

thou make marriages with them. . . For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods” (Deut. 7:2-4; also Ex. 34:11-17; Deut. 6:14; Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:6-13). These words of Moses were prophetic. The generation after Joshua enjoyed relative strength and in their self-confidence failed to utterly drive out the Canaanites, but put them under tribute (Jud. 1:28). Their sons married the daughters of the Canaanites (3:6), and were turned away to serve idols (2:10!12).

THE CYCLIC PATTERN OF THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES.

The second chapter of Judges provides a key to the structure of the book.

- Verses 10-13 reveal Israel’s SIN.
- Verses 14-15 show their SUFFERING for sin.
- Verses 16-18 show that in SEEKING GOD they would find SALVATION through the deliverance by the judge raised up by God.

This lesson is the great moral of the book — SIN will bring SUFFERING, but SEEKING GOD will bring SALVATION.

But verse 19 reveals the characteristic of human nature. When the judge passed off the scene, the people turned from God and sinned. Then came suffering and the cycle began to repeat itself.

There are six heroic episodes in the book of Judges that show the same pattern of SIN, SUFFERING, SEEKING GOD and finding SALVATION.

1. When Cushan-Rishathaim King of Mesopotamia oppressed Israel, God sent Othniel to deliver them (3:7-11).
2. When Eglon of Moab oppressed Israel, God sent Ehud to deliver them (3:12-30).
3. When Jabin and Sisera oppressed Israel, God sent Deborah and Barak to deliver them (chapters 4 and 5).
4. When the Midianites oppressed Israel, God sent Gideon to deliver them (chapters 6 to 8).
5. When the Ammonites oppressed Israel, God sent Jephthah to deliver them (chapters 10 to 12).
6. When the Philistines oppressed Israel, God sent Samson to deliver them (chapter 13 to 16).

The chart at the end of the lesson shows this cyclical pattern in more detail (page 69).

CHAOS—NO KING IN ISRAEL.

In the closing chapters of the book of Judges there are two lengthy records of the abominable behaviour of Israel. These terrible stories are

appended to the book, not because they happened at the end of the period of the Judges, but because they were apparently representative of many similar events that occurred during these times. These episodes are interlaced on four occasions with the poignant words: “In those days there was no king in Israel”, and twice by the statement: “but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

The nation therefore lacked the unified direction and leadership of a king. Although the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh (18:31; cp. 19:18; 20:18), with the priests who could mediate God’s will to Israel, generally the people paid little heed to it and so lacked co-ordination and divine authority. They did not see God as their king (cp. 1 Sam. 8:6-7), but refused Him, and it was left to every man to direct his own way.

This personal liberty led to great inconsistency in the nation. Whilst a faithful judge might lead several tribes to great conquest, others would remain unmoved (cp. 5:14-17). When Gideon routed the enemy, other cities of Israel refused him and his men necessary victuals (8:5-6). Judah originally was chosen to begin the conquests against the Canaanites, and yet in later years they betrayed Samson in the same cause (1:2; 15:11).

It was a time of poor cohesion, of much wickedness, of occasional righteousness, of spiritual heights and then depths all over the nation.

GOD’S STRENGTH MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.

Faith is impressed upon us in this book as the means of deliverance. “No king is saved by the multitude of an host, a mighty man is not delivered by much strength” (Psa. 33:16). In the book of Judges, God used the most insignificant means to impress this lesson of faith and dependence. Deliverance came to Israel by:—

1. A left-handed man and a dagger (3:15-16).
2. An ox-goad (3:31).
3. A woman and a tent peg (4:21-22).
4. One woman (5:7).
5. 300 men with pitchers and lamps (7:6, 16).
6. A woman and a stone (9:53).
7. A social outcast (11:2-3).
8. The jawbone of an ass (15:16).

In all these instances we are taught to turn from our own strength and learn the lesson spoken to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

THE ECCLESIA TODAY AWAITS ITS KING.

The period of the Judges came between the work of Joshua, who provided opportunity for every man to enter his inheritance, and the setting up of the kingdom under David and Solomon. It was a long time (450

years) of alternating success and failure, of triumph and tragedy.

In this it is highly typical of ecclesial life in our times. As Joshua set up elders who wisely guided the people after his death (Josh. 24:31), so the Lord Jesus did likewise when he appointed the Apostles and elders to follow him (Eph. 4:11-12). But since their day the history of the Truth has often mirrored the times of the Judges — when there is “no king in Israel” and “every man does that which is right in his own eyes”. We are lacking a Divine authority recognised and respected by all — a central point of command. Consequently, from the death of the Apostles to this present hour, triumph and tribulation have followed each other: the Truth has been revived at various times only to be submerged again. This results from the continuous failure of men in compromising God’s ways. Yet now is our opportunity to prepare for the coming of David’s son to set up the kingdom and reign in Jerusalem (cp. 2 Sam. 5:12). And even in these last perilous times we can preserve our heritage if we put our faith in Yahweh our God and see in His strength our means of deliverance.

DEBORAH—A WOMAN OF FAITH (Judges 4 & 5).

One of the most stirring of the judges was a woman, a prophetess, called Deborah. Israel was again in sore affliction because of their sin. God had sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. His commander-in-chief, Sisera, paraded his great forces (including 900 chariots of iron) before the eyes of cowering Israel.

After 20 years of such oppression, Israel cried unto their God (4:3), Who answered them through the voice of Deborah. She called Barak of Kadesh-Naphtali to assemble with 10,000 men on top of Mt. Tabor. Humanly-speaking this was a suicidal plan for this cone-shaped mountain rose conspicuously from the plain of Esdraelon where the chariots of Sisera held total command. The lives of the 10,000 depended on their faith, which was strengthened by the fact that Deborah, God’s prophetess, was among them.

At a Divinely-appointed time Deborah gave the word to attack. A mere 10,000 followed courageous Barak as he plunged down the 300 metre mount to the amassed chariots and multitude of the Gentiles on the plain (4:14). But God was on his side. The heavens broke forth with water, the plain became a thick black bog, and the river Kishon flooded its banks. Sisera’s orderly array of chariots and infantry was completely routed (5:19-23).

The agile Sisera escaped on foot but in his folly he accepted the hospitality of another great woman of faith, Jael. Although a member of the disloyal family of Heber (4:11-12), Jael was a true Israelite in heart. While the mighty prince lay asleep on the floor of her tent, she put her feminine timidity aside and, taking a hammer in one hand and a tent-peg

in the other, she smote the peg through his head so that it fastened into the ground (5:24-27). Thus “Yahweh sold Sisera into the hand of a woman”, as Deborah had earlier prophesied (4:9).

So God, in one day, delivered Israel from 20 years of self-inflicted oppression, principally by the faith of two women. Deborah later caused Israel to rejoice in the words of a song of triumph:

“I will sing unto Yahweh;
I will sing praise to Yahweh, God of Israel” (5:3).

LESSONS FOR US:

- The great need of a new generation is to hearken to the wise and godly counsel of faithful parents and elders. ◊
- When the growing children lose the separateness from the world which the Truth demands, then the very preservation of the Truth is endangered and the new generation starts to do “that which is right in its own eyes.” ◊
- The book of Judges teaches that sin has painful consequences, bringing inevitable slavery to further sin and death. ◊
- But the book also teaches the abundant mercy of God. SIN brings SUFFERING, but SEEKING GOD will bring SALVATION. ◊
- God does not require human strength and ingenuity to achieve His purpose; rather he uses things and people the world considers weak. ◊

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 2, No. 12
- “The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 13
- “The Judges” (C.S.S.S. Study Notes)

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which is right in his own eyes”. What time in Israel’s history does this refer to? What was the problem with the people and how did they arrive at this position?*
2. *In what ways does the book of Judges illustrate the principle that God’s strength is made perfect in weakness?*
3. *What lessons do we learn from the victory of Deborah and Barak?*
4. *What recurring pattern of events do we find in the book of Judges?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Outline the cyclical pattern of the book of Judges. What lesson do we learn from this?*

2. *The epoch of the Judges fits into a very important timetable in the development of the Kingdom of Israel. Show how our period of probation answers to this sequence. What are therefore the great lessons to be learned from the book of Judges?*
3. *Outline the episode of Barak and Deborah. How does it illustrate the pattern of events so frequently to be found in the book of Judges?*

THE SIX EPISODES OF THE JUDGES

	SIN	SUFFERING	SEEKING GOD	SALVATION
1. JUDGES 3:7-11	"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served Baalim. . ."	"Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia".	"And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD".	"The LORD raised up a deliverer, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. . ."
2. JUDGES 3:12-30	"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD".	"And the LORD strengthened Eglon the King of Moab against Israel".	"But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. . ."	"The LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera a Benjamite, a man left-handed. . ."
3. JUDGES 4 & 5	"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD when Ehud was dead".	"And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin, King of Canaan, the captain of whose host was Sisera. . ."	"And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD".	"And Deborah, a prophets, she judged Israel at that time, and also sent and called Barak. . ."
4. JUDGES 6 to 8	"And the children of Israel did evil. . ."	"And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. . ."	"And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites. . ."	"And there came an angel unto Gideon".
5. JUDGES 10 to 12	"And the children of Israel did evil again and forsook the LORD".	"And the anger of the LORD was hot, and he sold them into the hand of the Ammonites".	And the children of Israel cried saying We have sinned against thee. . ."	"Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. . ."
6. JUDGES 13 to 16	"And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD. . ."	"And the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. . ."	There is no cry recorded on this occasion, it doubtless being included in the cry of Jud. 10:15 which followed oppression by the Philistines as well as the Ammonites.	"The angel of the LORD said, He (Samson) shall begin to deliver. . ."

"BEHOLD THEREFORE THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD" Romans 11:22

12. GIDEON DELIVERS ISRAEL

“Why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles”

In Isaiah 9:4 and 10:26 the wonderful victory of Gideon is set forth as typical of Christ's coming victory over the forces of men, for his victory revealed, not the strength of a fleshly army, but the great might of God. Gideon's army was comprised of a few from whom the faithless, the cowards and the rash had been removed. The remaining 300 men of faith smashed the mighty forces of the confederated army of Midianites and Amalekites resulting in the latter turning their weapons on the former.

The aim of this lesson will be to show that God can deliver from the greatest of perils provided we turn to Him in truth and complete trust.

Judges 6, 7 & 8

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SIN BRINGS SUFFERING (Judges 6:1-10).

The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of Yahweh (v. 1) and He gave them up to the Midianites, the Amalekites and the “children of the east.” These people swarmed over the border on their camels and ruthlessly dominated Israel, holding them in a thralldom of fear and terror. They were ruled by two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, in conjunction with two inferior princes — Oreb and Zeeb (meaning the “Raven” and the “Wolf”).

A battle was apparently fought at Mt. Tabor in which Israel was defeated and Gideon's brothers slain (8:18), so that the hand of Midian prevailed (6:2). And now Israel was subjected to bitter oppression. Fire and sword spread terror on every hand. Pillage, massacre and murder drove the Israelites to take refuge in the numerous caves of the hills and in strongholds on hill tops. Their crops were eaten out by the invaders and their homes destroyed.

6:1

Why did they thus suffer? **BECAUSE OF SIN.** And all the suffering in the world is due to sin. It is an heritage that man has brought upon himself and the only thing to do under such circumstances is what they then did.

Faced with starvation and in a desperate plight, Israel turned to God. He sent a prophet who reminded the people of how they had turned from God and had disobeyed His voice. Thus he showed them the cause of all their sufferings. With characteristic human weakness they probably had blamed everything and everybody but themselves.

THE CALL OF GIDEON (Judges 6:11-24).

God sent an angel to Gideon, the son of Joash. He was secretly threshing wheat in fear of the Midianites. The angel challenged him,

“The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour”. Gideon was quick to seize upon what appeared to be an inconsistency. He questioned God’s care for Israel seeing they were under such oppression. But his question was brushed aside and he was commissioned to deliver Israel from the Midianites. What obstacles could there be if God was with him?

Nevertheless it was a tremendous task which Gideon had been given. The land was overwhelmed by the numerous and powerful enemy. Israel was fear-stricken and without means of waging war. No wonder Gideon requested a sign. It was given. Gideon had prepared a meal for the angel and placed it on a rock. The angel touched the food with his staff and instantly it was consumed by fire. It was only then that Gideon realised that he had “entertained an angel unawares” and he was filled with fear (Heb. 13:2). His attitude of doubt and despair was transformed into resolution and action. He was comforted with the assurance of Yahweh’s peace, whereupon he built an altar and called it Yahweh-shalom (Yahweh is peace).

BAAL-WORSHIP OVERTHROWN (Judges 6:25-32).

But before Israel could be delivered from their enemies, Baal worship must be destroyed from the nation. In obedience to divine instructions (vv. 25-26), Gideon courageously took ten of his servants and overthrew the altar of Baal belonging to his father. He cut down the wooden image (called “a grove”) that was erected by it, and, building an altar unto Yahweh, he used the wood of the image to burn the sacrifice he then offered.

He did this at night because the men of the village were Baal-worshippers. In the morning they demanded the life of Gideon but Joash, his father, replied, “If Baal be a god, let him plead for himself.” Joash’s belief in God had been restored by the courage and faith of his son, as had the spirit of the nation.

ISRAEL GATHERED (Judges 6:33-40).

All this did not go unnoticed by the Midianites. They could see in the action of Gideon and the spirit he was arousing in Israel, the seeds of revolt. They gathered a huge force together to check the revolt. Meanwhile Gideon had sent messengers through the tribes, and gradually (see vv. 34-35) the people were gathered unto him. In comparison to the number of the invaders, those gathered to Gideon were but few. He pleaded for another sign to show that God was indeed with him. The sign was given. As requested, when Gideon put out a fleece of wool one evening, he found the fleece wringing wet with dew, whilst the ground was dry roundabout. The sign was reversed on the following night. Gideon knew that God was with him.

GIDEON'S ARMY REDUCED TO 300 MEN (Judges 7:1-8).

Thirty-two thousand Israelites answered the call of Gideon (v. 3). They gathered in the valley of Jezreel by the well which was called Harod (“trembling”) because of their fear.

They saw the huge force of well-armed Midianites, numbering 135,000 (8:10). They were ill-equipped and conscious of the power of the enemy. But God said that the forces of Israel were too large! Despite the inequality, Israel might attribute victory to themselves (7:2)! He called upon Gideon to remove those who were fearful and afraid (see Deut. 20:8). As a result only 10,000 remained.

Even so, that was too many. God’s “strength is made perfect in weakness”. Gideon was told to take them down to the well, and observe how they drank. Those who hastily put their heads to the water were told to stand on one side while those who calmly lifted it up in their hands, their eyes still on the lookout for the enemy, were put on the other side. The former, the rash, were now removed from the army. Gideon found himself at the head of a mere 300 men.

A DREAM OF VICTORY (Judges 7:9-15).

God commanded Gideon to go down at nightfall with Phurah his armour-bearer and view the host of Midian. Creeping stealthily down the valley, they came to the outskirts of the camp. Now the full strength of the enemy would be evident to Gideon. They “lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude”. They symbolised the strength of the flesh. But when, under divine instruction, Gideon and his servant went near the enemy’s camp at night, they heard two soldiers speaking together in their tent. One related to his fellow a dream. He saw a cake of barley bread tumble into the camp of Midian. Striking a tent, it turned it over. His companion replied: “This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host” (v. 14).

A barley loaf was a small thing to overturn the tent of Midian. Moreover barley was the food of the poor. The lesson was plain. In the sight of men, Israel compared unfavourably, but God’s power would be magnified by human weakness. The interpretation of the dream also showed Gideon how greatly he was feared — he already had a psychological victory. Encouraged by this, he planned his strategy accordingly — a surprise attack.

THE VICTORY (Judges 7:16-25; 8:1-23).

Gideon divided his 300 men into three companies. He gave each man a trumpet and a torch covered with a pitcher. Spread out, they were able to encompass the whole of the forces of Midian. At midnight — the middle

watch—as the sentries of Midian were being changed, they acted (v. 19). The Midianites were suddenly awakened by the shrill blast of trumpets, the crashing of 300 pitchers, the blaze of 300 torches and the shout, “The sword of Yahweh and of Gideon”. Already troubled by omen and superstition, the enemy awoke in a panic. In the confusion of darkness, pandemonium broke out and they ran recklessly down the valley with every man’s sword against his fellow. Meanwhile the 300 Israelites “stood every man in his place round the camp” (v. 21). Truly Yahweh “delivered into Gideon’s hand the host of Midian” (v. 15).

Gideon had appealed to the tribe of Ephraim to assist him and now the Ephraimites gathered at the fords of Jordan to cut off the Midianites as they escaped. There the two princes Oreb and Zeeb were caught (vv. 24-25).

Fifteen thousand Midianites escaped under Zebah and Zalmunna their chiefs, and rested secure, far from the site of battle (8:10-11). They imagined that they had escaped the sword of Gideon, but with his faithful 300 men, Gideon, though faint, pursued them (8:4). Coming suddenly upon Zebah and Zalmunna, he completely destroyed the remnant.

He returned to punish those Israelites who had refused to assist him in the height of the campaign. The large tribe of Ephraim had shown jealousy for the success of Gideon, but he pacified them with a “soft answer that turned away their wrath” (8:1-2; Prov. 15:1). But the cities of Succoth and Penuel which had refused to succour Gideon’s army in its time of need, because they doubted whether he would be successful and feared reprisal from Midian (vv. 5-9), he duly punished on his return (vv. 13-17; cp. Num. 33:55-56).

Gideon was requested by the grateful Israelites to be their king, but he refused, saying, “Yahweh shall rule over you.” So it was that Israel had peace all the days of Gideon.

A TYPE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Gideon provides a wonderful illustration of the work of the Lord Jesus (Isa. 9:4; 10:26). Here are some points:—

1. His father’s house was astray from God—so also was Israel in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. His name means, “A Great Warrior”—the Lord Jesus is also styled “Mighty Warrior” (Isa. 9:6).
3. He overthrew Baal worship—the Lord Jesus will likewise overthrow all error (Rev. 18).
4. He established again the worship of Yahweh—the Lord Jesus will do likewise (Zech. 14:16).
5. He removed from his followers all the faithless, the cowards and the rash—the Lord Jesus will do likewise at the judgment seat (Rom. 14:10).

6. With his followers he defeated the enemy of Israel without the use of carnal weapons—so will the Lord Jesus at his second coming (Ezek. 38:19-22).
7. After the victory, he reproved and punished those Israelites who rejected him earlier—so also will the Lord Jesus at his second coming (Zech. 12:10).
8. He became ruler (Judge) in Israel—so also will the Lord Jesus at his second coming (Acts 17:31; Mic. 5:2).

LESSONS FOR US:

- God's strength is made perfect in weakness''. As God whittled down the size of Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300, all that Gideon could do was to rely more and more upon divine strength to overcome Israel's enemies.
- The experiences of our own lives teach us that if we rely upon human strength, then our work will come to nothing. But if we seek God's help and trust in Him, we can overcome the difficulties of life.
- As a preliminary to deliverance, God required that Gideon cut down the altar of Baal, just as idolatry in all its forms must be put aside by those who would seek God's help.
- The defeat of Midian at the hand of Gideon is used by the prophet Isaiah as a type of the future work of Jesus Christ.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 21
 “The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 1, 2
 “The Judges” (C.S.S.S. Study Notes)

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What were the signs that God gave to Gideon to show that He would save Israel by his hand?*
2. *What lesson was God teaching when he cut down the size of Gideon's army?*
3. *How did Gideon's army of 300 overcome the combined armies of the Midianites and the Amalekites?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *What are the great lessons in the preparation of Gideon and his army?*
2. *Describe the way that Gideon's army was reduced in size. What does this teach us?*
3. *How does the work of Gideon illustrate that of the Lord Jesus Christ?*

Judge 61

13. SAMSON: EXAMPLE OF FAITH & FOLLY

“Strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God”

Samson’s life is one of profound tragedy. Given great blessings by God, we see him ascend to glorious heights of spiritual and physical strength as the single-handed conqueror of the Philistines — no one in Israel being prepared to align themselves with him. And then he is found in the depths of human weakness, beguiled by a temptress, and blinded and mocked by the uncircumcised. Moreover his strength and his weaknesses symbolise Israel in this period.

The great lesson of Samson’s life is so aptly summarised by the proverb: “Better is he who rules his spirit than he that takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).

Samson made Philistine cities tremble at his presence, but it was only in the final act of his life that he properly learnt the lesson of subduing human passion. His faith wrought great things and for this cause he is enrolled among the heroes of faith, who “out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. 11:32, 34).

The aim of this lesson is to show that separation from the world is essential for salvation.

Judges 13

DIVINE VISITATION—A SON IS PROMISED (Judges 13:3-23).

Manoah and his wife were of the tribe of Dan. They lived in the town of Zorah which was really a city of Judah (Josh. 15:33), but inhabited by Dan because this tribe had failed to take its own inheritance (Jud. 13:2, 25; 1:34). Dan migrated to the north of Israel, abandoning the portion God had assigned them (18:1-2; Josh. 19:40-48), but a faithful remnant had stayed behind despite their nearness to the dreaded enemy, the Philistines. Manoah and his wife were of these — but their great sorrow in life was that they had no children (13:2).

Barrenness was an intense source of shame to a woman in those times. Like Rachel before and Hannah after, Manoah’s wife would have offered many prayers to God for children (Gen. 30:22; 1 Sam. 1:8, 10-11). At last she was answered by angelic visitation and promised a son.

This happy news was reported to Manoah who, apparently unable to comprehend the greatness of the promise, prayed for a second visitation (v. 8). God hearkened to him and the angel again appeared to his wife who then ran to fetch Manoah. The angel confirmed the promise and the commands (vv. 13-14). But Manoah knew not that it was an angel (v. 16).

He wished to show honour unto “the man of God” (v. 8), and offered to prepare a meal for him (cp. Gen. 18:5-8). The angel refused to eat and said that if he was to offer a burnt offering, it must be made to Yahweh. Manoah prepared his offering and, as the flame arose from the altar of rock, the angel mingled with it and ascended (Heb. olah). In the term “burnt offering”, the word “burnt” signifies “ascending”, to indicate the attitude of dedication towards Yahweh (Lev. 1:9). Thus when the angel ascended in the flame of the burnt offering, God’s acceptance of their dedication was plainly demonstrated.

With this Manoah perceived that an angel had been in their presence. He was greatly perturbed and feared death. But his wife, apparently the more spiritually perceptive, comforted him with the observation that the offering had been accepted, wonders had been seen and great blessings promised — God would not have so dealt with them if He intended to slay them.

In course of time a son was born, called by his mother “Samson”, meaning “brilliant sunlight”.

A NAZARITE FROM THE WOMB (Judges 13:4-5; Num. 6).

When the angel first spoke to Manoah’s wife (her name is not given) he had declared “the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb.”

The Nazarite vow is recorded in Num. 6. The word means “separation” and this concept is stressed throughout this chapter. Israel at Sinai were told they could be a “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). Yet their Law forbade them, on pain of death, from entering into the priesthood, as this was reserved for the sons of Aaron (Num. 18:6-7; see also Lesson 3). How then could other Israelites, who desired in their heart to separate themselves totally to the service of God, realise the offer made at Horeb? The Nazarite vow provided this opportunity. By it an Israelite could imitate the High Priest, for as in the case of the High Priest “all the days of his separation he is holy unto Yahweh” (Num. 6:8; cp. Ex. 28:36).

There were three specific injunctions for the person who vowed to be a Nazarite:—

1. He was to eat nothing associated with the vine or its products (Num. 6:3-4; cp. the priests, Lev. 10:9-10).
2. He was forbidden to trim the hair of his head (Num. 6:5; cp. the priests, Lev. 21:5).
3. He must avoid the defilement of death, even if the dead was of his family — a condition that only applied to one other man in Israel, the High Priest (Num. 6:6-8, cp. Lev. 21:10-11).

Thus the holiness of the Nazarite vow was impressed upon Israel and yet, by it, any Israelite, male or female, could imitate the separation of the High Priest.

Normally the vow was taken voluntarily by adults for a specific term. In Samson's case God had determined it before he was born.

Why was it that Samson should be a Nazarite, a separated one? Note that his mission is stated immediately after the injunction that he should be a Nazarite (Jud. 13:5) — “he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines”. Deliverance would come by separation to God. Failure to realise this principle had been at the root of all Israel's troubles from the beginning of the time of the Judges (2:2-3). They had associated with the nations of Canaan and learned their ways. They were still doing this in Samson's time. So God raised up a young man wholly dedicated to Him and totally separate from the nations. Then we read that “The child grew and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan” (13:24-25). Though the word of Yahweh was precious in those days (1 Sam. 3:1), His Spirit began to move Samson, the separated one.

THE WOMAN OF TIMNATH (Judges 14 and 15).

Timnath means “assigned portion”. It was a city of the Philistines though God had assigned it to Dan (Josh. 19:43). Samson went down to this city, no doubt at the prompting of the Spirit of Yahweh, but while there his eye was caught by a daughter of the Philistines. He determined to marry her despite the protests of his parents.

The family went down to visit the woman in Timnath (Jud. 14:5). While Samson was passing the famous vineyards (surely no place for the Nazarite), a lion roared against him. Samson felt the power of Yahweh surge into his body and without a weapon of any kind he tore the ferocious beast asunder. He passed straight on to visit the woman, undeflected by his experience.

Later he went back to take her to himself and turned aside to see the ruin of the lion. To his amazement a hive of bees had established their industry within its carcass (vv. 8-9). Samson returned to his parents and gave them some of the honey. But he did not tell them from where he obtained it.

In due time, his father (but not his more spiritually inclined mother — cp. v. 10 with v. 5) accompanied him to Timnath to the wedding feast called by Samson. Thirty Philistines were appointed to be his companions and his best man was also a Philistine (vv. 11, 20). Samson could never have betrayed his vow more completely. Here was the one separated to holiness uniting himself in marriage to the uncircumcised. The commandment forbidding marriage outside the Truth was put aside (Deut. 7:1-4).

In the midst of the revelry, Samson's mind returned to the slaying of the lion and he put forth a riddle about it to the guests. They had to explain: “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came

forth sweetness” (v. 14). If they failed within seven days to explain the riddle then they had to give him 30 sheets and 30 changes of raiment, and vice versa if they succeeded.

The Philistines were in a desperate plight. They threatened to burn Samson’s wife and her father’s house if she failed to furnish them with the answer. Therefore she used all her feminine wiles to entice him and at length on the seventh day, he yielded. Thus the riddle was made known to the Philistines.

Rising in great anger Samson slew 30 Philistines and so answered the terms of the agreement (v. 19). He left behind his new wife and returned to Zorah to his father’s house. This provided him with a further opportunity to humiliate the Philistines, for sometime later Samson sought his wife again, only to find that she had been given to the Philistine who was best man at his wedding (v. 20). This outraged him and provoked retaliation; viz.:—

1. He burnt down their cornfields with 300 foxes bearing firebrands in their tails (15:4-5).
2. He smote the Philistines with a “great slaughter” (15:8).
3. He slew 1,000 of them with the jawbone of an ass (15:14-17).

STRENGTH LOST THROUGH A WOMAN (Judges 16:1-21).

Great faith amidst profound weakness was the rule of Samson’ life. Despite the lesson of Timnath, he sinned with another Philistine woman in Gaza (16:1-3). He then fell prey to yet another, the seductress Delilah, in the valley of Sorek. Through his weakness the lords of the Philistines discovered the secret of his superhuman strength.

Such an association with a partner outside the Truth must in the end, result in anguish of mind, though it may seem attractive at the beginning. How can we share our lives with someone who does not share our most precious hopes and desires?

In his Nazarite vow of separation to Yahweh lay the key to his great strength, his unshaven head. By subtle enticement, Delilah elicited his secret just as the woman of Timnath had done previously (14:17). The Philistines were soon informed and, while he “slept upon her knees”, a Philistine “shaved off the seven locks of his head.” “Yahweh was departed from him” (v. 20). Down into the prison house in Gaza he was led to grind corn for the enemies of Israel amid the clank of fetters of brass. His eyes, which had been the source of his temptation, were now bored out of their sockets (1 Jn. 2:15-16).

In this tragic spectacle we see that suffering follows sin (v. 21). Samson learnt this lesson while suffering in the prison of the Philistines. The words of Christ surely must summarise his thoughts: “If thine eye offend

thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God. . .” (Mk. 9:47).

VICTORY IN DEATH (Judges 16:22-31).

The Philistines gathered for a great feast in Gaza, in thanksgiving to their god, Dagon, for the victory over Samson. Samson was brought before the crowds so they could mock him. The strong man of Israel was led in by the hand of a young boy.

But Samson knew his hair had grown again during the months in prison. He believed in the mercy of God. He knew that his greatest enemy was himself when moved by the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. He was no longer proud or lustful. In faith he sought and was led to the great pillars upon which the house was supported. He prayed to God and strength flowed into his body. He grasped the pillars and said, “Let me die with the Philistines”. By divine strength he caused the house to collapse. Samson and 3,000 Philistines died at once—more perished in his death than he had slain in his life. By faith he triumphed over his enemies (Heb. 11:32-33).

His brethren and the house of his father gathered his remains and he was buried in between Zorah and Eshtaol, the place where the Spirit had moved him at the first (16:21).

LESSONS FOR US:

- The life of a Nazarite is set forward in God’s word as an example to us of voluntary dedication to God and a corresponding separation from the practices of the world.
- While separation requires the cutting off of sinful lusts, it alone can bring true happiness in the end.
- Samson’s life of separation was marred by his attractions to worldly women. It has ever been true that marriage with the alien is a breach of God’s command.
- Young people should be careful to limit their contact with the world so that they will not be drawn aside like Samson by “the lust of the eyes.”
- In a world which encourages free expression and liberality, it is important for saints to remember the proverb which epitomises Samson’s life: “Better is he who rules his spirit than he that takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

“The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 3
“Samson” (R. Abel)—C.S.S.S. Study Notes

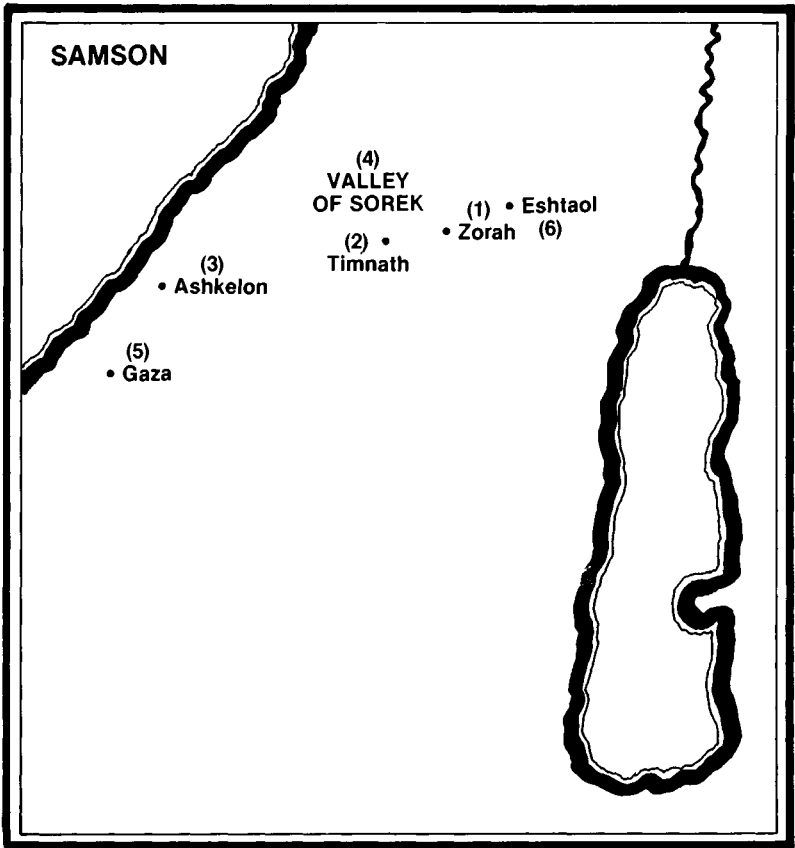
PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

- 0 1. *The angel that spoke to Manoah’s wife said that Samson would be “a Nazarite from the womb”. What three things was the Nazarite in Israel to do?*
2. *What weakness brought about Samson’s downfall? What lessons do you learn from this?*
3. *Samson showed great weaknesses in his life, but he is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as a man of faith who will be in the Kingdom. Comment on this by referring to the last act of his life.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *What was a Nazarite and why was Samson to be a Nazarite from the womb?*
2. *“Better is he who rules his spirit than he that takes a city”. Illustrate this proverb from the life of Samson.*
3. *Separation from the world is essential for salvation. How is this lesson illustrated in Samson’s life?*

Prov 16:32



- (1) The spirit of Yahweh begins to move Samson at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol (Judges 13:25).
- (2) Samson marries a woman of Timnath (14:1-4).
- (3) Because of her, his riddle is solved and he supplies the wages by killing 30 men of Ashkelon (14:19).
- (4) Samson falls prey to the wicked Delilah from the valley of Sorek and is deprived of his strength (16:4).
- (5) He is blinded and taken to grind in the prison house at Gaza (16:21).
- (6) In his death he brings down the house of Dagon and is then buried between Zorah and Eshtaol (16:31).

14. RUTH

“Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”

The story of Ruth presents a virtuous young Gentile woman desiring the companionship of her Hebrew mother-in-law, graciously receiving an inheritance in Israel, and finally becoming an ancestor of David and Christ. God guided Ruth to Boaz whose attitude to her needs reveals humility despite his wealth.

The aim of this lesson is to show that God is “no respecter of persons” — in this time of anarchy in Israel, the grace of God was extended to Ruth, a faithful Gentile, on the basis of her faith and actions.

Ruth 1 to 4 366

A BACKGROUND OF ANARCHY.

The story of Ruth is more impressive when viewed in the context of the times. Her character is more outstanding when compared with the terrible anarchy of her surroundings — the days “when the judges ruled” in which “every man did that which was right (or convenient) in his own eyes.” The record of Ruth is placed between the record of the spiritual decline and apostasy of Israel during the time of the Judges and the record of the re-organisation under Samuel who prepared the way for the establishment of the Kingdom of God under David. It is significant then that a few individuals were faithful in the midst of depressing conditions. Such has been the case in other times. For example, 7,000 had not bowed the knee to Baal in the time when the wicked king Ahab and Jezebel reigned (1 Kgs. 19:18).

Our own times mirror the days of the Judges. In the story of Ruth we can gain encouragement to quietly, humbly and faithfully seek our inheritance through the acceptance of the hope of Israel and serve Yahweh in readiness for participation in the Kingdom of God — despite the faith-destroying times in which we live. The virtue of Ruth, the strong faith of Boaz, and the patient endurance of Naomi, all present contrasts to the ungodliness of today.

FAMINE IN THE LAND (Ruth 1:1-2).||

There was a famine in the land. It could well have been indicative of Israel’s spiritual poverty (Amos 8:11), for God chastened his people in this way (see Lev. 26:18-20; Psa. 105:16; Amos. 4:6-10). Elimelech (whose name means “My God is King”), under the trial of famine, chose to leave Bethlehem-Judah (“The House of Bread and Praise”) and to sojourn in Moab, a Gentile country away from the land of his heritage. The need to seek sustenance was natural, but a lack of faith is also apparent.

Elimelech deserted the House of Bread and Praise for the land of sin and death, thus prefiguring the exile and tragedies to come upon his people in following generations.

Elimelech took with him to Moab, his wife Naomi and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion.

THE EXPERIENCES OF NAOMI'S FAMILY (Ruth 1:3-22).

Naomi's sorrows commenced with the death of Elimelech. Then her two sons married Moabitish women, Mahlon marrying Ruth (4:10), and Chilion marrying Orpah. It appears from verse 15 that Orpah at least was an idolator, indicating the assimilation of Elimelech's family into Moabitish customs. Here was a clear case of being "unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Deut. 7:1-4), an error as much a danger today as then. Mahlon (meaning "sickly, weak") and Chilion ("pining, wasting") died within ten years. Their names perhaps indicated their physical condition.

Naomi's plight was terrible: she was widowed and childless in a foreign land. The family had left the "House of Bread" (Bethlehem) to find food in Moab, but now the very "breadwinners" of the family were dead.

However, news reached her of God's provision of bread in Judah, whereupon she decided to return (v. 6). She encouraged her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab. After some hesitation, Orpah agreed, but Ruth determined to leave behind her Moabitish background and seek a new way of life accompanying Naomi (v. 14).

Her resolve (vv. 16, 17) is an outstanding hall-mark of sincerity and devotion to Naomi and Naomi's hope, people and God. As such she beautifully portrays the Gentile ecclesia willingly identifying herself with the Hope of Israel and renouncing former works of darkness. In like manner Moses chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25; see also Phil. 3:13; Acts 11:23).

The two returned to Bethlehem, much to the excitement of the city. Naomi wished to be no longer known as Naomi ("pleasantness, favour, sweetness"), but, because of her sorrows, to be known as Mara ("bitter"). They arrived "in the beginning of barley harvest" (v. 22) which coincides with Passover, the feast which speaks of deliverance. How apt it was for Naomi and Ruth to return at a time when hope of God's care and deliverance was being remembered in Israel.

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE (Ruth 2 and 3).

Ruth courageously took up the role of supporting herself and Naomi by gleaning in the harvest and was unknowingly guided to the field of Boaz. Provision was made in the Law permitting the poor and strangers

to glean (see Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19), though some property owners would be more considerate than others. She was blessed in coming across the field of Boaz who showed a remarkable concern for the well-being of his servants. He greeted his servants with the words, "Yahweh be with you", and they responded, "Yahweh bless thee" (2:4). Thus the lordship of Boaz and the submission of his servants was moderated by their mutual fear of God (Eph. 6:5-9). Though iniquity filled the land, there was righteousness in the fields of Boaz (whose name means "in him is strength").

Ruth industriously applied herself to her task (v. 7), and when she was noticed by Boaz, he spoke kindly to her, offering her sustenance and protection if she would keep close to his reapers (vv. 14, 21). Her work was rewarded by Yahweh "under whose wings she had come to trust" (vv. 11, 12). Boaz had instructed the reapers to leave behind plenty for Ruth to glean. We, too, are assured of blessings if we labour diligently in the fields of the one of whom Boaz was a type, the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 11:9-13), even though we were once, like Ruth, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10).

On returning to Naomi with an abundant reward for her toil (an ephah was about 22 litres), Ruth learnt that Boaz was a near kinsman. She was therefore encouraged by Naomi to remain in his fields, keeping fast by his maidens, for in the wicked days of the Judges, danger lurked outside.

After some time, Naomi instructed Ruth to approach humbly before Boaz and to seek his help in redeeming her, thus providing the protection and security of a husband (3:1-5).||

THE LAW OF REDEMPTION.

The Law of Redemption involved the following points:

1. If a man became poor, so that he had to sell his land, it was the duty of the nearest kinsman (his nearest relation) to redeem it for him, by buying it back, or paying what was owing (Lev. 25:25).
2. If a man became poor, so that he had to sell himself as a slave to a stranger, then his nearest relation could pay to set him free (Lev. 25:47-48).
3. If a man died, leaving no heir, it was the duty of the nearest kinsman to marry his widow and to raise children in the name of the dead man so that his name would not die out in Israel (Deut. 25:5-10; Luke 20:28).

Ruth was in the position of needing a redeemer.

BOAZ ACTS AS RUTH'S REDEEMER (Ruth 4).

Boaz was touched by the sincere appeal of Ruth. He knew she was of

excellent character — “for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman”, he said (3:11). He wanted to help but there was a closer kinsman who should first be given the opportunity to redeem her. Boaz took up Ruth’s need with the kinsman, who turned down his right (4:6), thus permitting Boaz to rightfully take Ruth to wife.

In the course of time Ruth gave birth to Obed, bringing much joy to Naomi as now a seed had been raised up in the house of Elimelech. Obed was later the father of Jesse, the father of David (4:17). Thus the Gentile Ruth became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5), a fact which illustrates the principle that it is faith and not fleshly lineage which makes a person acceptable to God.

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER.

By his excellent character Boaz (“in him is strength”) prefigures Christ our redeemer who is willing to redeem us if we sincerely desire this gracious provision for our needs. By contrast, the unnamed kinsman prefigures the Law which stood in the way of redemption and was acknowledged to be unable to redeem (1 Pet. 1:18; Gal. 3:17-19).

Note the following points:

1. The redeemer must be a near-kinsman (Lev. 25:48-49). Christ is our kinsman because he himself was of our nature (Heb. 2:14-15).
2. The redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:6). Christ was able to give himself as a perfect sacrifice for our redemption (Rom. 3:24-25; Rev. 5:9-10).
3. The redeemer purchased both persons and inheritance (Ruth. 4:5; Lev. 25:25, 47, 48). Christ redeems those who are in bondage to the law of sin and death, and provides the inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Thus we are “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Isa. 61:1-3).

The lesson of Ruth is therefore a lesson of redemption. Salvation will be graciously extended to those who separate themselves from the world, who faithfully serve Christ. Those who humbly seek for redemption in Christ shall find it.

LESSONS FOR US:

- Though the days of the Judges were wicked, people who feared God could still live faithfully. We too, can stand out from the wickedness of the world and learn to do the things which are pure and right before God.
- There is no future in straying from the Truth, as Elimelech did by leaving Israel. A close association with others in the Truth will help our resolve to follow our Lord and Master.

- The experiences of life taught Naomi this lesson and so she exhorted Ruth to stay in the fields of Boaz close to his servants. In effect, Ruth was told to stay within the ecclesia, working closely with her brethren and sisters.
- In the typical aspect of the story, Ruth represents the Gentile ecclesia, while Boaz represents the Lord Jesus Christ who provides redemption.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

“The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield) — Vol. 3, No. 5

“The Christadelphian Expositor” (H. P. Mansfield)—The Book of Ruth

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What did Ruth say when Naomi told her to remain in Moab?*
2. *Why did Naomi want her name to be changed to “Mara”?*
3. *How was Ruth’s faith in the God of Israel rewarded?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *What lessons do we learn from Elimelech’s journey to Moab and settlement there?*
2. *Write a character study about Ruth the Moabitess.*
3. *Describe how Boaz prefigured the work of redemption performed by Christ.*
4. *As Gentiles, what lessons can we learn from Ruth’s inclusion in Israel and in the line which led to the birth of Jesus?*

15. SAMUEL: HIS BIRTH AND MISSION

“All Israel. . . knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet”

The work of Samuel the Prophet involved the transition of a nation from anarchy in the times of the Judges to the establishment of the “Kingdom of God” under David, their King. Samuel was the last of the Judges but the first of the order of prophets that followed him (see Acts 3:24). Samuel is associated with Moses in the estimation of God as having a longlasting influence for good upon his people (Jer. 15:1). He can also be compared with John the Baptist as a fore-runner to prepare the way before the anointed of Yahweh.

This lesson reveals God’s preparation for the establishment of His Kingdom by raising up a faithful prophet and leader.

The aim of this lesson will be to show how important early training is for God’s children.

1 Samuel 1 & 2:1-11

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL (1 Sam. 1).

A Levite named Elkanah lived in Ramah near Mt. Ephraim with two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Hannah was favoured by her husband, but she failed to have children and was thus mocked by Peninnah who had children.

Every year all the family made a pilgrimage to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was set up, to worship and sacrifice unto God. But the feast was an occasion of sorrow for Hannah for she fretted for a son. ^{v11}

On one such occasion in the door of the Tabernacle, Hannah poured out her heart in prayer. She vowed that if Yahweh hearkened unto her prayer and granted her a son, she would present him unto Him “all the days of his life”. He would be like Samson, a Nazarite, separated and holy unto God (see Num. 6). His life would therefore be consecrated in the priestly role of service to God, though he would not be an actual priest of Aaronic descent (Num. 18:7 — refer Lesson 13).

Eli the high priest was at first mistaken as to Hannah’s conduct and rebuked her for drunkenness (which could well have been the case with others in the degenerate society of his time). She protested her soberness and wholehearted dependence upon Yahweh. Realising her God-fearing character, Eli added his prayer to that of Hannah: “the God of Israel grant thee thy petition” (v. 17).

God answered Hannah’s prayer and in due time a son was born to her, named Samuel, which means “heard of God”.

After a period of weaning the child, Hannah joyfully set forth to go to

Shiloh to present Samuel unto the service of Yahweh who had so wonderfully answered her prayer (vv. 26-28; see also the power of prayer in Jas. 5:16; Luke 11:1-13; Jas. 1:5; 5:11; Matt. 17:20, 21).

THE TRAINING OF SAMUEL (1 Sam. 2).

Little detail is given regarding the education and training of Samuel. However, two things combined to impress upon Samuel's receptive mind the principles of worship. Firstly he was brought up under the watchful eye of Eli, the high priest, while in constant contact with the things of God: secondly, he was regularly visited by his parents who no doubt imparted loving and sound advice to him (v. 19).

Such instruction is vital for young people developing God-like characteristics when confronted by gross immorality and ungodliness about them. We can imagine Samuel's shock at witnessing the wickedness of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and also his determination at a tender age to avoid contact with them. The lesson of Samuel is one of separation and a child-like teachableness. Later Jesus said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3; 19:14). The instruction of children in God's law was more than a duty, it was a divine command, (Deut. 6:7-9). Proverbs shows the wisdom of "training up a child in the way he should go; for when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

A note of tragedy is struck when we read of the laxity of Eli's control over his sons (1Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25, 29; 3:11-14). This is also condemned by the Proverbs (29:15-17; 13:24). Three times in the record Samuel is greatly contrasted with Eli's sons - it is recorded in verses 11-12 that the child Samuel did "minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD"; and again in verses 17-18, "the sin of the young men was very great. . . but Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod"; and again in verses 25-26, "they hearkened not unto the voice of their father. . . and the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD and also with men." Here Samuel foreshadows the character of Jesus who, as a youth, "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

It is somewhat ironical to see that the same Eli who guided the godly and obedient child Samuel had sons who rebelled against the instruction of their father. "Children obey your parents in the Lord", is Paul's instruction (Eph. 6:1), and he adds, "for this is right." The world encourages children to disrespect their parents by challenging what they say and stand for. Children brought up in the Truth must not do so. A respect such as the child Samuel showed is the example for us to follow. "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3).

SAMUEL AND JOHN THE BAPTIST.

It is significant that many points of similarity can be traced between the births of Samuel and of John the Baptist, both of whom were appointed as “forerunners” to prepare the way before the anointed of Yahweh.

- a) Hannah was barren (1 Sam. 1:5); so also was Elizabeth (Luke 1:7).
- b) Both these faithful women took their sorrows to Yahweh in prayer and He heard their petitions (1 Sam. 1:10-11, 19-20; Luke 1:13).
- c) Both children were to be consecrated as Nazarites, separated to the service of God (1 Sam. 1:11; Luke 1:15; Num. 6:1-5).
- d) In commemoration of the mercy extended them, both women uttered similar songs of praise and thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:1-10; Luke 1:42-55).
- e) Notice also the names of the two children:—
 - Samuel—“heard of God” (1 Sam. 1:20);
 - John—“whom Yah has graciously given” (Heb. “Johanan”).

Thus both Samuel and John were messengers sent to prepare the way of the Lord, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Mark 1:2-3). Samuel transformed the nation in large measure in readiness for the time of the monarchy (he even wrote the constitution, 1 Sam. 10:25), while John prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the near future Elijah must first come and perform a work which is similar to that of both Samuel and John. He will restore all things, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the children to the fathers before “the great and terrible day of the LORD” (Matt. 17:11; Mal. 4:5-6).

THE WORK OF SAMUEL.

Samuel was a Levite of the sons of Korah of the family of Kohath, a family whom David later appointed in charge of the service of song in the Tabernacle (1 Chron. 6:31-38 — “Shemuel” in verse 33 is “Samuel”, cp. verse 28).

Although not a descendant of Aaron and therefore not a priest, Samuel offered burnt sacrifice and offerings (1 Sam. 10:8), and was appointed to anoint Saul and David as successive kings of Israel (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 16:13).

As the one whose work was to turn the nation from the anarchy and ungodliness of the days of the Judges to the acceptance of a righteous ruler in King David, Samuel’s major work was to be in instruction of the people. He had an annual circuit of cities which he judged (1 Sam. 7:15-17). The apostle Peter classes him as the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24, cp. 13:20; Heb. 11:32; 1 Sam. 3:20). Previously there had been seers (1 Sam. 9:9), so Samuel’s work seems to have been one of establishing an official role of prophets, who in the days of the monarchy would, with

the priests, be an influence for good upon the king.

The life and ministry of Samuel bring to us a glorious hope but also at the same time, a sombre warning: "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king and exalt the horn of his anointed (Messiah)" (1 Sam. 2:9-10).

LESSONS FOR US:

- Samuel is a prime example of the principle to "remember our Creator in the days of our youth."
- Samuel's mother dedicated him to God's service in thankfulness for giving her a son so that from a young child he was associated with the worship at the Tabernacle.
- The training Samuel received from his mother and under the hand of Eli developed in him a devotion to Yahweh's service.
- The Bible calls upon children to honour and respect their parents.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "Elpis Israel" (J. Thomas)—Pages 451, 452.
- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 14
- "The Visible Hand of God" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 22
- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 6

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *How was Eli at fault in the upbringing of his sons?*
- *2. *Make some brief notes on the character of Hannah.*
3. *Why is early training important for a child of God? Illustrate your answer by referring to Samuel.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *What lessons do we learn from the training of Samuel?*
- *2. *What was the mission of Samuel?*
3. *Make a comparison between Samuel, Elijah and John the Baptist.*
4. *Write an essay on the circumstances surrounding the birth of Samuel.*

1 Sam 1:28

16. SAMUEL: PREFERRED BEFORE THE HOUSE OF ELI

“The word of Samuel came to all Israel”

The apostasy which developed through the shocking example of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and Eli's own inability to rectify the situation, brought on a dramatic change in the priesthood. This change affected the priesthood in the reign of David, but was to have a far-reaching implication in the future priestly order.

The aim of this lesson is to teach us that righteousness is an essential quality of those who seek to perform God's service to the glory of His Name.

1 Samuel 2, 3 & 4

THE FAILURE OF THE OLD PRIESTHOOD (1 Sam. 2:12-26).

Although Eli was diligent in his administration of the Tabernacle duties, he failed to discipline his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, until it was too late to do so. They not only conducted themselves in an immoral and debased fashion, but they arrogantly commandeered the sacrificial offerings for themselves (vv. 13-14). The Law allowed only a certain part of the peace offering to be taken by the officiating priest (Lev. 7:30-34). But the sons of Eli were taking their choice, and in effect taking fellowship (the significance of the peace-offering) from the people. They roughly seized part of the offering even “before they burnt the fat” (v. 15). The fat, which was the best part and represented the inward goodness, was Yahweh's portion and was not to be eaten (Lev. 3:16). It is clear that they demanded the offering before the fat was burnt so that they might roast the meat and eat it with the fat. In this way Eli's sons disdained the divine etiquette of acceptable worship, scoffing at the protests of the worshippers, so causing an even greater tragedy — many Israelites abhorred making offerings to God (v. 17).

Such a situation was intolerable to God. His appointments were being defiled and despised. Eli tried to correct his apostate sons but they brushed him aside (vv. 22-25). The time had come for divine intervention.

THE WARNING OF JUDGEMENT (1 Sam. 2:27-36; 3:1-18).

“A man of God” pronounced judgement upon the old priesthood on the principle that “them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (v. 30). There would be an enemy invasion, Eli's sons would be slain in one day and his family's priesthood would be superceded by another — “and I will raise Me up a faithful priest” (v. 35).

This was to have a preliminary application to the work of Samuel who performed the office of a priest in offering burnt offerings and sacrifices and who anointed Saul and David as kings of Israel (1 Sam. 7:9-10; 10:1, 8; 16:13).

The same impending judgement was revealed to the child Samuel one night at Shiloh. God called, "Samuel", three times and each time Samuel rose from his bed and ran to Eli, thinking that Eli had called. Then Eli perceived that it was God who was calling and instructed Samuel to say when next called, "Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth".

The instruction which Samuel received that night was that Eli's house was to come to an end because of the vileness of the sons of Eli and because he did not restrain them. In the morning Eli heard the content of this message and in due deference to the justice of God said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seemeth him good".

JUDGEMENT COMES (1 Sam. 4).

In the course of time, Israel rebelled against the Philistine suppression, but were repulsed. They desperately sought the assistance of the Ark of God in the battle, but to no avail. They were overrun and 30,000 Israelites were slain, including Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas. But it was the seizure of the Ark that formed the greatest shock to Eli. On hearing of its loss, he fell to his death (v. 18). The wife of Phinehas on hearing of the tragedies also died when giving birth to a son, but not before she named the baby Ichabod — "the glory is departed" (vv. 17-22; Psa. 78:64).

The Ark was taken to the land of the Philistines. But its presence discomfited the Philistines and brought shame upon their idol worship. Finally the Philistines gave up the Ark and it was restored later by a remnant in Israel who were blessed thereby. Later still David brought the Ark and placed it in Zion with great rejoicing (1 Chron. 15; 16:1-3). In the days of Solomon it was conveyed into the Most Holy Place of the magnificent temple he built (2 Chron. 5:4-10).

THE PRIESTHOOD CHANGED.

Eli had been told that the line of priests of which he was part would cease. This came to pass in the time of David and the early part of Solomon's reign.

During the reign of David there were two priests officiating — Abiathar and Zadok. Abiathar was in the line of Eli. He was the only one in his family to survive Saul's slaughter of the priests for support given to the fugitive David (1 Sam. 22:17-21; 23:6). Note that the names of Abiathar and his father Ahimelech are occasionally inverted — see 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chron. 18:16; 24:6.

Abiathar continued to serve during David's reign. But he later conspired with Adonijah against Solomon and was removed from the priestly office. Zadok was appointed as high priest in his stead. Thus was fulfilled the predicted change in Eli's priesthood (note 1 Kings 2:26-27).

But there was at this stage another fulfilment of prophecy. Two of Aaron's sons, Ithamar and Eleazar, were heads of the two families of priests. Eli and Abiathar were descendants of Ithamar, whereas Zadok was of the family of Eleazar (1 Chron. 24:1-3). Eleazar's son, Phinehas, had been given a promise of perpetual priesthood "because he was zealous for his God and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Num. 25:11-13). This too was fulfilled in the reign of Solomon, when Abiathar was deposed and the sons of Zadok ministered at the Temple.

THE MELCHIZEDEC PRIESTHOOD (Heb. 7).

The priesthood changed from one line of priests to another during the reign of Solomon, but they were still sons of Aaron, Levites. A more significant change was yet to occur.

Under the law of Moses, the Levitical Priests were appointed "after a carnal commandment" (v. 16). By this, the writer of Hebrews means that the priests appointed had to have certain qualifications which had no relationship to their character or way of life. Those qualifications related to:—

1. Tribe (Levi) and family (Aaron).
2. Age (30-50 years).
3. Physical fitness.
4. Marriage (within the house of Israel).

This meant that a wicked man, if he possessed these credentials, could qualify for the priesthood! In this the weakness of the Levitical Priesthood can be seen.

Jesus Christ does not belong to the Levitical Priesthood but to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Melchizedek was a man who lived in the days of Abraham and was King of Salem. Because there is no mention of his death in the portrait of him which is divinely given in Genesis 14, he appears, as far as the record is concerned, as one who lived forever. This feature of the record was taken up by David in Psalm 110 where it is said of Messiah that he would be, by God's oath, "a priest FOREVER, after the order of Melchizedek" (v. 3).

In Hebrews 7 Paul expounds the Melchizedek Priesthood. We are told that the meaning of the names and even the order of their occurrence is significant (v. 2). Melchizedek (meaning "King of righteousness") is first mentioned and he is then declared to be "King of Salem" (meaning "Peace"). Jesus was firstly king of righteousness (that is, he did no sin)

and then because of that he was made “king of peace” and a priest forevermore (see vv. 1-3, 28).

Paul also uses the fact, that the Genesis record mentions neither Melchizedek’s death or his parentage, to say that he was made in the record like Jesus who lives continually as a priest without being born of parents in the line of Levi (Heb. 7:3, 12-15).

PRIESTHOOD IN THE COMING AGE.

It is significant that in the age to come there will be two orders of priests officiating in the great Temple which Ezekiel describes in the concluding chapters of his prophecy (chapters 40-48). There will be mortal priests, the sons of Levi, who will be purified to offer to God sacrifices in righteousness (Ezek. 44:10-11; Mal. 3:3). There will also be officiating the immortal sons of Zadok (meaning “righteousness”), who have “kept God’s charge”, and they will have greater privileges and stand before Yahweh (Ezek. 44:15-16).

It appears that they will form part of the Melchizedek priesthood for their qualification is “righteousness” — they “kept God’s charge”.

Today God is taking from among men a people for His Name, a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:9-10). Their faith in God is imputed to them for righteousness and the works of faith that follow will, by God’s grace, enable them to be clothed in fine linen and immortality and to become the priests of the future age (Rev. 19:8, 20:6).

LESSONS FOR US:

- At times it seems that righteousness goes unrewarded and unrighteousness goes unpunished, but let us ever remember that God is in control.
- The evil works of the sons of Eli eventually brought them to their destruction in battle and led to a change in the priesthood in the time of Solomon, some one hundred years after his time.
- The zeal of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar eventually bore fruit — there was a change in the priesthood several hundred years later.
- God has called us to be “kings and priests”, not because our parents may be in the Truth, but on the basis that we individually respond and show faithfulness and zeal towards God.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 22
- “The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 14
- “The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 6

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What happened to the Ark after it was captured by the Philistines in the days of Eli?*
- * 2. *What change of priesthood occurred in the time of Solomon and what prophecies did this change fulfil?*
3. (a) *Who was Melchizedek and what is the meaning of his name?*
(b) *To whom was David referring when he spoke of "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"?*
(c) *What are some of the things Paul says about Melchizedek and the types he draws from them?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

- * 1. *Why was judgement brought on the house of Eli? In what way was he told of this?*
2. *What was Eli's failing and what was the fate of his sons? Comment on the lessons which you consider come from considering the household of Eli.*
3. *What is the difference between the Levitical and Melchizedek Priesthoods? On what basis can we be part of a "royal priesthood"?*

1 Sam 3:19.

SECTION 4

THE BEGINNING OF THE KINGDOM

In this section we see the Kingdom of God on earth established. The two kings who are considered, Saul and David, were as divergent as it is possible to be. Saul was self-centred and faithless, while David, his successor, sought Yahweh at every opportunity and was truly “a man after God’s own heart”. It was because of his great faith that he succeeded, for God was with him granting him victory over Goliath and guiding his steps to the throne of Israel. But David’s life was not without privation and trial. Much time would elapse in the wisdom of God before the promised throne would be his. In this there are lessons for ourselves. Probation before elevation is the decreed rule of God — it is “through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

David’s experiences in his exile and sufferings provide us with lessons in courage, faith, justice. His inmost thoughts are recorded in psalms he wrote, which have been a source of comfort to saints in all ages since.

17. SAUL: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

“Shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them”

For 450 years Israel was ruled by the judges who were raised up by God from time to time to deliver the nation from oppression. This era drew to its conclusion in the days of Samuel who faithfully administered the law and endeavoured to direct the people in Yahweh's ways. When he was old he made his sons judges in Israel, but they “walked not in his ways”. Instead of following in their father's footsteps, their judgment was perverted and their love of money led to the taking of bribes (1 Samuel 8:1-3).

The conduct of Samuel's sons prompted the elders of Israel to approach him with the request that a king be appointed who might rule them as the surrounding nations were ruled (8:4-5). They had forgotten that Yahweh was their king.

Our aim in this lesson will be to see how important it is for us to follow God's appointed will rather than the dictates of our own wills.

1 Samuel 8, 9 & 10

THE NATION DESIRES A KING (1 Sam. 8:1-5).

Although it was the elders who approached Samuel to appoint a king, it is quite obvious that the nation generally wanted one (vv. 19, 20). They made their request because the judges had become corrupt and therefore they wanted a single ruler who would have complete control of both administration and also matters of war, like the kings of the surrounding nations.

But there was no guarantee of course that a king would fare any better than the judges. Although the conduct of Samuel's sons prompted the people's request, their real motive was that they were envious of the way in which the Gentiles conducted their affairs and wanted to copy them. The glory of an earthly monarchy that they could see with their eyes seemed infinitely preferable to “the King eternal, immortal, INVISIBLE” (1 Tim. 1:17) and afar off, whose elected representatives had no constituted authority beyond that of judges.

THE FOLLY OF ISRAEL'S REQUEST (1 Sam. 8:6-9).

In asking for an earthly king, Israel was grossly wrong on two accounts.

Firstly, though Samuel thought that they were rejecting him, God told him plainly that it was not Samuel they were rejecting, but the God of heaven Who had guided and protected them from the day they came out of Egypt, despite their ungratefulness and infidelity (vv. 7-8).

The care Yahweh had given them was quickly forgotten. They thought that by having an earthly king they would overcome all their problems and triumph over their enemies, little realising that it was only through God's grace they were able to achieve anything. As the Psalmist said later, but which Israel was yet to appreciate, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. . . Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God" (Psalm 146:3, 5).

How wise it is for us to put our trust in the counsels of God rather than the counsel of those who do not appreciate His ways. Ungratefulness and ungodliness are characteristics of these last perilous days (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Let us constantly think of all the blessings and benefits of the Truth and so resound with thanksgiving to our heavenly Father at all times.

Secondly, by wishing to be like all the surrounding nations, Israel was rejecting its divine calling and destiny — the people were manifesting an attitude of mind that knew little of God's ways. Had not Moses reminded the nation at the end of their 40 years' wandering that God had delivered them to be separate from the Gentiles about them? "Ye are the children of the LORD your God. . . For thou art an holy (separate) people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:1-2).

But now they no longer wished to be separate and they desired to copy the nations in their administration and customs. Israel had been called to be "above the nations", but before long they would find themselves below.

The mood of the nation is well summarised by the following words from the book, 'The Man David': "From this restoration of the nation to God (by Samuel) there developed a sense of unity such as had not been experienced for generations. The twelve tribes from Dan to Beersheba were given an awareness of their wholeness and strength. It is ironical that this sense of integration and nationhood gave birth to the desire for a visible king. Samuel, his life's energy spent in selfless service, was deeply grieved. The cold blast of unthankfulness and disrespect was bitter to his sensitive and ageing soul. The new aspirations of the nation sprang from a deeper cause than disloyalty to a great man; the nation's faith had failed to see God in the watchtower. They wished to change the glory of the incorruptible God for the weakness of corruptible man. This is the way to disaster for Israel as a nation and, should we fall into the same error, for us as individuals."

Let us remember that God desires us to draw aside from the customs and attitudes of the world in which we live in order that we may be a peculiar people to "shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out

of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). The desire of Israel to be like the nations led them always to ruin — let us heed the lesson.

THE BURDEN OF AN EARTHLY KING (1 Sam. 8:10-22).

Acting on God’s instructions Samuel outlined to the people the problems and cost of maintaining an earthly king. He explained that many of them would be employed purely as servants and also that much tax and produce would be needed to keep the royal retinue (vv. 12-18). But Samuel’s words fell on deaf ears as the people had already made up their minds: “Nay, but we will have a king over us”, they answered (v. 19).

The people of Israel were always stubborn and in the days of Samuel they were no different. Their hearts were hardened to these sound words of advice and they refused to listen. There is a danger that we, too, can become hardened to sound advice and determine to follow out our plans regardless of the consequences. Let us in the “meekness of wisdom” recognise that we do not always know what is best and be prepared to accept sound scriptural instruction for our own good.

THE KING CHOSEN (1 Sam. 9).

The man Yahweh chose to be Israel’s king accorded with their wishes. They desired a figure-head who would lead them out in their battles and thus we read in 1 Samuel 9:2 that Saul was “a choice young man and a goodly: . . . from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.” In this man Israel placed their trust but were soon to realise that stature and physique are not the most important factors when it comes to ruling a nation (cp. 2 Sam. 23:3). In fact the Psalmist was later to relate, “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength” (Psa. 33:16)./

It is notable that in 1 Sam. 2:10 reference is made by Samuel’s own mother to a king who would be God’s “anointed”. The Law God gave them so long ago intimated that the time would come when they would have a king and had laid down certain rules as to his conduct on appointment (Deut. 17:14-20, cp. also Gen. 49:10 and Deut. 28:36 — “which THOU shalt set over thee” — which was a prophecy that the monarchy established by the people would lead the nation to sin and captivity). The sin of the people lay in their attitude — they precipitated the issue by the desire to conform, instead of waiting upon God. It was clear, however, that Samuel was to be the last judge and first prophet who would effect the transition to a monarchy (1 Sam. 2:35). Therefore, despite his reluctance, he was called upon to “hearken to the voice of the people” (1 Sam. 8:9, 22; cp. 9:16).

But while Yahweh appointed Saul as the people’s wish, He was nevertheless prepared to guide and help the king deliver the nation from

oppression. In fact this was related to Samuel (9:16). The mercy and longsuffering of God is seen in this incident in Israel's history. The people had rejected God, but God was still prepared to help them. Saul then could have prospered as ruler, had he kept his mind tuned to the word of God and remembered the encouraging words of Samuel, "God is with thee" (10:7).

THE OFFICIAL CHOOSING OF SAUL (1 Sam. 10).

Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, renowned for their left-handed slingers. We read in verse 1 that he was anointed by Samuel before being presented to the people. Then came the official choosing. Samuel called the people together to Mizpeh. He firstly reminded them again of all that Yahweh had done for them since the day the nation left Egypt. Samuel's object was to impress upon the people that it was not a light matter to ask for a king for it involved the rejection of their God (vv. 17-19). No doubt there are times in our lives when we also reject God by pursuing a course of action that is against His will. We may treat such matters lightly, but the words of Samuel to Israel are there for our admonition, that we may see how seriously God looks upon departure from His ways.

By the method of a lot, divinely controlled, Saul was then presented before the people with the words, "See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people" (v. 24).

There is no mention of Saul's spiritual qualities but merely his stature — something that was very appealing to a nation that had forsaken God's ways (v. 23). "God save the king" or "Let the king live", cried all the people in anticipation of a change in their fortunes in the days ahead. But the king who was head and shoulders above the rest was soon to forsake the guidance of his God and bring the nation low.

LESSONS FOR US:

- Decisions become distorted when there is a lack of faith and a failure to appreciate divine principles.
- We should never be like Israel and look to an earthly king to give us protection.
- We must come to realise that no matter what circumstances we are placed in, we must not seek the ways of man to solve our problems — for this will always lead to ruin.
- Though God is invisible to our eyes, it is He in whom we must trust for He is our help and our shield.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

“The Man David” (H. Tennant)—Pages 15-16

“The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 14

“The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 22

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *Why was Israel wrong in asking for a king? What personal lessons can we learn from Israel’s desire for a king?*
2. *What warnings did Samuel give Israel concerning their choosing of a king?*
3. *What characteristics did Israel look for when they desired a king to reign over them? What was wrong with these?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Why did Israel desire a king and what was wrong with their attitude?*
2. *Write an essay on Israel’s desire for an earthly king. In your answer include the following:*
 - (a) *Why such a desire was wrong.*
 - (b) *Samuel’s reaction and God’s reaction.*
 - (c) *The personal lessons we can learn from these happenings.*

18. SAUL'S FAILURE

“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”

The early part of Saul's reign was full of promise. So long as he was humble and placed his confidence in the strength of Yahweh, success followed.

One of Saul's first tasks was to subdue the Ammonites who were threatening the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sam. 11:1). His leadership in overcoming the Ammonites was encouraging, but the most impressive aspect of his victory was that he gave God the praise as the one who had really obtained victory for Israel “. . . today the LORD hath wrought salvation for Israel” (v. 13).

It seemed as though the people's desire for better leadership was to be realised in Saul. But the story of his decline and ultimate rejection as King is one of the most tragic recorded in Scripture.

Our aim in this lesson is to outline the reasons for Saul's rejection and to understand the principles of Divine acceptance.

1 Samuel 13 & 15

THE PHILISTINES THREATEN ISRAEL (1 Sam. 13:1-7).

We read in 1 Sam. 7:13 that “the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel”. It was in the early part of Saul's reign that they began to make inroads into the territory of Israel again. It appears as though God allowed this to happen in order that the faith of Saul might be tested. In the third year of Saul's reign, his son Jonathan determined to do something about the Philistine problem. He courageously smote their garrison at Geba which was about 15 kilometres north of Jerusalem. Saul, naturally elated over this success, published the news of this victory far and wide amongst the people (vv. 1-4).

The subduing of the garrison was the signal for more concerted attacks on the Philistines, and so all the people were called together at Gilgal to plan the future moves.

But the Israelites were not the only ones preparing for battle, for the Philistines, smarting under the defeat at Geba, were also busy organising themselves for war (v. 5). They amassed a mighty force including many chariots and stationed themselves at Michmash which was about 25 kilometres west of Gilgal.

This in itself challenged the faith of Saul, and when it was accompanied by the fear of his own people, he failed. Instead of putting trust in Yahweh the people were thrown into complete disarray. Some hid

themselves in caves and thickets, others in the rocks and inaccessible places, whilst still others fled over the river Jordan to the land of Gilead. We can imagine what sort of an effect this would have had on Saul, and the record very poignantly states, “As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling” (v. 7).

SAUL’S TEST OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE (1 Sam. 13:8).

Here was a great test of faith for Saul. He had been commanded to wait in Gilgal for seven days until Samuel arrived to offer the burnt and peace offerings to God, before launching an attack on the Philistines. But the situation surrounding Saul was far from encouraging. A fierce army was just 25 kilometres away to the west and he had a fearful and trembling people on every side.

What would you have done under these circumstances? We know what Saul did, but let us remember that these incidents were recorded for our learning and admonition. There will be times in our lives when we, too, will be placed in circumstances demanding the utmost faith. Remember God never tests us above that which we are able to bear.

Placed in this unenviable position, Saul should have called to mind the encouraging words of Samuel spoken to him when he was anointed as King: “Do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee” (1 Sam. 10:7). And had not God been with him? Saul had acknowledged this when he mightily destroyed the Ammonites not so long before (1 Sam. 11:13). And had not God promised so many years before through the mouth of Moses, “Ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: And your enemies shall fall before you by the sword” (Lev. 26:7-8)?

Had Saul meditated upon these matters, the problems could have been overcome. But instead he failed through lack of faith.

SAUL’S DISOBEDIENCE AND REJECTION AS KING (1 Sam. 13:9-22).

As each of the seven days went by, Saul became more and more afraid of his position. Finally when the seventh day had almost ended and Samuel had not appeared, he decided in desperation to offer the burnt and peace offerings himself. He assumed that God would overlook this departure from the appointed way of worship. This was a very foolish action. He should have known that only those appointed by God could offer sacrifices and that any other method was useless. Later in Israel’s history, another king, Uzziah, disregarded God’s law and offered incense. For this he was smitten in the forehead with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-21). This is Yahweh’s estimation of such presumption.

Saul had no sooner finished offering than, alas, Samuel arrived on the scene and enquired as to what had been done. In his reply Saul freely admitted that he had offered sacrifices because he was afraid. He was little prepared for the harsh words or rebuke that followed. In his mind he thought that although he had broken a command, Samuel needed only to forgive the wrong and all would be well.

But the reply from Samuel is a revelation as to how Yahweh looks upon disobedience to His commands: "Thou has done foolishly", and as a consequence, his kingdom would not "be established" (Roth). Though not specifically rejected himself as yet (cp. 1 Sam. 15:26), succession of his seed upon the throne was. God was seeking for a "man after his own heart", for upon the heart He looks and not the stature (1 Sam. 13:13-14; 16:7; Psa. 89:20).

We can visualise the tragic scene as Samuel turned his back on Saul and returned to Gibeah, leaving the dejected king with a small number of disillusioned followers.

Saul could have achieved a great victory over the Philistines had he obeyed, but instead Israel was humbled before the Philistines who encroached upon their territory (vv. 17-22).

SAUL AND THE AMALEKITES—AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REPENTANCE (1 Sam. 15:1-3).

A further test of Saul's faith was soon to arise. The opportunity came for him to show that he had learnt a lesson at Gilgal. From the position of weakness, Saul had risen again and had carried out some crushing defeats on the surrounding nations (1 Sam. 14). Then Samuel came to him with instructions concerning the Amalekites (vv. 1-3). It is important to note Samuel's opening words to Saul, "Now therefore hearken. . .".

The instructions were very clear. He was to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all that they had — "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

No doubt could arise as to the extent of destruction to be carried out. Moreover, implicit in Samuel's words was the fact that continuation of his kingship depended on his obedience (v. 1).

There was a reason for this destruction which at first glance appears very severe. The Amalekites were the first nation to attack the children of Israel after they left Egypt, and thus frustrated their walk towards the promised land (Num. 24:20). With Yahweh's strength, Joshua overcame them and, after the victory, God commanded Moses to write as a memorial in a book that He "will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. 17:14).

Later, at the end of forty years wandering, Moses recounted this

incident and reminded the people how this cowardly nation smote the weak and feeble of the children of Israel who had fallen behind the rest (Deut. 25:17-18). He then repeated God's intention to utterly destroy this nation. The Amalekites became a fitting symbol of Sin, against which we "war" continually as we walk to the promised land.

SAUL TREATS LIGHTLY THE DIVINE COMMAND (1 Sam. 15:4-9).

Had Saul appreciated God's estimation of the Amalekites, he would have carried out the command to the letter. But from this incident, as at Gilgal, we come to understand how Saul thought and acted. He was not a spiritually-minded man and he lacked appreciation of divine principles. He thought that God would be satisfied with something less than He had specified and would overlook "minor" details. And so alas, what do we find? Instead of utterly destroying everything as commanded, he spared Agag and the best of the animals, stating that he intended to sacrifice them to God at a later stage. Here was an excellent motive, so he reasoned, even if he had not done exactly what God had told him. How could God be displeased with him?

But Saul had utterly missed the point of the whole instruction. No matter how good his intentions may have been, they were worthless and useless if that which had been commanded was not carried out.

TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE (1 Sam. 15:10-26).

God who searches the thoughts and intents of the heart saw all that had been done. . . and not done. On being informed, Samuel, who no doubt hoped that Saul would have shown a different attitude, was extremely grieved and cried unto Yahweh all night (v. 11).

The next day he went down to Saul at Gilgal, weary of heart. Saul approached him in all confidence, elated by his triumph, and said to Samuel, "Blessed be thou of the LORD; I have performed the commandment of the LORD" (v. 13).

But Samuel was not impressed by such a display of "righteousness". With a touch of irony he replied, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (v. 14). The voices of the animals testified against Saul, declaring he had not kept God's commandment.

Saul protested that he had a reason for keeping the animals, but it was to no avail. The command was simple, he had broken it and thus nothing but denunciation could follow (vv. 17-19). Samuel reminded him that when he was little in his own eyes, God had made him king. Surely then the least he could do was to obey God's commands. Saul made one further attempt to justify his action. He claimed that he had in fact "obeyed

the voice of the LORD”, but the people had spared some of the animals “to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God”. Such self-justification may have been effective before fellowman, but it was inadequate before God’s appointed representative, Samuel.

In Samuel’s words of rebuke that follow, the relative value of sacrifice and obedience is crystallised for the first time. The very essence of sacrifice is obedience. Samuel said, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Many sacrifice, but few hear the Word and obey — which is more important than any “good” motive. The religious world, in its efforts to please the people, has discarded the Word of God, like Saul. No longer, in many sects, is belief of the gospel and baptism taught as essential for salvation. Instead they believe that good works will merit salvation and find acceptance in God’s sight.

The basis of Saul’s sin was faithlessness — he was more conscious of the people than God and acted accordingly (cp. 1 Chron. 10:13-14). Notice how the following passages of scripture, all written at a later time, show obedience to be more important than sacrifice (Ps. 40:6-8; 50:8-9; 51:15-17; Prov. 15:8; Ecc. 5:1 and Jer. 7:22-23). In order to emphasise the magnitude of Saul’s sin before his spiritually-dull perception, Samuel went on to equate rebellion with witchcraft, and stubbornness with iniquity and idolatry. Just how true is that equation was seen in the last events of Saul’s life when his faithlessness actually led him to witchcraft (1 Sam. 28). Previously his seed had been rejected from succeeding upon his throne, now he himself was “rejected from being king.”

LESSONS FOR US:

- Saul did not think that his sin was as great as it was. It does us well to seriously contemplate our own actions before the eyes of Him who sees all.
- None would consider themselves guilty of idolatry and witchcraft, yet in our everyday life our thoughts and actions can amount to these.
- Saul was disobedient because he would not humbly accept the instruction of God’s Word, but followed his own feelings and reasoning — never a wise course.
- Today we live in a society where obedience and respect for authority is scoffed at by many and there is a danger that such a careless attitude might “rub off” onto us.
- Our heavenly Father is merciful and forgiving, but on the other hand “will by no means clear the guilty”, as Saul found out to his sorrow.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

“The Man David” (H. Tennant)—Pages 15-18

“The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 23

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *How was Saul put to the test at Gilgal and how did he fail?*
2. *Why did God appoint the Amalekites to utter destruction?*
3. *Outline Samuel’s conversation with Saul when he returned from the destruction of the Amalekites.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *“Obedience is better than sacrifice”. Explain this statement and give examples from the life of Saul.*
2. *Why was Saul rejected from being king?*
3. *What lessons can we gain from the failures in Saul’s life?*

1 SAM 15: 22

19. DAVID—CHOSEN BY GOD

**“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD
looketh on the heart”**

God’s command to utterly destroy the Amalekites was not heeded by Saul. Instead he asserted his own will. He had not perceived that God desires a willing heart to serve Him. The character that had developed in Saul throughout his rule erupted into presumption (1 Sam. 13:8, 9, 14), and disobedience (15:16-23). For this reason he was rejected as King of Israel.

Yet God was determined to rule His people through a man of His own choice (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). This king would be “a man after God’s own heart.” His choice was David the shepherd whose early life fitted him for the time when he became King of Israel and conqueror of God’s enemies.

Our aim in this lesson is to see that God desires obedience to His precepts from a willing heart and that His choice is made on the basis of a knowledge of internal motives rather than external appearance.

1 Samuel 16

SAMUEL SENT TO BETHLEHEM (1 Sam. 16:1-5).

Samuel’s prolonged mourning for the lost king was interrupted by a word from God: “How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thy horn with oil and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.” Later it was recorded in the Psalms: “I have *found* David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him” (Psa. 89:20).

Samuel was afraid to go openly to anoint the new king while the old king was still on the throne, particularly since Saul had become violent and possessed of a jealous, angry, fitful fear. Samuel therefore went up to Bethlehem at the command of God seemingly to offer sacrifice, but secretly to select the man born to be king. At first sight the subterfuge seems almost unworthy of the great mission. We must view it according to the circumstances of the time. An open proclamation of David as Saul’s successor would have brought the sword of Saul to Bethlehem, upon the family of Jesse, as in later years Herod massacred the young children in the same place in the hope of killing the newly born Jesus.

Samuel’s arrival in Bethlehem caused consternation, for Bethlehem was not normally one of the towns of his circuit (1 Sam. 7:16). The elders of Bethlehem imagined that Samuel’s stern finger would probe out some hidden evil: “Comest thou peaceably?” They breathed a sigh of relief when the prophet declared: “Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD.”

THE DIVINE SELECTION (1 Sam. 16:6-11).

Jesse and his sons were specially invited to the sacrificial meal. Samuel took stock of the man and his sons. The firstborn, Eliab, seemed to have the makings of a king. The prophet looked favourably upon the man who by face and stature might have borne himself royally.

Samuel took counsel of God. The nature of the conversation is most revealing. God's clear, unmistakable voice was like a second conscience in Samuel. This was no mere refined spiritual thinking on Samuel's part, no "self inspiration," as it were. God spoke to Samuel and Samuel knew it. Moreover what Samuel heard was unexpected: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (v.7). This was the enunciation of a divine principle, applicable not only to the selection of David as king but also to every man who will be in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 2:23). "I have refused him", meant that his heart was not right in the sight of God.

In turn all seven sons at home with Jesse were rejected. "The LORD hath not chosen these," said Samuel to Jesse. Samuel refused to sit down to eat until the eighth son, whom the family had not considered necessary to invite to the sacrifice, was brought in from the field.

THE ANOINTING (1 Samuel 16:12-13).

Although David was "youngest" and quite out of mind so far as suitability for the throne was concerned, he was a "man after God's own heart" (13:14). David cared for his father's "few sheep" and this was to be his life's commission in a fuller sense (Psa. 78:70-72). Great men before him had been prepared by this occupation for greater changes—Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. David knew his sheep by name, led them in and out, found pasture and water for them, anointed them, bound up their wounds, protected them with his own life against the onslaught of wild beasts and shared their life night and day. This age-old occupation worked upon his character and developed in his mind a sense of responsibility and compassion for others, a love and devotion which remained with him to the end of his days (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17). He keenly felt what it meant for God to be the great Shepherd of Israel.

His life as a shepherd also gave him a great appreciation of the majesty of God as Creator. As he lay out on the wild hillside of Judea at night, he would ponder the wonder of God's handiwork and be drawn to study His Law (Psa. 19; 119:9).

Keen of eye, lithe of body, auburn-haired and of fair countenance (so the record suggests), David stood before Samuel. The command of God in Samuel's ear was urgent and incisive: "Arise, anoint him; for this is

he” (16:12). The horn of oil was poured upon his head while he stood among his brethren. What they thought is not recorded. Their later words and deeds speak of envy, like Joseph’s brethren (17:28; cp. Psa. 23:5).

What David specifically thought of this mark of favour does not appear in the Scripture, although the 23rd Psalm may well have been written against this background. No doubt he turned over in his lively mind the meaning of this meeting with Samuel as he sat at the table with him. This was the first of four anointings for David: three by men, in Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem, and one by God’s Spirit at the hand of Samuel here at home at the threshold of an almost unbelievably full life.

DAVID AND HIS GREATER SON	
The following chart sets out a brief parallel between David and Jesus Christ, up to this early stage of David’s life.	
DAVID	JESUS CHRIST
Revealed in the house of Jesse in Bethlehem by Samuel whose work parallels John the Baptist’s (see Lesson 15).	David’s greater son born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4) and revealed as Messiah by John the Baptist (John 1:29, 31, 36).
Literally a shepherd, and thereby prepared to lead Israel (Psa. 78:70-72).	A shepherd of men (Mark 6:34; Isa. 40:11), the Good Shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep (John 10:11).
Least esteemed among his brethren	His brethren did not believe on him (Psa. 69:7-9; Isa. 53:2-4; John 7:5).
Anointed with the Spirit—symbolised by anointing oil	Anointed with the Spirit at his baptism (Matt. 3:16-17) and, when resurrected, made “Christ” — “the anointed” (Acts 2:36).

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DAVID’S ANOINTING.

Anointing with oil was God’s way of formally inducting kings and priests to their office (cp. Lev. 8:12). The oil speaks of the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 1:21-22), and so its descent upon the head symbolises God’s approval and sanctification (i.e. that God had set the person apart for His special purpose). Notice how the giving of the Spirit to David followed his anointing (1 Sam. 16:13). This anointing of David points forward to

the Messiah (English “Anointed One”; Greek “Christ”). Jesus was anointed with the Spirit at his baptism when God showed His approval of Him in the words, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; see also Isa. 61:1; Heb. 1:9; Jn. 3:34). He was finally approved of God after his obedience to death when God raised Him from the dead. He was then glorified and given divine immortal nature. Peter said that by the resurrection God had made him “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36; 3:13).

LESSONS FOR US:

- The true son or daughter of God, like Samuel, will mourn when others such as Saul stray from the narrow way. They lament a society with no interest in Zion.
- Outward show does not impress God. He looks on the heart and desires those who willingly conform to His ways and not act in an independent manner.
- We can fit ourselves to partake in full measure of the sacrifice of Christ in company with all his brethren if we allow the power of the Word of God to influence our lives.
- Men in this world may consider us the least in their sight, just as David’s brethren did, but it is God’s opinion of us, not man’s opinion, which will determine our destiny.
- Those who realise that Yahweh “looketh on the heart” will endeavour to pattern their lives on the examples of both David, “the man after God’s own heart” and his greater Son, Jesus the Anointed.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 15
- “The Visible Hand of God” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 23
- “The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, NO. 8
- “The Man David” (H. Tennant)—Pages 19-23

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *Why was Samuel reluctant to go to Bethlehem, to anoint David? What became his official reason for going?*
2. *What lesson is there for us in the choice of David to be king instead of his brothers?*
3. *How did David’s early life as a shepherd help prepare him to be king?*

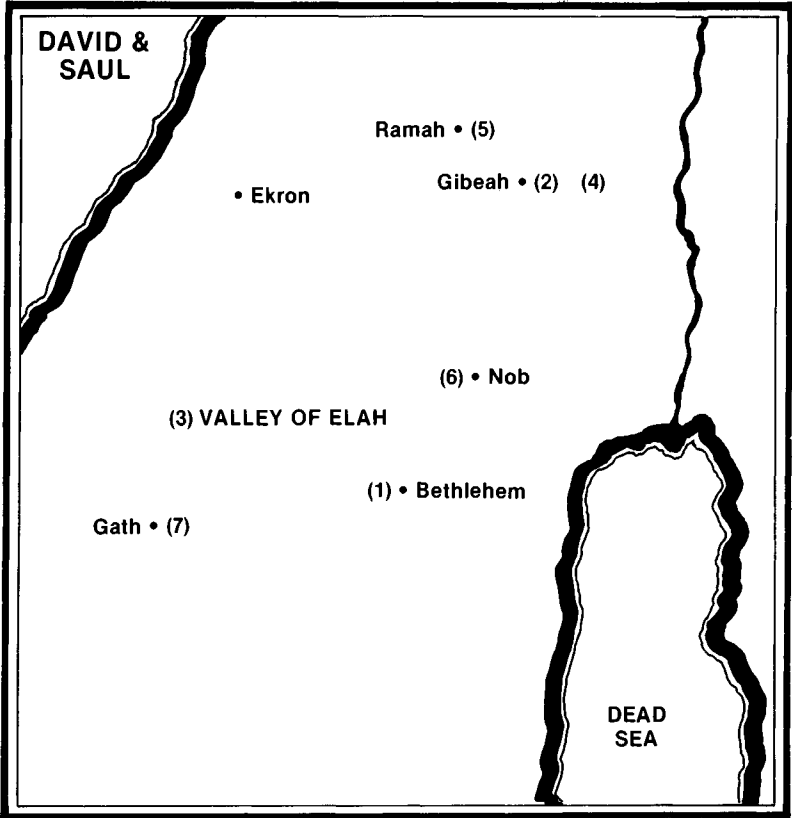
ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Compare the characters of Saul and David.*
2. *What qualities of character fitted David to be King?*
3. *Compare the selection and anointing of David with that of Jesus.*

4. *“Man looketh on the outward appearance but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7); “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). What is the principle underlying these two quotations? How does this apply in the selection of David and rejection of Saul?*

5. *Describe the anointing of David by Samuel.*

1 SAM 16:7



- (1) Samuel anoints David before his family at Bethlehem, then returns to his home at Ramah (1 Sam. 16:1, 13).
- (2) David plays his harp before King Saul at Gibeah (16:21; 15:34).
- (3) David fights Goliath in the Valley of Elah (17:1-2, 20). The Philistines are pursued to Ekron (17:52).
- (4) David returns to the palace of Saul (18:2) where he receives Jonathan's friendship but is the product of Saul's envy, especially in view of his successful forays against the Philistines (18:3-8).
- (5) With the help of Michal, David flees to Samuel at Naioth in Ramah (19:18).
- (6) On receiving a signal from Jonathan that he is in great danger from Saul (20:1, 33-37), David flees to Nob, the place of the priests (21:1).
- (7) Taking the shewbread and the sword of Goliath, he flees to King Achish of Gath from whom he escapes by feigning himself mad (21:10-13).

20. DAVID AND GOLIATH

“The LORD saveth not with sword and spear”

Israel had been delivered into the hands of the Philistines because of their iniquities (Judges 13:1). This oppression by the Philistines continued through to the time of Saul. From this background emerges David — a faithful youth.

The story of David’s victory over Goliath would be one of the best known stories in all the world. Many would of course see David’s victory as a lucky coincidence, but David said that it was in order “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Sam. 17:46).

Our aim in examining David’s victory will be to see how faith overcomes all obstacles: “this is the victory that overcometh. . . even our faith” (1 Jn. 5:4).

1 Samuel 17

THE PHILISTINE CHALLENGE (1 Sam. 17:1-3).

There is a most interesting account of one of the Philistine invasions in 1 Samuel 17. Here we read of the two armies being gathered together on opposite sides of the Valley of Elah.

The Philistines attacked along the valley taking possession of several kilometres of territory. Saul replied by gathering his army on the opposite side of the valley to prevent any further advance by the enemy. Both sides were in a very strong defensive position, secure against attack but at the same time unable to advance. To do so would mean forsaking their strong position on the side of the valley, descending to the valley floor and then advancing upwards, completely exposed to the weapons of the enemy.

A mental picture of the territory involved can help our understanding of these events. Consult a Bible Atlas (see Reference Library) and note the valley of Elah which runs from the hill country of Judah, south-west of Jerusalem, westward through the low lands past Ashdod to the Mediterranean. It provided a direct route for a Philistine invasion, right into the heart of Israel. Shochoh and Azekah were all in the territory of Judah (v. 1; Josh. 15:35), but at this time had been taken by the Philistines (cp. Josh. 15:47).

GOLIATH, THE MAN OF FLESH (1 Sam. 17:4-11).

Because the armies were in this deadlock, Goliath the Philistine champion came forward issuing his challenge to the warriors of Israel to engage him in single combat. He was an extraordinary sight: around 3 metres tall, almost completely covered in armour of one kind or another;

he also had a shield-bearer to add the final touch to his defences. His mighty cry struck terror in the hearts of the men of Saul's army. Day after day he strode forth bellowing his challenge and scorn across the valley.

Note how frequently "six" and "brass" are used in the description of Goliath. Both are symbols used of the "flesh", and so it appears that God is setting him before us as a type of Gentile might.

Saul's stature had shrivelled, at least in his view. Now there was a hollow ring to the words of the people spoken to Samuel before Saul was appointed: "Nay; but we will have a king over us . . . that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:19-20). Where now was the king who stood head and shoulders above his people (10:23)? Even the mighty among the troops of God, Abner and the rest, felt no urge to take up the challenge.

DAVID ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE (1 Sam. 17:12-37).

Meanwhile David passed back and forth between his father's flocks at Bethlehem and the camp of Israel, 23 kilometres away (v. 15 R.S.V.). When he arrived with provisions for his brethren, as instructed by his father (vv. 17-18), he heard the boastful challenge of Goliath (vv. 23-25).

David was surprised and dismayed that for forty days no-one in Israel had dared to take away this reproach — that the name of Yahweh, the living God, should be defied in this fashion (v. 26). His fervour was aroused. Without thought for his own person he sought to do exploits for God. The nature of his words and his marvellous confidence begotten of faith soon brought him within the king's knowledge.

Meanwhile his brethren, feeling that David's words were an implied rebuke to themselves, angrily accused him of neglecting his sheep for the glamour of the battle (v. 28). But on hearing of David's words, Saul sent for him (v. 31). David fearlessly volunteered to fight the Philistine champion.

Saul looked at what some might have called a precocious youth. But this was no time for empty boasting. The odds were too great. Even so, Saul thought that David had misjudged the situation. What chance had a mere stripling against so formidable a foe? How experienced was he? But it was Saul who had misjudged David's God. Nothing was impossible with Him. Twice before, through the power of Yahweh, David had delivered his flock from the ravages of a lion and a bear — and this heathen Philistine was no better than them (vv. 32-37). David's one concern was that this man had dared to breathe defiance against the living God of Israel and this reproach must be wiped out.

FAITH TRIUMPHANT OVER FLESH (1 Sam. 17:38-53).

Saul put his armour on David. This was a pathetic gesture, obviously meant in good faith, but of what use was the armour? Saul was not willing to wear it and go out to meet the giant. Nor was it any good to David, who excused himself and set out in shepherd's clothes to find Goliath. He hastened down the slope of the valley, chose 5 smooth stones out of the stream and drew near to the Philistine. The champion could hardly believe his eyes and poured scorn on the foolish youth who, said he, would make but a poor meal for the beasts of prey.

Humanly speaking, David's chances were slender in the extreme. But the weapons of his warfare were not carnal. His trust lay not in the simple sling he had brought, nor on the keenness of his eye — though these would be laid in service before the God of the armies of heaven. He came in the name of the living God. His purpose was "that all the earth might know that there is a God in Israel" (v. 46).

When Goliath of Gath cursed David by his gods he sealed his doom. Yahweh would surely move to vindicate His honour and David knew that he was the vessel chosen to bring this about. With supreme confidence he said to the Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (v. 45).

Goliath of Gath was constrained to bestir himself to meet his challenger. David moved like lightning. He chose a stone from his bag and, taking aim, struck the colossus in his partly exposed and vulnerable forehead. He sank like lead. David continued his run, drew out the giant's own sword and severed his head from his body. The shout from the camp of Israel was one of joy and near incredulity. The Philistines fled in dismay and were sorely routed. Meanwhile David took the armour from Goliath and brought it to his tent; the monstrous head was eventually buried near Jerusalem (the very site where sin itself would in time be destroyed).

By this means God brought David into prominence before the people and Saul (vv. 55-58). He had commenced his public life and was soon to stand in the court of Saul.

THE MIND OF DAVID.

An understanding of the mind of David at this time can help to gain an insight into a man of faith. The following two sections contain some notes on Psalms 8 and 144. The former is a Psalm of victory to commemorate his great deliverance and the latter is the prayer for deliverance he uttered as he went to meet Goliath.

The Psalms help us to grasp the mind of David as he prepared to meet the mighty colossus of Flesh. There is no doubt that Yahweh's judgement

was right when He selected David as Saul's successor to the throne of Israel.

(a) David's Prayer for Deliverance — Psalm 144

In the Septuagint version, this Psalm carries the heading "A Psalm of David concerning Goliath." It reveals David's attitude to the incident when later he penned the words of the Psalm.

Vv. 1-4: David's trust in Yahweh, for despite man's insignificance He will deliver him.

Vv. 5-8: David appeals for God's help in view of the blasphemy of the uncircumcised.

Vv. 9-11: David promises to give Yahweh praise and glory following deliverance.

Vv. 12-15: The blessings which will flow on to Israel as a result of deliverance from God.

(b) David's Song of Victory—Psalm 8

Words printed in our Bibles as the heading of Psalm 9 form really the footnote or subscription of Psalm 8. This reads, "To the Chief Musician upon Muthlabben", and the word "Muthlabben" means "the death of the champion". Thus Psalm 8 celebrates the death of Goliath and gives praise to the true victor.

V. 1: Extols the majesty of the Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth.

V. 2: Describes how Yahweh has gained victory over the enemy through a mere stripling (1 Sam. 17:42, 56).

Vv. 3-4: Extol the majesty of God, and His condescension in His regard for His people.

Vv. 5-8: Recall God's purpose in the creation of man, to give him dominion over "all things" despite his low estate (Gen. 1:26).

V. 9: Repeats verse 1 and declares the universality of God's name and dominion. This was David's purpose in destroying Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

There is also a prophetic element in this Psalm which justifies our viewing this incident as typical of the coming conflict when Christ will destroy the power of the Flesh in preparation for the establishment of His Kingdom. In Hebrews 2:6-8 Paul quotes Psa. 8:4-6 and applies the words of David to the worldwide dominion which Christ will exercise when He returns and fulfils the Divine purpose of man having dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26).

DAVID—A TYPE OF CHRIST.

Such passages show us that David's experiences are a type of those of His greater son. His conflict with Goliath types Christ's conflict with the power of flesh symbolised in Nebuchadnezzar's Image of a man (Dan. 2:31-33). Like Goliath the image was toppled by a little stone — the Son of God. When this really happens at Christ's return, the result will be the destruction of the power of man (vv. 35, 44). God alone shall be exalted in that day (Ezek. 39:17-22; 1 Sam. 17:45-47).

If we are wise NOW we will have our place with Christ in THAT DAY (Psa. 149:6-9). The faith of David must be followed by us today. No battle is too difficult for God. Our faith must be placed in the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), in whom we can be assured of success. Christ, as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4; John 10:11), can protect and deliver us from every foe.

LESSONS FOR US:

- The contest between David and Goliath was not just a fight between two men or two armies, but it was a challenge of the living God of Israel by the idols of the Philistines.
- The failure of Saul to respond to Goliath's challenge was a failure of faith and of his responsibility to lead his people.
- David's clarity of faith is an inspiration to disciples of all ages — "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).
- Goliath epitomises the world with all its lusts, ungodliness and blasphemy. We look to the time when the kingdoms of men will be toppled by the Son of God and blown away like chaff on the threshing floor.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 15
- "Nazareth Revisited" (R. Roberts)—Pages 417-420
- "Letter to the Hebrews" (J. Carter)—Pages 26-28
- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 8, 9
- "Nelsons Bible Atlas"—Maps 13, 15
- "Oxford Bible Atlas"—Pages 60-63
- "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land" (George Adam Smith)—1966 Ed., Pages 160-162
- "The Man David" (H. Tennant)—Pages 24-32

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *How was David's faith demonstrated in his victory over Goliath?*
2. *How did David's conflict and victory over Goliath point forward to future events?*

3. *The meeting between David and Goliath was more than a fight between two men. What were the real issues involved?*

④ *David's victory over Goliath can help us in our daily lives. How?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. (a) *Explain how David trusted in God when he went against Goliath.*
(b) *How do Psalms 8 and 144 reflect upon David's victory over Goliath?*

② *Write an essay on David's victory over Goliath. What do you think are the most important lessons?*

3. *Contrast David's attitude with the attitude of Saul when confronted with Goliath.*

1 Sam 17:45

21. SAUL'S JEALOUSY AND JONATHAN'S LOVE

“And Jonathan spake good of David unto his father”.

The friendship between David and Jonathan is one of the closest revealed in Scripture. Jonathan was attracted to David when he displayed such absolute trust in God in his victory over Goliath. This was the same spirit as he himself had shown on an earlier occasion (1 Sam. 14:6). The basis of their friendship was a common love of Yahweh. Each was zealous for the hope of Israel and so were naturally drawn together. No pride or pettiness marred this friendship; each was willing to sacrifice for the other. In this they were like the Lord Jesus who laid down his life for his friends, whose friends we are if we do as he commanded (John 15:13-15; 1 John 3:16).

On the other hand the very success and popularity of David became a stumbling block to Saul. Success bred envy and the record portrays the pathetic sight of the King of Israel clothing himself with shame as he bends all his energies to shed innocent blood. “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30). How difficult man finds the commandment, “Be kindly affectioned one toward another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10).

Our aim in this lesson will be to see a grand practical example of the basis of true friendship.

1 Samuel 18 to 20

DAVID AND JONATHAN DRAWN TOGETHER (1 Sam. 18:1-4).

Despite his princely status and seniority, Jonathan was attracted by David's outstanding faith and love of Yahweh: “The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” The Hebrew word “was knit” is also used to describe the deep affection Jacob had for Joseph (Gen. 44:30). Even Saul could not help being impressed by the comeliness of David and desired that he should remain permanently in his court (v. 2).

Following the defeat of Goliath, Jonathan and David entered into a solemn covenant of friendship. Jonathan stripped himself of the symbols of his high office, his robe, “and his armour, and even his bow and his girdle” (R.S.V.). So it was then that in the midst of the nobility of Saul's court, David was encouraged by the self-effacing love of one who “esteemed other better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). The heir to the throne of Saul acknowledged that God had prepared a man greater than himself to rule His people.

SUCCESS BREEDS ENVY (1 Sam. 18:5-11).

Under God's guiding hand, David went from strength to strength. Appointed general over Saul's men of war, he was accepted by the army, the people and Saul's servants. No-one seemed resentful or jealous of him (v. 5). As recorded in 1 Samuel 16:21, "Saul loved him greatly".

But David's growing popularity cast its shadow over Saul's life. As the victorious Israelites led by David returned home triumphant, the women of Israel came out to meet them, dancing and singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands". Saul's jealousy was aroused. Samuel had made it plain to him that Yahweh would rend the kingdom from him and give it to a neighbour better than him (cp. 13:13-14; 15:28). This dark foreboding which he had nurtured silently for years suddenly became a reality and his jealousy centred itself upon David: "What can he have more BUT THE KINGDOM?" said Saul (v. 8). For years no doubt he would have watched for the successor God said would come. Now he had a growing suspicion that it was David, the people's favourite.

Saul eyed David from that day forward (v. 9). The love he had for David turned into sour hatred. As the fear that David would succeed him grew in his mind, Saul became more erratic. The following day he was very disturbed. As David played the harp to relieve his depression, Saul suddenly lifted up his javelin and twice hurled it at David, intending to pin him with it to the wall. But David weaved aside (vv. 10-11).

SAUL PLOTS FOR DAVID'S DEATH (1 Sam. 18:12-30).

Notwithstanding these threats to his life, David remained at court. Then Saul conceived a plot whereby the Philistines would be his executioners. He offered David, Merab, his eldest daughter, to be his wife on the condition that he be valiant and "fight the LORD's battles." He sent him from the court to the battlefield, where, instead of being killed, he acquitted himself well — but Saul's marriage arrangement for David was dishonoured (v. 19).

Almost immediately however, another opportunity presented itself. Told that his younger daughter, Michal, was in love with David, Saul once more plotted David's death. Saul would this time give David his daughter, conditional only upon him providing Saul a dowry of 100 foreskins of the Philistines (vv. 20-25). "Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines" (v. 25), but David went forth, slew 200 Philistines, brought back a double dowry to the king and claimed Michal as his wife (vv. 26-27). David was now son-in-law to the king but, more than that, everything he did prospered. Saul's enmity knew no bounds and all the while, even in the most difficult circumstances, "David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was precious" (v. 30 mg).

Saul presents a pathetic figure as the victim of his own pride and refusal to accept the appointment of God. He knew that God was with David (vv. 12, 28), but would not grant him the respect and honour this called for. Why? The demon of disguised pride had blinded his eyes, and as such he was the hopeless victim of envy, fear (v. 29), wrath (v. 8) and folly.

PROTECTION FROM JONATHAN (1 Sam. 19:1-7).

The more popular David became, the more intense was Saul's hatred and determination to slay him. He even confided his intention to Jonathan, who immediately revealed this confidence to David and set about protecting him (vv. 2-3). He interceded for him with the king, chiding his father for his injustice. He demanded an end to the persecution of David, and extracted from his father an oath before God that David would not be slain (vv. 4-6). It was a most generous action by Jonathan for it could have cost him his own standing before his father. His action revealed the mark of true understanding and love. So David returned and was reinstated in the position he formerly held (v. 7).

DAVID FLEES TO SAMUEL (1 Sam. 19:8-24).

All this time Saul's insanity was becoming progressively worse. When war once more erupted and David returned victorious, it was too much for the king. This time he sought to transfix David to the wall with his javelin, but David fled from his court (vv. 8-10). David went to his home but Michal advised him to leave immediately. She let him down through a window. She was a cunning woman and devised a stratagem, viz., of hiding an image in David's bed, whereby she could excuse herself when the messenger first came. She pretended that David was sick in bed. When they returned from Saul to take David in bed, she alleged that David had in the meantime threatened her life and so she had no alternative but to let him go (vv. 11-17).

Meanwhile David fled to Samuel in desperation. When Saul learnt of his whereabouts he sent messengers to take David, but the Spirit of God forbade them and turned them from captors into prophets. Three times the hand of God intervened to forestall the intentions of Saul. Then he himself went and the same thing happened. Prophesying he came before Samuel to Naioth in Ramah, where he laid down naked "all that day and all that night", an evident token of the folly of his purposes (vv. 18-24).

COMFORT FROM JONATHAN (1 Sam. 20).

David gained a brief respite while Saul prophesied. To whom now could he turn? Only Jonathan. So he returned to Gibeah where he sought Jonathan. Why, he pleaded, did Saul seek his life? It is here that the

generous and guileless character of Jonathan shines through, for even now he was unprepared to believe that his father would break his oath and be guilty of a settled plan of destruction against David (vv. 1-3).

The friends agreed upon a plan to test Saul's intentions. The feast of the new moon, at which all close relatives were to be in attendance, was nigh at hand. David was obliged to attend the feast held in Saul's court, but he would absent himself with Jonathan's permission on the basis of keeping a family feast at Bethlehem. He would remain in the field until receiving Jonathan's message, either to flee or to stay, which would be indicated by shooting arrows on the near side or far side respectively of the rock Ezel (meaning "departure"). It is notable that David's ultimate triumph was accepted by Jonathan without question. All he asked for was David's continued kindness to himself and his children when he became king, and this was made the subject of a covenant between them (vv. 14-17).

The plan was put into operation. From the outset Scripture records Saul's murderous intentions (vv. 25-26). On the second day, Jonathan's defence of David put his father in a rage. "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman", said Saul, "Do not I know that thou has chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die" (vv. 30-31).

Jonathan tried to reason with his father but to no avail. Saul was so angry that he cast a javelin at him and Jonathan left, burning with fierce anger, refusing to eat, terribly grieved in heart because his father had disgraced David (cp. v. 34 R.S.V.).

The following morning Jonathan's arrow sped past the stone of "departure" and thereby David was given the pre-arranged signal to flee. So, full of grief, the two friends parted, never to see each other again except for a brief encounter when later Saul pursued David and Jonathan secretly visited him to strengthen him in the Lord and to renew the covenant between them (23:16-18).

Jonathan's outstanding loyalty kept him at his father's side. David was now an outcast and sought refuge from his pursuer. During his exile David determined that he would wait patiently upon God, and not under any circumstances lift up his hand against Yahweh's anointed.

THE BASIS OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

When later Jonathan was slain by the Philistines, David lamented and said, "Thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26). This was so because the basis of true friendship is a common love for the things of God. The two friends had one thing in common —

an intense unwavering belief in the God of Israel, to keep and to save all that trust in Him. It was this that surmounted the barriers of age, wealth and rank between them and that made them “one”.

The substance of true friendship is the same today. Friends play a big part in our lives and they influence us for good or evil. We should choose friends in the Truth as our companions. Those who love and obey the Lord Jesus are his “friends” and, like Jonathan and David, they will not fail us in times of trouble. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14).

LESSONS FOR US:

- Jonathan as heir apparent had most to lose by David’s succession to the throne of Israel. Yet he willingly stepped aside, pleading the preservation of his posterity and the right to serve David personally in the Kingdom.
- He was a shining example of the love in Christ Jesus commended to the Philippians: “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).
- Jonathan’s love displayed the kindred virtues of faithfulness and loyalty, hopefulness, generosity, self-forgetfulness, humility and courage (cp. 1 Cor. 13:1-13).
- In spite of Saul’s unreasonable and erratic behaviour, both Jonathan and David respected him as God’s anointed.
- Jealousy unrestrained will eat out the heart of a man so that he becomes consumed by it, just as Saul became consumed by his envy of David (Prov. 6:34).
- Our friendship should be with those who honour the God of Israel.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

- “The Ways of Providence” (R. Roberts)—Chapter 15.
“The Story of the Bible” (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 9
“The Man David” (H. Tennant)—Pages 32-45

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *Why did Saul envy David? What causes envy and how can it be overcome?*
2. *Describe briefly two events in which Saul plotted to have David killed.*
3. *How did Jonathan try to help David when his father sought to kill him?*
4. *What is the basis of true friendship? How is this illustrated in the case of David and Jonathan?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

- ① *Why did Saul seek the death of David? How did he try and bring it about?*
2. *How can the example of David and Jonathan help us to choose our friends?*
3. *Write a character study of Jonathan.*
4. *Contrast the characters of Jonathan and Saul as revealed in their attitude to David.*

22. DAVID IN EXILE

“I cried unto thee O Yahweh; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion”

Saul's envy would only be satisfied by David's death. As king he soon marshalled all his resources against David who was caused to flee for his life, an exile from family and friend. In the uncertainty of the years that were to follow, David's faith grew even stronger as he learned to depend on God alone (Psa. 142:4-5).

God's loving care was upon David because of his uprightness and integrity. Though destined to become King of Israel, he did not presume upon the mercies of God but sought Him in prayer, and, when answered, he obeyed (1 Sam. 23:2, 4, 10-12). Moreover, David respected the life of Saul as the Lord's anointed. He did not grasp the opportunities which seemed to offer immediately the prize of the Kingdom, but which would have entailed a breach of the commandments. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19). David was content to await God's time and God's way. Righteousness would yield its proper reward in God's good pleasure.

Our aim in this lesson is to see that God preserves those who trust in Him.

2+53

1 Samuel 22, 23 & 24

DAVID AT THE CAVE ADULLAM (1 Sam. 22).

Without any time to lose David fled to Nob, the city of the priests. In the desperation of his plight, David pretended that he was on a secret mission of Saul and so obtained from Ahimelech food (the shewbread) and the sword of Goliath. He was even driven to Achish, the King of Gath, before whom, for fear of his life, he made himself out to be mad.

He departed from Gath and came to the cave Adullam, where a company numbering 400 men gathered about him. For various reasons these men were unhappy with the reign of Saul. “Everyone that was in distress and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them” (v. 2). Many had come not for reasons of fellowship or sympathy, but mutual hostility towards Saul. They were generally a rough company and oblivious of the principles which governed their sensitive and godly captain (cp. (Psa. 57:4)). Nevertheless, among them numbered the priest Abiathar (1 Sam. 23:6), through whom David enquired of God, as well as the prophet Gad (v. 5), who was to be a close associate for many years (2 Sam. 24:11).

Meanwhile Saul mentioned his malicious intentions concerning David

to the Benjamites. He appealed for their loyalty on the grounds that he, being of their tribe, would be more favourable to them than a king from the tribe of Judah. With this pathetic appeal, Doeg the Edomite, who witnessed Ahimelech give David the shewbread and sword, came forth and informed Saul how the priest had assisted David and "inquired of the LORD for him" (vv. 6-10).

Saul's hatred knew no bounds: he feared neither God nor men. Ahimelech and the priests were summoned to his presence and when Ahimelech defended his action, Saul, in an atrocious act at which even his men rebelled, committed all the priests of God to the sword. Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, alone escaped and fled to David. The news of Saul's massacre confirmed David's worst fears and he said to Abiathar, "Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (v. 23). It was now clear to all Israel that the price of collusion with David was death.

THE UNGRATEFULNESS OF THE MEN OF KEILAH (1 Sam. 23:1-12).

News reached David that the Philistines, the implacable enemies of Israel, were fighting against Keilah and robbing their threshing floors. Such privations aroused David's wrath and, forgetting his own problems and confident of God's help, he enquired of Yahweh, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" God's strength is ever made perfect in weakness and he was told to go. But others in David's company did not share his trust in God or jealousy for the people of God. As they were already in fear of Saul, why should they multiply enemies by engaging the Philistines as well — so they reasoned. Enquiry was again made of Yahweh and a positive answer was again received with the assurance, "I will deliver the Philistines into thy hand." So David and his men went to Keilah and with characteristic valour they smote the Philistines and took their cattle. Thus the inhabitants of Keilah were saved (vv. 1-6).

Reports soon reached Saul that David was in Keilah, a walled city with bars and gates. Saul interpreted this as a God-given opportunity to rid himself of the threat of David. Saul's hopes were as vain as his reasoning. Was it not glaringly obvious that God was with David? Did not God deliver the Philistines into his hand? Leaving nothing to chance, Saul rallied all the people together to besiege Keilah.

But such large-scale preparations could not go on unbeknown to David. So David again made enquiry, "O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant" (vv. 9-11).

Such faithful prayer received immediate response. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry” (Psa. 34:15). David was told Saul would come and that the men of Keilah would deliver him into his hand. Perhaps the men of Keilah remembered what happened to the priests of Nob; allegiance to David could cost them their lives. Their trust lay in man and not God, for they would have betrayed the one who had saved them. What base ingratitude there is in the heart of men. So David was saved by God.

The words of gratitude and praise recorded in Psalm 31 were probably written at this time: “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou has laid up for them that fear thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men” (v. 19).

SAUL SEARCHES THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH (1 Sam. 23:13-18).

David and his men, now numbering 600, escaped and abode in the stronghold and wilderness of the rugged Judean hills. All the while Saul and his men searched for him. But though he eluded the trap of Saul, he was easy prey to the loving companionship of Jonathan. Jonathan found him and desired to “strengthen his hand in God”. There in the solitude of the wood the two friends united their hearts and hopes in the fear of Yahweh: “Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth” (v. 17).

But these hopes were not to be realised. This was to be their last communion together. Death would intervene and Jonathan would not see David king. But in the mercy and truth of the God in whom they trusted, they both will arise in the future to unite in the praises and service of a King who is even greater than David (Psa. 110:1).

THE TREACHERY OF THE ZIPHITES (1 Sam. 23:19-28).

It was one thing to yield to Saul’s pressure and hand over David, but worse to curry favour with Saul by feeding him with information on David’s whereabouts, as the Ziphites did. Saul told the Ziphites to make sure of their facts — he had not found David very easy to track down in the past — and he would come and search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah (vv. 22-23). The Ziphites returned, but David was now in the wilderness of Maon. Saul and his men came down and hearing that he was in the wilderness of Maon pursued him there. A crisis had come and David was in imminent danger — “Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain; and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them” (v. 26). All appeared to be lost: David was about to be captured at last.

But David had a hidden strength his enemies knew not of. He had

already committed himself to Yahweh's trust, "Save me, O God, by thy name and judge me by thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul" (Psa. 54:1-4 — written at this time, according to the superscription).

A most unexpected event happened. A messenger arrived at the camp of Saul with pressing news. The Philistines had invaded the land. Saul was obliged to retire immediately if reluctantly. "O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer" (Psalm 31:23).

DAVID SPARES THE LORD'S ANOINTED (1 Sam. 24).

No sooner had Saul dealt with the Philistines than he returned to pursue his enemy. David had by this time removed to the wilderness of Engedi where the large caves afford protection. It so happened that Saul sought rest in the very cave where David and his men were hiding. Before their eyes in the eerie darkness, Saul closed his eyes in sleep. This provided an occasion where the greatness of David shone. David's men were not governed by a sensitive perception of the will of God. To them the occasion provided an opportunity to do away with a hated enemy. Surely this was the will of God. But David respected Yahweh's anointing oil. He restrained his men and crept forth and secretly cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. His conscience even smote him for presuming to do this, while he restrained his men with the words, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD" (v. 6).

In due course Saul arose and went on his way, but his steps were arrested by the cry of David, "My Lord the King." Saul looked behind him and saw the figure of David stooped with face towards the ground. Here the power of righteousness was seen. With the skirt in his hand David showed Saul that his life was in his hand that day and only by his insistence was he yet alive (vv. 9-10). Surely this was witness to his integrity. He rebuked Saul for concerning himself with one so insignificant (v. 14), while he reminded him that ultimately God would judge between them and plead his cause.

Saul was humbled by David's integrity and experienced a moment of sanity. He acknowledged that David was more righteous than he in rewarding him good for evil by sparing his life (cp. Matt. 7:12). He even called upon Yahweh to bless David, and went on to declare his conviction that David would succeed him on the throne of Israel, and asked that David would at that time show favour to his house (vv. 16-21).

We might pose the question, if that was his conviction, why did Saul

not bow to it? Pride and power derange judgement and balance. With the lowly there is wisdom. Though once small in his own sight, Saul was now too entrenched in his position to relinquish the throne. Yet in returning good for evil, David had baffled Saul. In the soberness of the occasion all Saul could do was to go home, while David remained at safe distance.

LESSONS FOR US:

- In the extremities of his exile David was caused to rest heavily on God, for vain was the help of man. "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa. 34:6).
- David's faith in providence made him eshew every evil way, even when it contained the promise of immediate attainment of the goal God had promised him.
- Saints must restrain themselves and wait patiently and faithfully for the day of Christ's return and the fulfilment of their hopes. Vengeance belongs unto God.

REFERENCE LIBRARY:

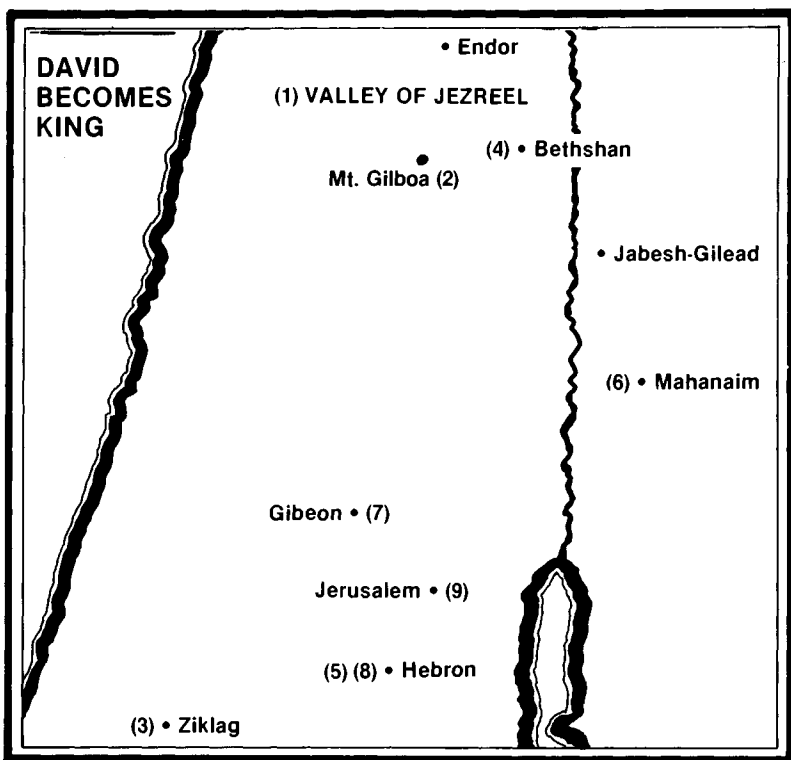
- "The Ways of Providence" (R. Roberts)—Chapter 16
- "The Story of the Bible" (H. P. Mansfield)—Vol. 3, No. 10
- "The Man David" (H. Tennant)—Pages 46-66

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What lessons did David learn while in exile?*
2. *Outline what happened to David at Keilah.*
- ③ *Why did David spare Saul in the cave of Engedi?*
4. *Outline the conversation between David and Saul after David had spared his life in the cave of Engedi.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *How was David preserved in his exile? Make reference to his experiences in Keilah, the wilderness of Ziph, and the caves of Engedi.*
2. *Describe the incident when David spared Saul in the cave at Engedi? What lessons do we learn from this?*
- ③ *What was the basic weakness of Saul? How was this revealed in his actions toward David? Give examples.*



- (1) The Philistines prepare for war against Israel at Jezreel. David assembles with them, but then is told to return to Ziklag (29:1-11).
- (2) Saul gathers his army at Gilboa. He seeks solace from the witch of Endor but hears only of his impending defeat and death (28:4-20).
- (3) Meanwhile David and his men, returning to Ziklag, find it burned by the Amalekites, but all is recovered (30:1-20).
- (4) Saul is defeated on Mt. Gilboa. The bodies of he and his sons are hung by the Philistines upon the walls of Bethshan, but the men of Jabesh-Gilead take them back for a proper burial (31:1-13).
- (5) David is brought to Hebron and anointed King of Judah (2 Sam. 2:1-4).
- (6) Abner, the captain of Saul's army, establishes Saul's son Ishbosheth as king over Israel in Mahanaim (2:8-11).
- (7) Civil war breaks out at Gibeon between the two houses of Israel, during which Abner slays Asahel, Joab's brother (2:12-32).
- (8) Following the murders of Abner and Ishbosheth, the way is clear for David to be anointed king over a united Israel at Hebron (5:3).
- (9) David takes Jebus (Jerusalem) which he makes his capital (5:6-9).

23. DEFEAT ON GILBOA

“And the battle went sore against Saul”

In this lesson we follow Saul as he sinks to his lowest depths in seeking out the witch of Endor. Finally he receives the reward of his iniquity — death at the hands of the despised Philistines. Saul should have recognized that his jealousy of David was a symptom of hurt pride and not allowed it to grow. Instead he refused to accept the will of God in exalting David and went from bad to worse, bringing shame on the name of the God of Israel and on himself. So the lesson warns us that the carnal mind must be put to death. If evil thoughts are nurtured over the years, they can take control of us, and then it may be impossible for us to forsake them (compare 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Phil. 4:8; Isa. 55:7; Prov. 23:7).

On the other hand, David continued to endure the trial and hardship of exile: “driven out from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD”. Yet in this he had not forsaken the principles of righteous living and he cast his care upon God. It was during this period that he wrote many of the Psalms which mirror the inmost thoughts of Christ. Suffering and trial have an appointed place in the purpose of God. Those called upon to endure them for righteousness’ sake can assure their hearts that they are sons of God (cp. Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:12-14).

Our aim in this lesson is to see how refusal to obey the Word of God eventually brings disaster.

1 Samuel 26-31; 2 Samuel 1

DAVID TAKES REFUGE IN ZIKLAG (1 Sam. 26 and 27).

The Ziphites again sought to betray David into Saul’s hands, but instead, Saul was once more placed in David’s mercy. David and his cousin Abishai invaded Saul’s lines at night, but David still refused to touch Yahweh’s anointed. Saul awoke to see his spear and cruse of water in David’s hand and, confessing that David was more righteous than he, he returned to his place (1 Sam. 26). David, despairing of Saul’s future actions, judged that he would be more secure in the land of the Philistines and he and his men and their households removed to Achish in Gath. Thereupon Saul sought David no more (27:1-4).

Perhaps for reasons of privacy, David asked Achish if he would appoint him a town to dwell in. Achish gave him Ziklag where he dwelt for 16 months. Now David was free to please himself. From this place he and his men invaded the nations south of Judah as far as Egypt and left none alive to divulge what had happened. Achish, naturally curious, enquired where David had made his raids. David replied, “Against the south of Judah. . .”. From that Achish assumed that David had totally forsaken his people and that he could now place full confidence in David.

Apparently he had had lurking suspicions that David could become his enemy one day. No doubt he had heard the rumours about David being destined to become King of Israel.

DAVID MARCHES WITH THE PHILISTINES (1 Sam. 29).

It came to pass that the Philistines mustered their forces to battle against Israel. David had won a place of affection and admiration in the heart of Achish and he was invited to participate. David complied and marched with the Philistine host up the maritime plain of Israel to Shunem, while Saul gathered Israel together upon the mountains of Gilboa (28:1-4; 29:1-2).

There can be no question that David would have proved an adversary to the Philistines had he been permitted to remain with them. His feelings for the name of God and his disdain for the uncircumcised, which he had uttered when he defeated Goliath, were unchanged (cp. 17:26, 45-47). Moreover, his bitter lament upon hearing of Israel's defeat shows plainly where his allegiance lay (2 Sam. 1:19-21). When the other lords of the Philistines learned that David was marching with them, they summoned Achish and told him to send David back. When Achish protested David's loyalty, they were unimpressed: "Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place that thou has appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary (Heb. — Satan) to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?" (vv. 4-5). Besides fearing his valour, they could not trust him. Their fears were well grounded. Half apologetically Achish informed David of the decision and so the Philistines proceeded to Jezreel to confront Saul while David returned to Ziklag (vv. 6-11).

SAUL AND THE WITCH (1 Sam. 28).

The sight of the gathering Philistines struck fear in the heart of the King of Israel. How different Saul was to David. He hurriedly searched for consolation and strength of Yahweh, but Yahweh "answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (vv. 4-6). He was in a desperate plight. To whom could he go? Samuel was dead and he himself had put away those who had familiar spirits (v.3; Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-14).

In his extremity Saul sought a woman with a familiar spirit. Nearby at Endor one was to hand and, with tragic hypocrisy, the King of Israel disguised himself and wended his way at night across the Philistine lines to her house with two of his men. She was at first reluctant to comply with his wishes, remembering the edict of Saul and thinking they had come to ensnare her. With the confusion that belongs to those who forsake Yahweh, Saul reassured her with an oath sworn in the name of

Yahweh. The woman yielded to his request and, by and by, from the darkness a figure appeared clad in a mantle. Saul perceived it was Samuel (vv. 13-14; cp. 15:27).

Saul made request of Samuel as to what he should do, seeing God had departed from him and he was fearful of the army of the Philistines. Saul had his worst fears confirmed. In a precise and detailed answer, Saul was told that on account of his disobedience God had left him and the Kingdom would be given to his neighbour David. Moreover, Israel would suffer defeat the next day and he and his sons would perish. With that Saul collapsed and fell headlong on the earth (vv.15-20).

Saul had departed from God's ways and now he was left alone. What a tragic spectacle the King of Israel presents as he frantically seeks consolation. But it was too late and the time of his judgment had come. It is wise to seek God while He may be found and there is no more sure time than the present. We cannot afford to put off the things of God till tomorrow as we do not know whether that day shall come.

* Saul's sin came to a head when he sought out the witch. When men depart irretrievably from the ways of God, God chooses their delusions and places stumbling blocks before them so that they might fall: ". . .because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Isa. 66:3-4; John 12:39-40). Thus when wicked Saul sought Samuel, a vision of Samuel was sent along with a prophecy that sealed his doom.

When the witch saw Saul prostrate upon the floor and troubled of mind it seems that she felt somewhat to blame. She told him that she had only obeyed his request. Perhaps she thought she would suffer on account of the bad news. She suggested that Saul receive a morsel of bread to strengthen himself, but at first he refused. At length he agreed and they did eat. Soberly Saul and his servants rose up and went their way in the night with the fears of the following day pressing heavily upon them (vv. 21-25).

SAUL'S DEATH (1 Sam. 31).

On the next day the battle was joined and Israel fled before the Philistines. The Philistines were determined to clinch victory by slaying the royal family of Israel: they "followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons" (vv. 1-2). At length his three sons fell and he became the chief mark of the archers and was sore wounded. Death stared Saul in the face. Rather than giving the "uncircumcised" the satisfaction of slaying and mocking him, he called upon his armour bearer to "thrust him through". When he refused, Saul took a sword himself and fell on it. The sight of his lord slain upon the field of battle, induced Saul's armour bearer to do likewise (vv. 3-6).

The fateful news soon spread abroad bringing panic and despair to Israel, but jubilation to the Philistines. The Philistines cut off Saul's head and the gory trophy was paraded among their peoples, with the victory being attributed to their idols. His armour was put on display in the house of Ashtaroth, while his headless body was fastened to the wall of Bethshan. How the glory of Israel was departed. Saul's defiance of God had brought shame upon the whole nation and the name of God. How different was this day to the one in which faithful David had slain Goliath.

But all spirit was not lost. The valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead, whom Saul in better days had saved from the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11), arose and recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Bethshan and gave them an honourable burial in Jabesh.

TIDINGS OF SAUL'S DEATH REACH DAVID (2 Sam. 1).

Meanwhile David and his men had returned from the Philistines to find Ziklag burned to the ground and all its inhabitants taken away. Despair overcame his men, but David strengthened himself in his God and all was recovered (1 Sam. 30).

Two days later a man wandered into David's camp with clothes rent and earth on his head. On learning that he came from the camp of Israel, David immediately asked how the battle went. The young man, an Amalekite, which nation Saul was commanded to eradicate (1 Sam. 15:3), recounted the story of Saul's death, claiming that he was responsible for finally killing Saul. He handed David Saul's crown and bracelet as evidence, obviously hoping to find favour of David. But David was smitten with sorrow, not joy. He and his men "mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel" (v. 12). The young man was duly slain for daring to "stretch forth his hand to destroy the LORD's anointed."

David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan reveals the greatness and graciousness of his character. He felt the shame upon Israel personally. The Truth had been crushed before the enemy. There is a lesson in this. We should avoid bringing shame upon the great Name we bear. The alien should never be placed in the position of gloating over the faults of those who bear Christ's name (cp. 1 Cor. 6:1-8). Further, David extolled Saul's prowess in war and remembered only his virtues: "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions" (v. 23). Even the daughters of Israel, who had at the first incited Saul's jealousy of David (1 Sam. 18:6-7), were commanded to remember Saul's blessings (v. 24).

David's final words in his lamentation relate to his beloved friend Jonathan and are filled with anguish and tenderness. He speaks as though Jonathan was yet alive: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women". And then accepting the tragic reality: "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished" (vv. 26-27).

LESSONS FOR US:

- Refusal to obey the Word of God caused Saul to be forsaken in the hour of his greatest need.
- When men depart irretrievably from the ways of God, God gives them up to their own delusions, "that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).
- If instead we, like David, draw near to God, He will draw near to us (Jas. 4:8). There is no better time to learn to trust and obey God than youth when the mind is unclouded with evil thoughts and habits and readily receives the impressions of the Word.
- David was very gracious towards even the man who jealousy raged against him.
- It is a good thing to develop friendships in the Truth which will remain strong and inspiring to our faith in times of adversity. Such was David's tender relationship to faithful Jonathan.

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PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *What lessons can we learn from Saul's defeat on Mount Gilboa?*
2. *Why was Saul's visit to the witch of Endor hypocritical? What does this teach us about those who deliberately despise God's Word?*
3. *Briefly recount what happened when Saul was defeated on Mount Gilboa. What was the basic cause of Israel's defeat?*
4. *What did the men of Jabesh-Gilead do for Saul following his death? Why did they do it?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Give an account of Saul's visit to the witch of Endor and the events which took place on the following day.*
2. *Why did God depart from Saul? What does this teach us?*
3. *What lessons do we learn from Saul's life and character? Why did God refuse to answer his prayer before his final battle with the Philistines?*
4. *Give an account of David's thoughts when he heard that Saul and Israel had been defeated by the Philistines.*

24. FROM THE SHEEPCOTE TO THE THRONE

“Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron”

Many years had passed since David had been anointed by Samuel as King over the whole house of Israel. We might have imagined that the anointing meant David would immediately be placed on the throne. Instead of that, David the shepherd first became the popular head of the army, then the King's son-in-law, next an exile under royal disfavour, next a mountain chieftain, next a Philistine auxiliary. Finally he became the accepted monarch of a small section of the Kingdom of Israel, before the full development of the divine purpose was reached.

We learn the lesson that God is never in a hurry and time is at His command. David's patience was tried and David's faith was rewarded. "David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker" (2 Sam. 3:1), until at last the Kingdom of Saul collapsed, and David's authority was established in all the land. The principle has not changed with the passing of time. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3, 4). "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). A place on the same throne that David occupied is offered to the faithful, by the King who shall reign on it forever: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 3:21; Luke 1:32-33).

Our aim in this lesson is to see how God rewards those who patiently endure to the end.

2 Samuel 2 to 5

DAVID, KING OVER JUDAH IN HEBRON (2 Sam. 2:1-7).

David took Saul's death as a sign that the time had come to take the throne (cp. 1 Sam. 26:10). Even so he did not take matters into his own hands but enquired of God, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" Having received an answer from God, he and his men went up to the cities of Hebron, where they then dwelt. Israel was without a king and in disarray. On hearing that David had returned from exile and knowing God's promise to him, the men of Judah anointed the popular hero as their king (v. 4).

The question now pressed itself in the mind of David: how would all Israel be gathered to him? When he learned that the men of Jabesh-Gilead were responsible for giving Saul an honourable burial, he blessed them in the name of God. He also reminded them that Saul was dead and

he was now King in Judah. Plainly he was implying that they should take the lead and join forces with him. But such was not to be at that time.

DIVISION IN ISRAEL (2 Sam. 2:8-32).

Abner forestalled David's hopes of uniting Israel by installing Ishbosheth, Saul's son, upon the throne. Abner had been Saul's captain and was the real strength behind the feeble monarch. He seems to have known that David would eventually succeed Saul's house, yet he kept the kingdom apart, probably to preserve his own position (3:9-10, 17-18).

Civil war broke out between both houses of Israel. Joab, the son of Zeruiah, led the servants of David, and Abner the servants of Ishbosheth. Both sides faced each other on opposite sides of the pool in Gibeon and a force of 12 men from each group all perished in a token battle. As always happens when brethren fight, there is tragedy and both sides lose.

In the sore battle that followed, Abner's men were put to flight. Asahel, Joab's youngest brother, pursued the experienced Abner with the fleetness of a roe. Ignoring repeated warnings to turn aside, Asahel perished by the skilful spear of Abner. The sight of fallen Asahel ignited the fires of vengeance in his brethren, Joab and Abishai, so that they pursued Abner and his host to the wilderness of Gibeon.

There Abner received help from the Benjamites. The battle was stalemated and, following Abner's call to remember that they were brethren and that the sword could only produce bitterness in the end, both sides ceased. When a count was made of casualties it was revealed that only 19 of David's men were lost, but 360 of Abner's had fallen. Clearly God was with David (3:1); Abner's folly, in refusing David the Kingdom, was manifesting itself. At length it would cost Abner his life. Refusal to obey God always leads to death (Prov. 8:34-36).

DAVID WAXES STRONGER AND ISHBOSHETH WEAKER (2 Sam. 3).

The strength of David's position is emphasised by a direct statement in the record (v. 1), and also by the fact that six sons were born to him in Hebron (vv. 2-5). But in the house of Saul there was division. Abner had taken Rizpah, Saul's concubine, to wife, probably to demonstrate that he was the strength behind Saul's house (cp. 16:22). When Ishbosheth, charged him with fault concerning the woman, it offended his pride and he vowed to give the northern kingdom into the hands of David. He also declared that in this he would be doing the will of Yahweh for He had sworn to give David the throne over Israel from Dan to Beersheba (vv. 6-11).

Accordingly he sent messengers to David with his intentions, but David refused to make a league until his wife Michal was restored to him (vv.

12-16). Diplomatically Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and later the Benjamites. They were pleased with his decision to transfer the northern kingdom into the strong hands of David. Abner could now speak to David with the confidence that all Israel endorsed his action. David received Abner and his men with festivity and they were sent away in peace with the purpose of uniting Israel under David (vv. 18-21).

But alas, Joab was not a party to the agreement. He was away fighting the king's battles. When he heard what had transpired, he rebuked David for making an alliance with his enemies. Unknown to David, Joab sent for Abner who, without suspecting his malicious intentions, perished by Joab's deceitful and deadly sword (vv. 22-27). He had exacted his vengeance for the death of his brother, Asahel. But God has declared, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). At length, in the wisdom of God, he too, became the victim of the sword for his treachery (1 Kings 2:28-34).

Joab's action was foolish indeed. Israel was about to unite under David. Matters were delicate and crucial. And now the chief negotiator from Israel had perished in Judah. David pronounced a bitter curse upon the house of Joab and wisely made it plain that he disapproved of Joab's action and was not party to it. He caused the people to rend their clothes and personally accompanied the bier. He made a public lamentation over Abner, extolling his virtues, and refusing to eat till the sun went down. David was a king with a wise and understanding heart. His subjects were impressed and pleased. Moreover, it was obvious to all Israel that he deplored Joab's brutality (vv. 28-39).

ISRAEL CRUMBLES WITH ABNER'S DEATH (2 Sam. 4).

Upon hearing the news of Abner's death, Ishbosheth's "courage failed" (v. 1, RSV). Israel was confused. Perceiving this and the need to unite quickly with David, two brothers, Rechab and Baanah, contrived to bring unity about in a way which they thought would secure their honour. They slew Ishbosheth while he slept on his bed and conveyed his head to David as the evidence that the day of Yahweh's vengeance upon the house of Saul had come. But David was not impressed. He was a just man, believing the law, "thou shall not kill". Rechab and Baanah had slain a righteous man asleep on his bed (v. 11). (Ishbosheth had actually been forward in returning Michal to David (3:15), and had, no doubt, hoped that the Kingdom would have been transferred to David peaceably).

David was troubled. The two brothers would be rewarded with shame not honour. They were quickly slain and hung over the pool at Hebron as

a public witness that King David would not tolerate iniquity (vv. 9-12). Their hands and feet were cut off, for “hands that shed innocent blood. . . and feet that be swift in running to mischief” are an “abomination” to Yahweh (Prov. 6:16-18).

How severe will be the judgements of God upon this world for its violence and crimes? True disciples of the Lord can have no part in physical violence and vengeance to attain their ends. Their Lord has commanded them to amputate their hands and feet should these limbs become a stumbling block (Mark 9:42-45).

ISRAEL AND JUDAH UNITED UNDER THE ANOINTED (2 Sam. 5:1-10).

David’s firm but merciful rulership attracted the northern tribes which were now in disarray. Without coercion all the tribes rallied to David in Hebron and willingly offered allegiance. They pleaded three points:

1. “We are bone of thy bone”;
2. “Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel”; and
3. “The LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be captain over Israel” (vv. 1-2).

With such ready homage, a covenant was made in Hebron and David was anointed king over Israel.

David was 30 when anointed King over Judah and it was seven and a half years later when he was made King over all Israel (vv. 4-5). Thus God’s word of promise came to pass in a remarkable way — without David presuming to grasp power. Truly God could later say, “I gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah” (2 Sam. 12:8).

David next took the city of Jerusalem from the hands of the Gentiles. Jerusalem (or Jebus) was situated in Benjamin on the border with Judah and so it was an appropriate place for him to reign over all the tribes. The nation of Israel was now about to move into the most glorious period of its history.

DAVID A TYPE OF CHRIST.

In many ways the accession of David to the throne is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ — the one who is to occupy the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33). The table on the following page shows a number of points in this comparison.

DAVID — A TYPE OF CHRIST		
	DAVID	CHRIST
1. Both were shepherds of their people.	Ps. 78:70-72	Matt. 26:31
2. Both were exiled and rejected by their countrymen.	1 Sam. 26:19	John 11:53-54; Isa. 53:3
3. Both were honoured and loved for their integrity and righteousness and were followed by men.	1 Sam. 18:16, 30	Mark 3:7-9
4. Both were promised the throne of Israel.	1 Sam. 16:1, 13	Luke 1:30-33
5. The Lord Jesus will, like David, save Judah first.	2 Sam. 2:1-4	Zech. 12:7
6. The Lord Jesus will, like David, unite both houses of Israel.	2 Sam. 5:3	Ezek. 37:22
7. Like David, Christ will redeem Jerusalem from the treading down of the Gentiles (Jebus = 'trodden down') and rule therefrom.	2 Sam. 5:7	Luke 21:24; Jer. 3:17; Joel 3:16

LESSONS FOR US:

- David's prospects were never darker than when he returned to Ziklag to find it burnt with fire and all the families missing. Yet he was on the verge of day-break.
- Like David we are tried in the furnace of affliction, but in due season we will reap if we faint not.
- Now is not the day of our exaltation and glory. We must submit to the yoke of Christ by putting aside the prizes this world has to offer, yet sacrifice and selfdenial for Christ's sake shall give way to glory, honour and immortality in the Kingdom soon to dawn.
- A worthy end does not justify unscrupulous means. Though Abner and Ishbosheth had to be moved aside to make way for David, he lamented the violence men used to hasten these events.
- Righteousness and justice became keynotes of David's reign (cp. Psa. 72:2).

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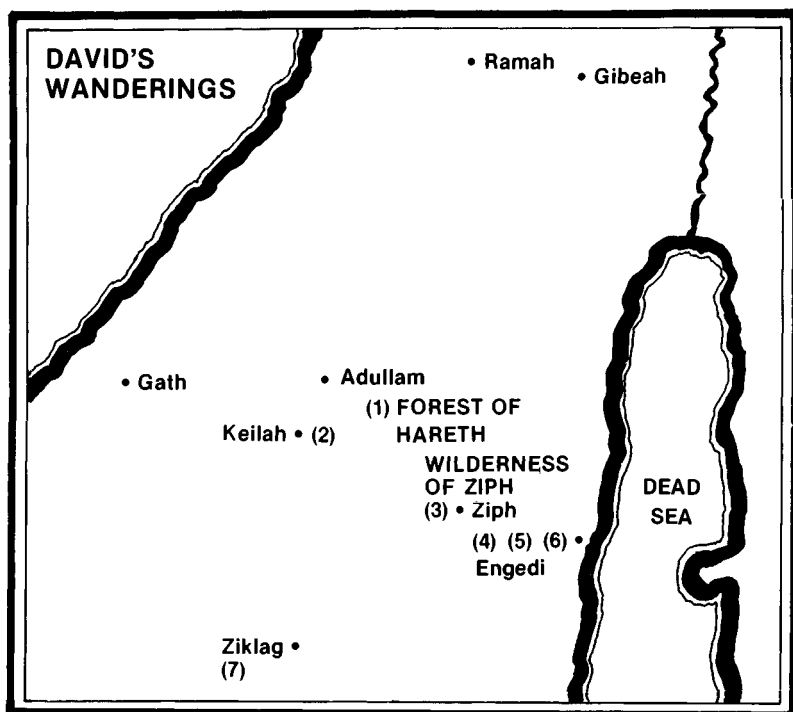
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PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *Why did David punish Rechab and Baanah for slaying Ishbosheth?*
2. *Why did David disassociate himself from Joab, when he slew Abner?*
3. *On what occasions was David anointed king in Hebron?*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *Describe how God brought both Judah and Israel under the rulership of David.*
2. *In what ways was David a type of Christ?*
3. *David had to patiently wait for many years before he was made king over all Israel. How was his character developed in these years? What lessons can we learn from this?*



- (1) After escaping from Gath, David comes to the cave of Adullam where 400 men gather around him. On the advice of Gad, he removes to the forest of Hareth (1 Sam. 22:1-5).
- (2) While hiding in the forest of Hareth, David hears of the Philistines fighting against Keilah and moves against them, saves Keilah, and makes it his new base (23:1-6).
- (3) Saul comes against Keilah with his army, but David and his men escape to the wilderness of Ziph, knowing that the men of Keilah would have delivered them into Saul's hand (23:7-14).
- (4) The Ziphites tell Saul where David is hiding. Saul's men surround David, but suddenly Saul is called away to fight the Philistines and David removes to Engedi (23:19-29).
- (5) Saul, having returned from repelling the Philistine raid, pursues David again. He enters the cave where David and his men are hiding and David cuts off part of his robe but leaves Saul unharmed. The King is touched by David's mercy and goes back to Gibeah (24:1-22).
- (6) The Ziphites again inform Saul of David's whereabouts. David and Abishai cross Saul's lines at night, taking his spear and cruse of water. Again Saul is touched by David's mercy and returns home (26:1-25).
- (7) David takes refuge with Achish, king of Gath, and dwells with his men in Ziklag (27:1-7).

25. GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

“But my mercy shall not depart away from him”

The promise which God made to David is the third and last great promise of a coming triumphant seed. The first of these great “seed covenants” was made in Eden and concerned the seed of the woman who would overcome sin and death (Gen. 3:15). The second was made with Abraham and concerned the inheritance of the Land of Israel to be gained by those in Christ (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 22:16-18; Gal. 3:16, 26-29). The third has to do with the throne, kingdom and descent of God’s Anointed.

The importance of the promises can be seen from the fact that the first verse in the New Testament links Jesus Christ with his forefathers Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1). At his birth he was confirmed to be the seed of Abraham and David (Luke 1:32-33, 54-55, 69-73). His death, likewise, confirmed the “promises made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). The promises fulfilled in Christ became the basis of the gospel preached by the Apostles (Acts 2:29-31; 3:13, 25-26; 13:22-36; 26:6-7; etc.).

Our aim will be to understand the great promise God made to David and to see how it relates to Christ and our own salvation.

2 Samuel 7

DAVID DESIRES TO BUILD GOD A HOUSE (2 Sam. 7:1-7).

God had told Israel that when He had given them rest from their enemies, there would be a place chosen by Him where he would “cause His name to dwell” (Deut. 12:10-11). That time was imminent. David sat in a house of cedar with his enemies at his feet (2 Sam. 7:1). He knew that there was something incongruous in the fact that the ark of Yahweh rested in a tent, while the king dwelt in a cedar house. David felt uncomfortable. He sent for Nathan the prophet and made known his concern for the ark. Nathan replied, “Do all that is in thine heart, for the LORD is with thee” (v. 3).

But Nathan’s answer was unpremeditated and without divine sanction. That night by revelation God corrected Nathan’s first impulsive answer to David and made known to him a greater and more beautiful house than David could have conceived. David had envisaged a house of wood and stone for God, but God revealed that He would build David a house, not of wood and stone, but of people — his would be a royal house. This was more than any man could provide.

David listened, enthralled and deeply moved as Nathan repeated the words, “Shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in?” (v. 5). Perhaps for the first time David realised how great a thing he had desired to do.

Can a man build a house for God? Would God dwell in it? Gently David was led along the path of understanding: "Since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, (I have not dwelt in any house) but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle" (vv. 6-7).

God dwelling in a tent is a salutary exhortation and lesson. God cannot dwell with men — yet. Even Solomon perceived the inadequacy of a temple of divine design to contain God (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 7:48). God dwells with the humble in heart who tremble at His word (Isa. 66:1-2; 57:15; Eph. 3:17; 4:6; 2 Cor. 6:16), who are part of the house whose foundation stone, Jesus Christ, has been laid by God (Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11; Psa. 118:22).

THE WORK OF GOD (2 Sam. 7:8-16).

David received the unfolding message with deepening understanding. God reminded David that his ascent from the shepcote to the throne was under His hand and that He would further elevate him and make his name great. This whole work would be a work of God: "I took thee from the shepcote. . . I was with thee. . . I will appoint a place for my people Israel. . . Also the LORD telleth thee that He will build thee an house. . . I will set up thy seed. . . I will establish his Kingdom. . . He shall build an house for my name. . . I will be his father. . ." (vv. 8-16).

The final resting place for the Name of God, the house in which He would dwell, would be built by a son of the house of David who would be the Son of God. Even the house built in the days of the kings would not be built by David because he had shed much blood, as was later explained (1 Chron. 22:8-10). Indeed the temple would be built by his son Solomon, whose name means "Peace", thus foreshadowing the greater work in Messiah's reign of peace.

DETAILS OF THE PROMISE (2 Sam. 7:10-16).

There are six elements in the promise which are especially relevant to the gospel:—

1. *Israel to be settled in the land and at peace with all nations:* "I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more" (v. 10).

This has never yet been fulfilled. The prophets, however, show that these conditions shall prevail when Christ reigns from Zion (cp. Ezek. 34:28-29; Amos 9:14-15; Zeph. 3:15; Jer. 33:11, 14-15).

2. *The promised seed to be David's own flesh and blood*—Son of Man—and hence mortal: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels" (v. 12).

3. *The seed to build an house for God's name:* "He will build an house for my name" (v. 13). Two houses are referred to:—
 - (a) A literal house — the Temple of Ezekiel, the wonderful "house of prayer for all nations" to be built in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3; Mk. 11:17; Zech. 14:16; 6:12-13).
 - (b) A spiritual house—composed of persons "in Christ" (Heb. 3:1-6; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5; 2 Cor. 6:16).
4. *God (as well as David) to be His Father* —He would be the Son of God: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (v. 14). This is the crowning feature of Jesus' Messiahship. By it he was uniquely fitted to become the sinless Saviour (cp. Luke 1:32-35; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; John 1:14, 49; 3:16).
5. *God's mercy to remain with David's seed despite the iniquity of many of its members, who would be punished accordingly* (e.g. Solomon in 1 Kings 11:11-14): "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul" (vv. 14-15; cp. Psa. 89:28-33; 132:12 where this portion of the promise is expounded; Jer. 17:24-27).
6. *David's throne to be established for ever before him at Christ's return:* "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever" (v. 16). The restoration of the Kingdom to Israel with the Christ, David's son, as King is the ruling sentiment of the prophets and the subject matter of the Hope of Israel (cp. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; Jer. 33:14-26; Ezek. 37:25-27; Amos 9:11-15; Luke 1:30-33; Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:6; 2:30; 3:19-21; 13:23-36; 15:16; 28:20; etc.)

FULFILMENT OF THE COVENANT.

Who is the seed of promise? From what has been said so far it is evident that Jesus Christ is the Son of David through whom the promise will be fulfilled. However, the promise does have general reference to the descendants of David who sat on his throne, especially Solomon. Note how the terms are applied to Solomon in the following references: 1 Kings 1:48; 5:5; 8:20; 9:4-6. The promise was conditional upon obedience. Solomon disobeyed, forfeited the promise and was "chastened with the rod of men" (2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Kings 11:11-14). The following reasons also show why Solomon did not fulfil the covenant other than in a limited sense:—

1. If it was fulfilled in Solomon, there would not be further divinely inspired mention of a coming fulfilment after his death, viz.
 - 250 years after his death — Amos 9:11;

- 450 years after — Jer. 33:14-26;
- 500 years after — Zech. 12:6-8;
- 1000 years after — Luke 1:32-33.

Hence it must refer to someone else at a much later time. The words of the angel to Mary recorded in Luke 1 show that it **must** refer to Jesus Christ.

2. 2 Sam. 7:14 is quoted and applied to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1:5.
3. Zedekiah was the last king to reign on David's throne. Because of his wickedness he was rejected and God declared the throne would be without an occupant "until he come whose right it is" (Ezek. 21:25-27). Jesus claimed this right (John 18:36-37) and Peter and Paul both declared him to be the rightful heir by a resurrection (Acts 2:29-32; 13:22, 23; Rom. 1:3-4).

BASIC DOCTRINE OF THE DAVIDIC COVENANT— RESURRECTION.

There are apparent inconsistencies in the promise. These can only be explained on the basis of the resurrection. God gave the promise knowing that the resurrection would be essential for its fulfilment (just as He gave promises to Abraham which required the resurrection);

1. The promised king was to be David's son and hence a mortal man and yet his throne was to be established **forever**. How? Through the resurrection. David worked this out and spoke accordingly in Psalm 16:8-11. Peter and Paul both explain that this psalm teaches the resurrection of the Christ (Acts 2:24-31; 13:35-37).
2. David is told that he will die ("sleep with his fathers"), but he is also informed that his son will reign forever "before him" or in his presence. The question arises — how? Besides appreciating that his seed would have to be a resurrected man, he realised that he, too, would have to be raised if he were to witness Christ's kingdom: "Thou. . . shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth" (Psa. 71:20-21).

SEALED BY DIVINE OATH.

Another important feature of the promise to David is God's oath confirming it: "The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it" (Psa. 132:11). Like the Abrahamic covenant, the promise to David is irrevocable and unchangeable (Psa. 89:3-4, 34-36; Jer. 33:20-26; cp. Luke 1:69-74).

THE EFFECT OF THE PROMISE UPON DAVID (2 Sam. 7:18-29).

Nathan departed, his work done. David arose and walked over to the place where the ark rested, enclosed in its curtains. He sat humbly before

Yahweh, transported by the wonder and grace of God's promise to him. No longer was he the king in his house of cedar seeking how he might bestow, albeit reverently, some blessing on the ark of God by bringing it to a permanent abode in Jerusalem. He went back in mind to his lowly origins and poured out his prayer: "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD: but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come" (vv. 18-19).

The great God had spoken to David, and caused him to tremble at the grace received. He contemplated in wonder the one who would be the centre of the promise and the Son of God: "Is this the manner of man?" (lit. "the law of the man"). Later he realised that his Son would be greater than himself, for he called him his "Lord" (Psa. 110:1; Matt. 22:44). David's son was David's Lord because he was also Son of God.

David continued and thanked and praised God for His revelation (vv. 21-22). He then spoke of the greatness of the nation of Israel, redeemed by God (vv. 23-24). He prayed that the name Yahweh might be magnified through the fulfilment of the promise made to his house (vv. 25-26). His final words sought that the blessing might surely come upon his house (v. 29).

LESSONS FOR US:

- A correct understanding of the promises to David is very important for the gospel of the Kingdom is based on the Davidic Covenant.
- David felt that he should do something for God to enable the kingdom to be settled, but God revealed that any work for good is a work which God has already prepared.
- David was humbled when he realised that God had bound up his "house" in the eternal scheme of things. So too, all who belong to families in the Truth are highly privileged.
- God has drawn nigh to us and invited "our house" to participate in the throne and Kingdom of David.

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PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS:

1. *God told David that He would build him an house. Explain what God meant.*
2. *What were the circumstances which led to God promising David a house?*
3. *What did David do and say when the great promise of a house was made to him?*
4. *The Davidic Covenant does not primarily refer to Solomon. Give * reasons for this statement.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. *What great lessons did David learn when he proposed building a house for God?*
2. * *How does the covenant to David relate to the Gospel?*
3. *Explain how resurrection is essential in order for the Davidic Covenant to be fulfilled.*
4. *Explain how the covenant made to David refers to Jesus Christ.*
5. *List four major aspects of the promise made to David and explain their fulfilment.*

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