

## WEEK 13, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: RUTH 1-4

### OVERVIEW:

Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons sojourn into Moab during a time of famine; Elimelech's death; the marriage of Naomi's two sons to Orpah and Ruth; the death of Naomi's sons; Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem and Ruth's decision to go with her; Ruth goes to glean in the field of Boaz in Bethlehem; Boaz's kindness to Ruth; Naomi informs Ruth that Boaz can fulfill the role of kinsman-redeemer; Ruth approaches Boaz at the threshing floor; Boaz fulfills the role of Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, taking her to wife; Ruth gives birth to Obed, King David's grandfather.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of Ruth is the record of one of the greatest love stories of all time. For those of us living in the church age, it is one of the most important stories in the entire Old Testament. Pay close attention to the details of her story.

Ruth was born into this world a Gentile, as a member of a cursed race. She was a Moabitess—and we learn from Deuteronomy 23:3, the Moabites were a race of people cursed by God due to sin.

And as the story unfolds, Ruth finds herself in a time of famine (1:1)—and yet, it is in the midst of this famine that one day, someone shared with her good news from a far land... the fact that the Lord had visited His people in Bethlehem, in giving them bread! (1:6) Upon hearing that good news, she left her father and mother, and the gods she served in her homeland, and went to partake of the Lord's provision of bread in Bethlehem. (1:15–18)

When she arrived in Bethlehem, chapter 2 and verse 3 tells us that she "just happened" to go to work, gleaning in the harvest field of the only man on earth who would carry out for her the Old Testament provision of the kinsman-redeemer. (Lev. 25:23-28) His name was Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, a Jew, from the city of Bethlehem. (2:1-2) Boaz takes one look at her in his field, falls head-over-heels in love with her (2:5), and takes her out of his harvest field to be his bride. (4:9-10). "And," as the old saying goes, "they lived happily ever after."

Nice story, right? And yet, check this out! The reason Ruth's story is, for us, one of the most important in the entire Bible, is because Ruth's story—is actually our story! Because you see, like Ruth, we too, were born into a race of people that had been cursed by God due to sin. (Rom. 5:12; 6:23a) We call it the "human" race.

But, one day, someone shared with us "good news" from a far land—the fact that God had visited His people in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4,7), as the Bread of Life (John 6:35), and could feed the famine sin had left in our soul. Upon hearing that "good news," ("gospel" – 1 Cor. 15:1–4), once again, like Ruth, we, too, left our father and mother (Matt. 10:37) and the "gods" we once served in our homeland (1 Thess. 1:9), and we became a partaker of God's provision on our behalf. (Eph.3:6)

And now, we have gone to work, gleaning in the harvest field (Matt. 13:38) of our Jewish Kinsman-Redeemer, the mighty man of wealth (the "God-man") from the city of Bethlehem, until He calls us out of His harvest field (1 Thess.

4:16) to make us His bride (Rev. 19:7; 21:9), and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17), living happily ever after! (Rev. 21:4)

Hallelujah! The Bible is a supernatural Book, y'all!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through BOAZ, the mighty and wealthy Jewish kinsman-redeemer from the city of Bethlehem who took a Gentile bride out of his harvest field – Ruth 2–4 (Isa. 9:6; Heb. 4:15; Luke 2:4–7; Rev. 19:7; Matt. 13:38)

## WEEK 13, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 1-4

### OVERVIEW:

God gives Samuel to Hannah; Hannah gives Samuel to God; Samuel gives himself to God; God gives Samuel to Israel; Eli misappropriates the tabernacle by permitting his sons to disobey; Eli misses God's message; Eli misuses the Ark of the Covenant; Samuel lives; Eli dies.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of 1 Samuel begins at a time when "the word of the Lord was precious." (3:1) It was precious for the same reason that gold or platinum are such "precious" commodities today—the simple fact that they are incredibly rare! If the Lord were making a declaration concerning our day, He would, no doubt, repeat these very words... "the word of the Lord was precious in those days!" (Amo. 8:11–12)

Recognize as we come into 1 Samuel today, that at this point in the history of Israel, God's people were in the place He wanted them—the Promised Land... and yet, they hadn't actually "possessed their inheritance," or "possessed their possession" the way He had intended. God had repeatedly warned them in Deuteronomy 8 and 9 of the danger of forgetting Him after He had brought them into the land, and yet it becomes more than apparent in the Book of 1 Samuel that God's warning had totally gone unheeded. It resulted in two extremely unfortunate realities:

- 1) God's people didn't fear Him, and therefore, didn't bring Him the honor and glory for which He was worthy. And,
- 2) God's people weren't experiencing the life He had designed for them to enjoy in the "land that flowed with milk and honey."

Once again, keep in mind in these chapters that Israel is an Old Testament picture of New Testament believers who are "in Christ," and therefore, obviously possess ETERNAL life... and yet, aren't possessing the ABUNDANT life God intended their ETERNAL life to bring them. Just like in the days of Samuel, many believers today (dare we say, MOST!) simply do not fear the Lord, and therefore, don't bring Him the glory that is due His name (Psa. 29:2; 96:8)—choosing to live beneath the privilege God designed them to possess.

A bright spot in 1 and 2 Samuel, however, is Samuel himself—the one for whom these Books were named. He was the first of the prophets, the last of the judges, and the man God would use to usher in Israel's earthly kings. He would faithfully serve God and His people, and yet, ultimately be rejected by the people. Though Israel rejected Samuel, God tells him not to take it personally, because it was actually Him they were rejecting! (8:7) Because of their rejection of God's leadership, they sought out earthly kings to lead them—as had the other nations of the world. This didn't come as a shock to God, however! Actually, He prophesied they would do this very thing way back in Deuteronomy 17!

The Book of 1 Samuel is fast-paced and layered with historical and spiritual significance. Notice in Chapter 1, that it is out of a rather sinful and precarious marital situation that Samuel is born to Hannah and Elkanah. As unfortunate as it is to say, Hannah is actually one of Elkanah's two wives. Though polygamy had become CULTURALLY acceptable at this time, it certainly wasn't BIBLICALLY acceptable! God's intention has always been and will always be ONE MAN... and ONE WOMAN... for ONE LIFETIME! (Gen. 2:24; 1 Tim. 3:2) Because of this sinful marriage arrangement, some might refer to Samuel as an "illegitimate child." Recognize, however, that in God's eyes, there are no "illegitimate children!" There may be "illegitimate PARENTS," but there is certainly no such thing as an "illegitimate child!" Samuel is a beautiful biblical example of that! Every child is formed by God Himself in His mother's womb, and is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:13–14), and God has designed a "perfect will" for each of us—regardless of the marital status or immoral behavior of our parents!

In Chapter 2, when Hannah presents back to God His present to her, from a human standpoint, she is handing Samuel over to a priest who has long departed from God's perfect will. He is a carnal, obese old man (4:18) who had allowed his own sons (who were the "sons of Belial," or Satan—2:12) to run the tabernacle. And, run it they did! Right into the ground! God, however, would receive the offering of her only begotten son, and use him mightily in fulfilling His purposes in the nation of Israel!

Notice in 3:2–3, that it says of Eli, "his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see." From this brief description, we can assume that Eli suffered from cataracts or some other condition that had caused him to become blind. In this case, however, it is a PHYSICAL picture of his SPIRITUAL condition. The greatest travesty concerning Eli's inability to see wasn't that he couldn't see PHYSICALLY—but that he couldn't see SPIRITUALLY!

We would do well to recognize that God tells us in 2 Peter 1:5–9 that if after coming to faith in Christ, we fail to give "ALL DILIGENCE" to add to our faith the seven things listed in 2 Peter 1:5–7, the same thing that happened to Eli PHYSICALLY—will happen to us SPIRITUALLY! Peter tells us that if we fail to faithfully follow this divinely inspired scope and sequence for our spiritual growth and development, we will become spiritually BLIND, and not be able to see "afar off"—which is another way of saying that we won't be able to see the things in the eternal realm that can only be seen through the eyes of faith. (2 Cor. 4:18) Peter continues on in verse 9 to say that failing to add these things to our faith will ultimately cause us to get to the place spiritually that we will even forget that we have been purged from our "old sins." In other words, we will get to the place that as born-again, blood-bought, eternally-secure believers in Jesus Christ, we are living like we did when we were lost! Oh my! God forbid! May we be certain to heed Peter's warning to give all diligence to add to our faith "virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity!"

As we move into chapter 4, because of Israel's disregard for the Word of God, and their subsequent disobedience (note that disregarding the Word of God will always result in disobedience to the God of the Word!), the nation of Israel is annihilated in battle against the Philistines. Along with losing 4000 soldiers in the first battle, Israel lost 30,000 soldiers in the second battle—along with losing their most prized possession—the Ark of the Covenant... or the presence of God in their midst! By the end of chapter 4, God gives us a graphic physical picture of the spiritual principle of Romans 6:23a: "For the wages of sin is death." In the battle against the Philistines, Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, both DIED! (4:11) When Eli received word of their death, and that the Ark of the Covenant had gone

into the possession of the Philistines, he fell over backwards, and DIED! When Phinehas' pregnant wife got word that the Ark of God was taken by the Philistines, and that both her father-in-law and her husband had died, the trauma was so great that it thrust her into labor, and in the process of delivering the child, she, too, DIED! Just prior to her death, she gave to her newborn son one of the saddest names she could have possibly given to him: she named him Ichabod—meaning, "the glory has departed." With her final breath, she uttered these fateful words: "The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken." (4:22)

Sadly, "Ichabod" is a perfect description of many 21st century churches: the glory of God's presence that is designed to be manifested through Christ's body has departed. While the people of the church gather on Sundays to celebrate the presence of Christ in their midst inside the four walls of their building—Christ stands OUTSIDE the church knocking on the door, as it were, waiting for someone to recognize that His presence is not there—and go and open the door to let Him in! (Rev. 3:20)

Can you hear Him knocking?

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through all that SAMUEL was intended to be – judge, priest, and prophet. (John 5:30; Heb. 7:26; Acts 7:37)

## WEEK 13, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 5-10

### OVERVIEW:

God wreaks havoc on His enemies through the Ark of the Covenant; Samuel leads Israel in reformation and worship; Israel demands an earthly king and Saul is installed as the first earthly king of Israel.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The account of the Ark of our God in the house of Dagon (the fish God) in chapter 5 is classic. The image of the idol that the Philistines worshiped and served "fallen upon his face," having his head and hands lopped off, bowing before the presence of the one true God represented in the Ark is not only awesome—it is a preview of coming attractions! Revelation 17 and 18 is the prophecy of a time in the near future when all of the false systems of religion in the world, represented in Babylon, will come crashing down to the earth and be destroyed by the King of kings and Lord of lords!

One would think that the Philistines beholding the absolute powerlessness and pitifulness of their God as a mere "stump" on the ground before the presence of the God of Israel, that it would have brought them to their spiritual senses, and in repentance, they would do what the Thessalonians did: "turn to God from idols to serve the living in true God!" (1 Thess. 1:9) That, however, didn't happen! The Philistines become, then, one of the greatest biblical examples of how "the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4) It is important for us to recognize from this verse, that God is revealing to us that the reason lost people are unable to "SEE" the truth of God is not because they are unintelligent—it's the simple fact that they have been BLINDED by Satan! That's why some of the most intelligent, and otherwise, rational people on this planet can believe obvious LIES—when the TRUTH clearly makes better and more logical sense!

Notice also, however, that 2 Corinthians 4:4 goes on to tell us that the power of the glorious gospel of Christ is able to shine past the blinders Satan uses to keep the gospel hid from lost people! (2 Cor. 4:3–4) As God's redeemed people, we must make certain that we always take full advantage of every opportunity our Lord opens to us to declare the gospel (the message of Christ death, burial and resurrection) to the lost people in our sphere of influence. It quite simply, is their only hope! Romans 1:16 tells us that "it (the gospel) is the power of God unto salvation!" Notice, this verse tells us that the power of God is in the message of the gospel! The power is not in our ability to communicate. It is not in our winsome personality or our ability to wield influence upon others. It is not in our ability to reason and/or debate with people. It is in the simplicity of the message of the gospel! (2 Cor. 11:3–4) May we, therefore, be diligent to pray, as Paul did, "that God would open unto us a door of utterance" (Col. 4:3), that we may have the opportunity to declare to the lost people of this world the powerful, life-changing, eternal-destiny-changing message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection! Again, as God's redeemed people, we must recognize that unleashing the message of the gospel is THE ONLY POWER(!!!) that can release people from the power of Satan! In Acts 26:18, Paul articulated to King Agrippa the purpose God had for him with regard to the lost people of the world. The purpose he articulates, however, is not only how God intended to use him with the lost, it is the purpose God has for using each one of us who have become a recipient of the glorious gospel of Christ: "To open their eyes (the lost!), and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in [us]." May God help us to faithfully proclaim the gospel ("good news") of Christ's redeeming death, burial and resurrection!

Notice also in 5:6-12 that God's awesome presence manifest through the Ark was very devastating to the people to whom it did not belong. God allowed them to be struck with a miserable ailment (hemorrhoids) that affects virtually any and every activity of life. The Philistines quickly came to the conclusion that perhaps they'd be better off without the prized possession of the Israelites in their midst. In chapter 6, they seek the counsel of their own pagan priests and demonic diviners about how to return the Ark, and they provide some of the most outlandish advice imaginable. They concoct their own self-styled version of offering a "trespass offering," which included, of all things, making golden images of the hemorrhoids by which God had used to judge them! Wow! Sometimes it is utterly amazing what people will invent to do "in the name of God"—totally disregarding what He has clearly revealed in His Word!

One of the key things to note in chapter 6, is that when the Philistines returned the Ark to the children of Israel, it arrived on a "new cart." God is here, foreshadowing an event that will come to fruition in 2 Samuel 6 because of this "new cart." Notice also the devastation God meted out upon the Philistines for the inquisitiveness that caused them to look into the Ark of the Lord: 50,070 men dropped dead!

In chapter 7, the Ark is returned to the children of Israel. Once it came into their possession, however, rather than take it to its designated place in Shiloh (4:3), it remains in the house of a man of Israel by the name of Abinadab. Interestingly enough, the Ark—which, again, represents the presence and power of God, sits in Abinadab's house rather than "the house of the Lord" for 20 years!

In 7:3, Samuel calls the house of Israel to repentance. The gods that he calls them to forsake in this passage, Baalim and Ashteroth, is an indication of the deplorable depths of sin to which God's people had plummeted. Baalim was a male god and Ashteroth was a female god, and the sinful behavior to which Satan had devised for the worship of these "gods" was nothing short of gross debauchery!

Samuel promises Israel that in accordance with their genuine repentance, God would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines. Israel does repent, and Samuel offers a lamb as a burnt offering to the Lord, and cries out to God for Israel, and 7:9 beautifully says, "and the Lord heard him." The Lord answered with thunder from heaven against the ensuing Philistines, and Israel was able to defeat them speedily and handily. (7:10–12) It has been noted that Samuel accomplished more with one prayer depending on the SPIRIT'S power, than Samson accomplished in 20 years depending upon the power of the FLESH! As chapter 7 closes, it reveals that Samuel served as a faithful prophet and judge in Israel, ministering to the people from city to city, speaking the word of the Lord and helping to settle their disputes all the days of his life. (7:13–17)

As we move into chapter 8, however, it lets us know that in all of the great things that could be said about the ministry of Samuel, there was one place he failed to minister: and of all places, it was his own home! Evidently, Samuel had the FALSE IMPRESSION, as many of God's faithful ministers have had through the centuries, that if he took care of the things of the Lord, the Lord would take care of the things concerning his family. We must understand, however, that though God has called all of us to constantly be a minister in His work—both edifying and expanding His family (1 Cor.15:58; 2 Cor. 5:18-19), our responsibility to the LORD'S FAMILY does not negate or diminish the responsibility we have to minister to our OWN FAMILY! Quite simply, our spouse and our children must be our first place of ministry! It is of such importance in the New Testament church, that God even prescribed in the list of those holding the office of a pastor, that his children be "faithful... not accused of riot or unruly." (Titus 1:6) The

way Paul articulated it in 1 Timothy 3:4 is: "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Recognize that these New Testament qualifications for the family of those holding the office of a pastor are no different than what He commands and intends for every believer (Eph. 6:4), it is simply that the things in these lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are a prerequisite for those who hold positions requiring them to provide the spiritual oversight and feeding of the family of God.

But notice as Samuel came to the end of his ministry, 8:1 says that he "made his sons judges over Israel." Sadly, however, 8:3 lets us know, "...his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." This action by Samuel, despite his inability to instill in his sons the godly character he possessed, became one of the justifications and rationalizations the people had for demanding that Samuel install a king to rule them "like all the nations." (8:5) God reveals the disingenuousness in their request by telling Samuel that their problem wasn't really with Samuel's authority—but with His! Yes, Samuel certainly should have made ministering to his family a greater priority—but his failure as a father was nothing more than a smokescreen the people used to get what they wanted all along... to be out from God's direct authority, and to be conformed to this world. (2 Sam. 8:5; Rom. 12:2)

It is interesting to note that 1 Samuel 8 records the first of Israel's three REJECTIONS of the triune God in Scripture:

Israel rejects God the FATHER by choosing Saul. (1 Sam. 8:7)

Israel rejects God the SON by choosing Barabbas. (Luke 23:18)

Israel rejects God the HOLY SPIRIT by refusing Stephen's message. (Acts 7:51)

Perhaps we should all ask ourselves today, "Is there any area of my life that would be communicating to God that I am rejecting His authority?"

In chapters 9 and 10, God concedes to Israel's wishes in granting them a king, but clearly communicates to them what it will ultimately cost them. It is another of many times in scripture where God gave the people what they wanted—but in doing so, the people lost what they had. (Psa. 106:15) In this instance in 1 Samuel 9 and 10, God gave them a king to rule them just as they had requested—but they lost the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent kingship of the God who so loved and cared for them that they were the very "apple of His eye." (Deut. 32:10)

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through all that Samuel was intended by God to be — judge, priest, and prophet. (John 5:30; Heb. 7:26; Acts 7:37)

## WEEK 13, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 11-14

### OVERVIEW:

The rise of King Saul as he obeys God; the fall of King Saul as he relies upon his own reasoning; Jonathan, Saul's son, acts in great courage.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As chapter 10 came to a close at the end of yesterday's reading, Saul returned to his home town after being anointed the king of Israel. Recognize that at this point, however, his leadership had not yet been firmly established, and word was actually still traveling throughout the land that he had even been installed as king. As we move into chapter 11 in today's reading, however, Saul was going to be given the opportunity to establish his leadership, because Nahash, the leader of the Ammonite army was threatening to come against Israel in Jabesh-Gilead. Saul's swift response to rally the armies of Israel and the subsequent demolition of the Ammonite army rallied the nation of Israel together in unity, and the people became zealous to follow their new king and leader.

In chapter 12, Samuel takes the occasion of Israel's renewal and rededication to further establish Saul's leadership. Samuel walks the people back through his own ministry among them, and then walks them back even further through their history as a nation under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and then, through several of the judges. Samuel's intent was to show them how God had been faithful to them as a people and a nation—and that they had actually slapped God in the face, as it were, for requesting an earthly king to reign over them, when the Lord their God was their king! (12:12)

Samuel tells them that even though they had done this evil to the Lord, He was still willing to take them from where they were—and bless them. He proclaims in 12:14–15 this incredibly gracious promise, and yet this incredibly powerful warning: "If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers."

To prove to the people that he was in fact speaking for God and that the Lord had been offended by their request for a king, Samuel predicted that the Lord would send thunder and rain on that very day, which was during the time of the wheat harvest—which was a time of the year when rain seldom, if ever, would fall on that part of the world.

When Samuel prayed, the thunder clouds rolled in and it began to rain upon the land—striking both the fear of the Lord and of Samuel in the hearts of the people. (12:18) The people owned their sin for requesting a king, and Samuel assures them of God's grace and His pleasure in them continuing to be His people, and yet, still warning them that they needed to follow the Lord without wavering, and to serve Him with all of their heart. (12:21–25)

As we begin chapter 13, God lets us know that the events that take place in this chapter happened two years into Saul's reign as king. We already begin to get glimpses of things that we will be able to look back on as "the beginning of sorrows" in the reign of Saul.

First, Saul tries to vaunt himself and his leadership by taking credit for the victory his very own son, Jonathan, had achieved in Geba. (13:1–4) Secondly, as the Philistines began to rally themselves together to come against Israel, Saul delayed in leading the attack against them, and the armies of Israel were found cowering in caves, fearful for their very lives. When Samuel didn't return when Saul expected, he took it upon himself to carry out the role of a priest in sacrificing the burnt offering. Just as he was offering the sacrifice, Samuel returned, immediately asking him what in the world he thought he was doing! Like a little child, Saul explains to Samuel that he didn't want to have to offer the sacrifice, but since Samuel wasn't around to do it, he forced himself to violate his own will and conscience and did it for the sake of the people. Yeah, right!

Samuel explains to Saul that though he had been fully positioned to lead Israel the remainder of his life, that now, because of his failure to obey the Lord, his reign in the kingdom would not continue. (13:14) Samuel continues to explain that the person God wanted to lead to His people was "a man after his own heart." Recognize that Samuel's declaration was made to Saul privately, so no one in Israel knew the decision God had made, and it would still be a number of years before the transition to a new king would actually be made.

As we move into chapter 14, rather than Saul seeking to humble himself before the Lord in an attempt to become "a man after God's own heart," he is lifted up with pride. Watching him try to hang onto his position and power becomes almost pitiful, if it weren't so prideful. He begins to make a lot of foolish decisions in chapter 14 that result in him seeking to take the life of his own son. He would have killed him had he not rescued by the people. Saul becomes foolish, fleshly, and full of himself—and begins to bring the nation of Israel down with him.

In the New Testament, Paul, whose original name was Saul, makes only one mention of his name's sake saying, "And when He had removed him." (Acts 13:22) How ironic that the first king of Israel is only known for having to be removed, so God could fulfill His plan.

May God help us to recognize today, that He is still seeking men and women after His own heart! Perhaps the question we need to ask ourselves today is this: Is there any area of my life where I, like Saul, am allowing myself to be lifted up with pride, and need to humble myself before the Lord?

Jonathan, King Saul's son, seems to have the heart of a lion (1 Sam. 14:6), but his life is caught in the web of his father's sin. Although he himself remains pure, the effects of his father's sin will ultimately end his life. We must recognize, there is no private sin or private life. What we do will ultimately affect those around us—and most often and most severely, those we love! (Num. 32:22–24)

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through all that Samuel was intended by God to be — judge, priest, and prophet. (John 5:30; Heb. 7:26; Acts 7:37)

## WEEK 13, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 15-17

### OVERVIEW:

Saul's disobedience costs him the kingdom; God chooses David to be king; David kills Goliath.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The three chapters in today's reading are some of the most dramatic in all of scripture. In these chapters, God rejects a king... appoints another one out of total obscurity to replace him... and instantaneously promotes the new king-elect in the eyes of the entire nation of Israel. Each of these events have been preached on countless times through the centuries because of the very clear and practical messages God is communicating through each of them.

In Chapter 15, God gives King Saul a very clear command to totally annihilate the enemy, and by all outward appearances, it looks as if Saul is going to obey Him. He gathers the troops, confidently prepares them, and courageously leads them to battle, and yet, despite the victory, Saul actually finds a way to turn the victory into a defeat. After the hard part was accomplished (trusting God to grant the victory!), Saul allows his flesh to control his thinking, and as a result, he "reinterprets" God's command to annihilate everything that anything to do with enemy, and willfully chose to do something that better suited and satisfied his own carnal desires. He keeps some of the spoils of battle, rationalizing that he did it to be able to offer sacrifices to God—and in so doing, forever forfeits the hand of God upon his life. With Samuel's words, "to obey is better than sacrifice" still ringing in Saul's ears (15:22)—we go on to read what Saul did not understand at the time. Chapter 15 and verse 35 tells us, "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." And oh, may we learn from this tragic event in Saul's life, to simply DO WHAT WE KNOW! Just DO IT... without COMPROMISING anything... without RATIONALIZING anything... and without JUSTIFYING anything! May we follow the simple counsel Mary gave to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee in John 2:5: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, DO IT!"

As a result of the removal of God's Holy Spirit upon Saul's life—the oppression of an "evil spirit" quickly came to take His place. Ironically enough, the only cure for the oppression of the "evil spirit" was the beautiful playing of the harp by a young man by the name of David, who unbeknownst to Saul, was God's choice to replace him as Israel's king! Note that in the Old Testament, Kings would be anointed for service with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but unlike born again, New Testament believers, they were not "sealed with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13)—meaning they could lose the Spirit's anointing. This is why after King David's infamous sinful act with Bathsheba, in his confession in Psalm 51, he prays in verse 11, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

As the emphasis in the scripture forever shifts from Saul to David, it is thrilling to note that what was at the very heart of that shift—was the HEART! While Saul was a choice that was based on outward appearance, David was a choice that was made based on the fact that he was a man after God's own heart! Chapter 16 and verse 7 says, "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him (Saul): for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It is of vital importance to recognize just how serious our is God about the state of our "inner man." (Eph. 3:16) The word "heart" is found 765 times in the Bible—and seldom does it refer to our physical blood-pumping muscle!

With this whole issue of the heart in mind, in chapter 17 we launch into the infamous story of “David and Goliath.” While this history is often recounted emphasizing the fact that David desired to defend the name of God against the big, bad, evil Goliath who defied the God of Israel, which was certainly his overriding motivation—it is also interesting to note David's other motivations when we examine the emphasis the scripture places on the discussions David had around the campfire prior to taking on the giant. After David is told what would be done for the man who defeated Goliath, he wanted to make sure that he was understanding what he heard correctly—asking them to repeat it another two times! (1 Sam. 17:25–30) And to further emphasize the point, after David's insistence on getting clarification about what would be done for the man who finally dealt with Israel's oppressor, David's eldest brother accuses him of having a bad heart, with ulterior motives. It is clear that God is strongly endorsing the fact that blessings often naturally accompany exercising faith in God, and doing what is right by Him—and we need not shy away from desiring to glorify God through His blessing upon our life.

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through DAVID'S NAME, which means “BELOVED” – 1 Samuel 16:13 (Matt. 3:17;17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35)

## WEEK 14, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 18–21

### OVERVIEW:

David and Jonathan become friends; David is promoted in the site of Israel and despised in the eyes of Saul; Saul plots and attempts to kill David; David is helped by Jonathan and others to escape Saul.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we move into chapter 18 in today's reading, we are introduced to what is perhaps the greatest record and example of friendship the world has ever seen. Would to God that every believer had the benefit of experiencing a deep friendship like that of Jonathan and David. Note some of the key statements found in today's reading about their incredible relationship...

"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." (18:1)

"Jonathan loved him (David) as his own soul." (18:3)

"Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David." (19:2)

"Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee." (20:4)

"And Jonathan...loved him (David) as he loved his own soul." (20:17)

What a 21st century travesty it is that because many homosexuals seek to use these statements as justification to support their sinful and reprobate lifestyle (Rom. 1:24-28), that clarification even needs to be given regarding the relationship between Jonathan and David. What an indication of how corrupt our world has actually become! To interpret the love shared between Jonathan and David as something romantic or sensual is as perverted as homosexuality itself, and only proves the trustworthiness of Scripture, because those who seek to use this as rationalization or justification for their sinful lifestyle are doing exactly what God said they would do in Romans 1:25: "[They] changed the truth of God into a lie." Again, how sad it is to even have to give an explanation of such perversion of Scripture, but there appears to be a satanic agenda in the 21st century to promote this biblically defined reprobation as normal and culturally acceptable, demanding that it be mentioned.

Chapter 18 also begins to show us the "wisdom" by which David conducted his life. Notice the repetition of this unique quality David possessed that began to elevate him into a national leader...

"And David...behaved himself wisely." (18:5)

"And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him." (18:14)

"David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by." (18:30)

But not only was David rising in popularity in the kingdom because of his noticeable wisdom—but because he was viewed as a military hero (and rightfully so!) for defeating the Philistine's champion—Goliath! David's wisdom was so apparent to King Saul that he quickly promoted him to the position of commander over the entire military. (18:5) This position was short-lived, however, as soon as Saul recognized that David's character and courage was also making him extremely popular throughout the entire kingdom—especially with the ladies! (18:7-8) The resulting jealousy in Saul's heart caused him to fear that David would try to overthrow his kingship—and 18:9 is a very telling sign of what was to come: "And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

Note that the Book of Numbers talks about "jealousy" as a "spirit" (i.e. "the spirit of jealousy" —Numbers 5:14,30), and apparently, as in Saul's case, it makes a person see things that aren't really there! Note also that the Book of Proverbs warns that "jealousy is the rage of a man." Interestingly enough, as soon as Saul selfishly opened himself up to that "spirit," the Lord allowed that "evil spirit" to overtake him, and in his rage, Saul makes his first attempt to take David's life. David was able to dodge Saul's javelin (twice!) however, and successfully flee from his presence. (18:10–11)

Saul recognized that the Lord's hand had not only been removed from his life—but that it had been placed on David, making him even more jealous, and thus, more fearful—and Saul demoted David from the commander over the entire army—to a mere captain over a band of a 1000 soldiers. (18:12–13) What David was experiencing from the hand of Saul would be so devastating and humiliating to most leaders, it would cause them to react carnally. David, however, continues to conduct himself according to godly wisdom, causing Saul to ironically become even more afraid of him. Because of Saul's demotion of David, it had actually caused David to become more accessible to the people—causing them to become all the more endeared to him! (18:16)

Evidently, as Saul is able to step back to analyze David's popularity—he determines that it wouldn't be in his own best interest to blatantly murder him, so he concocts a plan to attempt to kill him by making it look like it happened as due course on the field of battle. He promises to David the hand of his oldest daughter in marriage if he will promise to continue to fight the king's battles. Do note that David had already been promised the hand of Saul's daughter as the reward for defeating Goliath! (17:25)

Saul reneged on his promise and gave the hand of his daughter to another man—but promised David the hand of his other daughter, Michal, in exchange for the foreskins of 100 Philistine soldiers. Saul was obviously convinced that attempting such an incredible feat would certainly result in David's death, but because the Lord's hand was on his life, David promptly delivered double the "dowry" the king requested—the foreskins of 200 Philistine soldiers!

Chapter 18 ends with Saul having to face the reality that not only was the Lord's hand upon David, but that the heart of his son, Jonathan, and the heart of his daughter, Michal, was with David. Rather than celebrate this obvious God-ordained reality, 18:29 says, "And Saul was yet more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually." A practical lesson we glean from today's reading is that the hand of God upon a person's life will bring two opposite extremes from the people around us: extreme LOVE from those who are in tune with God... and extreme HATRED from those who aren't!

In chapter 20, rather than David and Jonathan using their blessed friendship to inspire one another to cry out in faith to the Lord for His wisdom, direction and protection against the attacks of Saul, the entire chapter is really nothing more than the unfolding of their elaborate plan of lying and scheming in order to create David's needed protection. And once again, as the old saying goes, "It is never right to do wrong in order to get the chance to do right."

The lying and scheming continues into chapter 21, as David gives evidence that he is no longer trusting the "wisdom of God"—but the "wisdom of men." (1 Cor. 1:5-7) Notice in chapter 21 that first, in verses 1–9, David lies to Ahimelech—and then in verses 10–15, he lies to Achish. James reminds us that "the wisdom that is from above is first PURE!" (Jam. 3:17)

It is important to remember, that this blatant deception, lying and obvious expression of a lack of faith in God is actually coming forth out of the life of "the man after God's own heart!" And if "trusting the arm of the flesh" as opposed to the "power of God"—and resorting to the "wisdom of men" after expressing such dependence upon

the "wisdom of God" was this great of a temptation to the likes of David, we might do well to ask ourselves a couple of questions!

What situation or situations am I presently facing in which I could be tempted to scheme, lie and/or deceive—in order to protect myself?

What would it look like in this potentially tempting situation or these potentially tempting situations, to trust the "wisdom of God" (exemplified through David in chapter 17 and 18)—rather than the "wisdom of men" (exemplified through David in chapters 19 through 21)?

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the friend that sticketh closer than a brother – 1 Samuel 18:3 (Pro. 18:24, Joh. 15:13–16)

By JONATHAN, knowing that it was God's will to make David king, stripped himself of his royal robe, promising all that he had to David — 1 Samuel 18:3–4. (Phil. 2:5–8 – Jesus, knowing, the will of the Father, stripped Himself of His royal robe, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men... and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.)

## WEEK 14, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 22-25

### OVERVIEW:

David is a fugitive from Saul and runs to Nob, Gath, Adullam and the wilderness; David spares Saul's life; Samuel dies; Abigail spares Nabal's life.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

After escaping from Achish in yesterday's reading, chapter 22 begins with David entering the cave called Adullam, and when news travels as to his whereabouts, it's interesting that the "down and outers" fled to where he was. They are described in 22:2 as those "in distress... in debt... and/or discontented." David became somewhat of a makeshift leader of over 400 of them initially, the number soon growing to about 600! (23:13) As the old saying goes, "Misery loves company!" David could certainly relate to their situation—and they could certainly relate to his! David cries out to the Lord in song during this time, and the songs are recorded in Psalm 54 and 142.

It is apparent that David is thinking that if Saul did end up killing him that he might well seek to do the same to his parents, so he seeks to bring them into the protective care of the king of Moab. That seemed a fitting place since David's father's grandmother, Ruth, was actually a Moabitess. After securing their protection, David exits to secure his own place of protection. God sends the prophet, Gad, to specifically tell David to get himself back into the land of Judah.

When Saul gets word of what David was doing and where he was headed, he is filled with rage against his own men—and throws a little "pity-party" for himself. (22:7–8) He accuses them of conspiring against him, and berates them for not informing him of the covenant Jonathan had made with David sometime earlier. (18:3;20:16)

Then, no doubt seeking to suck up to the enraged king, one of Saul's key leaders, Doeg, tells Saul how that when David enquired of the Lord in Nob when he went to the Ahimilech the priest, how Ahimilech had ministered to David. Saul commands his foot-soldiers to annihilate Ahimilech and anyone there who was wearing a priestly garment, but they refused to kill them. Saul then commanded Doeg to do it, and by the time it was all said and done, he alone had killed 65 priests in cold blood. Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech escaped with the "ephod" (an instrument used at this time through which God revealed His will) and went to inform David of the fate of his fellow priests of the house of Ahimelech. David tells Abiathar to stay with him, knowing that Saul would certainly seek to take his life.

In chapter 23, David gets word that the Philistines were fighting against God's people in Keilah, and he immediately seeks to know the will of the Lord concerning smiting them. God unhesitatingly tells David to go for it! David's men, however, wanted confirmation from the Lord about it, and God confirms that He would deliver them into their hands. Just as God had said, David and his men defeated them with a "great slaughter." (23:5)

When Saul heard the news that David and his men were shut in the gated and barred city of Keilah, Saul is so spiritually disoriented that he viewed it as his "God-given" opportunity to put an end to David's life. As David inquired of the Lord as to whether he should stay in the city and trust the people of Keilah to protect him, God reveals to him that he better get out of the city while he could! David departed into the wilderness of Zish—and hid out in a mountain, as Saul sought daily to kill him.

At a time when David was tired, discouraged and afraid, God used Jonathan to come out into the wilderness to where David was to speak words of encouragement to him. What a beautiful way 23:16 describes it: "And Jonathan...strengthened his (David's) hand in God!" Oh, may God use each of us to carry out the ministry of strengthening the hand of those around us in God! Can you think of someone that could use that strengthening ministry from you today?

The Ziphites send word to Saul of David's whereabouts, and conspire with Saul to help him find him. (23:19) As Saul is in hot pursuit of David (23:20–26), a messenger comes to Saul bearing news that he needed to return because the Philistines had invaded the land. (23:27–28) When David heard that Saul had departed, he made his safe haven a cave called Engedi. (23:29)

When Saul returns to seek David in chapter 24, Saul has brought 3000 soldiers with him that were constantly surrounding him. Saul, however, "just happens" to enter into the very cave where David and his men were hiding in the pitch darkness of the sides of the cave. He has entered the cave alone "to cover his feet," as it were (an expression the men of that day used to refer to relieving themselves), and to take a short nap. Oh my, what an opportunity for David to finally be able to rid himself of his enemy! And with all that David had faced in dealing with Saul's rage, in our humanness, it would be hard to fault David had he taken advantage of this unbelievable twist of fate—as his enemy lay alone, unprotected, literally within arm's length! David might well have interpreted this opportunity as God communicating to him the very thing David's own good men were whispering in his ear—that this was THE DAY... and this was THE WAY the Lord intended to deliver David from Saul's irrational and unreasonable pursuit.

And oh, David was certainly tempted! But David refused to listen to anything other than the clear message that there would be another time when God Himself would provide David's deliverance from Saul and his rise to the throne through events that only God Himself could orchestrate. David even worried that he had failed the spirit of the test by embarrassing the king by cutting off a small piece of his clothing to let him know that he could have killed him had he simply chosen to do so. Once again, David's sensitive heart pleased God. And once again, may David's sensitivity to the Lord's perfect will for his life cause us to examine just how sensitive we are to carrying out the perfect will of God for our lives. God was able to use the realization that David had the perfect opportunity to take Saul's life but refused, to appease Saul—at least for the time being!

In Chapter 25, all of us who have worked for a bona fide, biblical "fool" take great hope. (Note that the name "Nabal" actually means "fool!" Like so many biblical characters—he certainly lived up to his name!) Abigail saves her "fool" of a husband, and for this God blesses her abundantly. Many would have thought themselves powerless to redirect an army like David's, but Abigail was "a woman of good understanding" (25:3) who knew when to "make haste!" (25:18)

Through this passage we are reminded of the biblical principle and mandate that "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12:19) David had trusted God in not taking out vengeance upon Saul, but was about to blow it by seeking vengeance against Nabal. God uses Abigail's wise handling of the situation to avert David's vengeance against her husband. Within a matter of two weeks, God had already exercised His vengeance against Nabal, and he was no more! Oh, may we learn to trust God to deal with the enemies that surround us, rather than seeking to deal with them ourselves in the power of the flesh!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

By DAVID'S REFUSAL TO TAKE THE KINGDOM BY FORCE, OR BEFORE GOD'S APPOINTED TIME — 1 Samuel 24:10–13 (John 6:15 – Our Lord Jesus Christ refused to become king of Israel until God's appointed time.)

By ABIGAIL'S EFFORT TO MAKE PEACE BETWEEN DAVID AND NABAL — 1 Samuel 25:21–28 (2 Cor. 5:19 — God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself).

## WEEK 14, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: 1 SAMUEL 26-31

### OVERVIEW:

David spares Saul's life again; David lives in the land of the Philistines and defeats many enemies; Saul consults with a witch regarding going to war; David recovers his family and the families of his soldiers who are kidnapped; Saul's sons are killed in battle; Saul takes his own life.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

After Nabal died at the end of chapter 25 in yesterday's reading, David took his widow, Abigail, to wife. David was a man with so many talents and abilities, and had such a good heart, however, it is fleshly violations such as this that will ultimately blossom into a snare of epic proportions in his life down the road. When God prophesied hundreds of years earlier in Deuteronomy 17 years earlier that Israel would get to the place that they would want an earthly king like the other nations of the world, one of the key stipulations God made abundantly clear even then, was that a king in Israel "shall not... multiply wives to himself." (Deu. 17:16–17) David had already been anointed by Samuel for kingship in Israel (16:1–13), but before he can even be installed into the office as the nation's leader, he has already violated one of God's key tions.

Perhaps it was that lapse in judgment that spilled over into his decision to return to the land of Ziphites, placing him into harm's way by getting in the direct path of his irrational and unpredictable enemy, Saul, once again. By God's grace, He caused a "deep sleep" to fall upon Saul and his band of 3000 soldiers, and by taking Saul's spear and water bottle while he was sleeping rather than taking his life, David is able to prove to him that he did not aspire to kill him. (26:7–12)

It should be noted that the PHYSICAL condition of "deep sleep" that God poured out upon Saul and his men is actually a graphic picture of a condition that God pours out upon people SPIRITUALLY. Isaiah 29:10–11 talks about "the spirit of deep sleep" that causes a person's spiritual eyes to close, and the Bible to become as if it were sealed to them. It is apparent, biblically and practically speaking, that God chooses to pour out this spirit upon people because they willfully choose to close their eyes to the truth of God's word that has been revealed to them. In Matthew 13:15, Jesus talked about people whose "eyes they have closed; lest at anytime they should see with their eyes." We must be very careful in what we communicate to God through our lives that we really want, because God will gladly oblige. Pharaoh hardened his heart, and God helped him to get what he wanted—and God hardened Pharaoh's heart. People in the last days communicate to God that they want a lie by rejecting the truth of God when it is revealed to them, and God will give them the lie they told him they wanted—and they will believe the lie of the Antichrist. (2 Thes. 2:8–12) People close their eyes to God's truth, and God will help them in the process—and He will close their eyes! (Isa. 29:10–11; Mat. 13:15) Once again, we all might do well to ask ourselves what it is that our lives are actually telling God that we want! And, we all might need to ask ourselves, is there any area in our life where we are willfully rejecting truth that has been revealed to us?

Note also in today's reading, that one of the most admirable qualities David possessed was how he regarded GOD's authority in his life, and how that translated into how he regarded MAN'S authority in his life. Samuel had anointed David king while Saul still held the office. David, however, never manifested a sense of entitlement... he never

directly or indirectly sought to undermine the king's authority, or sought to rally followers to stage any type of insurrection against Saul's regime. Though God had promised to deliver Saul into David's hand, David made for absolute certain that that deliverance would not come from his own hand! On several occasions, David articulated that he would "not stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed." (1 Sam. 24:6; 26:9,11,23) In other words, regardless of his own anointing, as long as God allowed the previously anointed king to sit on the throne, David wasn't going to be party to any action to remove him. David operated off of biblical principles that at that time were yet to be recorded in God's word: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven" (Ecc. 3:1) — and "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time." (Ecc. 3:11)

In chapter 27, David puts himself into another precarious situation, this time by taking refuge in enemy territory, and ends up lying to the king. Chapter 28 is another sad chapter in the Bible, and yet another of the sad chapters in Saul's life. When we first met him in 1 Samuel chapter 9, Saul "STOOD... higher than any of the people." (9:2; 10:23) God had set before him a future that was incredibly bright and promising. By chapter 28, however, he has "STOOPEd" lower than any of the people. (28:14) He is literally on his face in front of a demonically-empowered witch—asking her to help him know his future because God was no longer communicating with him or to him. Oh, the depths to which sin can take us! Saul asks her to call up Samuel from the dead, and surprisingly enough—Samuel does appear to Saul! It was even surprising to the witch—and by the sound of her voice (28:12), even freaked her out!

This passage, as you can only imagine, has been the subject of many theological discussions and debates. Perhaps the simplest explanation for what actually happened with Samuel's appearance to Saul is that he was there—not because of the witch's power, but because God sent him there to deliver a message that He wanted Samuel to deliver to him.

The account of the death of Saul is also the subject of considerable debate. The debate centers around the fact that there appears to be two contradictory accounts of how it actually happened. In 31:4–6, the account reveals that after being wounded in battle, Saul fell on his own sword and took his own life before the enemy was able to taunt him and/or torture him. However, in 2 Samuel 1:2–10, the account the Amalekite reports to David is that Saul had fallen on his own sword, and though he was greatly wounded, Saul was convinced that his injury wasn't going to kill him, so he asked the Amalekite to "finish the job," as it were. The Amalekite tells David that he personally believed that Saul was going to die from his self-inflicted wound, so he saw no harm in putting Saul "out of his misery," so to speak.

So, which account is right? And is this actually a contradiction in the Bible?

Let's be clear. If this is a contradiction in our Bible, the best thing any of us could do is close our Bible right now and never open it again! Then, we ought to take this tool, the "52 Weeks of Pursuit," and use it as kindling for our next bonfire—and spend as much time as is necessary trying to find something productive to do with our lives that makes us happy, because the reality is—we're all in a lurch! (1 Cor 15:32) If this is a contradiction, then the entire Bible is a sham—and nothing more than a worthless piece of unreliable literary trash! It is not the word of God, but is, in fact, the words of men! In other words, it is the exact opposite of what 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says it is!

Obviously, these two accounts of Saul's death are NOT a contradiction in the Bible—because there are NONE! As in these two accounts, there sometimes may be "apparent contradictions" in the Bible, but there are NO contradictions! It is in very fact, the perfect, inspired, infallible, inerrant word and words of God! (Pro. 30:5–6; 1 Thes. 2:13) The "apparent contradictions" that are in the Bible can usually be unraveled by simply employing basic reasoning skills, and/or by simply comparing Scripture with Scripture. (1 Cor. 2:13) In this particular "apparent contradiction," the answer is very simply that the story that the Amalekite told David in 2 Samuel 1 was simply a fabrication. He may have concocted the whole story to make him look heroic in the eyes of David, and/or to give explanation for why he had Saul's crown and arm band in his possession. His fabrication, however, ended in his death. (2 Sam. 1:15)

Perhaps the best way to summarize the Book of 1 Samuel is for us to hypothetically take a sheet of paper and divided into two columns. At the top of the first column, we would title it: "What NOT to do." At the top of the second column, we would title it: "What TO DO." In the first column, we would explain the lives of two key characters: Eli and Saul. In the second column, we would explain the lives of two other key characters: Samuel and David. That is basically the practical essence of the entire Book. The beautiful thing about our God, is that He graciously allows us the privilege of choosing the column from which we will conduct our lives!

If someone were to read a written account of our lives over the past several years like we have done with these four men in 1 Samuel, would they place us in the "What TO DO" column, or the "What NOT to do" column?

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through the URIM, which was used to determine God's will — 1 Samuel 28:6 (Heb. 11:1–2 – Today Christ speaks to us to reveal His will through His Spirit as we read His Word. "God... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.")

## WEEK 14, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: 2 SAMUEL 1-4

### OVERVIEW:

The death of Saul; David mourns the death of Saul and Jonathan; David's song of sorrow; David is crowned king of Judah; Ishbosheth is made king of Israel; Abner deserts Ishbosheth to align with David; Joab murders Abner; Ishbosheth's murder; David's execution of Ishbosheth's murderers.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we saw in yesterday's reading, 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul. 2 Samuel is, as the name of the Book implies, a continuation of the narrative of 1 Samuel, so it likewise begins as 1 Samuel ends, with the death of Saul.

Saul's death gives us an incredible glimpse into the heart of the only one Scripture ever specifically identifies as a "man after God's own heart." (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) With all that Saul had done to David and had attempted to do, one would think that David would be elated at the news of his death. That's precisely what Saul's killer thought! But that certainly wasn't the case! Amazingly, David genuinely grieved and lamented Saul's death (1:11–12, 17), even composing a song as a beautiful and continuous memorial to Israel's first king. (1:19–27) David slayed Saul's slayer for the audacity of thinking it was within his right to put to death the one whom God had anointed. Be careful who you slay, realizing more people are slain with the four ounce slab of mucous membrane that rests behind our teeth, than all of the world's swords and knives combined!

But with Israel's king now dead, the question was, who would be his successor? Back in 1 Samuel 16:13, David had been anointed by God by the prophet Samuel as Israel's next king. But that was a long time ago, and Abner, Saul's cousin and the powerful commander of Saul's army was determined to keep the kingship within the family, or perhaps better stated—within his own authority. He moves to persuade the elders of Israel to put Saul's son, Ishbosheth, on the throne.

Once again, it is incredible to watch the "man after God's own heart" operate. With the anointing David had received of Samuel, he most certainly could have justified himself in facing Abner in battle for his "right" as God's chosen successor. Rather, David inquired of the Lord (2:1,4), placing his life and the entire situation completely in God's hands. It is a great lesson for those of us living in the last days to whom the Scripture identifies as "lovers of their own selves" (2 Tim. 3:1-2), and those who are interested in their "rights" (Rev. 3:14 – "Laodicean" = "the rights of the people"), who are so prone toward self-promotion and personal advancement, rather than waiting upon God, seeking God, and trusting God.

What situation are you presently facing, that from a human perspective, you would have the "right" to vaunt yourself, and "make happen" what you know God has determined as His will? David teaches us how unnecessary it is to fight for our "rights," and how God proves His faithfulness when "self" is off of the throne, and we patiently and confidently submit ourselves to Christ's Lordship, allowing Him to carry out His will in our lives, in His way, and in His time. David realized that if Jehovah had indeed anointed him as king, then Jehovah would deal with his enemies, and bring him into the possession of the kingdom.

God led David to Hebron where He was anointed king of Judah, yet Judah was only a small representation of Israel's tribes. The other tribes of Israel refused to recognize David's kingship. But in due time, Abner and Ishbosheth had a major falling out, causing Abner to pledge his loyalty to David. When Joab, the captain of David's army returned

from battle and heard that David had met with Abner, it sent Joab over the top! He immediately planned to kill Abner, and did so by stabbing him under the fifth rib (the perfect location to assure death). In response, David publicly condemned Abner's murder in two ways: first, by cursing Joab and his house; and second, by proclaiming a time of mourning for Abner, while openly mourning for Abner himself.

With Abner out of the way, Ishbosheth's position became weaker and weaker, while David's grew stronger, and stronger. Baanah and Rechab realized that David's rule over Israel was inevitable, and decided to impress David by killing Ishbosheth. David, however, was not impressed! David realized that God would never lead men to violate His Word in order to enthrone His king (i.e. It's never right to do wrong, in order to do something right!). David knew that God was more than able to fulfill His promises to him without the assistance of murderers! David called for Baanah's and Rechab's execution, exposing their bodies to the humiliation of public display, while the head of Ishobosheth was respectfully and honorably buried in the tomb of Abner.

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

In DAVID'S SONG OF SORROW — 2 Samuel 1:19–27 (Even though Saul had made David his enemy, David continuously loved Saul. Christ loved us, even though we had made ourselves His enemies —Rom. 5:8,10a; Eph. 2:1,4–5a)

In DAVID'S PARTIAL REIGN — 2 Samuel 2:4 (Though David had been anointed as Israel's king, he actually reigned over a very small percentage of those to whom he was entitled to rule. He patiently waited for God's timing. In similar fashion, the Lord Jesus Christ has been anointed King over all the earth, yet awaits the Father's timing to actually possess His kingdom. There are only a small percentage of the world's population who recognize Christ as their Lord and King, but one day soon, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father — Phil. 2:10–11)

## WEEK 14, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: 2 SAMUEL 5-8

### OVERVIEW:

David is anointed as the king over all of Israel; the stronghold of the Jebusites (Jerusalem) is captured by David; David brings the Ark of God into Jerusalem; the Davidic Covenant: David's prayer of thanksgiving; David's victories over the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, and the Edomites.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

David had reigned over the tribe of Judah for 7½ years in Hebron. In chapter 5, he is anointed king over the entire nation of Israel, and did so for 33 years, making his entire reign forty years.

With the extension of his kingdom, He now needed a more centralized location from which to rule, and chose Jerusalem to be the capital city. The only problem was, the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem and Israel had not yet found a way to capture this stronghold of the enemy. (Jos. 15:63; Jud. 1:21) The Jebusites were so cocky about their ability to maintain their stronghold they defied them saying, "The lame and the blind could defeat you!" Yet David and his men defeated the Jebusites—and Jerusalem even came to be called "the city of David!"

Like David, our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, has been anointed (Messiah) of God to rule from the throne of our hearts over our entire life. We must allow Him to remove any and all "strongholds" that the enemy has established. 2 Corinthians 11:35 says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"

But notice in 2 Samuel 5, that just as soon as the stronghold had been defeated and David had been established in Jerusalem, the old enemy, the Philistines, show up! Recognize, that until we receive our glorified body, we're never going to be "out of the woods," and that one of the key times Satan will attack us, is when he thinks we have been "lulled by the blessing" of a recent victory.

Note also, that as the Philistines were in pursuit, David sought clear direction from the Word of the Lord and victory was granted. As the enemy (the Philistines) attack a second time, David didn't assume another victory, but once again sought clear direction from the Lord. (These are key principles to file in the forefront of our understanding concerning spiritual warfare!)

In chapter 6, David is about to do something monumental—return the ark (representative of God's presence among His people) to its rightful place! The ark has been in the possession of the Philistines for 20 years, and sadly, no one seemed to miss it, or be impassioned to see it returned! The return of the ark was an incredibly exciting and worshipful experience for all involved. The spiritual atmosphere was electric! A great lesson is to be learned, however. God is never interested in self-styled worship—and good intentions and proper motivation mean nothing if there is not complete obedience to God's Word. In David's zeal to see the ark returned, the method of carrying it (on a new cart) was in violation of how God had clearly instructed Israel to carry it. (See Numbers 4:15; 7:9) When the oxen pulling the cart stumbled on Nachon's threshingfloor and well-meaning Uzzah reached forth to keep the ark from falling off, just as God had warned, he was immediately zapped! Don't ever forget, "God says what He means, and means what He says!" (Num. 4:15) The whole incident caused David to search his heart to determine whether

returning the ark was what he really wanted. In the mean time, he at least temporarily disposes of it at the house of Obededom, and it stayed there for three months. After seeing how the ark brought such blessing to Obededom and his entire family, David thought it might be advantageous to return it to Jerusalem after all.

In chapter 7, God established the Davidic covenant. This key unconditional covenant promised that David would have a child that was yet to be born who would succeed him and establish his kingdom. This son (Solomon) would build the temple instead of David, and the throne of his kingdom would be well established forever, even in spite of the sins he may commit. It further promised that David's house, his kingdom, and his throne would be established forever.

David was deeply moved by God's covenant of grace, and he humbly came into God's presence and offered the prayer of thanksgiving recorded in 7:18–29.

In chapter 8, David consolidates the kingdom by defeating in rapid succession the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, and the Edomites. The key to these conquests is found in 8:14, "And the Lord preserved David withersoever he went."

#### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through DAVID, THE ANOINTED KING OVER ISRAEL — 2 Samuel 5:3 (Psa. 2:2; Joh. 1:41 — Christ is the Lord's Anointed. Note that "Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew word "Messiah," which means "anointed one.")

## WEEK 15, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: 2 SAMUEL 9-12

### OVERVIEW:

David's kindness to Mephibosheth; the defeat of the Ammonites and Syrians; David's sin with Bathsheba; Nathan's parable and David's repentance; the death of David and Bathsheba's baby; the birth of Solomon.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In chapter 9, God gives us an incredible picture of salvation through the account of David's blessing upon Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son.

Mephibosheth beautifully portrays all of us in our lost condition. Note the similarities:

- 1) Just as Mephibosheth was born into a rejected family due to sin (Saul's – 1 Sam. 15:23,26), we, too, were born into a rejected family due to sin. (Adam's – Rom 5:12)  
(Note that Mephibosheth's location when David sought him was Machir, which means "sold." When God sought us, Romans 7:14 says we were "sold under sin.")
- 2) Just as Mephibosheth was unable to walk due to a fall, (2 Sam. 4:4) we, too, were unable to walk due to "the fall" that crippled us spiritually. Because of it, we were unable to walk and to please God.
- 3) Just as Mephibosheth lived in a land called Lodebar, meaning "no pasture" (2 Sam. 9:4–5), in our lost condition, we, too, lived in a land of famine and barrenness (i.e. the world), which provided "no pasture." (i.e. Nothing to satisfy the hunger of our souls.)

Note next, that David beautifully portrays the Lord Jesus Christ in providing our salvation:

- 1) David made the first move. (2 Sam. 9:1)  
Just as Mephibosheth was unable to make the first "step" toward David because of his lameness, we, too, were unable to make the first step in seeking the Lord. (Rom. 3:10–12)
- 2) David extended this grace to Mephibosheth because of a covenant he had made with Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14–17).  
We, too, have been extended the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ because of what Hebrews 13:20–21 calls "the everlasting covenant."
- 3) It was an act of David's kindness. (1 Sam. 20:15)  
In fact, in 2 Samuel 9:3, David calls it "the kindness of God." Titus 3:4-6 says, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;"

- 4) David made him a part of his own family.  
Like all of us when we came to the Lord for salvation, Mephibosheth simply sought to be David's servant, but he made him a son! Hallelujah! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"! (1 John 3:1)
  
- 5) David provided for Mephibosheth's every need and exceeded his needs. (9:9–10)  
David took Mephibosheth from the place of "no pasture," to feeding him at the table of the very king himself! Likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ took us out of the barrenness of our life, to meeting our every need (Phil. 4:19), and exceeding our every need (2 Cor. 9:8,11).

As we move into chapter 11, we move into the darkest chapter of David's life. God's epitaph of David is found in 1 Kings 15:5: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Chapter 11 of 2 Samuel is all about that "matter." The "matter of Uriah the Hittite" was simply this: David first took his WIFE; then, David took his LIFE!

There is something extremely interesting to note about how "the man after God's own heart" got himself in this unbelievably sinful mess. David said in Psalm 27:4: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple."

Note, that "ONE THING" David was seeking after was expressed "THREE" ways:

- 1) "That I may DWELL in the HOUSE of the LORD."
- 2) "To BEHOLD the BEAUTY of the LORD"
- 3) "To ENQUIRE in his TEMPLE."

Notice in 2 Samuel 11:1–4, that when David commits this terrible atrocity against the Lord and Uriah:

- 1) He was DWELLING in his OWN HOUSE... not the Lord's house! (11:1–2)
- 2) He was BEHOLDING the BEAUTY of BATHSHEBA... not the Lord's beauty! (11:3)
- 3) He ENQUIRED after the WOMAN... not enquiring after the Lord! (11:4)

It's a great lesson about the priority of WORSHIP. Jesus taught us in Luke 10:42, as David confirms here in 2 Samuel 27:4, that worship is in the "one thing" that is "needful." Maybe we could say that is the "main thing!" And as the old adage says, "The main thing... is to keep the main thing... the main thing!" We must constantly be aware of the depths the flesh can take us when we lose worship as the "one thing," or the "main thing" in our lives.

Sadly, it takes "the man after God's own heart" over a year to take ownership of his sin, and then, only when confronted by the prophet Nathan. Nathan assures David that his sin would be forgiven, but that the consequences of it would follow him the remainder of his life. (12:10–14) God help us to count the incredible cost of sin, and the terrible atrocity of "giving great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." (12:14)

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

In the prophet Nathan giving SOLOMON the name JEDIDIAH – 2 Samuel 12:24–25. (Note: The name "Jedidiah" means "Beloved of the Lord" — See John 17:24; Matthew 3:17;17:5; Ephesians 1:6. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the "Beloved of the Lord," or the "Beloved of the Father.")

## WEEK 15, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: 2 SAMUEL 13-16

### OVERVIEW:

Amnon rapes Tamar; Absalom, Tamar's brother, plots Amnon's murder in revenge; Absalom flees to Geshur; Joab plots to have Absalom returned to Jerusalem; David restores Absalom; Absalom leads a revolt, seeking to overthrow his father; David flees in fear of his son.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In today's reading we find the continuation of the consequences of David's sin that the Lord promised in chapter 12, verse 11, "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

A parent can experience no greater pain than to see his own sin repeated in the lives of his children—and yet the principle of Galatians 6:7–8 and Proverbs 11:29 reveals that it is inevitable. In chapter 13, David's son, Amnon, commits sexual sin against his own half-sister, Tamar. When David learned of Amnon's sin, he was obviously extremely upset and angry. (13:21) He did not, however, punish him. Leviticus 20:17 says that Amnon's punishment for raping Tamar should have been death! Most likely, David failed to exercise the proper discipline because his own sin was so fresh in everyone's mind—including his own! Tamar's full-brother, Absalom, was also extremely upset about it, and his anger only intensified as he observed that his father refused to do anything about Amnon's sin—even "after two full years!" (13:22-23) As a result of his exasperation, Absalom plotted Amnon's death, and had him killed at a family gathering. Absalom went into hiding for the next three years (13:38), and after overcoming the grief of Amnon's death, David longed to see Absalom, his exasperated and fugitive son.

Joab recognized that David longed to have Absalom back in Jerusalem, but also recognized that for him to return without receiving the retribution he was due for Amnon's murder—it wasn't going to be good for David's "approval rating" in Israel. Joab devised a clever plot (much like God did through Nathan – 2 Sam. 12:1–7), to get David to act on the situation with his own son, by sending a woman to ask the king's counsel on a situation similar to the one David faced. In offering her counsel, David is caught in the web of his own moral wisdom. He has been backed into a corner, and now must restore, with protection, the banished, fearful, and exasperated Absalom.

David gives orders to Joab (as weak as they were), to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, even though Absalom remained unrepentant. It is a decision through which the consequences of David's sin will bear even more fruit, and once again, just as God said, would reap "evil out of his own house."

Though Absalom is brought back to Jerusalem, after another "two full years," he still had not been permitted to come into his father's presence. (14:28) That means that it has now been seven years since Amnon raped Tamar—and five years since Absalom has seen his father! But during Absalom's two years back in Jerusalem, while his own animosity toward his father continued to grow, the hearts of the people of Israel were beginning to be turned toward Absalom. When David and Absalom were reunited, Absalom took the favor his father extended to him, and used it as the platform to launch a national rebellion. How ironic, that while David schemed to spare his son's life, Absalom schemed to put his father to death. Not enough can be said about the incredible danger of "provoking your children to wrath!" (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21) Parents, we must be extremely careful!

In chapters 15 and 16, Absalom blatantly seeks to extend his following throughout the nation, openly criticizing his father's leadership and plotting to turn the affection of the people toward himself. It is interesting to note that while

David was reigning in the height of his power, his enemies within his own kingdom (that were there all along!) would not dare to oppose him. Absalom's revolt, however, gave them what they thought was the opportunity to resist the king's leadership and get away with it. What Absalom's rebellion actually did for the kingdom was sift the true from the false. As difficult as it is, God says that the same thing happens in churches: "...When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there MUST be heresies (note that the word "heresies" is the same word that was just translated "divisions" in the previous sentence!) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. 11:18–19). Notice, God not only says that it happens in churches, but that it "MUST" happen! Sometimes it's the only way to tell who the people in the church really are—and where they stand. Remember, there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecc. 1:9)

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through DAVID'S RESTORATION OF HIS ESTRANGED SON — 2 Samuel 14:22 (2 Cor. 5:19)

Through DAVID as he REBUKED HIS FOLLOWERS WHEN THEY WANTED TO EXECUTE HIS ENEMIES — 2 Samuel 16:10–11 (Luke 9:54–56)

## WEEK 15, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: 2 SAMUEL 17–20

### OVERVIEW:

Absalom chooses to follow Hushai's counsel over Ahithophel; Ahithophel commits suicide; David's army battles Absalom and his followers; Joab kills Absalom; David grieves bitterly; Joab rebukes David; the revolt of Sheba; David replaces Joab with Amasa as captain of his army; Amasa is replaced with Abishai; Joab is reinstated as captain of David's army; Sheba is killed.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we pick up in today's reading, Absalom's rebellion against his father and his wicked plot to overthrow him is at an all-time high. Though God has permitted this rebellion as a part of the consequences for David's sin in connection with Bathsheba and her faithful and loyal husband Uriah, he also used it to purge David's kingdom and separate the loyal from the disloyal. But now the time of judgment against Absalom had finally arrived.

Many times it takes a crisis to reveal who our real friends are. Ahithophel, David's counselor (and presumed "friend"), was invited by Absalom to be a part of his conspiracy. It is interesting and quite revealing to note the repeated usage of the personal pronouns "I" and "me" in Ahithophel's response in 17:1–3. Ahithophel said:

"Let 'ME' choose out of 12,000 men, and 'I' will arise and pursue after David this night: and 'I' will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid... and 'I' will smite the king only: And 'I' will bring back all the people unto thee."

It sounded to Absalom as if he was the object of Ahithophel's loyalty, but Ahithophel's speech betrays him. It reveals that the object of Ahithophel's affection was actually Ahithophel—and that he wanted to make certain "he" had a place of prominence and preeminence in what appeared to be the inevitability of a new regime.

In the meantime, David sends his true friend, Hushai, to join Absalom. This really fueled Absalom's passion, because now it appeared that he had been successful in gaining the following of both his father's top two advisors. Absalom seeks the counsel of these two men for the best way to actually formalize the overthrow of his father's kingship, and put an end to David once and for all. Ahithophel's plan was obviously the best of the two, but in answer to David's prayer back in chapter 15 and verse 31, "O, Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness," God saw to it that Absalom rejected his counsel. Hushai's plan appealed to Absalom's vanity, so since that is what had been driving him for the past seven years, it was the counsel Absalom followed. Absalom's vanity is what actually led to his death! And when the vanity of Ahithophel had been crushed by Absalom's refusal to heed "his" counsel, he went out (like Judas) and took his own life. Never underestimate what people will do when they don't get their own way!

Though David had given clear instruction not to kill Absalom in the midst of the battle (18:5), Joab saw the "pretty boy" hanging by the locks of his hair in a tree and immediately "shish-kebabbed" him. Joab sent Cushai to inform the king of Absalom's "condition," to which David was plummeted into deep depression and overwhelming grief. His grief for one that was the source of such turmoil and revolt, however, almost cost David his kingdom! (19:1–7) The subtle lesson we learn from this is that people are not only watching and analyzing our ACTIONS—but our REACTIONS!

This was obviously a time of great unrest and confusion in the kingdom. David begins his trip back to Jerusalem, and promises to appoint his nephew, Amasa (who had very recently been Absalom's general!), as the captain of his army in the place of Joab, if he could be successful in turning the hearts of the people of Judah (who had been extremely upset with him), to support David's return to power. This action certainly must have communicated to everyone in the inner circle, that David punished loyalty... and rewarded rebellion! That wasn't actually the signal David needed to be sending at a time of such political unrest, instability and volatility. Amasa was successful, however, in "bow[ing] the hearts of the men of Judah" to David's side. (19:14)

As chapter 20 begins, there is yet another rebellion. This time, it is a satanically influenced rebel by the name of Sheba, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was also successful in rallying a group of people against David. By this time, David certainly had to wonder, "When is all of this nonsense going to be over?"

In the process of dealing with the rebellion of Sheba, David replaces Abishai into Amasa's position as captain of the army, and Amasa is killed by Joab. Joab is then reinstated by David as his general, and ultimately, Sheba is beheaded. Once again, all of the murder and bloodshed that was a result of David's sin in these chapters is a very graphic reminder to us all—that "the wages of sin is DEATH!" (Rom. 6:23a)

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through MAHANAIM, a city of refuge where David went when he was fleeing from Absalom — 2 Samuel 17:27 (Heb. 6:18–20 — "We... have fled for REFUGE to lay hold upon the hope set before us... even JESUS.")

## WEEK 15, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: 2 SAMUEL 21-24

### OVERVIEW:

God punishes Israel with a three year famine because of Saul's ill-treatment of the Gibeonites; seven members of Saul's family are put to death as retribution; victories over the Philistine giants; the last words of David; the last recorded sin of David; David builds an altar; David's sacrifice; the three day plague.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Today's reading covers six events, which are not necessarily in chronological order, that form what might be considered an appendix to the main context of the Book of 2 Samuel:

- 1) A major famine sent as God's judgment for Saul's treatment of the Gibeonites.
- 2) A series of wars with the Philistines.
- 3) A psalm of deliverance and praise.
- 4) A list of David's mighty men of valour.
- 5) A sinful census.
- 6) The severe punishment that followed the census.

The events of chapter 24 provide many practical principles and applications. It is difficult to say with complete assurance what motivated David to call for this census since the Scripture doesn't specifically say, but it appears that once the nation of Israel had been re-established following the whole Absalom debacle—that David's heart was lifted up with pride, desiring to bask in the glory of his success. The parallel account in I Chronicles 21:1 says, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

It is interesting to compare this great sin in David's life with his sin with Bathsheba. 2 Corinthians 7:1 commands us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the FLESH and SPIRIT." Whereas David's sin with Bathsheba is a great example of a "sin of the FLESH," David's numbering of the people is a great example of a "sin of the SPIRIT." Whereas his sin with Bathsheba was a sin of PASSION—done in haste; this was a sin of PRIDE, done very calculatedly. Joab even appeals to David's conscience about doing such a defiant thing against God, and yet he still persisted. Whereas the result of David's sin with Bathsheba caused great sorrow to David and the death of a handful of family members, his sin in numbering the people actually resulted in the death of 70,000 men! From a human perspective, pride and rebellion do not seem quite as terrible as adultery and murder, and yet in David's life, they produced greater sorrow and tragedy than his sin of adultery. May this become a graphic reminder to each of us that we must always be on guard—not only concerning sins of the FLESH, but also for sins of the SPIRIT! Do recognize, however, that the consequences of sin affect not only ourselves, but those we lead (i.e. family, disciples, church members, etc.).

So what practical lessons does 2 Samuel 24 teach us?

#### 1) We never "out-grow" temptation.

David is not a strapping youth in 2 Samuel 24. He's way up in years, and one would think he would know better. Again, don't forget, regardless of our age or our level of spiritual maturity, we will never be out of the reach of temptation! (1 Cor. 10:12)

**2) God always gives us space to repent.**

In this case, He gave David over nine months to “cleanse himself of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” (2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Sam. 24:8) Maybe this would be a good time for each of us to ask ourselves, “Have I cleansed myself of ALL filthiness of the FLESH and SPIRIT?”

**3) We must recognize that sins of the SPIRIT are as horrific as sins of the FLESH.**

It is interesting that Jesus was actually more “accommodating” to those involved in sins of passion (i.e. the woman caught in adultery), than He was those who were persistently involved in sins of pride (i.e. the scribes and Pharisees). Certainly, we must guard against both.

**4) Our sin always involves others.**

In David’s case, whether it was family members or the entire nation, it screams to us that others are always affected by our sin. May God help us to count the horrific cost of our sin!

**CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

As the ONE WE CALL UPON FOR SALVATION — 2 Samuel 22:4 (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9,13).

## WEEK 15, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: 1 KINGS 1-3

### OVERVIEW:

The end of David's reign; Adonijah's attempt to take the throne; Solomon anointed and announced as king; David's final charge to Solomon; Solomon executes judgment; Solomon asks for and receives an understanding heart and discernment.

### HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we enter into 1 Kings today, let's begin by highlighting a few important details from a technical standpoint. First, note that 1 Kings continues the Old Testament narrative where the Book of 2 Samuel ended. Second, recognize that the Books of 1 and 2 Kings in our Bible appear in the Hebrew Bible as one. Third, the date of the writing of 1 Kings is approximately between 562 and 536 B.C., and though tradition has assigned its authorship to Jeremiah, it was most likely written by a Jewish captive in Babylon under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And fourth, though the Kings and Chronicles cover the same basic time period and content, it is apparent that they were written from different perspectives: whereas the Books of 1 and 2 Kings were written from a PROPHETIC standpoint, the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written from a PRIESTLY standpoint.

Whether it be in nations, corporations or churches, (actually, in any organized group where there is an identifiable leader!) the time of transition from one leader to another has the profound potential of becoming an extremely volatile situation. As in chapter 1 in today's reading, what had the potential to produce an exciting and new beginning filled with fresh vision and innovative ideas as a new king was about to be installed in Israel, quickly became a powder keg once EGOS began to vaunt themselves— and OPINIONS began to swarm like flies around a piece of raw meat. Much like Adonijah's older brother Absalom sought to usurp the kingship from their father David — Adonijah sought to usurp the kingship from the rightful heir to the throne, their younger brother, Solomon.

And it is amazing how people you think would know better— in this case, Abiathar the priest, Joab the captain of the host, and all of the sons of the king (1:19)— actually champion the cause of someone like Adonijah, who had an "I" problem as big and as obvious as Lucifer's in Isaiah 14:13–14: "I will...I will...I will...I will...I will!" And yet, to this day, somehow people allow themselves to get behind self-serving, self-promoting egotists who are seeking to ramrod themselves into a position of authority. If someone is desirous to fill a leadership position, but they are violating God's structure of authority to get there — recognize that those antics will merely be a preview of coming attractions if or when they assume the position! May God use this passage to open our eyes! When God is orchestrating the installment of a new leader, there will not be the violation of clear principles of character, integrity and/or scripture!

It is also amazing how good men in positions of leadership— in this case, David, often fail to properly implement a smooth succession plan/strategy. Were it not for the boldness and tenacity of Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet, Israel might have missed God's selection for their next king— Solomon. Verse 6 of chapter 1 is actually astounding: *"And his (Adonijah's) father (David) had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?"* Be it known, undisciplined children grow up to be self-seeking, self-willed and self-indulgent adults! Adonijah is a perfect example!

As David prepares to die in chapter 2, his parting charge to his son and newly installed king was to "man up!" (2:2) And with the kingdom in its present state, he was certainly going to need to do just that! His father had left some "unfinished business" that would require Solomon's immediate attention. (2:5, 9) That "unfinished business" would

actually translate into the execution of four key men in the kingdom. And this, too, becomes the plight of many newly installed leaders. It often falls their lot to "clean house," as it were, so that the new regime can actually be "established." (2:12) Those kind of bold moves for a new leader have the potential to be majorly misunderstood — but are often necessary in order for the new leader to actually lead.

In chapter 3, Solomon becomes a great illustration of how a believer can actually love the Lord (3:3), and yet, be in the midst of making major compromises that, in time, will cause that love to wane. Solomon genuinely loves the Lord, as evidenced by his request when the Lord promises to grant that for which he would ask. And yet, the affinity he makes with the king of Egypt and the relationship with which he enters with his daughter will become the things that ultimately lead to Solomon's demise. (3:1)

Perhaps the exorbitant amount of sacrifices (a thousand of 'em!) that Solomon offered (3:4) — were an attempt to convince himself that his compromises weren't actually infringing upon his love for the Lord. Often when people are "over-doing" their spiritual responsibilities, it can be an attempt to compensate for an area (or some areas!) of clear disobedience. Perhaps we all should put our spiritual brakes on for just a minute and stop to consider: though I love the Lord enough today to still be pursuing Him through His Word, is it possible that I am doing it as an attempt to overshadow compromises that I am making in my walk with the Lord, or violations of clear commands of Scripture, that like Solomon, could in time overtake my love for the Lord? Remember the words of Samuel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel 15:22: *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."*

### **CHRIST IS REVEALED:**

Through SOLOMON, the Son of David, sitting on the throne of David with his kingdom established — 1 Kings 2:12 (Luke 1:32; Mark 11:10)