



ISRAEL'S EARLY KINGS

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INTRODUCTION

It was not God's highest will for Israel to have a king reign over them. He intended to manifest His glory and power through the people of Israel without such a system. It was God's purpose to reign over Israel Himself in such glory and power that all the nations round about would recognize the superiority and glory of the God of Israel and forsake their idols to serve the Lord, Jehovah.

Instead of influencing the nations as God intended, Israel chose to be like them. They desired to have a king like all the nations about them. This was a great grief to Samuel, but even more to the Lord. Nevertheless, God instructed Samuel to grant Israel's request. After a solemn protest, by the leading of the Lord, the first king was chosen.

Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned in turn over all Israel for forty years. Saul and his reign correspond to the rule of the natural man (the flesh). David's reign represents the kingdom of the Spirit, while Solomon's 40 years of peace represents the heavenly kingdom of our Lord.

Forseeing that Israel would choose a king to reign over them, the Lord, through Moses, gave specific instructions for any future monarch to follow (see Deut.17:14-20). Much grief and tragic failures could have been avoided, had only these monarchs heeded the Divine wisdom so graciously provided. There are many relevant lessons for us to learn from this era of the monarchy of Israel. Above all let us be sure to recognize our Lord Jesus as our own King of Kings. Let us be sure that we seek His rule and reign in every area of our lives.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This is the eleventh in a series of twenty quarterlies (5 years) covering the greater part of the historical portion of the Bible. Now available are:

The Men and Women of Genesis	The Parables of Jesus
The Personal Ministry of Jesus	The Miracles of Jesus
Lessons From Exodus	Wilderness Examples
Possessing the Land of Promise	The Days of the Judges
Israel's Early Kings	
Matthew: The King and His Kingdom-I & II	

ISRAEL CHOOSES A KING

Read: I Samuel 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12

Memory Work: Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. Psalm 2:1

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Rebellious children are a grief to godly parents and a stumblingblock to others.*
2. *We are not to be conformed to this world. We are called to come out and be different with high standards of holiness.*
3. *If we insist upon our own willful way, God in His mercy does not totally forsake us, but we lose the glory and the full reward He wants us to enjoy.*
4. *When God's people persist in willful evil when they know it is wrong, judgment is bound to follow.*

I Like All the Nations: God's plan for Israel was, that they should be a bright example to all the nations around them, of what God would do for any nation which left idolatry and served Him only. They were called to be a peculiar or unique treasure to God, and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (see Ex.19:4-6). The law which God gave through Moses was intended to bring such blessing on those who lived by it that the nations round about would desire to serve the Lord God of the children of Israel. Under Moses and Joshua, God ruled over the people. In the days of the Judges the people rebelled and did their own will. Only when they repented and returned to the Lord, was God able to deliver and keep them. Samuel ruled the people by the Word of the Lord and Israel was blessed and helped. Through Samuel's prayer the Philistines were defeated and Israel enjoyed rest. But as Samuel grew old he delegated some of his authority to his two sons. They began to judge the people of Israel. Soon it became evident that they were not upright and honest like their father. What a sad thing it is

when the children of godly parents rebel against them and God. Disobedient and unclean and stubborn children of Christian workers are a stumblingblock and hinderance to the work of God. These sons of Samuel were grown men. We are not told why they became crooked and unjust.

The children of Israel foresaw that when Samuel died they would be in an evil state with such judges ruling them. No blame is placed on Samuel in the scripture for the wickedness of his sons. He did, however, show poor judgment in making his sons judges. Now the elders of Israel gathered together at Ramah where Samuel lived and they pointed out to Samuel that his sons would not be proper successors should he die. They proposed that Samuel make a king to judge them and to reign over them "like all the nations" (ch.8:5). This hurt Samuel deeply. He did what we should all do when we are grieved or hurt. He prayed unto the Lord. God comforted Samuel at once. The Lord pointed out that Israel was really rejecting the rule of God and not that of Samuel. Further, the Lord told Samuel to grant them their desire after a solemn protest (ch.8:9). The old man of God told the people all that God had shown him. He pointed out that a king would take a portion of their possessions and that they would be forced to give sons and daughters to serve the king. Samuel warned them that the day would come when they would cry out for deliverance from the burdens imposed by their king. Nevertheless, the people insisted, "Nay, but we will have a king over us that we may be like all the nations" (ch.8:19-20). Samuel went to the Lord again with the people's reaction and God told him once again to grant them their desire.

If we insist upon our own will the same thing happens. God's best is lost. The natural man has a deceitful and desperately wicked heart. The flesh will choose wrong every time. We must learn to give in to God. We never lose when we go God's way. He does not want us to live like the world, nor to look and act and think as the people of the world. We are called to be different. It is a high and holy calling that brings rich satisfaction and fulfillment.

II The King Is Chosen: The first king was chosen from the tribe of Benjamin. It was this tribe that was almost obliterated in the days of the judges. Now the strong young son of a mighty man of power from this tribe was chosen. The young man's name was Saul, and his father was Kish. The donkeys of Kish had wandered off and were lost. He sent his son Saul

with a servant to search for the donkeys. When after several days they did not find the animals, Saul proposed to return home before his father sent searchers out to find his son and the servant. The servant, however, proposed to seek out Samuel who was nearby and ask him concerning the donkeys. Saul protested that they had no offering to give the man of God. The servant did have a piece of silver and so they went to find the Seer.

God had spoken to Samuel the day before and told him that He would send him a man out of the tribe of Benjamin. Samuel was instructed to anoint him to be "captain over Israel" for the express purpose of delivering Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. Even as Saul and his servant enquired of the young girls at the well, where they might find Samuel, the old prophet was expecting him. When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord spoke to him and said "Behold the man whom I spoke to thee of."

Samuel greeted Saul and instructed him to proceed to the place where he was sacrificing to the Lord. Without being asked, he told Saul that the donkeys were found. He then told Saul that the desire of all Israel was on him. The tall young man was astonished at the sudden turn of events. Is it not often so, that our Lord is desiring to make us kings and priests unto our God, while we are busy looking for donkeys!

Samuel had set aside the best portion of meat for Saul and the two ate together and then communed on the top of the house. In the morning Samuel asked Saul to send his servant on ahead. As soon as the two were alone Samuel anointed Saul, pouring a vial of oil on his head and kissing him. "The Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance," Samuel advised him. The prophet then told Saul that as he went, the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him. To confirm to Saul that these events were of God, Samuel foretold in great detail how Saul would meet three men going to Bethel. Later, he would meet a company of prophets, and the Spirit of God would come upon him and he, too, would prophesy. All these things came to pass precisely as Samuel had said. "The Spirit of the Lord changed Saul into another man" (ch.10:6). When Samuel ministered to him, God gave Saul a new heart (ch.10:9).

When Saul arrived at home he told how Samuel had told them plainly that the donkeys were found, but he discreetly said nothing of the matter of the anointing and the kingdom.

The anointing of Saul had been done in private. Now Samuel called all Israel to Mizpeh. There Samuel upbraided the people for rejecting the rule of God in favor of a king. Nevertheless,

he made the tribes pass before him. This was the public choice of Saul to reign over Israel. The tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then the family of Matri and finally the son of Kish, Saul, was chosen. He could not be found, however, until Samuel enquired of the Lord, who told him that Saul was hiding "among the stuff" (ch.10:22). When Samuel brought him out and presented him to the people as the one whom the Lord had chosen, the people all gave a shout, "God save the King" (ch.10:24). The chosen one was head and shoulders taller than any of the other Israelites. He made a good looking king. Some men at once followed Saul to serve him, but others scoffed and said "how shall this man save us?"

III The First Battle: Nahash, the Ammonite, came up against the city of Jabesh-gilead. The frightened Israelites offered to become the heathen king's servants. Nahash demanded that they allow him to put out the right eye of every inhabitant of the city. They asked for seven days to consider the matter. News reached Saul of the distress of the people of Jabesh-gilead. The Spirit of the Lord again came upon Saul when he heard the demands of Nahash. His anger was kindled and he sent and called for all Israel to come to the help of Jabesh-gilead. Three hundred and thirty thousand responded, and Saul successfully defended and delivered the people of Jabesh-gilead. After the glorious victory, Samuel invited all the people to Gilgal. There they made Saul king again before the Lord and offered sacrifices and offerings. Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

IV One Last Protest: Samuel protested yet once more to the people for their desire to be like the nations about them. He asked if they had found any covetousness or dishonesty in him. They readily admitted his guiltlessness. Samuel recalled their history, showing how God had been their king and had prospered them and brought them out of Egypt and into the promised land. Yet now they were casting off the rule of God and choosing to have a mortal king. To prove God's disapproval of their decision Samuel told them that he would call to the Lord to send thunder and rain even though it was the time of harvest. This unheard of, out of season thunderstorm, really frightened the people. They asked Samuel to pray to God for them but they still insisted on their king.

Samuel magnanimously assured them that if they would serve the Lord with all of their hearts, God would still bless them

and their king. Despite our stubbornness and willfulness, the Lord is merciful and blesses us as much as He can. Let us make no mistake, however, for if we persist in our own choices when we know God's way to be a higher way, there will be certain loss and judgment. God will not totally forsake us, but our best fruitfulness may be lost. The eternal rewards also may be forfeited. God help us not only to know the will of God but to do it.

Samuel himself promised still to pray for the people. He overcame any temptation to bitterness. He admonished the people one last time to serve the Lord in truth with all their hearts. He finally warned them that if they continued in wickedness that both their king and they themselves would be consumed. May God help us to choose His way.

NOTES:

THE KINGDOM IS RENT FROM SAUL

Read: I Samuel 13, 14 & 15

Memory Work: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Psalm 2:2

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We must follow the instruction of the Lord at once if we desire his blessing on our lives and ministry.*
2. *We should see the importance of waiting on the Lord. He will endue us with power for our work if we wait upon Him.*
3. *If we live close to the Lord He will give us good judgment so that we do not make foolish mistakes that cost us full victory.*
4. *God counts partial obedience as total rebellion. If we do not completely obey the King, we cannot be children of His kingdom.*
5. *What people think of us does not count nearly so much as what God thinks of us.*

I Saul's Impatience at Gilgal: When Samuel anointed Saul to be king over Israel, he foretold exactly how the events of the day would occur and how the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him to enable him to deliver Israel. Samuel also instructed Saul to go down to Gilgal and wait for him for seven days. Samuel promised to come to Saul there and tell him further, exactly what God would have him to do. After the anointing of Saul, the new king delivered the people of Jabesh-gilead. But more than a year passed and Saul had not gone to Gilgal to meet Samuel and to get instruction from the Lord. Jonathan, the oldest son of Saul attacked a garrison of the Philistines and stirred them up to come against Israel. Then Saul called the people to come after him to Gilgal. The people were frightened

by the Philistines. Israel had no weapons while the enemy had chariots and horsemen. The people followed Saul to Gilgal but as the seven days went by many of them hid themselves in caves and pits and high places and in the woods. Some even deserted and went over Jordan. Saul became impatient waiting for Samuel. He reasoned that soon he would have no army left at all. When Samuel did not appear on the seventh day as appointed Saul took action. He called for a burnt offering and he offered it up himself. In his own words he "forced himself" to do what Samuel was to do. His motive seemed right and his reasoning sensible, but God judged differently. Saul did not go to Gilgal until the second year of his reign, yet now he could not wait one day for Samuel to come to him. The flesh is impatient. God is never in a hurry but He never works too late.

Samuel came just as soon as Saul had finished sacrificing. Saul gave his explanations and excuses which seemed reasonable, but Samuel told him at once that he had done foolishly. "Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God," Samuel told Saul. He explained that God would have established the kingdom of Saul at this time if only Saul would have obeyed carefully the commandment of the Lord. But, alas, Samuel gave the sad word that the kingdom of Saul would not continue. Samuel revealed that God had sought for a man after His own heart to be captain over His people. Note that God spoke of that man as though already available to replace Saul, whereas David was not yet born in the second year of Saul's reign. Now Samuel left Saul without instructing him how to proceed against the enemy. He lost the wisdom and help God wanted to give him so that he could deliver Israel. We, too, must learn to wait on the Lord and get wisdom from His Word and from His servants so that we may know how to fight and overcome the old tempter.

II Saul's Senseless Curse: Instead of celebrating victory over the Philistines, poor Israel now was victimized because of their king's poor judgment. The Philistines divided their forces into three companies and went out and raided and spoiled Israel in every section of their country. The people of God were helpless before them.

The oldest son of Saul, Jonathan, was a man of faith. He proposed to his armour-bearer that the two of them undertake an expedition against the garrison of the Philistines near Gibeah. Saul had six hundred men with him there, but Jonathan and his armour-bearer set out alone. As they climbed the rocky

cliff to surprise the garrison of the Philistines Jonathan told his helper that if the Philistines told them to come up to them, then they would understand that as a sign that God was working with them and they would attack the Philistines. If they told Jonathan to stop and came to meet him they would take that as a sign not to proceed any further. Jonathan had faith that God would guide them and was willing to do whatever God showed him, one way or the other. If we desire to be led by the Lord we must do as Jonathan did and always be willing to be led either way.

The Philistines saw the two faithful Israelites and called them to come up. At once Jonathan and his armour-bearer attacked. In a few minutes twenty Philistines were dead and the rest were in hasty retreat. As soon as the victory began more Israelites appeared, some had been with the Philistines and now turned against them, others came out of their hiding places and joined the pursuit. Saul's lookouts reported the activity and after a roll call Saul realized that Jonathan was leading this attack. Confusion reigned among the Philistines. A great trembling came upon the enemy and even the earth quaked. Soon the Philistines were beating one another to the ground. Saul and his men finally joined the action. The king ordered, on pain of death, that no one should stop to eat until the enemies were all destroyed. But the people became faint in their pursuit and dared not eat of the honey they found in great abundance in the wood. When Jonathan took some of the honey, he was strengthened at once. He did not know of his father's foolish curse. After lots were cast to find who caused the Lord to refuse to speak to Saul through the priest, Jonathan was chosen. Saul again showed poor judgment in sentencing Jonathan to die. But the people had more sense than their king. Jonathan had brought victory to Israel that day and public opinion overruled the king.

Saul was strengthened by this victory and led Israel against all their enemies with good success. He made his cousin, Abner, the captain of the army. Because of the constant war with the Philistines, Saul took every strong young man which he could find, just as Samuel had foretold.

III Saul's Failure to Obey: Samuel came to Saul once again with instruction from the Lord. Samuel advised Saul to "hearken unto the voice of the words of the Lord." The Lord remembered the treachery of the Amalekites when Israel came out of Egypt. They had come suddenly upon Israel after Moses had smitten

the rock and water had poured out to meet their need. Moses had gone with Aaron and Hur to the top of a hill while Joshua led the Israelites in battle against the Amalekites. This took place shortly after the Red Sea crossing when Israel was not ready for war. As Moses lifted his hands to God on the hill, stayed up by Aaron and Hur, Israel prevailed in the valley of Rephidim. God became the enemy of the Amalekites because of this treachery and now commanded Saul to utterly destroy them. Men, women and children were to be wiped out as well as all their domestic animals. Nothing was to remain.

So Saul gathered his army and went up against one of the cities of the Amalekites. He assembled two hundred and ten thousand troops. After warning the Kenites to flee because they had treated Israel kindly in the wilderness, Saul fell upon the Amalekites and overcame them. From Havilah to Shur near the border of Egypt, Saul and his army chased them. They slaughtered the Amalekites except for Agag, their king. Possibly Saul desired to exhibit the conquered king in Israel and so enhance his reputation. Saul and the people also spared the best of the animals for themselves in direct disobedience to the word of the Lord.

The Lord spoke to Samuel in the night. He told Samuel that Saul had not obeyed His commandment and that He was sorry that He had made Saul king. Samuel cried unto the Lord all night. In the morning Samuel went to find Saul. He found him at Gilgal. Saul brazenly greeted Samuel and boasted of having performed the commandment of the Lord. Samuel asked why then he could hear the bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen. Saul blamed the people and explained that they had only spared the animals so that they could offer them to the Lord. "Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," Samuel declared (ch.15:22). This is an eternal truth. God is much more pleased with our obedience to His Word, than with our gifts and offerings. Let us remember that if we do not obey Him perfectly we cannot be in His Kingdom. The source of Saul's trouble was in his pride. He once had been little in his own eyes, but now he was lifted up. We face the same danger as we have precious victories in our Christian warfare. Let us be careful to stay at the feet of Jesus; always teachable and recognizing that without Him we can do nothing.

Samuel's sentence was pronounced, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (ch.15:23). Perhaps the saddest part of the story is Saul's response to this sentence. He desired Samuel to worship

with him before the people. He half-heartedly confessed his sin but wanted to keep up appearances. Samuel turned to leave and Saul caught his cloke and asked him to come back. Samuel pulled his garment from Saul and it ripped. "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and given it to a neighbor of thine who is better than thou," Samuel dramatically pronounced. And he added that God would not change His mind. Saul asked only that Samuel honor him now before the elders and the people by turning and worshipping with him. Samuel consented and did worship the Lord with Saul in the sight of Israel but the rest of the years of Saul were hollow and empty. He deteriorated in mind and spirit until God became his enemy. Samuel called for a sword and did the job Saul was commissioned to do. The old prophet cut the cruel and wicked king of the Amalekites, Agag, in pieces and left Saul, never to see him again in life. Let us choose the path of obedience. The end is worth any sacrifice involved.

NOTES:

DAVID IS ANOINTED AND DEFEATS GOLIATH

Read: I Samuel 16 & 17

Memory Work: Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Psalm 2:3

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We ought not to waste time mourning over past defeats. We must take courage and press on.*
2. *Inward virtue is to be preferred over outward beauty.*
3. *If we persist in willful disobedience we open the door to evil spirits.*
4. *David was no waster of time. Music and shepherding and good use of time laid the foundation for good service to God.*
5. *Our faith will be helped if we get our eyes off of the great difficulties we face, and onto our God who is mighty to save.*

I A King Provided: When Saul did not obey the Lord and was rejected from reigning over the Lord's people, Samuel was heart broken. God had directed in the choice of Saul. He had seemed a promising prospect. He was humble and little in his own sight to begin with, but with the authority of a king, Saul's ego and self-sufficiency soon matched his oversized physical stature. Samuel felt some responsibility for Saul and so he mourned over his failure. But God's plan did not stop because of Saul's failure. God had long before foreseen this situation and began, through Boaz and Ruth, to raise up a king who would do His will. The Lord asked Samuel how long he intended to mourn for Saul. There was work to be done. He told Samuel to fill his horn with oil and go to the home of Jesse in Bethlehem. Among the sons of this grandson of Ruth and Boaz, God had provided Himself a king to reign over His people.

Samuel dared not openly go to anoint the new king. So far had Saul fallen that Samuel feared for his life should the king learn of his errand. Human nature is so quick to forget the service rendered in the past. Joash quickly forgot the kindness of Jehoiada and slew his son Zechariah. Saul, too, forgot to be grateful for all that Samuel had done for him. To disguise the errand of anointing a new king, God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. This wisdom of the Lord reveals that He does not want us to put ourselves in needless danger. The plan to sacrifice was wisdom not deceit. The elders of Bethlehem trembled at the coming of Samuel. The old man of God was feared and respected. Perhaps the elders of Bethlehem had a guilty conscience which caused them to fear. Samuel told the elders to sanctify themselves and come to the sacrifice. The old Seer himself sanctified Jesse and his sons and called them to the feast.

When the sons of Jesse came, Samuel looked at the oldest, Eliab, and concluded that surely this must be the Lord's anointed. Saul had been a tall impressive man and Samuel considered Eliab's stature and looks. God told Samuel, however, that this man was refused. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance," God told Samuel, "but God looketh on the heart" (I Sam.16:7). The second and third sons of Jesse also appeared before Samuel, but neither Abinadab nor Shammah were chosen. Seven sons passed before Samuel, but none was approved of God. Samuel had to press Jesse to find out that there was another son, but he was tending the sheep. The man of God insisted that the youngest son be brought before they sat down to eat. When he came, Samuel noted that he was a good looking young man with a healthy rosy cheeked appearance. "Arise, anoint him," the Lord commanded Samuel, "for this is he" (12:12). At once the old prophet and judge obeyed and anointed David by pouring the oil from his horn on David's head. This was done in the sight of his brothers. From that day on, the Spirit of the Lord was upon David. Samuel returned to his home in Ramah and David to his shepherding in Bethlehem. No outward changes took place at once, but the Lord was with David.

II Cunning in Playing: Persistent disobedience had caused the Spirit of the Lord to leave Saul. In its place an evil spirit was permitted by the Lord to oppress Saul. He had fits of depression and was a very troubled man. The servants of Saul suggested that a good musician might help cheer the king when

these dark moods were upon him. One of the servants had seen David and was greatly impressed by the young man. He described him as a cunning player, a mighty valiant man of war, prudent in matters, and best of all, the Lord was with him. David had not wasted his time with all fun and games as a boy. He learned to improve and develop himself by faithful diligence. He did not become a cunning player because Samuel anointed him. His prowess as a man of war also came from self-discipline and practice. Most young people are rash until experience teaches them prudence. The teen-age David had sought and found God, for the Lord was with him. Let every young Christian learn to improve himself by wise use of time and opportunity. "Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings" (Prov.22:29).

So young David was sent for and he stood before Saul and when the king was oppressed David played soothing and joyful music on his harp until Saul was refreshed. The king loved David and made him his armourbearer. This was David's first contact with the king and the kingdom.

III David Meets Goliath: The perennial enemies of Israel, the Philistines, gathered together at a place called Shochoh near Azekah. This was not too far from Bethlehem, David's home. Saul brought his troops to defend against the Philistines and a battle was shaping up. The three oldest brothers of David joined the troops and followed Saul to the battle. Meanwhile David had returned from serving as Saul's armourbearer and court musician, to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

The Philistines were led by a fierce giant named Goliath. Daily he appeared and challenged Israel to send a warrior to fight him. He proposed that whoever should win such a duel would bring victory to the whole nation. The loser would cause his nation to become the servants of the nation of the victor. Daily the roaring, loud mouthed giant defied the armies of Israel. Just at this time Jesse sent David to bring his brothers and their captain some corn and bread and cheese. It is noteworthy that young David saw to it that a substitute took his place caring for the sheep, and also that he rose and set out on his errand very early in the morning.

When David arrived at the encampment the warriors were just going out to engage in battle. He found his brothers and delivered his provisions. As they were taking together the champion of the Philistines came up and shouted out his defiance. David heard his challenge. The soldiers of Saul cringed before

the giant. They mentioned that Saul had offered great rewards to anyone who would accept this challenge and win the victory for Israel. David was interested at once. He recognized this unaccepted challenge as a reproach to the armies of the living God. Eliab, the tall good looking eldest son of Jesse scolded David. He accused David of coming just to see the battle. Perhaps Eliab felt a little ashamed for not having the faith or courage to fight the Philistine himself. And what about Saul? Wasn't he head and shoulders taller than all Israel? Why is he offering rewards to any successful volunteer instead of buckling on his armour and going out to meet the Philistine in the name of the Lord?

Soon Saul was informed of the brave words of David and the young man was summoned before the king. Apparently the sick king did not recognize David or, as some have reasoned, perhaps this story is out of place in the chronological record of the events. Saul protested that David was too young to fight such a mature and experienced warrior. David insisted that the Lord who had enabled him to save his sheep from a lion on one occasion and a bear on another, would enable him to defeat this God-defying, heathen Philistine. Saul offered David his armour, but it must have been evident that the young man could not comfortably move about in the tall king's armour. Saul wished David well and the brave young hero took his staff and sling with five stones and ran to meet Goliath. The giant was insulted that a mere lad was coming against him without armour. He cursed David by his gods and boasted that he would feed David's body to the vultures and scavengers. David responded that he was coming to meet the giant, not with sword and spear, but in the name of the Lord of hosts whose armies the Philistine had defied. Though David had no sword, he declared that he would take off the giant's head and feed his dead body to the birds and beasts. Then all the earth would know that there was a real God in Israel who could win victories without swords and spears.

With the speeches over, David hastened and ran to meet Goliath. It was an unfair fight. David never gave the giant a chance. He took a smooth stone from his bag and slung it with deadly accuracy at the enraged giant who never came close enough to David to use his weapons. The stone struck the Philistine directly in the forehead and caused him to fall headlong on the ground. David was upon the giant at once and taking the Philistine's own sword, he finished the job and cut off his head. The astonished army of the Philistines broke rank and

and fled. Now the courage of Israel returned to them and they pursued the Philistines to Ekron. They took much spoil and celebrated a great victory over their chief enemy.

It is true also in the church of Christ today, that when one individual, full of faith, wins a victory over the forces of evil, that all the church is inspired to believe God and win victories for His cause. Let us not fear the enemy. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. "Expect great things from God: Attempt great things for God:" that all the world may know that there is a resurrected, loving Lord in the church.

NOTES:

DAVID FLEES FROM SAUL

Read: I Samuel 20, 21, 22, 25 & 26

Memory Work: He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Psalm 2:4

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jealousy must be overcome or it will debase our lives and spoil our usefulness.*
2. *A true friend seeks the welfare of his friend above his own.*
3. *We must learn not to avenge ourselves. Since the Lord works all things together for good for those who love Him, we can well afford to leave all judgment to Him.*
4. *Selfishness and stinginess strangle our usefulness to God and man. Generosity enriches, while selfishness impoverishes.*

I The Jealousy of Saul: After David killed the giant he became a popular hero. He was young and handsome and brave and, of course, the women admired him greatly. Israel rejoiced in the victory over the Philistines. Wherever Saul went crowds came out to meet him, and to see David. The women sang a new song which no doubt was number one in popularity. They sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (ch.18:7). Saul was the king but David was honored above him. It was only natural for Saul to feel jealous toward David. We can learn a lesson here. When honor is given to some one, it ought to be done in such a way as not to provoke jealousy in others. Should we be tempted to be jealous we ought at once to deal with God about it. We must recognize jealousy as a dangerous sin. If we pray earnestly for the one we are tempted to be jealous of, and find a way to do him some service, we shall overcome the dangerous temptation.

Saul did not overcome his jealousy. He began to eye David from that time on. He looked for things to find fault with in

David. When Saul was in one of his evil moods, David played the harp for him. Saul's jealousy rose up within him and caused him to hurl his javelin at David. Twice the young hero narrowly avoided death at the hand of Saul. When David conducted himself so wisely that Saul could find no fault with him, the king began to fear him.

Getting rid of David soon obsessed Saul's mind. He tried devious ways to get rid of the popular hero who seemed a threat to the throne. He sent him out to dangerous battles. Then he asked that David kill 100 Philistines as the dowry for the daughter he had promised as a reward for killing Goliath. David killed 200 and presented the evidence to Saul and claimed his bride. Saul knew that God was with David and feared him more and more. He became David's enemy continually. David had done nothing but loyal service to Saul and yet the little seed of jealousy had grown into a full grown obsession to kill the son of Jesse.

Jonathan, the son of Saul, had befriended David. He had perhaps more to be jealous of in David than Saul did, yet Jonathan perfectly overcame any temptation along this line. He spoke to his father on David's behalf and reminded Saul of the loyal services David had performed. For a little while Saul was persuaded to give up his attempts to kill David.

But when David once again enjoyed great success in battle (see ch.19:8) the old jealousy revived and Saul once again threw his javelin at David. The weapon missed its target and stuck fast in the wall. Saul sent men to David's house to get him. Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, helped him escape. She told the messengers that David was sick in bed. This did not satisfy Saul who wanted David brought in the bed so he might kill him. But David was long gone and Saul's evil designs were foiled again.

Again Jonathan tried to reason with his crazed father but soon became the target of the javelin himself. So David had to flee. He left Michal behind. When Saul learned that Ahimelech the High Priest, had given David bread and the sword of Goliath, he ordered the death of 85 priests of the Lord. To what depths of degradation unconquered jealousy can plunge a man! David left the country for a while until a prophet told him to return. But now he lived the life of a hunted fugitive. Saul sought more for David's life than for those of his true enemies, the Philistines. He took 3,000 men and chased David. Twice, David had opportunity to do away with Saul, but spared him because he was the anointed of the Lord. In so doing he

shamed Saul into giving up the hunt for David's life. God deliver us from jealousy!

II The Friendship of Jonathan: After David slew the giant, Jonathan became the friend of David. Their hearts became as one. Jonathan is a rare and wonderful example of a real friend. Jonathan gave everything he could to David. His princely robe, his garments, his prized bow, and his sword all found their way into David's possession (ch.18:3&4). When Saul attempted to get Jonathan to kill David, he warned his friend to hide himself for a while. Jonathan convinced his father to be reconciled to David but it did not last. When Jonathan determined for sure that evil was determined against David he gave him a sign and warned him to flee. But before David left the court of Saul for good, Jonathan renewed his covenant with his friend (ch.20:17). Saul had told Jonathan that he would never be king as long as David lived, but Jonathan was willing to see David reign and take second place. Before David left, once again the two friends vowed to be loyal friends in the sight of God and to be kind to each other's children whatever happened (ch.20:41-42). It was a tearful goodbye for the friends but David eventually was able to take Jonathan's advice to "go in peace" (20:42). Once more, some time later, while Saul was pursuing David with his army, Jonathan sought out and found his friend in the forest of the wilderness of Ziph. They had good fellowship together and Jonathan encouraged and strengthened David in the Lord. What a refreshing that must have been for the weary fugitive. "Fear not," Jonathan assured David, "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" (ch.23:17). If there is one word to describe the character of Jonathan, that word is **magnanimous**. One cannot help wondering, however, what might have been, had Jonathan forsaken the king's court and cast his lot with his fugitive friend.

Not many are fortunate enough in this selfish world to have a friend like Jonathan. Those whom we call friends often turn out to be self-seeking and forgetful of their friends. If you don't have a true friend, perhaps you can become one. At any rate, "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and that friend is Jesus. He stripped Himself of His royal robes and put on the rags of humanity and offers to share His eternal kingdom with us. What a friend we have in Jesus!

III Abigail: When David fled from Saul he escaped to a cave

at Adullam. There four hundred men joined him. Some were in debt, some were in distress and others discontent. They made a formidable force and later raided the Philistines regularly. These men followed David and were loyal to him. After the death of Samuel, David and his men went to the wilderness of Paran in the South. There was a very wealthy descendant of Caleb there. This man was very evil and stingy. He had a quick temper and tongue, but a beautiful and wise wife. The man's name was Nabal (fool) and his wife's name was Abigail. When David found out that Nabal was shearing his sheep at Carmel, he sent some of his young men to ask for some provisions for his men. David and his men had protected Nabal's flocks from raids during the winter (ch.25:15-16). The time of wool shearing was always a time of feasting. Nabal was a very prosperous man. David had served him by protecting his shepherds from raiding parties. He had a right to expect some share in the feasting of Nabal and his men.

But Nabal was miserly. He answered David's men very roughly. He called David a renegade servant. When David got the report, he ordered 400 of his 600 men to gird on their swords. He fully intended to kill all the men of the household of Nabal.

One wise servant of the stingy rich man ran to tell Abigail, the wife of Nabal, the sorry tale. He reasoned accurately that evil was determined against Nabal. His testimony of his master was that he was such a son of Belial (the devil) that no one dared speak to him. Unfortunately, there are sons of Nabal among the ranks of "Christians" today, to whom one hardly dare to speak. May God give us a civil and a kind and loving tongue.

Abigail took action at once. She sent abundant bread and wine and dressed sheep, corn, raisins, and cakes of figs. She herself went to meet David and his men. She dared not tell Nabal of her action. When she found David she fell at his feet and begged his forgiveness for her husband's rash actions. She advised David not to avenge himself so that it would bother his conscience when he became king. Though Nabal said, "Who is David?" Abigail recognized him as the coming King. She knew all about the injustice of Saul's actions toward David, and considered the actions of her husband as a sentence of death upon him. Truly, she was a remarkable woman. "Now let thine enemies and they that seek evil to my lord be as Nabal," she said. She seemed to reckon him as dead. It was not difficult for David to take the advice of this wise and beautiful woman. He blessed the Lord who had sent her, he

blessed the advice she had given, and he blessed her for keeping him from avenging himself by shedding the blood of Nabal. David thankfully accepted the bounty which Abigail provided.

When the beautiful wise wife finally told Nabal of her actions the next morning, he had a heart attack or stroke. He had been very drunk the night before. Now with the wine gone out of him the news of his wife's generosity apparently caused his attack. In ten days he died. When David heard of it he thanked God again that Abigail had prevented him from avenging himself. He went to Carmel and asked her to become his wife. She protested that she would gladly become his servant but she soon was his wife.

What a change for Abigail. From marriage to a stingy son of the devil, to union with the coming king full of wisdom and kindness. It is a picture of our union with the Son of God after we have suffered from our marriage to the self-life. We are become dead to self by the cross of Christ that we may be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead. Let us reckon our self-life to be dead indeed as Abigail considered Nabal as good as dead. Nothing can be more satisfying than union with our Lord and King.

NOTES:

THE TERRIBLE END OF SAUL

Read: I Samuel 28, 29, 30 & 31

Memory Work: Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Psalm 2:5

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *If we persist in disobedience, the Lord will not speak to us at all.*
2. *To have God become your enemy is a terrible condition indeed.*
3. *We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of our deeds.*
4. *The best response we can make to calamities and disasters and accidents, etc., is to encourage ourselves in the Lord.*
5. *Our personal failures often cause grief and suffering to our loved ones and others around us.*

I The Lord Becomes Saul's Enemy: David in despair finally left Judah and took refuge with Achish, king of the Philistines, at Gath. The Philistine king gave David and his men (about 800) the city of Ziklag to dwell in (I Sam.27:6). From this base David conducted his operations. He and his men made excursions and fell suddenly upon the enemies of Israel (I Sam.27:8). He left no one alive to bring tidings of his activity to Achish and so the king of the Philistines trusted David as an ally and friend.

Finally, king Achish organized a great attack upon Israel. He informed David that he should join him in this invasion. In response to the threat from the Philistines Saul gathered the forces of Israel together at Gilboa (I Sam.28:4). The army of Saul was small in comparison to the host of the Philistines. Saul was very frightened. How he wished for the help and guidance of Samuel. But the old man of God had died. All Israel had mourned for him and buried the last judge and first of

the prophets in his own city of Ramah. When Samuel lived, Saul did not hearken to the word of the Lord by Samuel, and now, when Samuel was dead, he wanted the guidance of the Lord and could not get it. Neither by prophets or by dreams, nor by the Urim of the priesthood could Saul get any answer from God.

Saul had banished the fortune tellers and witches with their soothsaying from the land, but now he would like to enquire from one of them. Saul's servants knew of one such woman at Endor. Disguising himself, Saul went to her (I Sam.28:8) and asked her to bring up the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel (I Samuel 28:11). She protested that it was against the law of the land. Only when Saul swore to her that no punishment would be given for this offence did she consent to attempt to raise Samuel by her witchcraft. When the old prophet did indeed appear the woman was terrified. Samuel obviously appeared not in response to the witch's incantations, but rather in answer to poor king Saul's desperate cry. When Samuel asked Saul why he had disturbed his rest, the distraught king told of his anxiety concerning the battle that was about to take place. He told Samuel how God would not speak to him anymore. "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy," Samuel demanded? Then Samuel told Saul that because of his disobedience, especially in the matter of the Amalekites, the Lord had rent the kingdom from him and given it to David. Samuel pronounced the Divine sentence upon Saul: the next day Israel would fall before the Philistines, and the king and his sons would be in the land of the dead. When Saul heard this he fell headlong to the ground. Forty years of disobedience, jealousy, pride and injustice finally had caught up with Saul the son of Kish who had made such a good start.

Let us be warned! We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We must hearken and fully obey the word of the Lord here and now if we would have the reward then. To have God for your enemy is a fearful condition. James warns us that if we are a friend of the world we become the enemy of God. Let us earnestly ask ourselves, "am I in any way a friend of this world?" If so, let us sincerely and thoroughly repent and set our affection on things above.

II The Ziklag Experience: When the armies of the Philistines massed to make war with Israel, David and his 800 men joined forces with them. The lords of the Philistines had some well-

founded misgivings about having this formidable force in their midst. They feared that in the midst of the battle, David and his men would turn on them. In this way, the Philistine leaders reasoned, David could be reconciled to Saul and rejoin his native land. Accordingly, David was asked to return from the invading force to his place at Ziklag. Unquestionably, David would have done as the lords of the Philistines feared. There was no chance that David would actually have gone to fight against his own people and against Jonathan, his friend.

When David and his men, after vehement protest, did return to Ziklag, a disheartening situation awaited them. The unguarded town had been ravaged by a band of Amalekites. These were the very enemies Saul should have utterly slain. They had burned the city with fire and taken captive all the women and children. David's men were so stunned that they wept. Then they began to blame David. Some spoke of stoning their leader. Yet David himself lost his two wives also. He responded to this terrible situation by "encouraging himself in the Lord" (I Sam. 30:6). May we learn from this how to respond to the calamities which befall us. We too, may encourage ourselves in the Lord. David called for a priest and an ephod. He then enquired of the Lord if he should pursue. Unlike Saul's requests to the Lord, David received answer at once. He was instructed to pursue the enemy and was assured of recovering all. Two hundred of David's men were too disheartened to join the chase. They remained at Ziklag to guard their few remaining possessions.

The pursuers found a sick Egyptian slave in the field and brought him to David. He had been abandoned by his master because of his sickness after the sacking of Ziklag. He agreed to lead them to the Amalekites' camp in exchange for his life and liberty. When they came upon the camp, the Amalekites were celebrating their recent good fortune. They were feasting and carousing. David fell suddenly upon them and destroyed them from one evening to the next; about 24 hours. Only four hundred escaped on swift camels. David recovered all, including his two wives. They also took a great deal of spoil from the Amalekites. David's men got a little greedy and did not want to share any of the spoil or recovered goods with the two hundred who had stayed behind. David insisted however, that they share and share alike! He later made this an ordinance in Israel; that those who "stayed by the stuff" should share equally in the spoil of the victory.

III The Bitter End of Saul: Meanwhile on the mountains of Gil-

boa, the great battle between the Philistines and the children of Israel took shape. The Philistines gained the upper hand at once. No doubt, the message from Samuel the night before took the heart out of Saul. Unfortunately Saul's miserable failure affected the lives (and deaths) of many other Israelites. The warriors of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell down slain before them. The three sons of Saul fell in the battle: Abinadab, Malchishua, and worst of all Jonathan. This generous prince who had befriended and defended David from his own jealous father, now lost his life because of his father's sins. One cannot help wondering what might have been, had Jonathan left the king's court and joined David's band. Were it not for the assurance of resurrection, the premature death of Jonathan would be a total tragedy. May it be that we can learn a lesson here and recognize that if need be when we are called to the kingdom of God that we be ready to "forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Psalm 45:10).

Saul himself was sorely wounded by the archers of the Philistines. He feared that the Philistines would capture him and abuse him, and so he asked his armorbearer to thrust the sword through him. When the lad would not do it, Saul did it himself, falling on the upturned blade. The loyal lad followed the example of his king. So Saul, his armorbearer and his three sons, all died on that day. When the Philistines found Saul and his three sons the next day, they cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor and sent word all around their land. They put Saul's armor in the temple of Ashteroth, their god, and fastened his body to the wall at Bethshan.

The men of Jabesh-Gilead in Israel heard what had happened and what the Philistines had done to Saul's body. They remembered how the king had saved them from the ultimatum of Nahash. The valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead marched all night to Bethshan and removed the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall. They brought them back to Jabesh and burned the bodies there and then buried the bones and remains under a tree. Then they fasted and mourned for Saul for seven days.

The tragedy of Saul is, that one who began so well, one whose heart was regenerated, and who had such great help as that of Samuel, should come to so tragic an end, with God as his enemy. Let us take heed to ourselves that we do not become presumptuous and careless as a result of blessings and early victories. It is exceedingly important that we fully obey the word of the Lord and that we stay down at the feet of the Lord Jesus, recognizing that without Him we can do nothing.

DAVID ANOINTED KING

Read: II Samuel 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5:1-5

Memory Work: Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Psalm 2:6

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Our failures come back to haunt us.*
2. *To fulfill the plan of God for our lives we must learn to enquire of the Lord concerning all our actions.*
3. *The follower of the Lord should have a high regard for the life and welfare of all those around him; even those who seem to be enemies.*

I Tell It Not In Gath: On the third day after David's return to Ziklag with all the spoil of the Amalekites, a man came to David from the camp of Saul. He came with his clothes rent and with earth upon his head. He fell down in obeisance before David. When questioned, he told how he had come from the battle between Israel and the Philistines. David asked how the battle went and the man told how Israel had fled from the Philistines. He told of the many casualties and then revealed that Saul and Jonathan were dead. David asked how he knew that Saul and Jonathan were dead, and he told how he had found Saul wounded and fallen in battle. The Philistines were coming near and Saul asked him to slay him because he was yet completely conscious. It is not clear if this man made up this story in the hope of getting a reward from David (see II Sam.4:10), or whether it actually happened as he related it to David. Most of the story agrees with that recorded in I Sam.31:1-5. Only the part of this man who was an Amelekite is not mentioned in the first record.

The man had brought to David, Saul's crown and bracelet to confirm his report. When David saw the crown and bracelet, he realized that the report of Saul's death was true. He rent his clothes, as did the men with David, and they fasted and mourned for Jonathan and for Saul. David then questioned the

young man further and found out that he was an Amalekite. The Lord had given Saul the commission to execute His fierce wrath against the Amalekites. If Saul had fulfilled his obedience to God, there would have been no Amalekite to finish him off. David asked the Amalekite why he was not afraid to stretch forth his hand against the anointed of the Lord. He ordered the death of the Amalekite. His reward was not what he was expecting. Twice David had had opportunity to slay Saul, but because he regarded the evil king still as the anointed of the Lord, he refused to touch him. Now Saul was dead, killed in essence, by the Philistines and still David took no pleasure in the death of his persecutor and tormenter. Sincerely, David mourned for Saul and for Jonathan. Later, in memory of Jonathan the expert archer, David ordered that the skills of archery be taught to the children of the tribe of Judah. David lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan with an eloquent eulogy: "How are the mighty fallen!" he cried. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice." David had loved Jonathan with a beautiful pure friendship love that is rare in this life. May God grant us the grace to love our enemies and pray for those who have treated us badly, and in short, "do unto others as we would have them do unto us."

II Anointed Again in Hebron: David was first anointed by Samuel at Bethlehem. He was about 17 years old at that time. Now thirteen eventful years had passed. There had been great triumphs for David, but the suffering and misunderstanding and persecution predominated in those interesting years. David was in God's school. Many of the lessons David learned were hard for him, but he stayed in God's school. He learned to bring every problem to the Lord and to seek for guidance from Him concerning everything. Now with Saul dead and Israel without leadership, David enquired of the Lord whether he should return to Israel from Ziklag; and if so, where he should go. The Lord instructed David to return to Israel and to make his home base at Hebron. Accordingly, David and his two wives and the men which had been with him, with their families, all moved into the area of Hebron. There, the princes of Judah came and anointed David to be king over them. It is noteworthy that David did not grasp for the crown. The Lord allowed things to develop rather slowly. David was king over only the tribe of Judah at first.

Abner, Saul's cousin, had been the commander of Saul's

army. When Saul died, Abner made Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, king, and did not recognize David's rule at Hebron. Joab, the son of Zeruah, half sister of David, was made chief captain of David's army. The men of Abner and the men of Joab met in a tournament which developed (like some of our modern sporting events) into a full scale battle. David's men overcame their rivals. When Asahel, the brother of Joab, and a champion long distance runner, pursued Abner, Abner recognized him and warned him to turn aside to get some armor for protection, but Asahel continued pursuing until Abner thrust the blunt end of his spear at Asahel. The weapon felled the foolish brother of Joab, striking him under the fifth rib and going right through his body. He fell wallowing in his own blood. Abner killed Asahel in self defence, but Joab resolved to avenge his brother's death. For the time being, however, Abner and Joab agreed upon a truce.

The house of David, with the blessing of God, grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul under the leadership of Ish-bosheth, grew weaker and weaker. Abner revolted against the son of Saul when he was reprovved regarding his relationship with a woman which had been the concubine of Saul. While Abner did not harm Ish-bosheth physically, he conferred with David to make an alliance with him. David demanded first of all that Michal, Saul's daughter, who had been David's first wife and now had been married to Phaltiel, be restored to him before any conference was arranged. Michal was forcibly returned to David but their relationship was never what it had been before. Perhaps she had found real satisfaction with Phaltiel and resented being forced to return to David. At least ten years had elapsed since David fled from Saul leaving her behind, and now there were several other wives to share David's love. Perhaps this explains a little, her criticism of David later when he brought the ark to Zion.

The requirement met, David did meet with Abner in the absence of Joab. David made a feast for Abner and twenty men whom he had brought along. Abner agreed to gather all of Israel together to recognize the rule of David as their king. Note again that David himself did nothing to bring this about. He was allowing God to work out His will and fulfill the promise made years before through Samuel. We will do well if we do not attempt to do, by our own natural wisdom or power, that which the Lord has promised to do for us.

When Joab heard that Abner had come and made an agreement with David, he was angry. He rebuked the king and

suggested that Abner's purpose was to spy upon David's defences and preparedness. Joab sent messengers after Abner without David's knowledge and when Abner returned, Joab treacherously assassinated the unwary captain. David deplored the treacherous act and publicly mourned for Abner. He commanded Joab and his men to rend their garments and to put on sackcloth. In this way all Israel understood that David was not a party to the wicked assassination. But David did deplore the carelessness of Abner. Such a man as Abner should have been more wary. Some years before, David had reproved him for sleeping carelessly when he should have been guarding Saul, his king (see I Sam.26:15). This time Abner's carelessness cost him his life and David judged that Abner died like a fool because of his carelessness. Let us be wary and vigilant, and remember that we have a treacherous enemy seeking our destruction, both physical and spiritual. We must be alert and wary and we need not be ignorant of his devices.

III King Over All Israel: The death of Abner delayed the union of all Israel under David, but it weakened the reign of Ish-bosheth. Two of the captains who had been under Abner, took it upon themselves to revolt against Ish-bosheth. They slew him while he was resting at noon. They cut off his head and proudly presented it to David, thinking to receive a reward for their treachery. David would have no part in such actions and related the story of the Amalekite who expected a reward from David for finishing off Saul and bringing David the crown. That was considered by David to be worthy of death. This act by these brothers, Baanah and Rechab, against "a righteous person in his own house upon his bed" was infinitely worse than the other, and David judged rightly that the blood of Ish-bosheth must be required at their hand by taking their lives. Their act was cold-blooded, premeditated murder. Therefore the two brothers were executed, their heads and feet were cut off, and their bodies hung by the pool in Hebron as a warning that David the king would not tolerate treacherous violence.

At last all the tribes agreed that David should reign over them. Seven and a half years had elapsed since David was anointed to reign over Judah. The leaders of Israel realized how David had led the armies of Israel during Saul's reign and remembered that the Lord had said to David, "Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel" (II Sam.5:2). So once again David was anointed, this

time to reign over all of Israel. He was the man God had chosen: a man after God's own heart, who would do fully all the will of God. He was a man of prayer and a man of praise. He never became unteachable. Though he failed grievously several times he was not ashamed to repent deeply. Many years passed from the time Samuel first anointed the handsome ruddy youth at Bethlehem until the purpose of the anointing was fully realized as when David was crowned by all Israel, but David had this confidence: that it was God who put him on the throne. He had had opportunity to kill Saul on several occasions. It would have hastened his reign, but it would have been the work of the flesh and hindered the rule of God through David. May we learn the lesson of waiting on God till He performs the good pleasure of His will concerning us. God's work is never too late!

NOTES:

DAVID BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM

Read: I Samuel 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12

Memory Work: I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Psalm 2:7

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *When we allow ourselves to be led and guided by the Lord, we will surely be victorious in every battle of life.*
2. *The manifested indwelling Presence of the Lord is the greatest treasure of the followers of Christ.*
3. *Our worship and service for God must be performed according to God's revealed way. Salvation and redemption are given on His terms.*
4. *Our service for the Lord should be directed toward building His temple. Our work, motivated by love, will be generously rewarded. We cannot out-give God.*

I A New Capital: As soon as David was recognized and anointed King over all of the tribes of Israel, he set out to dispossess the Jebusites from the city of Jebus. This was the chief city in all of southern Palestine. The Israelites had once taken the city (Judges 1:8), but the tribe of Benjamin, in whose territory the city lay, had allowed the Jebusites to dwell there again (Judges 19:11). Such a stronghold of the enemy was intolerable to David. His first action as king of the twelve tribes of Israel was against this city.

The Jebusites scorned David's effort. They said, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither." What they meant by this was that if only the blind and the lame among them would defend the city, David would still not be able to conquer them. This, of course, made it all the more a challenge to David to take the city. He offered to make whoever first smote the Jebusites, the chief captain of his

armies. Joab, who already served in that capacity, earned the reward. So David took the stronghold and called it the city of David. The city proper was also taken and known thereafter as Jerusalem. The Lord was with David and prospered him in all his undertakings. He took several more wives and more children were born to David at Jerusalem.

II And David Enquired: When the Philistines heard that David had become king of Israel they assembled their army and came to the valley of Rephaim. Then David enquired of the Lord whether he should engage them in battle. The Lord answered David directly and promised to deliver the Philistines into David's hand. So the enemy was smitten before David and as they fled they left their images behind. David and his men did the right and wise thing in burning them. The king named the place of the victory Baal-perazim, meaning "the plain of breaches", for there the Lord broke forth against his enemies. But the Philistines regrouped and came once again to the same valley. David did not just presume to attack again, but humbly enquired of the Lord once more. This quality of always seeking guidance, among other virtues, was what made David a man after God's own heart. This time the Lord advised David not to attack directly, but to circle around and attack from the other side. The Lord told David to wait for the sound of "going" in the tops of the mulberry trees and then to attack. The idea expressed here is that David should wait to hear the sound of marching feet up above. The hosts of the Lord went forth before David and his earthly army. David did exactly as he was told and of course, smote the Philistines again. May we learn to wait on the Lord and enquire of Him before we launch any new endeavor. We can expect success when we move at His direction.

III David Brings The Ark to Jerusalem: The ark of the covenant had been captured by the Philistines in the days of Eli. Because of the plagues which broke out wherever they brought the ark, the Philistines sent it back to Israel. For many years it remained at the home of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim. Now David took thirty thousand men and went to bring the ark to Jerusalem. They did not transport the ark in the way described in the law (see Ex.25:12-14). Instead, a new cart was used, and the ark was set in the cart drawn by oxen. The musicians of Israel all marched before the ark led by David, playing on all manner of instruments. Suddenly, the

the oxen stumbled and the ark shook. A man named Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark. The anger of the Lord was directed against him. He was smitten so that he died. This caused David great grief. He set the ark aside in the house of Obed-edom and wondered how he should get the ark to Jerusalem. For three months the ark rested with Obed-edom and during that time the Lord blessed him and everything that pertained to him. When David heard how Obed-edom was blessed, he discerned that it was because of the ark and determined anew to bring the sacred treasure to Jerusalem. This time the ark was transported in the proper manner (see II Sam.6:13). David sacrificed oxen and fatlings before the Lord as they carried the ark on its gold covered staves. Then he danced before the ark with all his might as all Israel brought the ark up to Jerusalem with shouting and with the fanfare of trumpets.

The king brought the ark of the covenant into "the tabernacle of David"; a small tent which he had prepared for it. Then he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord and gave food and drink to all the multitude of Israel, to the women as well as to the men. Then all departed to their homes. When David came to his house, Michal, his wife and the daughter of Saul, derided him for his dancing with such abandon before the ark. She had observed him from her window and had despised him in her heart. But David protested that his dancing was before the Lord. He told her that he was ready and willing to be even more base in his own sight. He answered Michal that his actions would not debase him in the eyes of the maidens she had spoken of, but that they would hold him in high honor. Michal's critical attitude caused the judgment of God to fall upon her resulting in her barrenness unto the day of her death. We better overcome any tendency we may have to despise and criticize those who enthusiastically serve the Lord.

IV The House of the Lord: Hiram, the king of Tyre, had sent workers and cedar trees to Jerusalem as a present to David, and they built him a house (see ch.5:11). Now when David brought the ark to Jerusalem he placed it in a tent. One day as David spoke with the prophet Nathan, he observed that he himself was living in a house of cedar while the ark of the Lord rested within curtains. Nathan urged him to go ahead with whatever was in his heart. But that night God spoke to Nathan. He was to tell David that God had never asked for a

house to dwell in. The Lord reminded David that in all the wanderings of the children of Israel, the place of the ark of the covenant had always been in a tabernacle or tent. Never had the Lord asked Israel, "Why build ye not me a house of cedar? Years later David told Solomon the God did not allow him to build the house for the Lord because he had shed so much blood in the battles he had fought (see I Chron.22:8). The Lord reminded David that He had taken him from following the sheep of his father and had made him ruler over His people, Israel. The Lord called David's attention to the fact that He had given him victory over all his enemies so that his name was like that of the great men of the earth. Moreover, God promised that the enemies of Israel would no more be able to drive out the Israelites from their cities. Finally, the Lord told David through Nathan that He would build David a house. He promised David that his seed should reign forever (ch.7:16). Nathan told David that when his days were ended that his son would indeed build a house for the Lord. This, of course, was fulfilled doubly. Solomon, David's son, did build the temple that was a wonder of the world; and Jesus, also the son of David, built the temple of the Lord not made with hands. David thought to build a house for the Lord, but the Lord built a house for David.

Then David, after he had heard these words from Nathan, went to the little tabernacle where he had set up the ark of God. There he sat in the Presence of the Lord and gave thanks to God for the great promises of blessing which the Lord had given him. He was astonished that God had spoken of his house for a great while to come. He prayed in a manner we all may imitate: "The word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, establish it for ever and do as thou hast said." We pray well when we use God's own promises and insist that He do as He has said.

We would also do well to be desirous to abide in the Presence of the Lord like David. He went to a great deal of trouble to bring the ark, symbolizing the Presence of God, to Jerusalem so that he could sit and meditate before it. We may enjoy the Presence of the Lord always. Carelessness and disobedience hinder the manifestation of the Presence of our Lord. Let us so live that we never, for a moment, lose the treasure of His Presence.

We ought also to be more concerned with building up the house of the Lord, than with our own houses. David wanted the Lord to have a house to dwell in. We are privileged to be

involved in building the true temple of God in which each of us is a living stone. Let us give our best for this house and build for eternity. The Lord will undertake to bless our homes as we put Him first.

NOTES:

DAVID'S SIN

Read: II Samuel 11 & 12

Memory Work: Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Psalm 2:8

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Without the grace of God the greatest of saints can fall into the most terrible sin.*
2. *If we attempt to cover up our sin instead of confessing and forsaking it, the one sin often leads to another and another.*
3. *It takes courage today to take a strong stand against the permissive attitudes of the general public and of even many church leaders regarding immorality and perversion. Nathan was a good example.*
4. *Even thorough repentance cannot prevent the terrible natural consequences of a sin such as David's.*

I The Lust of the Eye: David was such a Godly man in so many ways that the sin he fell into comes as a great shock. Only a divinely inspired record could set forth such events in a manner profitable for our learning and admonition. None of us knows fully what our unholy flesh is capable of, and into what gross sin we might fall, were the protecting hand of God withdrawn from us for a day. David's forbearing spirit toward Saul was remarkable. His care for Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan, was noteworthy. Yet when temptation came to David along the line of personal purity, he fell headlong into that pit.

Joab had led the armies of Israel forth to battle. It seems there is the subtle suggestion in the sacred record that David should have been with his army (see II Sam.11:1, & 12:26-28). The battle was with the Ammonites who had shamefully humili-

ated David's good-will ambassadors (see ch.10:2-4). Instead of accompanying his troops David remained at home in comfort and security. When he could not sleep one evening, he went up to the roof of his house, probably for a breath of fresh air. From that vantage point he was able to see what he should not have seen. The beautiful wife of his neighbor Uriah was washing herself. Instead of looking away and turning his eyes elsewhere, poor David, like many other helpless men before and since, fed his base lusts by feasting his eyes upon the beautiful form of the young woman. In some instances the woman has purposely allowed herself to be seen in order to seduce through lust. It is at this point that we ought to overcome. A Christian girl or woman ought to take great care to modestly cover her beauty and so avoid lustful staring or evil imaginations. We cannot be too careful along this line. Men are specifically warned that the lustful look is the root of the sin. Such teaching is laughed at in these loose times, but David, as well as many other men and women since, could have saved themselves untold agony had they only overcome the lustful look. How can such powerful temptation be overcome? By using the sword of the word of God! By reciting a scripture to ourselves or singing a beautiful hymn and by a definite act of the will turning from the tempting view. Ten minutes of yielding to the flesh has cost many a man his happy home; and how many women have suffered years of remorse because of one hour of weakness! Jesus accused the Pharisees of having eyes full of adultery! Men,--be sure your eyes are under the control of the Holy Spirit. You may not be able to help seeing some things that stir the appetite of lust, but you can and you must turn away from feeding these base appetites.

II The Lust of the Flesh: David fell right into the trap the enemy had set for him. He found out who the woman was and sent for her and committed adultery with her. Her husband was Uriah, a Hittite, who had somehow joined the forces of David and was a valiant warrior for the king. Some question should be raised regarding the absence of the mention of any protest on the part of Bath-sheba. The unclean act consummated, David sent her to her house. It must have seemed unlikely to David that anyone would ever find out. So Satan blinds those who stumble along the downgrade of unclean desire! Alas, after due time the young woman sent word to David that she had conceived and was carrying his child. At once David began to scheme to cover up the wickedness.

III The Pride of Life: Pride often keeps us from acknowledging our sin and repenting from it. David chose to cover up the evil he had done. He was not the only head of a nation to fall into the trap of covering up. David sent for Uriah to bring him home from the military campaign. David asked him some questions and told him to go home (to spend the night with his wife). David even sent food from the king's table for them. But all this sudden attention aroused Uriah's suspicions and he refused to go to his wife. Next, a more desperate plan was devised. Now David attempted to get Uriah drunk so that he would forget his purpose and go home anyway. When this too failed the final step in this plunge into the depths of Satan was taken. David wrote a secret letter to Joab instructing him to set Uriah in the most dangerous position in the next battle that he might die. This was deliberate premeditated murder. Joab did as David instructed, but oh how many times David must have wished that he had never written that letter. From that day on David was in Joab's power. The letter was probably held like a sword over David's head. But when the news came to David that some men had been lost and that Uriah was among them, he had no remorse. Bath-sheba mourned for her husband. When the proper time of mourning was ended David brought her to his house and she became his wife. Too soon she bore David a son. It seemed that the coverup was successful. No public disgrace had come upon David. Only Joab knew of the matter. Yet God knew and the thing that David had done greatly displeased the Lord.

IV Courageous Reproof: The Lord sent Nathan to deal with David about this terrible deed. He used a parable to awaken David's conscience. Nathan told of a rich man who owned many flocks of sheep who would not take of his own sheep to feed a traveller. Instead he took the precious pet lamb of a poor man who had nothing else. The rich man slaughtered the pet lamb of the poor man to provide supper for his guest. When David heard this story he was furious at the heartless rich man. He vowed that surely that man would die. Then Nathan uttered those courageous words, "Thou art the man." Nathan painted the whole lurid picture for David. He reminded David how God had given him the kingdom and wives and would have given him still more but now he had despised the commandment of the Lord (thou shalt not commit adultery and, thou shalt not kill) and killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the children of Ammon.

To David's everlasting credit, he did not rise up against Nathan as other kings often did when they were reprov'd. David at once acknowledged his sin and began to repent thoroughly. Psalm 51 is a prayer of repentance written at this time. David's repentance must have been thorough for never again did he fall into the same sin. Also, Nathan assured David that the Lord had forgiven him (ch.12:13), but advised him that his sin had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. To this day the sin of David is a stumblingblock and causes shame to the people of God. Please, let us be careful.

V Inescapable Consequences: Though David repented thoroughly and obtained God's forgiveness for his sin, this did not remove the consequences of David's sin from his life. Never again did David enjoy the unity of former times either in his kingdom administration or in his own home. If you sow your field with the wrong seed, all the tears and repentance in the world cannot cause the bad seed to produce good fruit. God's sentence was that the child would die. After its birth and while it lingered in sickness David fasted and prayed hoping that the Lord would change His mind and spare the child. But the first son of David and Bath-sheba died. Nathan had also pronounced the sentence upon David that what he had done in secret and in the darkness of night to another's wife would be done to his wives in the sight of all Israel. God foretold that evil would arise out of David's own household. The fulfillment of these things, in spite of David's repentance, stands as a warning to God's people today. The consequences of secret sin cannot be avoided. David's son Amnon defiled his half sister, Tamar, and Absalom avenged the outrage by murdering Amnon. Later, after several years of exile, Absalom returned to favor with David at Joab's instigation. But then he rose up in rebellion against his own Father and committed adultery with some of the concubines of David in the sight of all Israel. One hour of yielding to the weakness of the flesh cost David untold agony for the rest of his life. Did he have any regrets? You better believe it! Many a life has been ruined by just one moment's weakness. And many a testimony has been marred in the same way. In this permissive age one feels like John the Baptist: an odd one in outlandish attire, preaching purity and holiness and self-control. Yet this is the standard set forth in the Word of God. The standards of society have changed, but the standard of personal purity in God's word will never change. God will never set His great power into the hands of one who

is not absolutely pure. In this age we need a passion for purity. Pray over it! Cleanse yourself by confession and prayer and faith, from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and hate the garments that are spotted by the flesh.

NOTES:

DAVID'S GREAT TRIBULATION

Read: II Samuel 13-18; Psalm 3

Memory Work: Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psalm 2:9

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The truth that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is vividly illustrated by the change in David's fortunes after his affair with Bath-sheba.*
2. *The natural consequences of such evil cannot be avoided even though the sin is repented of and forgiven by the Lord.*
3. *The story of Absalom illustrates that pride goeth before destruction and also that he that exalteth himself shall be abased.*

I Sin in David's Household: So often we see our own sins and failures repeated in our children. When David sinned in the matter of Bath-sheba he opened the door to the devil who wrought havoc in David's family. The law of Moses specifically forbade that any king of Israel should multiply wives to himself (see Deut.17:17). Despite this clear prohibition David had married first Michal, Saul's daughter, then Abigail who had been the wife of Nabal, he also married Ahinoam by whom he had his first son, Amnon. David also married Maachah, the daughter of Talmai the heathen king of Geshur. This marriage was clearly out of order since the children of Israel were strictly forbidden to intermarry with the heathen around them. This unfortunate union produced a son, Absalom; and a beautiful daughter Tamar. Can you imagine the strained relations between the members of such a household? To this already explosive situation, Bath-sheba is added as David's latest and favorite. His unfortunate adultery was the spark which ignited the powder keg of trouble in his own house. Even the thorough repentance of David could not avert the consequences of the evil in David's home.

Amnon, David's oldest son, began to lust for his half-sister, Tamar. She was beautiful and being often near him in the home aroused his lusts. So intense was his evil desire that it made him appear sick. A cousin, Jonadab, wickedly advised Amnon to feign sickness and request that Tamar attend him. When this subtil plan was carried out, Amnon requested to be left alone with Tamar and then he ravished her. She protested and warned him of the consequences; nevertheless Amnon defiled his halfsister and when he had finished the deed his love for her turned to hatred. Despite her protest he chased her out and barred the door. She rent her beautiful garment of many colors which indicated that she was a virgin and put ashes upon her head. When David heard what had transpired, he was very angry (see II Sam.13:21) but apparently took no action to punish Amnon. No doubt, his own recent sin undermined his ability to act in this case.

Absalom, who was the full brother of Tamar, hated Amnon for what he had done. He said nothing to betray his feelings, but patiently awaited the opportunity to avenge his sister's mistreatment. Two whole years passed and, no doubt, Amnon thought his deed was forgotten. Then Absalom invited his father David, and all the king's sons to a feast accompanying the shearing of his sheep. David himself did not go, but his sons all attended. Absalom had carefully instructed his servants to watch Amnon, and when he had drunk too much wine, to fall upon him and kill him. They followed his instructions and fell upon Amnon. The rest of the king's sons fled from Absalom, fearing the worst. The first news that reached David was that Absalom had slain all the king's sons. David rent his garments and lay on the ground. When his sons came to him and told him what had transpired he was somewhat relieved, but continued to mourn for Amnon, his firstborn. Absalom, meanwhile fled and went to his grandfather, Talmai, king of Geshur. So both the immorality and murder which David himself committed in the affair of Bath-sheba and Uriah were repeated openly by David's loved ones (see II Sam.12:10-12). It was indeed a costly indulgence when David saw and lusted after the beautiful wife of his neighbor. Could he have known the consequences of that night of lust he would have fled from the temptation as from a deadly serpent. Let every reader take warning. Remember the consequences of David's sin and that despite his repentance.

II The Rebellion of Absalom: Absalom fled from Jerusalem and

stayed with his grandfather, Talmai in Geshur for three years. The influence upon him certainly was not for good. Joab, schemed to get David to bring Absalom back from his exile. He subtly conspired with a woman to present a tale of woe to David that would move him to compassion and then apply the decision to Absalom. The king recognized the hand of Joab in the affair but nevertheless brought Absalom home. Once restored, the handsome son of David began to win the affection of the people of Israel. There was no man more handsome in Israel than Absalom. His hair was unusually thick and beautiful. Once a year he trimmed and weighed it. Whenever those with judicial cases appeared before the king Absalom would meet them and assure them that if he were judge he would rule in their favor. Thus he "stole" the hearts of the people of Israel. His friends and political accomplices increased until he had a great following in Jerusalem and friends throughout Israel.

After four (not "forty" as in ch.15:7) years, he asked permission to go to Hebron to pay the vows, he told his father, he had made to the Lord while in exile. He took two hundred men with him from Jerusalem. They had no idea of what was to transpire. Absalom had sent his traitorous messengers throughout all Israel to proclaim that Absalom was reigning in Hebron. He also sent for Ahithophel, David's personal friend and advisor and he came from Giloh and joined Absalom's rebellion. The conspiracy was well planned and the people joined Absalom in droves.

When David received word of the insurrection, he took it very seriously and prepared to flee at once. Many loyal friends went with him. They began to take the ark of the covenant also, but David decided to send the ark back to Jerusalem and have faith that if he found favor in the eyes of the Lord; He would bring him again to Jerusalem. Zadok and Abiathar with their two sons agreed to remain in Jerusalem and inform David of developments there. So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark back to Jerusalem and David and his loyal friends departed by way of the Mount Olivet, mourning as they went. At this point David was told that his close friend and advisor, Ahithophel, was with Absalom. The advice Ahithophel had given to David was as if one had enquired of the mouth of God. His defection to Absalom disturbed David greatly. He prayed at once that God would defeat the counsel Ahithophel gave to Absalom. David sent Hushai, the Archite, who had just come to join David, back to Jerusalem for the express purpose of defeating Ahithophel's counsel and of sending word by the sons of Abiathar and Zadok of any important development.

One might question why a man so wise as Ahithophel should join the conspiracy of a young ambitious schemer. Could he not foresee, if he were so wise, that the enterprise was doomed to failure. There is a very reasonable answer to this unreasonable alliance. In II Samuel 23 we find Eliam the son of this same Ahithophel listed amongst David's top officers (vs.34). In the same list we find Uriah, the Hittite (vs.39). Also revealed in the sacred record is that Uriah had for his wife, Bathsheba the daughter of Eliam. This would be a very natural development since Uriah and Eliam were fellow officers. But this means that Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel and very reasonably explains why he turned against his long time friend and king. What complications sin brings upon our heads! May God help us to keep from becoming the least bit careless.

Hushai did return to Jerusalem and pretended to advise Absalom. He appealed to his vanity and so defeated the counsel of Ahithophel. The turncoat advisor foreseeing the result of Hushai's counsel went to his own house and took his own life. The house of Saul rose up against David at this time, also. Mephibosheth who had been treated so kindly by David, was accused by Ziba, his servant of disloyalty. Shimei, another relative of Saul followed David and threw stones and curses at him. When Abishai, Joab's brother offered to shut him up by lopping off his head, David forbade it. He reasoned that if his own son was out to kill him, it should not be thought strange if one from the house of Saul cursed him. David took this humiliation from the hand of the Lord.

David's secret messengers brought the news from Jerusalem that Absalom was coming with his troops. David divided his defenders into three companies and ordered each of the commanders to spare his son. Absalom rode on a mule through the woods where the battle was joined. Even the woods were against the followers of Absalom. The wise counsel of Ahithophel had been defeated because the Lord had determined to bring evil upon Absalom. This grasping young politician deserved what he got His mule rode under an oak with low branches and Absalom was caught by the head in its boughs. Probably the hair he was so proud of was entangled in the tree. While he hung there Joab was called and he threw three darts into Absalom's heart. David mourned for his son, recognizing, no doubt, the guilt in his own past that brought such terrible consequences. David went so far as to wish that he had died for Absalom. But the grasping son of the daughter of a heathen king was unworthy to fill the shoes of the man after

God's own heart, who despite his great sin served the Lord with a perfect heart.

Such a terrible turn in the fortunes of David, a man after God's own heart, is not pleasant to contemplate. Yet we would be unfaithful were we to ignore the clear warning set forth in this story. David was at the very zenith of his success and popularity when he saw Bath-sheba on that fateful night. Thereafter the history of David is filled with tragedy and that despite his thorough repentance and the forgiveness of God. Let us take warning.

NOTES:

THE LAST DAYS OF DAVID

Read: II Samuel 19,21,24; I Kings 1,2;
I Chronicles 21,22,28 & 29

Memory Work: Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Psalm 2:10

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We should do all in our power to hasten the return of our King: the Lord Jesus.*
2. *Our confidence to overcome in the fight of faith must be in the Lord and in the weapons He provides for us, not in our wisdom or natural abilities.*
3. *As the friends and adversaries of David were judged by Solomon, so we must stand before our Judge one day.*
4. *The greatest opportunity we have in this life, is to build the temple of our Lord: to work with the Lord for the furtherance of His kingdom.*

I Bringing Back the King: David mourned for his son Absalom. Finally, Joab reproved the king for his attitude and reminded him of his responsibility to the loyal friends which had defended him. So, after a long period of mourning, David finally appeared before his loyal friends and defenders. Meanwhile, all over Israel, the people were asking why nothing was done to bring the king back to his throne. David received this report from many sections of Israel, but from his own tribe, Judah, there came no word. He sent a message to the priests, Abiathar and Zadok, to inquire of the elders of Judah why they were so long in bringing back the king to his own people and house. David attempted to unify the nation once again by promising Amasa, who had been chief captain for Absalom, that position in place of Joab, who had killed Absalom. His message moved the hearts of all Judah and they sent word to him: "Return thou, and all thy servants." All Judah went out to meet King

David and his household. Shimei, who had thrown stones and curses at David as he fled before Absalom, now came with a thousand men of Benjamin and repented of his sins. Mephibosheth, also came now to meet the king and explained why he did not join David in his exile. The king, it seems, was not convinced of Mephibosheth's innocence, for Ziba, his servant, was never reprov'd and obtained half the inheritance of Mephibosheth. It was a joyful day for David. When Abishai, Joab's brother wanted to execute Shimei for his former cursing, David forbade it. No one was to be punished on this happy day. The judgment was to come at a later date, when Solomon was king. When the other ten tribes heard of David's return from exile they came and asked why they had not been consulted and allowed to participate in the grand occasion.

Surely there is a lesson in this story for us. Are we doing all we should to hasten our King's return? Can we say that we truly desire our Lord to come? Would we be ashamed before Him at His coming? Let us be sure that this present world has no hold on us. We are commanded, as subjects of our heavenly King, to; "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." "We cannot serve God and mammon." Let us loosen ourselves from every entanglement of this natural life and "look for the city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God." "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

II Numbering the People: Exactly why the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, we are not told. There were plenty of reasons: the foolish acceptance of Absalom must have angered the Lord and may have been the grounds for the unfortunate episode which followed. Because of God's anger with Israel, David was, by Satan (see I Chron.21:1), moved to number the people of Israel. David commanded Joab to go throughout all Israel and number the people. Joab remonstrated with David and warned him that it would be a cause of trespass to Israel (see I Chron.21:3). Nevertheless, David persisted and Joab carried out his orders. He did not do the job with his whole heart and did not even include the tribes of Levi and Benjamin in his totals. The Lord was greatly displeased with this census. It was the desire of the Lord, that Israel should trust in God for their defence and not in the number of their fighting men. It is nothing with God, to save by many or by few. The Lord sent Gad, His seer or prophet, to David to reprove him for his error. The Lord offered the choice of three

punishments to David. Either three years of famine or three months of defeat before Israel's enemies, or three days of pestilence. What a choice! Poor David did not know what to do, but finally decided that the three days of pestilence at the hand of God was preferable to the other choices because of the mercy of the Lord. Enemies and famine would be unrelenting, but the merciful Lord could be counted on to pity a repentant David. The pestilence did indeed break out and seventy thousand of the men David had numbered, perished. David repented deeply and with the elders of Israel, dressed in sackcloth and fell on his face before the Lord. "Let thine hand be upon me and my fathers' house," David implored of the Lord, "but as for these thine sheep, what have they done?" (I Chron.21:17). God did have mercy and commanded David through Gad to go and set up an altar and make a sacrifice at the threshing floor of Ornan. This prince of the Jebusites saw the angel of the Lord and was ready to give David the threshing floor and oxen for the sacrifice. David, however, insisted on purchasing the place for the full price, for he would not make a sacrifice to the Lord of that which cost him nothing. So the plague was stopped.

God has provided us with weapons which are not carnal, but mighty to pull down the strongholds of the enemy. His work is accomplished not by the wisdom and methods of this world, but by faith in His power and ability to work through us. The preaching of His word has its own built in power. The weapon of praise can bring down the walls of impossibility. The prayer of faith can change any situation. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, that maketh flesh his arm" (Jer.17:5). Let us trust in the omnipotent God. His Spirit alone can give us the wisdom necessary to do His work in His way.

III David's Old Age: David went with his troops to fight with the Philistines, but he "waxed faint" in the battle. Ishbibenob, the giant son of a giant, almost killed David (II Sam.21:16). Abishai came to David's rescue. He killed the Philistine, but from that time on, his men did not permit David to go to battle any more. They forbade it, "that thou quench not the light of Israel" (vs.17). Incidentally, four giants were slain at this time, and they may have been either the brothers or the sons of Goliath, whom David slew at the beginning of his illustrious career.

In some of David's last words (see II Sam.23:1-7), he expressed his complete confidence in the promises God had made

to him concerning his house in the future. His confidence in the Lord did not wane though he became feeble. He obviously suffered from poor circulation and was always cold (I Kings 1:1). While David was in this declining health, Adonijah, his son and the brother of Absalom, exalted himself and proclaimed that he was king. Joab and Abiathar joined him. We are told that David had never reproved Adonijah. He clearly was not the ideal father. His kingdom and love for God are exemplary but his home life fell far short of what it should have been. It was David's will that Solomon, the son of Bath-sheba, should succeed him on the throne and the Lord had approved this choice. When David learned of what Adonijah had done he ordered Zadok and Nathan to take Solomon on the king's own mule and anoint him king at Gihon. When this was done all the people shouted, "God save king Solomon." There was exuberant music and Adonijah and his followers heard it. They learned from Abiathar's son what had transpired. Adonijah feared then and plead for his life. He was spared for the time being but not long after, he perished as a result of his presumption (I Kings 2:23-25).

IV With All My Might: David danced before the ark of the Lord "with all his might," and it is also recorded that he provided and prepared for the building of the house of the Lord "with all his might." He gave to Solomon, his son, the blueprint of the temple to be built (I Chron.28:11). He charged his young son (only 19) to serve the Lord with a perfect heart. He reminded him that God had chosen him to build that house of God which David himself had so desired to build. But if David could not build it himself, he at least was not hindered from preparing for its construction. By the miraculous revelation of the Lord David was made to understand in writing all the details of the pattern (ch.28:19). Nor was David content to make the plans. He provided so enormously for its building and furnishing from his own possessions, as to be almost unbelievable. In chapter 29, we are told of the enormous gifts toward the temple which David gave. Truly, as he himself said, "I have set my affection on the house of my God" (I Chron.29:3).

V In A Good Old Age: Solomon was instructed to execute judgment on Shimei and Joab, and to reward the loyalty of Barzillai for his kindness. The absence of any word concerning Mephibosheth, and David's covenant with Jonathan can only lead one to think that David felt that Mephibosheth had been

disloyal to him and forfeited any claim to further benefits. So David died, after reigning forty years, at the age of 70. May we be inspired by his example to love the house of the Lord and esteem highly and practice the Presence of the Lord always.

NOTES:

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

Read: I Kings 2,3,4,5,6, & 7; II Chronicles 1

Memory Work: Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Psalm 2:11

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Every believer has the privilege to ask for, and receive, the wisdom of God.*
2. *Self indulgent living leads to backsliding.*
3. *Building for the Lord is more important than building for ourselves.*
4. *If we want the Lord to dwell in the temple of our bodies, we must live pure and holy lives.*

I Solomon Upon the Throne: Just before David left this life he instructed Solomon to punish Joab and Shimei for their wickedness. Solomon was very young, probably nineteen when he began to reign. Therefore, David gave him specific instructions. When David died and Solomon reigned he executed the judgment David had indicated. Abiathar, the priest, was thrust out of his office because of his union with Adonijah, who tried to usurp the kingdom before Solomon was crowned. Adonijah had been put on probation of a kind, to see if he would prove himself worthy of pardon. It was not long before he began his political scheming, using Solomon's own mother to speak for him. This angered Solomon so that he executed Adonijah. Three sons of David died violently and one at birth. The execution of Adonijah was still the reaping of the evil brought about by David's sin. David held Joab guilty for the deaths of both Abner and Amasa. He told Solomon not to let him die of old age. To add to Joab's guilt he had supported Adonijah in his grasp for the kingdom. He realized that he was sentenced to death and fled to the tabernacle and caught hold of the horns of the altar thinking that there he would be safe. But when Solomon was told of Joab's action he gave commandment for Joab to be slain to avenge the blood of the two he had slain

that were "more righteous and better than he" (I Kings 2:32). Shimei, the Benjamite, had been excused by David for his cursing and throwing of stones at the King when he fled before Absalom, but at the last David instructed Solomon to find occasion to execute him also. Shimei had been commanded to remain in Jerusalem (a city of refuge). He left, however, to recover two runaway slaves and in so doing forfeited his pardon. Solomon at once apprehended him and executed him for his wickedness, so that his administration would be cleansed from guilt.

II Ask What I Shall Give Thee: Solomon loved the Lord and made sacrifices to the Lord. The Lord was not pleased with the offerings made in the high places, but excused this transgression because the temple was not yet built. Solomon also made an unfortunate alliance with Pharaoh the king of Egypt, taking his daughter as his wife. Solomon went to Gibeon where the tabernacle was located, and there offered one thousand burnt offerings to the Lord. While there, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. The Lord told Solomon he could ask for anything and He would give it to him. Solomon requested "an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (I Kings 3:9). His request pleased the Lord greatly. Solomon had recognized his need. He discerned that he was "but a little child," and accordingly requested wisdom to govern. The Lord at once assured Solomon that he was given "a wise and understanding heart" surpassing all who lived before him and all who would arise after him. The Lord also informed Solomon that because he had asked for this thing which pleased the Lord so much, he also would be given riches and honor above all other kings for all his lifetime. The Lord added yet a conditional promise, that if Solomon would walk in obedience to the commandments of the Lord as David, his father, had, that He would also give Solomon long life (vs.14). Solomon awoke and found it was all a dream. Nevertheless, the dream obviously was of God, for Solomon did indeed receive gifts of wisdom and understanding from the Lord to govern the people of Israel. Solomon went at once to Jerusalem and came before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. He certainly took the dream seriously. God still can speak to His people in dreams. Our conscious minds are too preoccupied to permit the clear communication of Jehovah, so God does sometimes reveal Himself to us in dreams.

Two New Testament promises are illustrated by this incident.

We are told that if any of us lack wisdom we may confidently ask of God who will liberally bestow this gift upon us if we ask in faith, without wavering (James 1:5-6). Who does not lack wisdom for these trying times? Wisdom is a gift of the Spirit whereby we may know the thoughts of God regarding any problem or choice we must face. Let us have faith that this wisdom will be liberally bestowed upon us, and let us follow this wisdom in absolute confidence. We are also told by the Lord Himself, that if we seek first the rule of God in our entire lives, He will add "all these things" unto us. The unbelievers seek for material things, but we are to seek the kingdom (or rule) of God and His righteousness. Then He will add material blessings to the spiritual (Matt.6:33). Let us remember this and keep our priorities right.

III Practical Proof: This incident illustrating Solomon's wisdom to understand and judge God's people proves that the dream was indeed of God, and the offers very real. Two unmarried women had borne babies. They lived in the same house, and at night in deep sleep one of these mothers smothered her baby by rolling over upon it. She then took her dead child and switched it for the other while its mother still slept. But the other mother recognized that the dead babe was not hers. A great argument resulted. No one could settle this argument satisfactorily until the case came to Solomon. He ordered the living baby cut in half. Its true mother, of course, was horrified. She offered to give up the child, if only it were allowed to live. The lying mother hard-heartedly approved the cutting in two of the baby. By this means Solomon discerned who the true mother was, and gave the child to her. The wisdom of this judgment of Solomon was spread far and near. Let us remember that a greater than Solomon is our source of wisdom. Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom! (see I Cor.1:30).

IV A House For the Lord: David had subdued all the enemies on all sides of Israel. He received tribute from many of the surrounding nations. Solomon inherited a kingdom in good order. Peace and security were the marks of his administration. Israel was very prosperous. Solomon appointed twelve officers to provide food for his household. Each month a different officer took charge. All Israel was eating and drinking and making merry. Such prosperity is pleasing to the flesh but dangerous for the spirit. Solomon failed to obey the threefold commandment written specifically for the king. Moses had warn-

ed, by the word of the Lord, that if Israel ever did choose a king to reign over them that he must not multiply horses or wives or silver and gold to himself (see Deut.17:16-17). Young king Solomon fell before all three of these temptations. Nevertheless, the Lord gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding. He became an expert in poetry, botany, and zoology; loving many excellent things.

Hiram, king of Tyre, had loved David, and now sent servants to Solomon. The young king requested that Hiram supply him with wood of the cedars of Lebanon, so that he could build a house unto the name of the Lord God of Israel. Hiram, who had built a house for David (see II Sam.5:11), was happy to cooperate with David's son, Solomon, in building the house of the Lord. Solomon sent men to help cut the trees. Thirty thousand men were occupied with that work. Ten thousand went for a month while the others were at home. When the first ten thousand returned, the second crew served in Lebanon for a month. Solomon organized everything perfectly. The work was begun in the fourth year of the reign of Solomon. More than a hundred thousand men were employed in the great project. The plan for the building was given to Solomon by David, who had received the wisdom for it by Divine revelation in writing (I Chron.28:19). The building was not prodigious in size, measuring approximately 90 x 30 feet and 45 feet high, but its beauty was unsurpassed in that day. The best wood available was used. It was cut in Lebanon and carried to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, where it was bound into raft-like floats and sailed south to Israel. Then it was carried overland again to the area of Jerusalem. Great, costly, hewn stones were also prepared for the foundation of the temple by the combined work forces of Hiram and Solomon. The timber and the stones were cut and prepared to fit into the proper place in the temple before they reached the building site (I Kings 5:17-18). The wisdom of Solomon and David made it possible to erect the temple to the name of the Lord without the sound of hammer or axe or of any other tool. This, of course, is a picture of the true temple of God which is being built in these days by a wiser than Solomon. A skillful craftsman to oversee the artistic work of the temple, was provided to Solomon from Tyre also. His name, by coincidence, was also Hiram, but his mother was an Israelite widow of the tribe of Dan, who had remarried a man of Tyre. This Hiram worked cunningly to beautify the house of the Lord. Note how often gold was used to overlay the different parts and furnishings of the temple (I Kings 6:20-38).

In the eleventh year of Solomon's reign the temple was finished. Thus Solomon spent seven years in building the house of the Lord (I Kings 6:38). The next verse begins with the ominous and suggestive word, "but". The record reveals, without comment, that Solomon was building his own house thirteen years. It seems to suggest that Solomon took greater care of his own house than that of the Lord. Is that mistake not often made today? We are very greatly privileged to have the opportunity to build in the eternal temple of our God. Let us not do the work negligently. If we seek Him and His kingdom first, our God will abundantly add such things of this life as we need.

NOTES:

THE TEMPLE DEDICATED

Read: I Kings 8 & 9; II Chronicles 5,6,7

Memory Work: Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Psalm 2:12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It is the manifestation of the Presence of God which makes a building become a temple.*
2. *It is the uprightness and sincerity of the believers, and not the beauty of a building which brings the manifestation of God's Presence.*
3. *Praise offered to the Lord brings the glory of God to true worshippers.*
4. *Just as the fire came down from heaven to consume Solomon's offerings and sacrifices, so the fire of the Spirit will fall on us as we seek the Lord with all our hearts.*

I The Glory Fills The Temple: The fashion of the temple was identical with that of the tabernacle which Moses had erected in the wilderness. David had received the pattern for the more permanent temple from the same source which had revealed the fashion of the tabernacle to Moses. The tabernacle had to be portable, for the children of Israel were sojourning in the wilderness at the time it was first erected. After Israel conquered the land of Canaan, in the days of Joshua and the judges, the tabernacle was erected in a more substantial way at Shiloh. The original fabric and skins, no doubt, had to be replaced, and this was probably accomplished by making the structure more substantial. In the days of Eli it was called a temple (I Sam.1:9; & 3:3). In the days of Saul the tabernacle was moved to Nob, and later to Gibeon. David brought the ark to the capital city, Jerusalem, where he set it in a small tent or tabernacle, but the altar of the tabernacle at Gibeon was used until the dedication of the temple of Solomon.

David had dedicated much gold for the building of the temple, and his example inspired great generosity in the people of Israel. This resulted in a great abundance of gold, silver, and precious stones for the temple (see I Chron.29:6-8), which, in time, produced great joy, because with a perfect heart, the people offered willingly. David also rejoiced greatly and offered praise to God before all the congregation for the abundant provision (I Chron.29:9-10).

Now, as the building neared completion, the gold was used to cover everything in the holy place. The entire Holy of Holies was overlaid with pure gold (I Kings 6:19-20). The partition, the walls, and even the floor was covered with gold. There is spiritual significance to all this gold. Since we, the believers, are the true temple of God, our sincerity and purity of purpose are represented by this pure gold. The purity of the gold suggests the necessity of purging out hypocrisy. Nothing is more hateful to God than pretence. Many today go to great lengths to appear to be righteous or religious; but only worship in sincerity and truth is acceptable to our thrice holy God.

As this work was finished by the craftsman, Hiram, of Tyre, Solomon called for the chief elders of all Israel to gather together in Jerusalem. The temple was finished, but it was still only a building. Nothing but the manifested Presence of God could change the beautiful building into a temple to the name of the Lord. So Solomon sent for the ark of the covenant, which was in the city of David (fortified part of Jerusalem). It had rested there during David's reign, and often he had gone in to sit in the Presence of God before the ark. Solomon also sent for all the vessels that were in the tabernacle at Gibeon. These were all brought to the new temple. The Levites were sent to bring the ark into the temple, and they did so in the manner set forth in the law of Moses; carrying it by the long staves prescribed by the Lord. Solomon, in his great God-given wisdom made this event unsurpassable in glory and drama. As the ark was carried by the Levites, Solomon offered up sacrifices and offerings innumerable (II Chron.5:6). The air must have been filled with the smell of sacrifices and incense. The Holy of Holies was fully prepared. The cherubims, overlaid with gold were in place; the whole room was completely covered with gold. Not a speck of dust to be seen. Solemnly, the privileged Levites marched, bearing the sacred symbol of God's Presence. Usually, only a portion of the priests ministered, taking turns, but on this grand occasion, all were present.

Those Levites who were singers were all assembled, many with cymbals and harps and psalteries. All were dressed in beautiful white linen. One hundred and twenty priests with trumpets, together with singers and musicians stood at attention as this ark drew near. Then in perfect unison they sounded forth the praises of Jehovah. It was an event to make the spine tingle. Then the Levites the ark entered that Holy of Holies. Carefully, the ark was set on its place between the cherubims. The staves were removed and set in their place. Carefully and reverently, the bearers of the ark retreated from the sacred room. All the while, the singers and players sounded forth in perfect time and unison, "For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (IChron.5:13). As the priests came out of the holy place, the cloud of the Presence of the Lord filled the temple. Those who witnessed the glorious manifestation could never forget it. The musicians fell silent and the priests could not minister because the building had been filled with the glory of God. Now it was a temple! The record in the book of Kings does not mention the part of the music and praises, but the book of Chronicles calls special attention to the fact that it was just as the music played and the singers praised the Lord for His goodness and mercy, that the glory descended. The Lord still inhabits the praises of his people. If you will praise him with your whole heart and mind, the glory of God will inevitably fill your spirit with His glory. Praise the Lord!

II Hear Thou From Heaven: All this took place during the Feast of Dedication in the seventh month. This feast lasted for fourteen days on this occasion: twice as long as usual. The installation of the ark, and the manifestation of the cloud of God's Presence did not end the great occasion. Solomon assembled the whole congregation together again before the temple. Facing the temple, he pronounced the declaration that he had built for the Lord God, who had said that he dwelt in thick darkness, an house for His habitation. Then he turned about and facing the people, he blessed them (II Chron.6:3-4). He recalled God's dealings with David, his father, which led up to this memorable day of dedication. Solomon spoke to the people from a platform which he had erected before the altar. The platform (or scaffold) was made of brass about 8 feet square and 5 feet high. There, standing above all the people he blessed them. As he blessed them he spread forth his hands. Then Solomon prayed a marvellous prayer of dedication. He knelt down as he prayed and spread forth his hands toward heaven. He praised God for

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His faithfulness in keeping the covenant He had made with David to bring this occasion about. Solomon recognized that even the heavens could not contain God Almighty, and that it was folly to think that the temple he had built could contain God. He asked the Lord to have respect to his prayer and to cause His eyes to be upon this house where the Lord had promised to put His name. He requested that the Lord God recognize and hear the prayers of himself and the people of Israel that they would pray in or looking toward this sanctuary. "Hear thou from heaven," Solomon implored, "and when thou hearest, forgive" (II Chron.6:21). He recognized, as is clear from his words, "hear thou from heaven," that God Himself could never be contained in this or any other temple made by man. God would continue to dwell in His heaven, but the signs of His Presence, like a spark from the eternal flame of God, could and would fill this house with great glory. Over and over (eight times in I Kings 8) Solomon repeated this request for God to hear from heaven those who prayed in or toward this house. He enumerated seven situations which might cause people to pray in or toward the sanctuary. He asked that when those prayed, who faced judgment of civil authorities, who were being beaten in battle, who called on the Lord because of drought, or pestilence, who were in need of guidance, and deliverance from captivity, who though they were strangers called on the Lord for any need, that God would hear from heaven and give proof that this house which Solomon had built was indeed the place where the Lord put His name. "Hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause," Solomon implored. He closed his prayer with an invocation for God to arise and enter the resting place, "thou and the ark of thy strength; let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness" (II Chron.6:41).

Sacrifices and offerings had been prepared again for this second part of the dedication. As Solomon stood to his feet from the kneeling position, the fire of God fell from heaven in full view of the whole congregation. The fire fell on the offerings and sacrifices and consumed them. The people fell on their faces before the Lord and worshipped Him, saying, "for He is good for His mercy endureth for ever." Once again the music rang forth and as the trumpets sounded the people rose and stood before the Lord. They finally turned toward their homes joyful and full of gladness.

The Lord appeared to Solomon after this great dedication

and assured him that his prayer was heard, that God would recognize this house as His temple and hear the prayers of His people from this place. He warned Solomon solemnly that if Israel forsook His commandments and served other gods that he would pull them up by the roots and cast their house out of his sight before all the nations. Unfortunately, the threats of this warning had to be carried out and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the magnificent temple and Israel was held in captivity for seventy years.

This dedication of the temple is one of the most glorious scenes in the Old Testament. Surely the same Lord who honored the efforts of Solomon and David to build Him a house by manifesting His glory in cloud and in fire, will do no less if we wholly dedicate our lives, spirit, soul, and body to Him. Our bodies are His temple. Let us expect His glory and His Presence to fill us, and surely the fire of the Holy Ghost will make us His able ministers of the Gospel.

NOTES:

THE GLORY AND SHAME OF SOLOMON'S REIGN

Read: I Kings 9,10,11; II Chronicles 9;
Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Memory Work: Review Psalm 2:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Too much prosperity is a peril to the spirit.*
2. *We ought to be very careful not to set our affection on anything of this world, but only on heavenly things.*
3. *We can spare ourselves many heartaches and serious spiritual loss by taking heed to obey the commandments of our Lord.*
4. *If our hearts are divided we will lose the great rewards of the kingdom of God.*

I The Prosperity of Solomon: The first twenty-four years of Solomon's reign were occupied mainly with building. He began to build the house of the Lord in the fourth year of his reign and finished it in the eleventh year. The ominous word "but," appears then in the narrative without comment in connection with the building of his own house. The Lord's house was seven years in building, "but" Solomon was thirteen years in building his own house (I Kings 7:1). Solomon taxed the people and made bond-servants of all the remainder of the inhabitants of Canaan.

Solomon inherited a powerful and well ordered kingdom. He perpetuated the supremacy of Israel, not by the might of arms and armies, but by the strength of his wisdom. The nations all around Israel sent him gifts. Solomon sent ships with the navy of Hiram, king of Tyre, all over the world of that day, to trade and make gain. They brought to Jerusalem such exotic items as ivory, apes, and peacocks as well as the inevitable gold and silver. So much gold came into Solomon's possession, that he made two hundred targets of beaten gold and three hundred shields of the same precious metal. He fashioned a throne

for himself, the likes of which had never been seen in this world before. The throne was made of solid ivory overlaid with the best gold (ch.10:18). Six steps ascended to the throne. The throne had arms on each side and a sculptored lion stood at each arm. Also twelve lions stood at the sides of the steps, six on each side. It must have been an awe-inspiring sight to behold. There was nothing to compare to Solomon's throne in any other kingdom of the world (ch.10:20). All the cups for drinking were also made of gold which became so plentiful that silver was not considered valuable any more.

Solomon received visitors from every kingdom under heaven. They came from far and near to see his kingdom and especially to hear his wisdom. He had requested that God give him wisdom to govern Israel and the Lord had truly given that gift to Solomon liberally. They all brought gifts to this son of David, and so Solomon's wealth and glory increased year by year.

II To Hear the Wisdom of Solomon: When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's glory and wisdom, she set out to visit him. She arrived with a great caravan bearing spices, gold, and precious stones. The Lord Jesus called her "the queen of the south" (see Matt.12:42). No doubt, she thought that her own glory was the greatest in the world. She came to test Solomon with difficult questions. He satisfied all her inquiries and astonished her with the glory of his administration. The high estimation of herself and her own administration was clearly overshadowed by the wisdom, organization, and beauty of the kingdom of Solomon. All the spirit (of competition) went out of her when she had observed all the glory of Solomon's reign. She confessed to the king that she had not believed the reports which had reached her concerning the glory of Solomon and his kingdom. Now she declared that the half had not been told her. She observed that the servants of Solomon were very fortunate to serve in such an administration. The queen of Sheba gave Solomon 120 talents of gold; a great store of spices, the likes of which never again was equaled in Israel; and precious stones in abundance. Solomon satisfied every desire of the queen and gave to her "of his royal bounty," and she returned to her own land.

The Lord Jesus reproved the people of His generation, referring to the queen of Sheba as an example. She came, Jesus noted, a great distance from the south to hear the wisdom of Solomon; while they would not accept the teaching of Jesus, the Son of God, whose wisdom was far greater than that of Solo-

mon. Let us be warned. We have the perfect wisdom of the Word of God. We do well to hearken diligently to its teaching. We also have available the gift of wisdom, which is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is God's provision that this gift should operate in His church. By it we may learn of God's thoughts on any subject. Let us "covet earnestly" this precious gift, not for ourselves personally, but for the church of Jesus Christ. The coveting which we are urged to develop is not that we should receive this gift as our personal endowment, but that our assembly might be enriched and guided by its operation, through whom ever it might operate. When we hear the word of wisdom we must follow its directives carefully.

III God's Warning to Kings: In the days of Moses, God had foreseen the probability of Israel setting a king over themselves. In mercy and in wisdom God gave specific instruction and warning to the king who would reign over God's people (Deut.17:14-20). Three things the Lord set forth that the king must not do. He was not to multiply horses. Israel was to trust God for their protection and not chariots and horses. This was the chief use of the horse. Also, the king was warned not to take many wives for himself. This warning was especially aimed at the heart of the king. His heart and affection was to be set on the Lord God of Israel. Many wives would turn his heart away from that whole-hearted devotion to God, so desirable in a king. Finally, the king was warned not to multiply silver and gold greatly for himself. It is difficult for those who trust in their own riches to wait on the Lord for His salvation, whether temporal or spiritual. The prohibitions were followed by one requirement for the king. He was to write out in his own hand, the entire law of God, and then read in it daily for the rest of his life. This would help to keep the king humble and keep him from turning aside to idolatry or self-indulgence. It would have the effect of prolonging his reign and enriching the quality of it.

This warning and instruction was given by God, through Moses, to any and all kings of Israel thereafter. But God gave to Solomon, his own personal admonition and warning. Right after the dedication of the temple, the Lord appeared for the second time to Solomon. He assured Solomon that his prayer was heard, and reaffirmed His promise that if Solomon would walk before the Lord with a perfect heart like David, his father, then the Lord would establish his kingdom for ever. The Lord also warned Solomon that if he did not keep the commandment

of the Lord, but turned aside to worship other gods, that Israel would be cut off and the temple destroyed.

There is no record of any king ever doing that which the Lord commanded regarding writing out and reading the law of God. If only Solomon had done it and followed the wisdom of it! If he would only have learned the instruction to the king (Deut.17:14-20), and governed his life and administration by it, he could have spared himself the disgrace of his later years.

In the midst of Solomon's glory and prosperity, we come upon another "but" in the record (I Kings 11:1). This was a disastrous failure on Solomon's part. "But," we read, "Solomon loved many strange (heathen) women." Pharaoh's daughter was the most prominent of these but there were many more. Altogether, the obsessed king married seven hundred wives, beside which he had three hundred concubines. He chose brides from the very nations with which the Lord had forbidden the children of Israel to intermarry. Nehemiah recorded many years later that these "many outlandish women" caused Solomon to sin (see Neh.13:26). Solomon's heart turned away from wholly following the Lord, exactly as Moses had warned. Now Solomon in his older years began to go after Ashteroth the goddess of the Zidonians, Milcom and Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, and Chemosh the vanity of the Moabites. He undoubtedly continued to worship and sacrifice to the Lord at the temple also, but now his heart was divided. The Lord was angry with Solomon. He had also transgressed the other two prohibitions of Moses, by multiplying horses for the protection and security of Israel (I Kings 10:26), and also in making money flow like water (vs.27).

The Lord sent word to Solomon that because He had twice appeared to him, specifically warning him not to depart from following the Lord only, and Solomon had gone after other gods despite these warnings, therefore the kingdom would be rent from Solomon and given to his servant. For David's sake the punishment was postponed until Solomon's son Rehoboam, succeeded him. Also for David's sake, and because of the covenant God made with him, only ten tribes were rent from Solomon's kingdom, leaving only Judah and Benjamin for Rehoboam to reign over. So Solomon lost out in his older years, and never fulfilled the hopes of David his father.

Enemies arose against Solomon from that time on. The Lord sent Ahijah to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Solomon had promoted him to a place of responsibility and now Ahijah, the prophet of the Lord, found Jeroboam alone in a field. He caught hold of

the new robe Jeroboam wore and tore it into twelve pieces. Then he gave ten pieces to Jeroboam and told him that God would rend the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and give ten tribes to him to reign over (1 Kings 11:31). This caused Jeroboam to lift up his hand against Solomon (vss.26-27) who then tried to kill him (vs.40).

Again, we must take warning from this story which is written for our learning and admonition. Many have started well in serving the Lord and obeying His commandments, and when they became prosperous and honored, have fallen from their steadfastness. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The blessings we receive through the gifts of the Spirit are not a substitute for faithful obedience to the commands of Jesus. Be careful. Don't lose the kingdom!

NOTES: