

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

1 SAMUEL

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PREFACE

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Duncan Heaster

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 1

1Sa 1:1 Now there was a man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephraimite-

We note that this continues on from Judges-Ruth, where people from Ephraim are generally apostate. So here we have an example of a family holding on to the covenant amidst general apostasy from it. Elkanah means "God obtains" and his father "Tohu" means "depression", and he was to be taught the meaning of his name through obtaining Samuel after the years of Hannah's depression. We too are set up by God with challenges and things we need to perceive, and are led by Him to that understanding- including through the experiences of our partners.

The variations in the genealogies reflect how fluid was the spelling of names, and how there were variations upon the same name: Elkanah, Jeroham, Elihu, Tohu, Zuph (1 Sam. 1:1); Elkanah, Jeroham, Eliab, Nahath, Zophai (1 Chron. 6:26,27); Elkanah, Jeroham, Eliel, Toah, Zuph (1 Chron. 6:34,35).

1Sa 1:2 He had two wives; the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children-

"The one" could be translated "the first". Perhaps Hannah was his first wife, but being barren he had taken Peninnah. Hannah, the depressed, bitter, hopeless case, the barren first wife in a polygamous marriage, with a co-wife who has produced ten sons, is again the hopeless outsider chosen by God to further His saving purpose. For Peninnah to have produced many children and Hannah none, this situation must have gone on for at least 15 years. Throughout which God appeared apparently silent, years when life must've seemed just not worth living for Hannah.

Issues related to barrenness are so common in the lives of the Old Testament faithful. To not have children was seen as the ultimate poverty and sign of God's lack of blessing. The equivalent in modern society may be a sense that God has not come through for us in life as we think He ought or might have done; whether or not the issue is fertility. "Hannah" means Yah's gift or grace; and like Elkanah (see on :1), she had to be brought to understand God's intention for her, and to realize that children like all blessings don't come automatically but are God's gift by grace. "Peninnah" means rubies, and perhaps Prov. 31:10 has her in view when saying that the virtuous woman (cp. Hannah) is worth more than rubies / Peninnah.

1Sa 1:3 This man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and to sacrifice to Yahweh of Armies in Shiloh-

Elkanah is presented as faithful to the covenant. And yet the Mosaic commandment was that every male should appear before Yahweh three times / year (Ex. 23:17). But he went up only once / year, and yet is presented as a righteous man. Clearly most of God's people didn't keep the law of Moses perfectly, and yet legitimate relationship with God was still possible. And yet the fact that was true, was therefore by His grace alone.

The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests to Yahweh, were there-

Phinehas means "mouth of a serpent", Hophni is less clear, possibly "one who punches / slaps with his hands". Strange names for men who were supposed to be priests, and a reflection on Eli. "Eli" could be a variation on El, but it seems more likely to mean high / proud one. And for all his apparent humility, that was indeed his problem in the end.

1Sa 1:4 When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he gave to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters portions-

The idea may be that they ate a peace offering together, presided over by Elkanah, and he shared out the portions of the sacrifice to the whole family to eat, including little children. They ate of the symbol of the covenant relationship which their parents had, and this may or may not be helpful in formulating an understanding of whether children should partake of the bread and wine in our dispensation.

1Sa 1:5 but to Hannah he gave a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but Yahweh had shut up her womb-

"But Yahweh had shut up..." may hint that Elkanah's high view of Hannah was not at that point shared by God. He gave her, literally, "the nose portion". This could be a metaphor for "double", or it could be read literally, as if the gift of this part of the animal was a symbolic sign of favouritism. We will note on 1 Sam. 2 that she says many things which seem to betray a very unspiritual and bitter heart, even though she was of a woman of faith. We note again the usage of contemporary medical understandings ["phenomenological language"], a point to bear in mind when we come to the language of demon possession used to describe mental illness in the New Testament. For infertility is not due to a literally closed womb. The dynamics of the situation are so true to life- Hannah had no children, but Peninah did; but Hannah was the favourite wife and was given the "double portion" to demonstrate that, and so Peninah responded by hitting at Hannah because of her barrenness.

1Sa 1:6 Her rival provoked her severely, to make her fret because Yahweh had shut up her womb-

We have the situation of Rachel and Leah repeated again, whereby the barren wife was loved more by the husband and was provoked by the other partner. It is commendable however that she didn't resort to trying to get her husband to sleep with another woman and bear a child symbolically for her. The way circumstances repeat in life and between persons, both contemporary with each other and historically, is typical of how God works; we are intended to see the similarities with others and take lessons and encouragement. This is what makes the Bible a living word, because the characters selected for us to meet are all designed to speak directly to us in our lives, and to confirm our deep sense that man is not alone, and nothing we pass through is in fact totally unique to us. Peninnah made Hannah "fret" (1 Sam. 1:6), and yet when she has Samuel she asks God to "thunder", s.w. "fret", against her enemies, clearly having Peninnah in view (1 Sam. 2:10). Hannah imagines He will do this when His "anointed king" is reigning, and clearly she understood Samuel to be that. He didn't become that; and the fact he anointed David to be king rather than himself being anointed is pointed proof of the fact that her bitter expectations and hopes didn't come true as she intended. There seems no forgiveness, just a desire for judgment and to make Peninnah feel the same way as she had been made to feel; and a desire for the manifestation of the anointed King in order for her to see her enemy made to feel how she had felt, and worse.

"Fret" is literally, 'Anger after anger'. The picture is of continual provocation leading to continual anger episodes. But she will later reflect that Yahweh 'counts actions' (1 Sam. 2:3 Heb.). Every provocation and episode was counted. All the countless daily episodes like this in countless human relationships are likewise not unnoticed, and all will finally be judged when they concern the Lord's people.

1Sa 1:7 This went on year after year when she went up-

It is again emphasized that they made once yearly pilgrimages to the tabernacle. And yet the Mosaic commandment was that every male should appear before Yahweh three times / year (Ex. 23:17). But Elkanah went up only once / year, and yet is presented as a righteous man. See on :3. This is another indication that Hannah was not the peerlessly spiritual woman which she is sometimes made out to be.

To the house of Yahweh-

The temple of Yahweh wasn't then built, so this anachronism may reflect how these historical books were rewritten under Divine inspiration, after the exile. Or it could simply be that a more permanent structure had been built for the tabernacle.

She provoked her, therefore she wept and didn't eat-

The idea may be that she didn't eat of the peace offerings, because she didn't feel at peace neither with God nor with the rest of the family because of Peninnah being so horrible to her. Again this is all so psychologically credible; tension with another in the believing family leads to distance from God. Until like Hannah we get a grip and take initiative in our relationship with God personally.

1Sa 1:8 Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why don't you eat? Why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?-

Perhaps this implied Peninah had borne him 10 sons; she is described as "she who has many children" (1 Sam. 2:5). We could infer that Hannah refused to eat the double portion Elkanah gave her; even his special love and favouritism couldn't compensate, in her mind, for her lack of children. We note that Elkanah isn't recorded as praying that his wife Hannah conceives, unlike Isaac for Rebekah. Perhaps because his own 'need' for children had been met through

Peninah. And so it is Hannah who has to pray for herself directly to God. Only after she has done that does she agree to eat again- not because of Elkanah's pleas. Through ignorance, misintention, lack of sensitivity, dysfunction or whatever of others, we too are driven to personal engagement with God. Perhaps he alludes to the happy Naomi, for whom her daughter in law's love was better than seven sons. And he wonders why Hannah can't be like her. Weeping and not eating could be associated with fasting; but also it could be the psychological outcome of cruel teasing and provocation. Or perhaps there was a little of both. The loss of appetite associated with her depression turned into fasting before Yahweh for a child. Or as suggested on :8, it may mean she declined to partake in the eating of the peace offering.

1Sa 1:9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his seat by the doorpost of Yahweh's temple-

We have just read that she didn't eat (:7,8), which I suggested may mean she declined the meat and wine of the peace offering. But now she did, because her mood had changed because she had decided to make a vow (:11) and pray for a child with a prayer believed in so strongly that she believed and felt as if she had received the answer; for that is the true nature of faith in prayer (Mt. 21:22). Or perhaps Elkanah persuaded her to eat, and her participation in the meal of fellowship and peace with God [the portions were from the peace offering] inspired her to believe that this God she sat and ate with would indeed respond to her prayer. The memorial meeting should have the same inspiration for us.

We note how Eli sits but Hannah rises up. This is typical of the reversals we will read about in her prayer in 1 Sam. 2. Samuel was to rise and the house of Eli were to fall. So we have set up conflict between her house and that of Eli. Her prayer imprecating her adversaries can be read as referring to both Eli and Peninnah. Samuel was therefore born into conflict, and this enabled him to comfort David who was in the same situation with the house of Saul. Truly all our sufferings are in order to help others (2 Cor. 1:4).

1Sa 1:10 She was in bitterness of soul and prayed to Yahweh and wept bitterly-

I suggested on :9 that what we now read may be explaining how it came about that she was not eating and drinking the peace offering again, when previously she had not been. When we read in :18 that after her vow she ate, this would be linking back to :9. Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer", although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point.

Hannah's personal spiritual ambition and initiative contrasts positively with the responses of other barren women. Rachel demanded that her husband resolve the situation; Rebekah kept silent about it and it was her husband who prayed to God about it (Gen 25:21); Sarah was willing to live with the situation but got her husband to sleep with her slave girl. Samson's mother was ordered to Nazirite her child, whereas Hannah takes the initiative in offering that to God.

1Sa 1:11 She vowed a vow and said, Yahweh of Armies-

Poor Hannah was driven through the sorrow of her life to coin the phrase "Yahweh of hosts" for the first time in Scripture, so strong became her sense of the strength and manifestation of Yahweh in His Angels. The close association between Angels [Yahweh's hosts] and

answered prayer resulted in many of the early believers conceiving of God in terms of an Angel, as Jacob in particular did. Hannah is another example; she prayed to the Lord of Hosts (Angels) to "look on the affliction of Your handmaid"; and the Angels are God's eyes through which He looks on us. She came to pray "before the Lord" (:15)- i.e. before the Angel dwelling over the ark. Angels are associated with conception- the cases of Samson, John and Jesus quickly spring to mind. Her affliction drove her to a new paradigm in understanding God- hence she apparently coined the term "Yahweh of armies", used here as an address for the first time in Scripture. Our afflictions likewise drive us to closer and paradigm breaking understandings of the Father.

If You will indeed look on the affliction-

She was thinking of Leah, who considered the end of her barrenness to have been Yahweh looking on her affliction (Gen. 29:32 s.w.). She formed her faith from considering this Biblical precedent. But the same phrase is also used of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 4:31; Dt. 26:7 etc.). She reasoned that the God who had done that for His people could just as easily give her conception.

Of Your handmaid and remember me and not forget Your handmaid, but will give to Your handmaid a boy, then I will give him to Yahweh all the days of his life, and no razor shall come on his head-

She wanted not merely a child to remove her reproach amongst men, but specifically a male so she could present him as a Nazirite to God. Although they were not Levites, by promising him as a Nazirite she was effectively asking for him to be counted as a Levite. Hannah's request in 1 Sam. 1:11 that God look upon her affliction and answer it was heard, and she became an inspiration to her descendant David; who often makes the same request, unashamed to be inspired by the example of a woman (s.w. 2 Sam. 16:12; Ps. 9:13; 25:18 and so often in the Psalms). See on :15. And yet why would Hannah so desperately want to give God just one more Nazirite? Surely her motives were mixed. She seems to have wanted above all to personally attain the status of motherhood, and for that she was willing to sacrifice retaining the child. Indeed it could be argued that abandoning Samuel after weaning him to be cared for far away from her by Eli and his immoral sons... showed no real care for Samuel. All she wanted, it could be argued, was the status of motherhood, and her offer of Samuel as a Nazirite was as it were a bargaining chip she offered God in return. But from this low point, she grew spiritually. And God worked through it to raise up Samuel and thence David as His servants.

It seems from :21 that they were in the habit of making a vow every year, hence Hannah decides to vow that if she has a son, she will give him to Yahweh's service.

1Sa 1:12 As she continued praying before Yahweh, Eli saw her mouth-

Col. 4:2 alludes to the LXX of this verse, bidding us all be like Hannah and continue in prayer; I noted on :11 that her example served as a template for David, as it should for us.

1Sa 1:13 Now Hannah spoke in her heart, only her lips moved but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk-

The tacit implication is that Eli had seen drunk people in the tabernacle before. The low level of spirituality in Israel is a continued theme of the Old Testament. We also have a reflection of how unspiritual and solely "religious" was Eli; the concept of praying silently rather than out loud was totally foreign to him. There is also the implication that Eli didn't hear her voice, but God did.

1Sa 1:14 Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put away your wine from you-

It's possible that most of the then existent Old Testament was rewritten under inspiration in

the exile. Hannah becomes the template for the exiles; for they too were "afflicted" as she was (:11), and are described as drunk but not with wine who would be justified and their tormentors punished, surely an allusion to Hannah (Is. 51:21,23). See on :15. We recall how Peter was likewise falsely accused of being drunk when speaking in the Spirit. Circumstances repeat between Biblical characters, just as they do between the lives of contemporary believers. The same Divine hand is at work.

1Sa 1:15 Hannah answered, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit- Israel in affliction in Egypt were of sorrowful spirit (s.w. Ex. 6:9). As noted on :11, she clearly had God's past salvation of His people from Egypt in mind. She felt that her domestic situation was as theirs, and likewise believed that God could miraculously save her from it. We note that this is the extent of depression and desperation that is inflicted by those who goad others over their supposed spiritual inferiority and God's supposed displeasure with them. We think of those disfellowshipped or tormented by others over their marital status, to the point they feel driven to suicide.

"Sorrowful" is the word for "hard". Her triumphant victory song of 1 Sam. 2 would indeed suggest her to be a hard woman, rejoicing over and requesting Peninnah's downfall. Verse 10 twice uses the word bitter about her- "in bitterness of soul... wept bitterly". Her language there is also relevant in parts to Eli and his sons, and came true of them. She commendably refused to be disillusioned with God because of the situation in the "church" of her time, but her bitterness with it is still discernible. The song seems all about her, and her self justification and vindication. Grace and forgiveness is not much on her agenda.

I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before Yahweh- It was Judah in captivity whose soul was poured out (s.w. Lam. 2:12,19); see on :14. And David again took inspiration from his ancestor Hannah in speaking of himself likewise in Ps. 42:4; see on :11.

The peace offerings, of which Hannah was given a double portion, involved eating and also drinking wine. But although she has eaten (:9), she says she hasn't drunk wine. I take that as being because she believed before she prayed that she would conceive and Nazirite the child to Yahweh. She was surely influenced by the command to Samson's mother not to drink wine because even whilst Samson was *in utero* he was to be a Nazirite and not drink alcohol. So her prayer was preceded by faith that it would indeed be answered and she acted as if it had been answered. This is indeed faith in prayer, and it is why she exits the sanctuary and returns home with joy, believing and feeling as if the prayer has already been answered.

1Sa 1:16 Don't count your handmaid a wicked woman, for I have been speaking out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation-

She meant, she had been speaking to God in her heart. "Wicked woman" is AV "daughter of Belial", the term used of Eli's sons. She may be implying that she was not in fact drunk as Eli's sons often were. In this case, Eli criticized her for doing what his sons did. It's a psychological classic, taking out on someone else what should be directed to ones own family.

1Sa 1:17 Then Eli answered, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him-

Eli's unspirituality is again revealed, for he thinks that prayer is simply asking God for petitions. But in fact she had been pouring out her soul to God, telling Him all her feelings about the provocation of Peninnah (:16). Let us also not think that prayer is simply requests; read David's prayers in his Psalms, and see how few of his words are actually requests. Eli told her that her prayer would be granted even though he didn't know what it was for. In fact

the answer to that prayer, Samuel, would mean the end of his priestly line and service. Hence she later tells Eli "For this boy did I pray, and the Lord granted me my request that I requested from him". Eli presents as the disinterested priest coming out with a standard form of verbal blessing with no personal interest in the worshipper. Perhaps she grasped that, and therefore didn't tell Eli her prayer- when it is usual in religious circles to want a priest to pray for you, to put your prayer to God. Again, the dysfunction of the situation led her to closer intimacy with God.

1Sa 1:18 She said, Let your handmaid find grace in your sight-

Corrupt and unspiritual as Eli was, she still saw him as Yahweh's representative. His acceptance of her therefore encouraged her that God likewise had accepted her. "Hannah" means 'grace'. She perhaps hints that to receive grace was 'her', it was how she had been set up by life's path of infertility, polygamous marriage experience etc.

So the woman went her way and ate, and her face wasn't sad any more-

She ate, of the peace offerings. I suggested on :9 that the mention of the fact that she again "ate" is then explained by :10-17. Her newfound joy was because she had the faith that feels and acts as if what we asked for has been granted, even though we don't yet have it (Mt. 21:22).

The LXX adds that they stayed in an inn. Hannah's song was clearly a major influence in the mind of Mary. But there are some background similarities as well as the verbal ones. The LXX of 1 Sam. 1:18 [not the Hebrew text] speaks of Elkanah and Hannah staying in a katalyma on their journey to Shiloh- the very word used of the "inn" in whose stable Mary had to stay. If we ask why Mary based her song so heavily on that of Hannah, we find a clue in considering how she was greeted by the Angel as "favoured" (Lk. 1:28). The Greek *kecharitomene* virtually translates the Hebrew name 'Hannah'. The record is written in Greek, but Mary was a Jewess and spoke Aramaic and Hebrew; and probably the Angel spoke to her in those languages. So the link would have been all the stronger- 'Hail, Hannah-like one'. And this set the mind of Mary thinking about Hannah, and in the days between hearing these words and meeting Elisabeth, Mary had perceived the similarities between her position and that of Hannah. She allowed the spirit of Hannah to genuinely become hers, in perceptive obedience to the Angel's bidding. She came to share God's perception of her as a woman like Hannah. 'Hannah' comes from the Hebrew root *hnn* – favour. Mary is told that she has been favoured / 'Hannah-ed' by God (Lk. 1:30)- as if to lead her to see the similarities between her and Hannah. And she responds magnificently, by alluding to Hannah's song so closely. Tragically as we shall see, she later came to be more influenced by the world's perception of both herself and her Son. The theme of joy is very great in her song- again, because she was obedient to the greeting "Hail!", literally, 'rejoice!'.

The points of connection between the songs of Hannah and Mary's Magnificat are really quite detailed:

1 Sam. 1:3 = Lk. 1:7; 1 Sam. 1:18 = Lk. 1:38, 30; 1 Sam. 2:1 = Lk. 1:46; 1 Sam. 1:11 = Lk. 1:48; 1 Sam. 2:2 = Lk. 1:49; 1 Sam. 2:4 = Lk. 1:51; 1 Sam. 2:3 = Lk. 1:51; 1 Sam. 2:4 = Lk. 1:52; 1 Sam. 2:8 = Lk. 1:52; 1 Sam. 2:5 = Lk. 1:53; 1 Sam. 2:10 = Lk. 1:69; 1 Sam. 2:26 = Lk. 2:52.

Hannah's faith and initiative is impressive. There are several cases of Divinely induced pregnancies after infertility. But usually a prophet or Angel gives the news of the pregnancy, often there is a sign that it will indeed happen- whereas here Hannah takes it upon herself to pray for it, and with no confirmatory sign, totally believes it will happen and rejoices because of it.

1Sa 1:19 They rose up in the morning early and worshipped before Yahweh and returned

home to Ramah, and Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and Yahweh remembered her-

The worship may imply thankfulness. As noted on :18, Hannah really believed the prayer would be heard, even though she had not yet tried to conceive again. "Remembered" doesn't mean God had forgotten. The word is often used of what man does to God, and is translated "burn [incense]" and other terms appropriate to prayer to God. There is a mutuality between God and man, which especially functions through prayer. We 'make mention' of things to God in prayer, and He respects that and in turn, in His own council of Heaven, mentions or makes a mark for us in response. This is why the Hebrew for "ask" is the same for "heard" regarding prayer and the answers to prayer. See on :20.

1Sa 1:20 When the time had come, Hannah conceived and bore a son-

The time coming is applied to both the conception and the birth of the child. With respect to the conception, the idea would be that God indeed had specified a time for this in His plan for Hannah from the beginning of the world. But all the same, without Hannah's intense prayer, this would not have been actualized. And it follows therefore that there are so many potentials which aren't actualized by intense prayer.

And she named him Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of Yahweh-

"Samuel" means both 'asked of God' and 'heard of God'. This exemplifies what was discussed on :19; that God and man are in mutual relationship. What we ask, He hears in the sense of answering. Samuel's name memorialized how she had asked and had such faith in the answer coming.

1Sa 1:21 The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to Yahweh the yearly sacrifice and his vow-

It seems they were in the habit of making a vow every year, hence Hannah decides to vow that if she has a son, she will give him to Yahweh's service. LXX adds "and his tithes". It was surely clear that the tithes were being abused by Eli's family, but Elkanah still brought them. Their abuses led to men sinning against Yahweh by not bringing tithes and offerings (1 Sam. 2:23,24). But Elkanah is commended for not being amongst those made to stumble in this way. See on :25.

1Sa 1:22 But Hannah didn't go up, for she said to her husband, Not until the child is weaned, then I will bring him that he may appear before Yahweh and stay there forever-

The idea may be that she didn't go up because she had no vow to bring, whereas Elkanah did (:21); because her fulfilment of her vow would be when Samuel was old enough to be brought to the temple and left there, as a living sacrifice. We see here Hannah's individual, personal relationship with Yahweh; her vow was different to that of her husband's. This was at a time when religion was largely a male preserve, and the woman just followed along with the husband's religion. Elkanah encouraged her to do what was right to *her*.

1Sa 1:23 Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what seems good to you. Wait until you have weaned him, only may Yahweh establish His word. So the woman waited and nursed her son until she weaned him-

I noted on :22 that Elkanah encouraged her to do what was right to *her*. And this reflects how within a good, spiritual marriage, the devotions of the wife and husband may be quite different. Hence the significance of LXX "but may the Lord establish that which comes out of thy mouth". He saw Samuel as her project whilst he had his own projects for Yahweh, his vows he brought yearly; but Samuel was his wife's project. The Dead Sea Scrolls at this point has "Only may the Lord fulfill what your mouth has uttered".

1Sa 1:24 When she had weaned him she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of meal and a bottle of wine, and brought him to Yahweh's sanctuary in Shiloh-

"I am the woman" may suggest Eli had forgotten who Hannah was and she had to introduce herself to him again. She and her husband had been regular visitors over the years as well as her having had the encounter with him which is recorded here. Again he is presented as unthoughtful and mindless concerning his flock, which drove her to personal engagement with God. She clearly separated church from God, and didn't allow inept religious leadership to discourage her from personal relationship with God. Rather did it drive her to this.

The age of the bull was perhaps to represent Samuel, who would have been weaned by three years old (see on 1 Sam. 2:11). If Samuel was only three years old when given to Eli, his later spiritual maturity and devotion is the more remarkable; for he grew up surrounded by bad examples, and only the annual visit of his parents to impart true spiritual guidance. The bread ["meal"] and wine were associated with the voluntary peace offerings. This formed the basis for the later institution of bread and wine in the breaking of bread. If we ask "And where is the animal that is devoted and eaten?" the answer would be that it represents the Lord Jesus and also ourselves, as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1) because we are "in Him".

The child was young-

Evidence enough that a child can still serve God.

1Sa 1:25 They killed the bull and brought the child to Eli-

The "they" is presumably Eli's sons, whom we learn usually abused the offering and took it all for themselves. But just as Elkanah still offered tithes despite the abuse of them by these men (see on :21), so Hannah offered the bull. She knew it was done to Yahweh despite the abuse of His representatives. She separated church from God, in a way which many fail to do today.

1Sa 1:26 She said, Oh my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to Yahweh-

We note that she doesn't swear as Yahweh lives, as is commonly found in the Bible, but by Eli's own life. Perhaps she felt that Yahweh was no authority to Eli to make an oath by. We note that this way of swearing by the life of the person being spoken to [rather than by Yahweh] is used of men to Saul (1 Sam. 17:55), by Uriah to David when he knew David had slept with his wife (2 Sam. 11:11) and by Hannah to Eli (1 Sam. 1:26). In every case the implication is that the speaker didn't think that the person being addressed really feared Yahweh.

1Sa 1:27 For this child I prayed, and Yahweh has given me my petition which I asked of Him-
As Yahweh gave her, so she wanted to give to Yahweh (:28). This is the irresistible motivating power of grace, once it is perceived.

1Sa 1:28 Therefore I have given him to Yahweh-

AV "lent". It is rendered by many versions as "given" because she seems to have totally and absolutely given Samuel to Yahweh for all his life, with no intention of getting him back. However, we can still read "lent" if she had a Kingdom perspective; she looked forward to receiving back the sacrificed relationships in the Kingdom, just as we can.

As long as he lives he is given to Yahweh. Eli worshipped Yahweh there-

This is an attempt to interpret "he worshipped Yahweh there". But I think the "he" refers to Elkanah, unless we apply it to Samuel, who was still so young. And then his worship

becomes parallel with Hannah pouring out her heart to Yahweh in the next chapter, making this a repeat of the situation earlier, and continuing the theme of this lovely couple each independently pursuing their devotion to Yahweh in unique ways.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 2

1Sa 2:1 Hannah prayed, and said: My heart exults in Yahweh!-

Prayer is largely carried out in the mind – how we ‘speak in the heart’ is effectively read as our prayer to God. We find the phrase used about how Abraham’s servant prayed, ‘speaking in his heart’ (Gen. 24:45). Thus our self-talk merges into prayer; Hannah’s “prayer” appears to have been the same (1 Sam. 2:1). Solomon’s prayer for wisdom is described by God as “in your heart” (2 Chron. 1:11). This close link between thought and prayer is developed in the Lord’s teaching in Mk. 11:23,24: “Truly I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he says comes to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things you pray and ask for, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them”. Our self-talk is to be fantasy about the fulfillment of our prayers. Yet how often do we hit ‘send’ on our requests to God, like scribbling off a postcard, and hardly think again about them?

My horn is exalted in Yahweh-

The allusion may be to the way women wore a protruding head dress which was lifted higher the more children they had. But it is righteousness which exalts the horn, and not the biological experience of childbearing; for the wicked also have horns (Ps. 75:10; Lam. 2:17). She may have had in view the idea that her child was to be the anointed Messianic seed (the term is used about Him in :10; Ps. 89:24). But her proud assurance of this was misplaced, for it was Samuel who was chosen not to be anointed, but to anoint David.

My mouth boasts over my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation-

Hannah had remarkable faith, as noted throughout 1 Sam. 1. But like all of us, she had weaknesses, and those weaknesses were elicited by the situation she now suddenly found herself in. Instead of rejoicing in her blessings and new stage of life, she becomes boastful and distinctly vengeful in her attitude to Peninnah. There is no appeal to the other woman to repent, no forgiveness, only an eager desire for the direct judgments upon her, now that Hannah considered herself justified by God through her having had a child. "Enemies" may be an intensive plural for her one great enemy, Peninnah. Or it may be that she felt mocked for her infertility by a whole set of people, over whom she felt she could legitimately boast in the song she is now composing and singing.

Literally, my mouth is opened wide. 1 Sam. 1:7,8 describe her response to Peninnah's provocations as being weeping and silent depression. Now, with all psychological credibility, she opens her mouth and the pent up anger pours out. Yet within this unspirituality there is also faith and hope, and Mary's song of praise perceives the good and takes that and dwells upon it. Just as we should look at our brethren.

It has been observed that this prayer "begins with the first person, “I”: “My heart exults ... my horn is raised ... my mouth is wide ... for I rejoice.” Hannah is very full of herself and her own emotion at being granted her petition. But quickly the prayer moves to focus on the source of Hannah’s joy: God. And, indeed, most of the prayer is about God and his act". This is the path for us all, from "me" to God. And in her case, she is led onwards to speak of the

coming of "the anointed one", "David's seed", the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Sa 2:2 There is none as holy as Yahweh, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God-

David in his Psalms repeatedly alludes to the song of his ancestor Hannah. He effectively quotes this verse in 2 Sam. 22:32; although I argue throughout 1 Sam. 2 that Hannah's was apparently lifted up with pride and the vengeance of the underling who has overcome the oppressor. And there is reason to think that David had elements of this weakness too. He thought it was acceptable to be like this because Hannah had been. And that is the problem with setting bad examples. See on :5.

I explained on 1 Sam. 1:18 the detailed points of contact between Mary's magnificat, and Hannah's song of praise. But Mary was spiritually discerning enough to avoid the sense of pride and vengeance which fills Hannah's song in places. The points of connection between the songs of Hannah and Mary's Magnificat are really quite detailed:

1 Sam. 1:3 = Lk. 1:7; 1 Sam. 1:18 = Lk. 1:38, 30; 1 Sam. 2:1 = Lk. 1:46; 1 Sam. 1:11 = Lk. 1:48; 1 Sam. 2:2 = Lk. 1:49; 1 Sam. 2:4 = Lk. 1:51; 1 Sam. 2:3 = Lk. 1:51; 1 Sam. 2:4 = Lk. 1:52; 1 Sam. 2:8 = Lk. 1:52; 1 Sam. 2:5 = Lk. 1:53; 1 Sam. 2:10 = Lk. 1:69; 1 Sam. 2:26 = Lk. 2:52.

The evident allusions Mary makes back to Hannah's song could be read as reflecting what had actually been wrought in Mary's own person and experience by some kind of persecution in her childhood. And it drove her within herself. It seems that she had been deeply humbled in order for her to be highly exalted. One wonders if she had been sexually abused. If Joseph was indeed much older than her, then we can understand how it happened that this girl, mature as she was beyond her years, got attracted to an older and spiritual man. Her spirituality and intelligence [for her allusions to Scripture indicate a fine appreciation of so much] would have been enough to spark plenty of village jealousy.

1Sa 2:3 Talk no more so exceedingly proudly-

Hannah comes over as hypocritical as she has just announced that she will be speaking proudly and hardly against her "enemies" now that she has had a child.

Don't let hardness come out of your mouth, for Yahweh is a God of knowledge, though actions be not weighed-

Hannah again presents as hypocritical because she has just admitted to Eli that she is a woman of a "hard" spirit. But she had reflected upon God's omniscience; and on this basis she tells Peninnah not to be proud and not to use hard words against her, exactly because of this: "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not hardness [AVmg.] come out of your mouth: *for* the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" here and now, *because* He sees and knows all things (1 Sam. 2:3 AV); even though it appears that they are not being weighed, because His judgments aren't immediately apparent (so NEV, RVmg.). The word is used of how God weighs thoughts (Prov. 16:2; 21:2; 24:12), but here of actions. We could conclude that therefore the thought is the action, as the Lord Jesus taught; or that Hannah was over emphasizing the external rather than seeing that it is the thoughts of the heart which are the essential issue.

The Hebrew can be rendered "By Him actions are counted". In 1 Sam. 1:6 we read of how she had been made to "fret", literally, 'Anger after anger'. The picture is of continual provocation leading to continual anger episodes. But now she reflects that Yahweh 'counts actions' (1 Sam. 2:3 Heb.). Every provocation and episode was

counted. All the countless daily episodes like this in countless human relationships are likewise not unnoticed, and all will finally be judged when they concern the Lord's people.

1Sa 2:4 The bows of the mighty men are broken-

Seeing children are as arrows (Ps. 127:4,5), the bow may refer to the womb, in Hannah's mind. And she is now wishing her barrenness upon her enemies who had once mocked her. This is hardly the right attitude, and she repeats it in :5. But as noted on :2, this is an idea alluded to by David in his victory song of 2 Sam. 22:35. She likely also has in mind the imagery of the mouth as a bow, and words as arrows: "Who whet their tongues like swords; they aim their arrows –cruel words – to shoot from hiding at the blameless man" (Ps. 64:3). She has in view how the words of Peninnah will be shattered. She is uttering curses she wished upon her enemies, which in Hebrew thought were seen as future prophecies.

Those who stumbled are armed with strength-

"Stumbled" is a word mostly used about spiritual stumbling. And yet Hannah is revealed as a woman of great faith in 1 Sam. 1. But she seems now to see that part of her life as stumbling, and her arrogant boasting as spiritual strength.

1Sa 2:5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread-

This is an idiom for prostitution. It's as if Hannah wishes Peninnah to be divorced by Elkanah and left on the street starving and needing to sell her body for food. The past tense may simply express Hannah's intention and desire for how things would be in the future, expressed in the past tense because of her confidence and strong desire that this would happen. Yet in line with the second half of the verse, hunger is understood as the hunger of the womb. So Hannah could be saying that she wishes Peninnah to now hunger, to become desperately barren, willing to prostitute herself to get conception. This is as Hannah also wished in :4.

We note that this is the judgment upon Eli and his family- begging for a morsel of bread in return for doing servile work in the tabernacle (1 Sam. 2:36). The 'prophetic perfect' means this is a prophecy. Possibly Hannah is bitter at Eli's indifference and insincerity, and has him in mind as well as Peninah.

The Lord builds this into the experience of the prodigal son. He was more generous than Hannah. He held out hope even for the judged and rightly brought down.

Those who were hungry are satisfied. Yes, the barren has borne seven-

Again we see how past tenses are used in order to express intention and an assured future. Hannah was confident she would go on to have seven children. She didn't; including Samuel she had six. She had only asked for a single child, but now she had Samuel she assumed she was going to be totally fertile. This was a presumption upon God's grace, and yet He still kindly gave her further conception. But not up to the "seven" she here confidently boasts of.

She who has many children languishes-

The languishing could be in the sense of being unable to have more children; see on :4,5. But it is also a word used of mourning the dead, which would then lead on to :6 if this is the context. It is as if Hannah wishes Peninnah's children to die, for Elkanah to divorce her and for her to become a prostitute selling her body for bread (:5). The bitterness is terrible, and sadly recalls Sarah's bitterness with Hagar. Without doubt, Sarah was wrong. And yet Hannah follows her example here, just as David will later

follow Hannah's wrong example. See on :2. We can infer from 1 Sam. 1:8 that Peninah had borne 10 sons.

1Sa 2:6 Yahweh kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up-
Hannah feels that she has been dead [useless and non-existent in society without children, cp. "the deadness of Sarah's womb", Rom. 4:19], and now made alive. But she seems to want the converse to happen; she wants Peninnah to now be made 'dead', perhaps in becoming barren as Hannah had been. . But she may literally have in view a desire for Peninnah and her children to die; for Sarah, whose wrong example she was unconsciously following, wanted Hagar and Ishmael dead and therefore cast them out into the desert to die.

1Sa 2:7 Yahweh makes poor and makes rich. He brings low and He also lifts up-
Instead of simply exalting that she had been lifted up (s.w. :1 "exalted"), she wishes to see Peninnah brought down. This is a classic psychological reaction of the downtrodden who are now exalted; but it is not the way of the Spirit. Hannah lacked grace. However we see in these statements that the negative side of life, the bringing down, the making poor, is attributed solely to Yahweh as in Is. 45:5-7. Clearly Hannah didn't believe the good comes from God and the evil from some cosmic Satan figure. See on :32.

1Sa 2:8 He raises up the poor out of the dust. He lifts up the needy from the dunghill-
Despite being apparently middle class, Hannah felt as a desperate beggar at the bottom of society. Perhaps she had Job in mind, for the story of Job would have been well known to her. But he was lifted up through recognizing his pride, and Hannah doesn't appear to have done that.

To make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory-
This and Hannah's song and experiences are alluded to in Ps. 113:7-9. She is presented there as representative of Israel, particularly the exiles in Babylon. Her hope was that Samuel, whose destiny she saw as tied up with herself, would be not only a priest [although he was not strictly a Levite] but also a prince / king reigning upon a throne of glory, a term which clearly has Messianic Kingdom overtones. This is all similar to the idea of Ps. 110:4, where the Messiah was to be a king-priest, not a Levite, but a priest "after the order of Melchizedek". "He settles the barren woman in her home, as a joyful mother of children" (Ps. 113:9) continues the allusion to Hannah continues; but she was representative to the "barren woman" of Israel in exile (Is. 54:1), who was to be blessed with many children (Is. 49:12,18,20; 54:2,3; 60:5; Gal. 4:27). But Samuel didn't do this; instead it was he who set up another man [David] and his family to do so.

For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's; He has set the world upon them-
1 Sam. 2:8; 2 Sam. 22:8 speak as if Heaven / the sky rests on the mountains, from where earth seems to touch the heavens (Is. 13:5), with the stars stretched out in the north (Job 26:7). This reflected the geo-centric view held by people at the time. The point surely was that *however* people understood creation to have happened, God had done it, and in wisdom. Likewise the technically incorrect view of demons as causing mental illness is reflected in the language of the New Testament.

1Sa 2:9 He will keep the feet of His holy ones, but the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness; for no man shall prevail by strength-
The experience of Divine grace and answered prayer led her to over-simplistically

conclude that she was a "holy one" and Peninnah the wicked. She thinks that her pregnancy somehow empowered her to condemn Hannah to condemnation at the last day. What she says is true, but the way she expresses these Divine truths smacks of pride and inappropriate personal condemnation of others. And we who likewise hold Divine truth and experience His grace must take the lesson.

1Sa 2:10 Those who strive with Yahweh shall be broken to pieces. He will thunder against them in the sky-

Peninnah made Hannah "fret" (1 Sam. 1:6), and yet when she has Samuel she asks God to "thunder", s.w. "fret", against her enemies, clearly having Peninnah in view. Hannah imagines He will do this when His "anointed king" is reigning, and clearly she understood Samuel to be that. He didn't become that; and the fact he anointed David to be king rather than himself being anointed is pointed proof of the fact that her bitter expectations and hopes didn't come true as she intended. There seems no forgiveness, just a desire for judgment and to make Peninnah feel the same way as she had been made to feel; and a desire for the manifestation of the anointed King in order for her to see her enemy made to feel how she had felt, and worse.

Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed-

She considers Samuel as becoming the anointed [the first occurrence of the word 'Messiah'] king. But her dogmatic statement here was not to come true. Samuel didn't want Israel to have a human king and Hannah appears not to appreciate this as she ought to have done. And it was his duty to anoint David to become king. Hannah's prayer began with her, in fact it was all about her- but develops to think about God Himself and now here we have her focus upon the Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah. This is almost the only time when a prophecy of the Lord Jesus comes from the lips of an ordinary Israelite. The classic Messianic prophecies were all from Angels or prophets speaking God's word. She came to the spirit of the Lord Jesus through her own reflections on her suffering; Job is perhaps the only other example, and he came to it likewise.

1Sa 2:11 Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the child served Yahweh before Eli the priest-

Again we note how a child can acceptably serve Yahweh. The mention of Elkanah returning leads us to wonder whether Hannah initially remained there with the three year old Samuel; see on 1 Sam. 1:24.

1Sa 2:12 Now the sons of Eli were men of Belial; they didn't know Yahweh-

Even in the Old Testament, sin was personified as 'Belial'. The personification of sin was known throughout the Bible. And so it is in the New Testament, as the great enemy / satan of believers. It really has to be accepted that 'Devil' and 'Satan' are used to personify sin, because if we read these words as always meaning a literal being, then we have serious contradictions. We note that it's quite possible to do religious duties as did Eli's sons, without knowing / having relationship with Yahweh.

1Sa 2:13 The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand-

God was and still is intensely aware of every detail of what they did apparently in secret. He noticed that the fork had three prongs. The style of the record is as if there

is a video camera trained upon the servant. And the recording is kept until today; see on :13.

The significance of "any man" is that this therefore included Elkanah. He and his sacrifices were therefore likewise abused. But still he offered them, because he separated church from God.

1Sa 2:14 He thrust it into the pan, kettle, cauldron or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there- We notice the zoomed in focus of the camera, as it were. The fork was thrust in, and it brought up meat which the priest's took away for themselves rather than offered to Yahweh. See on :13.

1Sa 2:15 Moreover, before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came and said to the man who sacrificed, Give meat to roast for the priest, for he will not accept boiled meat from you, but raw-

The order given in Lev. 3:3-5; 7:29-34 was that the fat must be burnt to Yahweh first, before the breast and shoulder were waved or 'heaved' before Yahweh, symbolically given to Him, and only then could the priests take it. But Eli's sons were too impatient for this and just grabbed what they wanted as soon as they saw it, exactly the spirit of our age. There was no recognition that whatever they had was really God's, and given to them only as His representatives. The habit of thanking God for our meals ought to be strongly established amongst all true Christian believers.

The word for "servant" is the same translated "child" in :18, talking of how he ministered / served before Yahweh. So we are led to conclude that Samuel as a child or young person would've been expected to do what the priest's servant here does. So from a young person, he was up against conflict with his religious elders.

1Sa 2:16 If the man said to him, Let the fat be burned first, and then take as much as you want; he would say, No, give it to me now, and if you don't, I will take it by force- Their sin was in how they saw the meat and wanted it immediately, as did Esau. They were unwilling to experience delayed gratification through firstly giving to God, however symbolically. The implication was that the fat was never burnt; and it was the fat which rose as a sweet odour to Yahweh. They looked greedily at it and took it for themselves, fattening themselves with the fat; see on :29.

1Sa 2:17 The sin of the young men was very great before Yahweh, for they despised the offering of Yahweh-

The word for "offering" here is *minchah*, that used specifically of the bloodless offerings of flour etc. The idea may be that when people saw the larger sacrifices being abused, they didn't want to offer anything at all to God, no matter how tokenistic. They failed to perceive the difference between God and church. Disillusion with the visible people of God, especially their leadership, led to not serving God. Elkanah, as noted on 1 Sam. 1, overcame this- and he needs to be the example to many. "Despised" is the word for "blasphemed". We blaspheme God by not offering to Him, even if we blame the church. We note too that the greatest sin is to make others turn away from God.

1Sa 2:18 But Samuel ministered before Yahweh, being a child, clothed with a linen ephod-

The "but" places the child Samuel in contrast to the sons of Eli. The phrase "minister

before Yahweh" is only used of the priests ministering in the holy place, where incense was offered (2 Chron. 29:11). We wonder how a child, who was not 30 years old, could do this, and wear a linen ephod whilst doing so. The remarkable truth seems to be that because Eli's family didn't do even the most basic work at the sanctuary, the young Samuel did it. The connection between the ephod and the robe made for him each year (:19) would suggest that his mother had the spiritual vision to realize this and try to make the appropriate priestly clothing for him. Truly this was a family who saw beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of it. See on :19.

1Sa 2:19 Moreover his mother made him a little robe and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice-

I suggested on :18 that the child Samuel, a non Levite, was doing the priestly work because Eli's family refused to do it, or perhaps just told him to do it. The Hebrew words for "robe" and "ephod" in :18 only occur together in the descriptions of the "robe of the ephod" worn by none other than the High Priest (Ex. 28:4,31; 29:5; 39:22). The young Samuel apparently did the work of the High Priest. His example and spiritual ambition inspired David, who he was to anoint, to likewise wear such a robe and ephod (1 Chron. 15:27).

1Sa 2:20 Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife and said, Yahweh give you children by this woman for the petition which was asked of Yahweh. They went to their own home-

Eli is somewhat male centred. He is really addressing Elkanah, and implying that he would be blessed with more children because "this woman", his wife, had prayed and dedicated the resulting child to Yahweh. Eli tacitly recognizes that he had been wrong in assuming Hannah had been drunk; he realizes now that she had indeed been praying with a paradigm of intensity unknown to him. Eli comes over so often as genuine enough; but it was his weakness in allowing his sons to blaspheme and cause others to stumble which led to his condemnation. The challenge to us is that major weakness in one area of life is not as it were compensated for, at least it wasn't in Eli's case, by an otherwise generally reasonable and spiritual service of God.

1Sa 2:21 Yahweh visited Hannah and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. The child Samuel grew before Yahweh-

This blessing- possibly implying quintuplets conceived at the same time- is directly connected to the blessing uttered by Eli in :20. Although Eli was condemned, Yahweh worked through him. The similarities with Sarah noted earlier in this chapter continued; for again Yahweh "visits" to grant conception. See on Gen. 18:10.

1Sa 2:22 Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons did to all Israel, how they lay with the women who served at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

His great age is perhaps mentioned to imply that he had for decades heard of what his sons were doing, and had only rather lamely rebuked them rather than insisting that the abuses end. These women are the supporting women of Ex. 38:8 who looked ahead typically to those women who were to support the Lord Jesus, the true tabernacle which the Lord God pitched. Again, as in :17, the greatest dimension to sin is in making others stumble. "Served" is literally 'assembled in bands', as if their ministry was quite highly organized. See on 1 Sam. 3:11.

1Sa 2:23 He said to them, Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil deeds from all the people-

Being blind, he only "heard" of these things rather than saw them. Consistently, the Biblical record has the ring of internal consistency and credibility to it. People complained to him, but he is condemned for not disciplining his sons. So we can conclude that his words here were said as a formality and half heartedly. He would only have been condemned so strongly if it had indeed been within his power to change things. But we can also conclude that Eli ought to have noticed his sons' behaviour for himself. He only said something to them because people were gossiping about it. Image was clearly all important to him, and he himself colluded with his sons and is condemned for it.

Samuel was in his 50s or 60s at the time of 1 Sam. 8:1 when he made his corrupt sons judges over Israel. Eli had become judged of Israel at age 58 (1 Sam. 4:15,18). It seems that Samuel's later life had unfortunate parallels with that of Eli. Eli may well have had his sons Hophni and Phinehas in his 50s, because his daughter in law was pregnant at the time of his death at 98. It would seem that when Samuel was about the same age as Eli, he also had sons, who turned away from God just as had Eli's sons. And the people likewise complained (1 Sam. 8:4 = 1 Sam. 2:23). The fact Samuel made them judges despite their immorality would suggest he had gone the way of Eli in turning a blind eye to them. So although Eli's bad example to Samuel was apparently ignored by him and Samuel's spirituality was commendable, finally in later life it seems that example did rub off upon him.

1Sa 2:24 No my sons, it is no good report that I hear; you make Yahweh's people disobey-

We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Kings 16:19). There is an urgent imperative here, to really watch our behaviour; e.g. to not drink alcohol in the presence of a brother whose conscience is weak. The making of others to stumble is the repeated reason given for God's wrath with this family.

Eli *did* rebuke his sons; but in God's eyes he didn't (1 Sam. 2:24 cp. 3:13). He said words for the sake of saying words, but in his heart he didn't frown upon them. Eli appeared to discipline his sons. But he couldn't have really done this from his heart, or he wouldn't have been condemned for not controlling them. He honoured his sons above God, to make himself "fat with the chiefest of all the offerings".

1 Sam. 1:21 LXX adds that Elkanah brought "his tithes". It was surely clear that the tithes were being abused by Eli's family, but Elkanah still brought them. Their abuses led to men sinning against Yahweh by not bringing tithes and offerings. But Elkanah is commended for not being amongst those made to stumble in this way.

1Sa 2:25 If one man sins against another, God will judge him; but if a man sins against Yahweh, who shall entreat for him?-

To sin against God's people is to sin against Yahweh, just as Saul's persecution of Christians was effectively done to the Lord Jesus. The Father and Son are so closely identified with their people, they feel all that is done to us as done to them. Man is not alone, even in the most painful sufferings at the hands of others.

We see here in this verse a hint towards the lack of the Lord's mediation available at that time. But sinners against Yahweh, such as Israel, had had a mediator- Moses. But these men had no such mediator. And yet the question is perhaps rhetorical; although Eli didn't quite understand that. The answer was: the child Samuel, who points ahead to the future mediator, the Lord Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). For Eli as the high priest ought to have been the mediator, but he was precluded from doing so by his own unspirituality.

However, they didn't listen to their father, because Yahweh intended to kill them-
And yet Eli was condemned for this. The situation was therefore of his making, but Yahweh confirmed that situation. He works in the same way today. There are a number of other passages which mention how "it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read Jud. 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. The fact a man does something "of the Lord" doesn't mean that he is guiltless. In the same context of God's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, men who did things "of the Lord" were punished for what they did (Dt. 2:30; 1 Sam. 2:25; 2 Chron. 22:7; 25:20). God through His Spirit works to confirm men in the path they wish to go. And this is the huge significance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

1Sa 2:26 The child Samuel grew and increased in favour with Yahweh and with men-
As noted on :25, Samuel is being set up as a type of the Lord Jesus, the mediator whom Eli should have been (Lk. 2:52 quotes this about the Lord).

1Sa 2:27 A man of God came to Eli and said to him-
The visit of the man of God to condemn Eli was the more remarkable because there "was no frequent vision" at that time (1 Sam. 3:1). God was making a special effort to appeal to Eli.

Thus says Yahweh, 'Did I not reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt, in bondage to Pharaoh's house?'
The reference is to the calling of the tribe of Levi "out of all the tribes of Israel" (:28). "Revealed" in 1 Sam. 3:7,21; 9:15 is the word used of how Yahweh had revealed Himself to the tribe of Levi and called them to be His priests (1 Sam. 2:27), and Eli as it were was in the loins of his father Levi, according to the principle of Heb. 7:10. But the line of Levi and Eli had potentially been rejected because of Eli's apostasy. The Divine intention was to replace them with Samuel as a prophet-priest and perhaps king (1 Sam. 2:10). But this potential was only partially fulfilled by Samuel, and despite possibilities in David and Solomon, it only came to full term in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. It seems that some unrecorded appearance of God to call the tribe of Levi is being referred to.

1Sa 2:28 Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? Did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?'
I have suggested that already, the non Levite child Samuel was doing these things. And he was wearing an ephod, which I suggested on :18 was one with religious significance. Eli and his sons had passed off the work of the high priesthood to the child Samuel. And their attitude was now being confirmed, in that this meant that the calling of them and their tribe was going to be abrogated. And this is indeed the nature of condemnation; it is a giving of a person what they themselves have wanted and according to their own desires.

1Sa 2:29 Why then do you despise My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded for My dwelling, and honour your sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?'

"Despise" is as LXX 'to look greedily'. They saw the fat of the sacrifices which was intended for God and wanted it for themselves, fattening themselves with the fat.

The danger of materialism is the assumption that we are ultimate owners of what we 'have'. When Eli and his sons kept part of God's sacrifices for themselves, he was condemned: "You trample upon My sacrifice and My offering" (1 Sam. 2:29 RVmg.). This is what we are doing by considering that anything that is God's is in fact ours- we are trampling upon that which is His. And this verse is alluded to in Heb. 10:29,30- we can indeed trample upon God's sacrifice today.

Eli honoured his sons above God, to make himself "fat with the chiefest of all the offerings". The description of Eli as being fat surely reflects his guilt (1 Sam. 2:29; 4:18). And yet he appeared on the surface to run his family life on a spiritual footing. His merely surface level rebuke of his sons is revealed as having a motivation in the fact he was himself benefitting from their misbehaviour.

Eli, although apparently righteous himself in many ways, was rejected specifically because "he frowned not" upon his sons' apostasy; he personally was counted as 'kicking' at God and profiteering from His sacrifices, even though he himself seems to have truly loved God (1 Sam. 2:29; 4:18). Because Eli wouldn't exercise discipline, he was somehow seen as committing those very things which he failed to rebuke. The man who wouldn't discipline his wayward ox was to be treated like as if he had committed the crime the ox did, and therefore must die if the ox killed a man (Ex. 21:29).

1Sa 2:30 Therefore Yahweh the God of Israel says, 'I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before Me forever'. But now Yahweh says, 'Far be it from Me. Those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me shall be despised-

The idea is, despised by God. To be despised by the God of all grace... is indeed a fearsome thing. "Despised" is the word used for the sin of presumption (Num. 15:31), and this is what Eli had committed. But having been told this, he could still repent; for Judah despised God's word until there was no remedy, the implication being that each time they were told what they were doing, they could have repented (s.w. 2 Chron. 36:16). And it is the word used by Nathan to David of what he had done (2 Sam. 12:9,10), and he repented in response to the prophetic word of rebuke. But Eli didn't. We see here how God can make an "eternal" statement, but it is in fact conditional upon preconditions which He may not at the time specifically express. He speaks His purpose, but He can change it according to human action (Jer. 18).

Because of His capacity to imagine, to see possible futures, we can better sense the poignancy behind His words in places like Is. 48:18: "O that you had hearkened to my commandments!", "Oh that they would have a mind such as this always" (Dt. 5:29), "O Israel, if you would but listen to me" (Ps. 81:8,13). It's as if He could see the potentially happy future which they could've had stretching out before Him. And so we can better understand the sadness with which God had to tell Hophni and Phinehas: "I thought this, that your house, and the house of your father, would eternally serve Me: But now, the Lord, says, Be it far from Me; for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be despised" (1 Sam. 2:30). He as it were limited His omniscience in order to enter into real time relationship with Eli and his family. Note how God opened His heart to those who had so hurt Him, at the very time they had hurt Him- just as Paul did to Corinth. Such sharing of dashed hopes with those who have dashed them seems to be part of what condemnation is all about;

and, given Paul's doing this to the Corinthians, it is perhaps even a useful tool for we who cannot condemn others, but may need to walk separately from them in this life.

1Sa 2:31 The days are coming when I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house so that there shall not be an old man in your house-

The father's house in view was that of Levi, who is the "father" referred to in :27,28. To cut off the arm was an idiom for removing from power. Eli was an old man and had therefore been High Priest a long time (see on :22). But this would not happen again. The implication seems to be that the cutting off of Eli and his sons (which happened at the same time) would be the point at which the house of Levi would be cut off from the priesthood. But this potential plan didn't happen, although it seems at the time that Samuel was intended to take over effectively as High Priest. But the Levitical High Priesthood did continue; it seems that Samuel didn't live up to his potential, although he does act as a priest as does David. The power of tradition trumped his potential calling, as happens so often with those called to new paradigms of service.

"Arm" is "strength", and the Hebrew word is very similar in sound to that for "descendants". Eli's descendants would be cut off, but Hannah had been promised a son and a dynasty of faithful priests.

1Sa 2:32 In distress you would look with envy upon the wealth which I would have given Israel, but there shall not be an old man in your house forever-

Eli was told of "all the wealth which God would have given Israel", which his behaviour had now disallowed. Knowing this, women like Hannah clearly hoped and prayed that their sons would be Messiah (1 Sam. 2:10 = Ps. 89:24); for they perceived that the outworking of God's purpose was open to change. The wealth of Israel is paralleled with there being an old man in the house / tribe of Levi; the blessing of the people would have been parallel with the blessing of Israel. But their apostasy was the poverty of Israel. And yet Hannah has spoken of the rich becoming poor and the poor rich, with her having in view how Samuel and herself were the poor who would be made rich (:7). Again we see that the priesthood of Eli could have been replaced by that of the non-Levite Samuel.

1Sa 2:33 Any man of yours whom I shall not cut off from My altar, will only blind your eyes with tears and grieve your heart; all the increase of your house shall die in the prime of life-

The original is unclear as to whether Eli's eyes would be blinded with tears, or whether any who were not cut off in violent death would be blinded. But there is also the possibility as in GNB: "Yet I will keep one of your descendants alive, and he will serve me as priest. But he will become blind and lose all hope, and all your other descendants will die a violent death". Whichever option we take, it speaks of a future which was only a potential possibility. For Eli and his sons died at the same time. I suggest that all these potential pathways of cursing upon Eli didn't quite come about as was potentially possible, just as Samuel didn't become the anointed Messianic king-priest which he might have been (:10). The unclarity of the text is purposeful because it reflects the various possible paths of judgment; the very existence of them all reflects God's extreme sensitivity to human behaviour and the various outcomes He finds appropriate to them all.

1Sa 2:34 This will be the sign to you which will come on your two sons, Hophni and

Phinehas: in one day they shall both die-

The idea of a sign to Eli was surely that he was to take note of it and then repent. But it seems the day the sons died, he also died. It was as if he refused to respond to it, and therefore was slain the same day. And so the idea of the "sign" was that it was to be immediately responded to. Eli died at a great age; God had been so patient with him, giving him so many opportunities to repent, and then at the very end of his life, on the very last day of it, he was given the fulfilment of this sign to urge him personally towards repentance. And still he refused, being concerned merely about the loss of the ark as a religious symbol.

1Sa 2:35 I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall minister before My anointed one forever-

Again we see various potential fulfillments here. A faithful priest was to be raised up to minister before the anointed one, the Messianic king, who apparently was potentially Samuel (see on :10). But no such faithful priest was raised up in Samuel's time, nor did he become a king. These words were reapplied therefore to Saul and David whom Samuel would anoint, although neither of them had a specific priest ministering before them. And it is David who is presented as the man after God's own heart and mind (1 Sam. 13:14); yet he was the anointed one and not the priest. The promise of a "sure house" could have had fulfilment in Solomon (1 Kings 11:38), in contrast to God's destruction of Eli's household; and yet that also failed. So we see that none of the potential fulfillments fully came about, because of various human failures in living up to the potentials. And so these words are reapplied and reinterpreted towards fulfilment in the Lord Jesus. For all others, for whatever reason, had let the baton drop.

Samuel had been prophesied to be the next priest whilst the existing priest would be removed for apostasy. This was exactly the essential situation of David with Saul as regarded the kingship. Samuel's experience therefore ideally qualified him to relate to David. All our trials are likewise so that we can empathise with others.

1Sa 2:36 Each one who is left in your house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, and shall say, 'Please put me into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a morsel of bread'-

The Lord's parable of the prodigal seems to have given this in mind. The son asks to return to the family home not with the rights of a blood descendant, but just as a labourer and servant in order to eat bread. If indeed the Lord had this verse in mind, He would be hinting that even in this case, repentance was possible. This bowing down to the faithful priest of :35 never apparently happened, and so again [as noted throughout this section] we are left with the impression that there were various potential pathways for fulfilment, different possible scenarios, which didn't all come strictly true to the letter.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 3

1Sa 3:1 The child Samuel ministered to Yahweh before Eli-

The phrase "minister before Yahweh" is only used of the priests ministering in the holy place, where incense was offered (2 Chron. 29:11). We wonder how a child, who was not of the tribe of Levi, could do this, and wear a linen ephod whilst doing so.

The remarkable truth seems to be that because Eli's family didn't do even the most basic work at the sanctuary, the young Samuel did it. The connection between the ephod and the robe made for him each year would suggest that his mother had the spiritual vision to realize this and try to make the appropriate priestly clothing for him. Truly this was a family who saw beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of it. See on 1 Sam. 2:18,19.

The word of Yahweh was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision- This would mean that the visit of the man of God to condemn Eli in 1 Sam. 2:27 was the more remarkable because there "was no frequent vision" at that time (1 Sam. 3:1). God was making a special effort to appeal to Eli. This also sets the scene for God appearing to the young Samuel in a vision. The lamps had gone out in the Holy Place, matched by Eli's declining sight, and yet we see Samuel's growth contrasted with the decline of Eli and his dynasty. A new light is set to dawn in Israel, through Samuel. Who was born and grew spiritually against all odds.

1Sa 3:2 At that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see)-

Blindness is repeatedly used in the Old Testament as a sign of Divine judgment. The impression is that his declining eyesight was connected with the waning of the lamp of God in the tabernacle that night (:3). We get the impression that the message he is about to receive is yet another appeal to him, as was the prophetic word of 1 Sam. 2:27.

Eli is presented always as either laying down or sitting down [by the tabernacle 1 Sam. 1:9, or by the road side at the entrance to Shiloh, 1 Sam. 4:13]. His passivity is highlighted. Samuel's father Elkanah likewise presents as passive, and so Samuel's zeal for God is the more commenable given this background and these role models.

1Sa 3:3 and the lamp of God hadn't yet gone out, and Samuel had laid down in Yahweh's sanctuary where the ark of God was-

The lamp was intended never to go out. We have here the impression of the oil lamps now waning and about to go out, connecting with the impression we have of Eli's declining light as his eyesight slowly failed in :2. God's presence in the tabernacle was in decline, but this was because Eli had not made the effort to keep that light burning, passing the job to young Samuel, who lit the lamps at evening and then went to sleep. We could reason that it was when the lamp had gone out that then the prophetic word of condemnation came to Samuel. The "lamp of God" going out was representative of the end of God's relationship with His people (2 Chron. 29:7), and is the term used of the faithful line having a lamp of God burning in Jerusalem (1 Kings 15:4). But in Eli's time, the lamp was allowed to burn out, because the priests couldn't be bothered to keep it burning. And this therefore came to represent the extinguishing of the light of Eli's household.

1Sa 3:4 Yahweh called Samuel, and he said Here I am-

Notice the fascinating repetition within 1 Sam. 3:4-6,10,16: the Angel calls Samuel's name, and he replies "Here am I". Then Eli calls his name for the first time [:16 *Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son! He said, Here I am*], and Samuel likewise responds "Here am I"- insisting that Eli has already been calling him, when in fact it had been the Angel. Clearly the Angel spoke to Samuel with the voice of Eli! Could this imply that that Angel was Eli's guardian? At very least it reflects how closely sensitive and understanding the Angels are to their charges on earth- they can imitate

the exact intonation of their voices! By all means compare this with how the early believers were sure that what appeared to be Peter standing at the door was his Angel- they imagined that his guardian Angel looked exactly like him.

"Samuel" means 'the one who hears God', and he runs to Eli, 'my God'. He was being taught by these three episodes that hearing God was not the same as hearing Eli. Eli was not in fact 'Eli', 'my God', to Samuel. A child's perception of God is always taught by their father figure, and Eli was Samuel's father figure. But at this young age he was being taught otherwise, and to his credit he responded, not going the way of Eli and those around him.

1Sa 3:5 He ran to Eli, and said, Here I am, for you called me. He said, I didn't call; lie down again. He went and lay down-

We note Samuel's running in response to God's word, in line with the idiom of 'running' as meaning response to God's message (Dan. 12:4; Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Am. 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; Jn. 8:37 RV; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.).

1Sa 3:6 Yahweh called again, Samuel! Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, Here I am; for you called me. He answered, I didn't call my son; lie down again-

See on :4. "My son" reflects how in Elkanah's absence from maybe the age of three (1 Sam. 1:24), Eli was effectively Samuel's father. He is the more commendable for being spiritually strong for Yahweh when his adoptive family were so far from Him.

"Here am I" was the logical answer if the Divine voice came from between the cherubim, as it did in Num. 7:89. So Samuel was sleeping next to the ark. Yet when Uzzah touched the ark he was slain. Boundaries of holiness were so flexible. There seems little point in mentioning the ark unless to make the point that Samuel slept next to it: "Samuel had laid down in Yahweh's sanctuary where the ark of God was" (:3). The lamps that went out therefore refer to those in the candlestick in the Holy place. A child was maintaining the whole tabernacle and moving freely in and out of holy space. Eli's attitude to God's holiness was terrible.

1Sa 3:7 Now Samuel didn't yet know Yahweh, neither was the word of Yahweh yet revealed to him-

Despite this, he was still ministering to Yahweh, even though he had no personal relationship with Him and was aware of this in that he omitted using the term Yahweh (see on :10). For that is the usual sense of "knowing" in a Hebraic sense. This is mentioned to explain why Samuel was so slow in realizing that this was a Divine prophetic call and not Eli calling him. "Revealed" in 1 Sam. 3:7,21; 9:15 is the word used of how Yahweh had revealed Himself to the tribe of Levi and called them to be His priests (1 Sam. 2:27), and Eli as it were was in the loins of his father Levi, according to the principle of Heb. 7:10. But the line of Levi and Eli had potentially been rejected because of Eli's apostasy. The Divine intention was to replace them with Samuel as a prophet-priest and perhaps king (1 Sam. 2:10). But this potential was only partially fulfilled by Samuel, and despite possibilities in David and Solomon, it only came to full term in the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

1Sa 3:8 Yahweh called Samuel again the third time. He arose and went to Eli and said, Here I am; for you called me. Eli perceived that Yahweh had called the child- This perception would have been mixed with a premonition that this child was his replacement, seeing he had earlier been warned that he was as it were not hearing his own calling as high priest (see on 1 Sam. 2:27). "Child" is the same word used in 1

Sam. 2:13 for how the priest's servant or "boy" defrauded worshippers of their sacrifices. Samuel even as a child was doing priestly service.

1Sa 3:9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, Go, lie down, and if He calls you, say, 'Speak, Yahweh, for Your servant hears'. So Samuel went and lay down in his place-
Eli is to be commended for being prepared to accept that Yahweh was having a relationship with Samuel because he had failed. Many jealous people, such as Saul, would have ten wanted to destroy Samuel. But Eli wasn't like that. He comes over as completely passive, although happy to get fat on the abuses performed by his sons. But the condemnation of him is severe. He is a parade example of the significance of sins of omission.

Eli's command to Samuel to "listen" may allude to the way in which his own sons "didn't listen to their father, because Yahweh intended to kill them" (1 Sam. 2:25). Eli presents as a man who knows what's right (he tells Samuel to say the right thing to God)- but is just too weak willed to do it personally. His condemnation, in such heavy terms, is a true warning and challenge to us all.

We naturally wonder why these three attempted callings of Samuel. The impression may simply be created that Eli was not spiritually perceptive; he ought to have perceived Samuel's calling at the first time. But Samuel was also being taught to perceive the difference between the voice of Eli, and that of God. Until this point he had conflated the two. Now he is being led further out of religion into personal spirituality and response to God's word direct to him.

1Sa 3:10 Yahweh came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel! Samuel! Then Samuel said, Speak; for Your servant hears-

This coming and standing of Yahweh was presumably in the form of an Angel. We note Samuel omits to use the term "Yahweh", contrary to how Eli had instructed him (:9 'Speak, Yahweh, for Your servant hears'). It is noted on :7 that Samuel didn't yet know Yahweh.

1Sa 3:11 Yahweh said to Samuel, Behold, I will do something in Israel which will make both the ears of everyone who hears it tingle-

Samuel as a child had to tell Eli of God's rejection of him, a message he also heard at night, and His replacement of him with someone else. This prepared Samuel for doing this very same thing years later, with Saul (1 Sam. 15:16); and to some extent, he too failed in ways similar to Eli, and was in a sense replaced. Whilst it's impossible to attach meaning to events at the time they happen, they potentially prepare us for later use by God if we are willing to be used.

Eli and his sons were surely unpopular, because the people complained to Eli about all the abuses going on (1 Sam. 2:22). The result was that they gave up offering sacrifices (1 Sam. 2:17). And yet Yahweh foresaw that the people would be shocked at the judgment to come upon the family. We see here how people need religion, to the point of accepting awful abuses and being deeply upset when the abusers are judged; even though they notice and complain about the abuses. This kind of thing, especially in the areas of sexual and financial abuse, is too often seen in religion gone wrong today.

1Sa 3:12 In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end-

And yet I noted in 1 Sam. 2 that there were various potential judgments upon Eli's

house. But the essence of God's judgment was to be performed even if not the letter of it.

In the gap between beginning and ending, there would be no repentance. Because God can begin judgment and not complete it. But in their case, He would begin and take it through to the end. Possibly the beginning was in the death of Hophni and Phinehas, continuing in the death of Abimelech and the eighty five priests at Nob at the hands of Saul; and then came to "an end" when Solomon cast Abiathar from the priesthood.

1Sa 3:13 For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew-

The judgment was eternal not in the sense that they would experience eternal conscious punishment; but the consequences of rejection would be eternal in that they were missing out on eternity. And losing a potentially possible eternity is therefore in that sense an eternal judgment.

Because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he didn't rebuke them- Eli *did* rebuke his sons; but in God's eyes he didn't (1 Sam. 2:24 cp. 3:13). He said words for the sake of saying words, but in his heart he didn't frown upon them. Eli appeared to discipline his sons. But he couldn't have really done this from his heart, or he wouldn't have been condemned for not controlling them. He honoured his sons above God, to make himself "fat with the chiefest of all the offerings". We too can go through the motions of spirituality without believing it. Even external acts of apparent righteousness can be sin.

Eli ought to have noticed his sons' behaviour for himself. He only said something to them because people were gossiping about it (1 Sam. 2:23). Image was clearly all important to him, and he himself colluded with his sons and is condemned for it.

We note again that all condemnation is self inflicted; they brought this curse upon themselves.

1Sa 3:14 Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli, that the guilt of Eli's house shall not be removed with sacrifice nor offering forever-

We compare this with the observation that the blood of bulls and goats could never remove sin or guilt of itself (Heb. 10:4). The guilt could only anyway be removed by faith in the future Messianic sacrifice, better than any animal offering. Again we see that the judgment upon persons was a reflection of what the position which the person themselves had arrived at. They had no desire for forgiveness nor any vision towards the future Messianic sacrifice; and so they were judged with the curse of sacrifice never removing their guilt. David surely looked back to this when he confessed that sacrifice and offering could not remove his sin, only God's grace (Ps. 40:6).

We could infer from this statement that there was a hint that Eli even at this stage could find forgiveness- if he threw himself upon God's grace, as David likewise did when in a situation when sacrifice and offering couldn't save him. Indeed David may have been inspired by Eli's refusal of this offer to himself accept it. Possibly the situation with Eli is in mind in Hos. 6:6: "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings". But instead Eli's response is passive, just accepting his judgment because of the clogging nature of religion and his lack of personal spirituality, reflected in how he failed to perceive Hannah was praying in her heart.

1Sa 3:15 Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of Yahweh.

Samuel feared to show Eli the vision-

This is a common theme, of men fearing to tell others the prophetic vision. We think of Daniel dumb with fear before telling the vision to Nebuchadnezzar. It is our own narrative almost daily, as we fear to tell others God's word as it really is, fearing their rejection.

1Sa 3:16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son! He said, Here I am-
"Here" translates *hinneh*, a word with the same consonants as the name of his mother Hannah. It was almost as if he were saying "I am Hannah". In that moment he felt unity with his mother, in obedience to God's word.

1Sa 3:17 He said, What was it that He said to you? Please don't hide it from me-
Surely Eli knew that this was another message of condemnation for him. But he wanted to know it, just as Zedekiah urged Jeremiah not to hide from him the message of his own damnation (s.w. Jer. 38:14).

May God deal with you severely if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you-

This was no mere threat from Eli. We are not to hide God's word from those for whom it was intended at our hands. One theme of the history here is the critical significance of sins of omission. Omitting to discipline sons, omitting to declare God's word... all merited severe judgment.

1Sa 3:18 Samuel told him everything-

Literally, "every word". Samuel is presented as a new Moses, for this phrase is used repeatedly about him and his mediation for Israel.

And hid nothing from him. He said, It is Yahweh-

By Eli commenting "It is the Lord", he meant 'It is the word of the Lord'; but he saw God as effectively His word. "The word", the "word of the Kingdom", "the Gospel", "the word of God" are all parallel expressions throughout the Gospels. Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to Him. "The word was God". David "despised the commandment (word) of the Lord... you despised me" (2 Sam. 12:9,10). David learnt that his attitude to God's word was his attitude to God- for the word of God, in that sense, was and is God. By *our* words we personally will be condemned or justified- because we too 'are' our words.

Let Him do what seems good to Him-

This kind of fatalism isn't right. It seems a similarly faithfulness Hezekiah alludes to it in Is. 39:8: "Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, Yahweh's word which you have spoken is good. He said moreover, For there will be peace and truth in my days".

1Sa 3:19 Samuel grew, and Yahweh was with him, and he let none of His words fall to the ground-

The words in view are presumably the intention to raise up the non-Levite Samuel as a replacement priest and mediator for Israel. But as noted on 1 Sam. 2, God's purposes and intentions for Samuel went as far as establishing him as a Messianic king, prophet and priest who would rebuke Yahweh's enemies (1 Sam. 2:10). But Samuel let the ball drop to some extent and this was not finally achieved in him. But from God's side, His words did not fail. Prophecy therefore doesn't fail or "fall to the ground" but the potential fulfillments may not come about.

1Sa 3:20 All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Yahweh-

Samuel was apparently required to speak forth his words of judgment upon Eli to all Israel, otherwise the ears of Israel could not have tingled at hearing the message (:11). This would have resulted in a difficult life for Samuel at Shiloh, with Eli and his sons aware of what he was saying about them. Perhaps the subsequent account of the death of the family in 1 Sam. 4 is now included to show how this verse came to be true. When the prophecy of Samuel about them was suddenly fulfilled, all Israel would have known that Samuel was indeed a prophet. For short term fulfillments were required in order to legitimize a prophet (Dt. 18:22).

1Sa 3:21 Yahweh appeared again in Shiloh, for Yahweh revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Yahweh-

"Revealed" in 1 Sam. 3:7,21; 9:15 is the word used of how Yahweh had revealed Himself to the tribe of Levi and called them to be His priests (1 Sam. 2:27), and Eli as it were was in the loins of his father Levi, according to the principle of Heb. 7:10. But the line of Levi and Eli had potentially been rejected because of Eli's apostasy. The Divine intention was to replace them with Samuel as a prophet-priest and perhaps king (1 Sam. 2:10). But this potential was only partially fulfilled by Samuel, and despite possibilities in David and Solomon, it only came to full term in the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 4

1Sa 4:1 Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle and encamped beside Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped in Aphek-

"Ebenezer" is "rock of help", but Yahweh was no longer the rock for Israel. Eli epitomized Israel; Jeshurun like Eli (:18) had "become fat" and despised Yahweh as their rock (Dt. 32:15), and so He was not a rock of defence for them (Dt. 32:30,37). Israel found no help from God there. The theme of religious hollowness continues, for mere tokenism cannot save.

1Sa 4:2 The Philistines put themselves in position against Israel; when they joined battle Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand Israelite soldiers-

The description of the drawing up of battle lines and camps recalls the description of the conflict with the Philistines when David saved Israel by slaying Goliath. The contrast seems intentional. God's plan through Samuel and David was to salvation, whereas Eli and his sins led Israel to defeat and their own destruction.

1Sa 4:3 When the people had returned to the camp the elders of Israel said, Why has Yahweh struck us today before the Philistines?-

They realized that this was no mere bad luck, but that God was working through the Philistines. To be smitten by enemies was part of the curse for disobedience to the covenant. That was the answer, but rather look at themselves self critically and perceive their sins, the people blamed a lack of external religion- in that they blamed what had happened instead upon not having the ark with them. The ark was never

presented as a talisman nor was there a command to take it with them into battle. This was purely their assumption.

Let us bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of Shiloh that it may go with us and save us out of the hand of our enemies-

This is the language of Yahweh personally going with Israel and saving them out of the hand of their enemies. But as so many do today, Israel had replaced content with form, personal relationship with God with a hollow trust in wooden formalism and mere religion. For no gold box could save Israel. Instead of speaking of Yahweh going with and saving them, they speak of "that it [the ark] may go with us and save us". They were making God equal to a religious item. Just as so many do. They were misapplying Biblical precedent; "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee" (Num. 10:35) was being taken to mean that enemies would flee before the physical ark, whereas this passage is nuanced by the blessings and cursings for faithfulness to the covenant; only a covenant compliant Israel would experience their enemies fleeing before them. They likely also recalled how the Ark had preceded them in the victory against Jericho (Josh. 6:6). The Biblical precedent for Israel was in Josh. 7:6-9 and Jud. 20:26-28 – where both times the people were humbled by their defeat before the ark and sought a word from their God. Both times their sins were revealed, the people repented and were then given victory. But here they just assume that the ark's physical presence would guarantee victory. There was no sense of personal sin nor relationship with their God. Instead they were treating the ark just as the Gentiles treated their gods, taking them into battle with them. Israel's victory against the Philistines in their next recorded battle, in 1 Sam. 7, was not because they had the ark with them- but because Samuel called them to repent and destroy their idols.

In 2 Sam. 5:21 we read of David destroying the images of the Philistines after defeating them in battle, so it's quite possible the Philistines had brought their idols with them to battle. And Israel wanted to do likewise by bringing the ark with them. But they were making the classic religious error of confusing symbol with actual Divine presence. This error is widespread; religious people think that God's presence is only in a building, or only mediated through relics or symbols. Presence and physical symbol are different, although mere religion conflates them. It is the same essential error of Holy Spirit-less Christianity, wherein the physical external forms and appearances of worship are relied upon rather than the actual presence of God through the Spirit. This is surely why the ark fades from view in Israel's history and nobody knows where it ended up. No ark features in the restored temple of Ezekiel. Likewise the temple was destroyed, as a judgment intended to actually help God's people relate to Him on a spiritual level rather than in terms of mere religion and externality. And this is surely why when the ark does literally return to Judah in 1 Sam. 6:19, the men of Beth Shemesh are judged rather than blessed by its presence. They likewise wrongly assumed that having the ark with them would guarantee them blessing; they repeated the same error of the people when they thought that having the ark with them would bring them victory.

David later brings the ark to Zion in 2 Sam. 6, but this was without any Divine command to do so and without consultation with Him; and there was the disaster with Uzzah the first time he attempted it. He clearly also veered towards seeing the ark as a talisman. It was almost as if he wanted to underwrite his own enthronement in Jerusalem by having Yahweh enthroned there also over the ark. Likewise David's desire to permanently locate the ark in a physical temple in Jerusalem can be seen as a desire to legitimate the enthronement of his dynasty in that city. As Adele Berlin

noted, "temple-building is crucial to the dynastic promise. The link between the two is common in ancient Near Eastern temple-building literature, where the builder of the temple receives a divine blessing for dynastic stability". God's response was that He needed no temple, but He would build David's "house" or dynasty. But on the other hand, David often 'gets it' about the lack of need for the ark's physical presence. His psalms speak of how he lived permanently beneath the shadow of the cherubic wings, as if he lived on the mercy seat, on the sprinkled blood. In 2 Sam. 15:24-29 he flees from Absalom, and refuses the suggestion he take the ark with him. In fact he initially wants to take it but re-thinks. But, so true to real spiritual life, he also had tendencies towards needing the physical and religious when it came to the ark. Just as we pine for the religious at times, whilst also rejoicing in God's presence in our hearts quite regardless of religious context. David wrote at least two Psalms about bringing the ark to Zion, Ps. 68 and Ps. 132. Ps. 68 clearly expects God to bring victory to Israel because of the ark's presence in Zion, and Ps. 132 seems to reason that once the ark is in Zion it will be there forever. This wasn't to be the case. But we see in David's reasoning that he still considered the ark as some kind of physical guarantee of God's presence, and the legitimization of his own enthronement in Jerusalem- and that of his dynasty after him, as he imagined. He was proven wrong- the ark disappeared, his dynasty was cut off from being the kings of Judah, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. But God's spiritual presence in human hearts continued and became the stronger after these things. We marvel at how God works through human weakness to achieve His wider purposes.

1Sa 4:4 So the people sent to Shiloh and they brought from there the ark of the covenant of Yahweh of Armies, who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God-

There is a juxtaposition between the presence of Yahweh at the ark, and the corrupt sons of Eli being present "with" the ark. The opposition may be between their being "with" the ark, but Yahweh being "above" it. Being in the presence of the ark had done those men no spiritual good, and so it was vain to suppose that being "with" it would provide salvation. His presence "above" the ark may also suggest that Yahweh and the ark were not the same thing at all.

"The ark of the covenant of Yahweh of Armies, who sits above the cherubim" is a lengthy title for the ark; again we have the impression of them trusting in the religious rather than the spiritual.

1Sa 4:5 When the ark of the covenant of Yahweh came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded-

Such was the depth of their belief in mere religion. This is the language of deep religious joy (1 Kings 1:45; Ezra 3:12,13; Mic. 2:12). One lesson we learn is that religious passion, deep faith in the external symbols of the religion (the ark, in this case) is absolutely nothing to do with really knowing God in relationship. I have suggested that the historical records of the Bible were rewritten under inspiration in Babylon, with special reference to the events of the restoration. In this case the connection would be with the great shout and echoing land of Ezra 3:12,13 when the rebuilt temple was dedicated. But some wept at that time; for it had not been built according to the commandments of Ez. 40-48, and therefore the more spiritually minded wept as they realized that the temple and kingdom had not been restored as potentially possible. The connection of the language is in that here again the people had shouted with passion and the earth had echoed- but Yahweh was not among them,

and they were slain. The ark was for them just a box and not the real presence of God. They wrongly equated God with the symbolism of Him, assuming that God was with them if the ark was with them (:7).

1Sa 4:6 When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout they said, What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean? When they understood that the ark of Yahweh had come into the camp-

Note the parallel in :7 between the ark coming into the camp, and God coming into the camp [as they understood it]. Like Israel, they wrongly equated God with the symbolism of Him, assuming that God was with them if the ark was with them. Form replaced content. The externalities overshadowed and then eclipsed the essence.

1Sa 4:7 they were afraid, for they said, God has come into the camp. They said, Woe to us! Nothing like this has happened before-

God's experience with Israel led to His humiliation before the nations. Seeing the ark represented the very presence of God, the capture of the ark was in a sense the capture of God (1 Sam. 5:7,11 cp. 4:7). Ps. 78:61 comments: "He delivered his power to captivity, his glory to the hand of the foe". And likewise at the cross, crucifixion meant humiliation in some sense for God.

"God has come into the camp" reflects how they viewed the ark as the 'god' of Israel. And that was clearly how Israel themselves viewed the ark. They came to view their God as if He were just the same kind of god as the surrounding nations had, whose presence was in a symbol, which gave victory if carried into battle. In fact the shekinah presence of Yahweh was *over* the ark, on the blood sprinkled mercy seat or lid of the ark, between the cherubim. The presence was not the ark itself.

1Sa 4:8 Woe to us! Who can deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness- They refer to Yahweh in the plural, and we wonder if this too was how Israel conceived of their God. For Aaron had made the gold calf and told them that "these be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 32:4). The desire to believe in a plurality of gods somehow beneath the banner of "one God" is a basic human tendency in all religious systems, and came to term in the false doctrine of the Trinity. And yet we see how jumbled was the message which had come down to the Philistines- that the Egyptians had been plagued "in the wilderness" by the multiple gods of Israel. It is a sign of Divine inspiration and purpose that the basic message about Yahweh has been accurately preserved in His word.

We have here the fulfilment of the Song of Moses at the Red Sea: "Fear shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina [Philistia]" (Ex. 15:14).

1Sa 4:9 Be strong, and behave like men, you Philistines, so that you will not be servants to the Hebrews as they have been to you. Strengthen yourselves like men and fight!-

These words are quoted about our call to likewise bravely fight against apparently impossible odds- and win (1 Cor. 16:13). This indicates how context [contrary to what is often claimed] is not always the critical issue in interpretation. For typical of Hebrew midrash, the New Testament quotations of Old Testament phrases are often without any attention to context, just taking phrases of Old Testament scripture and applying them to some other context. When you go back and look at the surrounding

context of the Old Testament quotation, there is often no relevance nor appropriacy at all (although sometimes there is).

1Sa 4:10 The Philistines fought and Israel was defeated and they fled every man to his tent and there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand Israelite foot soldiers were killed-

The Hebrew word translated "thousand" doesn't literally mean 1,000 in every occurrence; it can refer to a grouping or family, and in a military context, to a regiment or military subdivision. But the slaughter was far greater than at the first battle. This was clearly punishment for misusing the ark of God as mere religious tokenism and as a totem for good luck and success. With what hurt must God view the similar usage of the symbol of the cross, and the taking of His Name in vain today.

1Sa 4:11 The ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed-

As discussed on :7, the taking of the ark of God into captivity was in a sense God going into captivity. It seems the ark was taken before the men were killed. But the order is reversed in :17 to reflect how much the ark meant to Eli. And yet his love of external religion didn't mean he was thereby spiritual nor saved from his condemnation.

1Sa 4:12 A man of Benjamin ran out of the army that day and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and earth on his head-

There may be some significance to this in that it was Benjamin who were chosen by God through Samuel as the first kingly tribe. Why mention he was from Benjamin? The "man of Benjamin" who features throughout the books of Samuel is Saul. So we wonder whether this was Saul, and yet he failed to discern the warning from the death of Eli and his sons at the hand of the Philistines. For the circumstances of the end of Saul and Eli were so similar. We note how the birth of Ichabod is very similar to that of Benjamin, with the death of their mothers in depression and despair.

1Sa 4:13 When he came, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God-

The paramount importance given to the ark is continually stressed. He was worried far more about the ark than about his sons. And yet his lack of discipline of his sons led to his condemnation. His love of the religious externalities didn't save him. "By the road" is LXX "by the gate"; he was watching, but he was a blind watchman (:15), 'watching' for the external religious symbol of the ark, when he was blind to real spirituality. Recall how he had no conception that a woman could pray to God in her heart.

When the man came into the city and reported what had happened, all the city cried out-

The record emphasizes Eli's love for the ark; even after the shock of hearing that his sons had been killed, it was only when he heard that the ark had been taken that he had a stroke and died (:18). Likewise his daughter in law died with mourning for the ark on her lips (:22). But this love of the external things of one's religion (see on :10) wasn't the same as true spirituality. For all Eli's love of the things associated with the true God, he was severely condemned for not having the glory of God and care for His people at heart (see on 1 Sam. 3:13). It's not difficult to love the external

trappings of our religion- the church hall, the social events, the regular activities, the general ambience. But this isn't the same as true spirituality.

1Sa 4:14 When Eli heard the noise of the crying he said, What does this noise mean? The man hurried and told Eli-

The historical records were rewritten under inspiration in exile, with the Babylonian captivity presented as having been experienced in essence in Israel's earlier history. This is a parade example, for the phrase "the noise of the crying" is used in Jer. 25:36 of how the shepherds of Israel (cp. Eli and his sons) would make a noise of crying at the Babylonian invasion (also in Zeph. 1:10).

1Sa 4:15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were bad so that he could not see-

We noted on 1 Sam. 3:2,3 that at that point Eli's eyes had begun to grow dim, and this is associated with the waning and extinction of the oil lamp which was intended to burn always before Yahweh. Now, Eli is completely blind. The light has gone out within him and within the tabernacle.

1Sa 4:16 The man said to Eli, I am the one who came out of the army, and I fled today from the battle. He said, What happened, my son?-

Fleeing before enemies was a sign Israel had broken covenant. This is the point of the history here. Mere possession of the ark and ritual obedience was just mere religion, and was not at all associated with the real, saving presence of God amongst men. This was all so relevant to the exiles, for whom these histories were later rewritten and presented.

"What happened, my son?" is literally 'What is the word?'. Eli used the same term in 1 Sam. 3:17 where he again asks "my son" Samuel 'What is the word?'. And it had been a word of condemnation. And now in response to the same question, he hears the fulfilment of it, in the news of the death of his sons. But even personal condemnation, the fulfilment of the threat of judgment upon him, meant less to him than the loss of the ark. We see reflected here how personal relationship with God, even the issues of personal salvation or condemnation, can be subsumed in human psychology beneath the obsessive burden of religion and religious symbolism.

1Sa 4:17 The man who brought the news answered, Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Your two sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead, and the ark of God has been captured-

1 Sam. 2:34 had given Eli this very sign: "This will be the sign to you which will come on your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall both die". The idea of a prophetic sign to Eli was surely that he was to take note of it and then repent. But it seems the day the sons died, he also died. It was as if he refused to respond to it, and therefore was slain the same day. And so the idea of the "sign" was that it was to be immediately responded to. Eli died at a great age; God had been so patient with him, giving him so many opportunities to repent, and then at the very end of his life, on the very last day of it, he was given the fulfilment of this sign to urge him personally towards repentance. And still he refused, being concerned merely about the loss of the ark as a religious symbol.

1Sa 4:18 When he made mention of the ark of God-

Eli, although apparently righteous himself in many ways and loving the ark of God

above all, was rejected specifically because "he frowned not" upon his sons' apostasy; he personally was counted as 'kicking' at God and profiteering from His sacrifices, even though he himself seems to have truly loved God (1 Sam. 2:29; 4:18). Because Eli wouldn't exercise discipline, he was somehow seen as committing those very things which he failed to rebuke. The man who wouldn't discipline his wayward ox was to be treated like as if he had committed the crime the ox did, and therefore must die if the ox killed a man (Ex. 21:29).

Eli fell off his seat backward by the side of the gate and his neck broke and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had judged Israel for forty years- He honoured his sons above God, to make himself "fat with the chiefest of all the offerings". The description of Eli as being fat surely reflects his guilt (1 Sam. 2:29; 4:18). And yet he appeared on the surface to run his family life on a spiritual footing.

1Sa 4:19 His daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant, near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labour and gave birth, but was overcome by her pains-

If Eli was 98 (:15) and his daughter in law was young enough to have a child, we can conclude that she was much younger than Phinehas, who was likely in his 70s. He was known for sleeping with other women, so we can assume he had had a number of relationships.

1Sa 4:20 As she was dying the women attending her said, Don't be afraid, for you have given birth to a son. But she didn't answer, neither did she pay any attention- The possibility of future things continuing through her son was unimportant to her. For her, the present glory of being in the High Priestly family, even though that family had been condemned to destruction, was everything. And the ark likewise was everything for her, the quintessence of her religion, without which all was meaningless. She is similar to Eli in that the ark meant more to her than anything else (:18).

1Sa 4:21 She named the child Ichabod saying, The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband- Phinehas' wife honestly thought that her apostate husband and father-in-law were "the glory of Israel". But she was not without some spirituality, or at least religiosity, because she considered the ark to be the even greater glory of Israel (:22). As noted on :18, like Eli, she considered the ark more important than anything else, even her family. And yet this is the point- that mere love of religious symbolism is nothing at all in spiritual terms.

Eli's daughter in law had died muttering "Ichabod", 'the glory is departed', because of the loss of the physical ark. But she saw things only in terms of physical visible religion. Glory was in fact given to God even in the loss of the ark, because the Philistines decide they must give glory to God by returning the ark to Him with offerings (their wise men advised "you must make images of your tumours and your mice that are destroying the land, and give glory to the God of Israel", 1 Sam. 6:5); He was to be given glory, *kabod*, heaviness, so that He would lighten His hand. It was a magnificent defeat; Israel on earth lost, but Yahweh won, hence Dagon falling mutilated and defeated before Yahweh.

1Sa 4:22 She said, The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken- The relevance to the exiles is that the shekinah glory had literally departed from Jerusalem when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and Judah went into captivity; "departed" is the word used for the exile. The visions Ezekiel showed progressive departure of "the glory of the God of Israel" (Ez. 8:4) from the temple to the East of Jerusalem and then further away to Babylon. And the painful thing for Judah was the ark was apparently lost. But the spiritually minded would have seen from the connection with the ark's previous captivity that actually the presence of God and the ark were two different things. The ark was not to be seen as a mere piece of religious and nationalistic symbolism. The loss of it was not to be mourned unduly because personal relationship with God was still possible, and that is of paramount value. The physical glory of Yahweh which dwelt between the cherubim had departed. We marvel that it was still there through all the years of abuse by Eli and his sons. Her grief should have been for the reasons why that glory departed. But like many religious people, she was focused merely upon the external. However the record will describe the return of the ark, and this would've given hope to the exiles. The Philistines knew the story of the Exodus, and in 1 Sam. 5 will perceive that the ark represents Israel; they reason that they should let it go, and give it gold and silver, lest they suffer the fate of the Egyptians who refused to let Israel go.

"The glory is departed from Israel" is literally, "Where is the glory?". Sharing the spiritual blindness of Eli, she could not conceive of God's glory as being anywhere but over a wooden box. This gives depth and perspective to David's frequent observations that he saw God's glory in all the earth. This woman saw it solely over a box.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 5

1Sa 5:1 Now the Philistines had taken the ark of God, and they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod-

This continues the theme developed in 1 Sam. 4 of how having the ark as mere religious symbolism was not the same as having relationship with God. It was taken away from Ebenezer, the rock of help, for God was no longer their rock; see on 1 Sam. 6:15; 7:12. And yet misusing it was going to bring judgment. This was relevant encouragement to the exiles as they mourned how the temple vessels had been taken to Babylon and were being misused, as in the drinking feast of Dan. 5. "Ashdod" is a form of the word translated "spoiler" or "robber" frequently used of Babylon (Is. 33:1; Jer. 4:13,20; 6:26; 9:19 and often). These historical records were intended to be discerned by the exiles as speaking to them.

This journey of 60 km. was surely done without the ark being carried by Levites. Uzzah was later slain for just steadying the ark; whereas Samuel appears to have slept next to it, and here the Philistines manhandle it on a long journey. Uzzah was slain but they weren't. Again we see how boundaries of holiness are relative, and God looks at the heart; something clearly was very wrong in Uzzah's heart, in a way it was not wrong in the hearts of the child Samuel or these Philistines. Attitude and heart are paramount in God's judgment of men.

1Sa 5:2 They took the ark of God into the house of Dagon and set it beside Dagon-

This connects with how the Babylonians took the temple vessels into the houses of their gods in Babylon.

1Sa 5:3 When the people of Ashdod arose early the next day, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh-

The phrase 'fell on his face to the ground before' is usually used of worship. Although the ark was indeed just a wooden box, God would not be mocked, and expressed His wish that the Philistines would quit their fish god Dagon and worship Him. See on :12. But laying flat on his face before the ark could suggest Dagon has been slain by Yahweh. There are virtually no undamaged statues of gods or idols discovered by archaeologists- because it was normal for the victors to damage or mutilate the idols of their enemies. This is what Yahweh is doing here to Dagon, as if He has won and is now mutilating the opposing god. And yet Yahweh's people had been slain before the Philistines and Dagon their god. We see here the paradox- it was a "magnificent defeat" just as was the cross. Apparent defeat is actually Yahweh's longer term victory. His people may be defeated on earth, but He wins in Heaven; and that is a theme of the book of Revelation.

In the context of the exiles, the gods of Babylon were likewise judged- "Bel bows down, Nebo stoops" (Is. 46:1). Again we see how the ark narrative in 1 Sam. 4-6 was probably rewritten for encouragement to the exiles. And to teach them that the ark's presence amongst them was not of essential importance. Rather were they to see God's personal presence in their heart, according to the promises of the new covenant they were offered.

They took Dagon and set him back in his place-

This need to "set him back in his place" connects with the mockery of idol worship found in the restoration prophets. The same phrase is used in :11. The worshippers of Dagon had to return their god to his place by themselves; but the ark was returned to its place by God working through the oxen and cart, which represented the cherubim.

1Sa 5:4 When they arose early the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of Yahweh and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were broken off, lying on the threshold. Only Dagon's torso was intact-

A fish has no head, palms nor hands. The idol image was reduced to all it was- a mere fish. We saw on :3 that the phrase 'fell on his face to the ground before' is usually used of worship. It was God's intention that the Philistines come to acknowledge His supremacy, and perceive their idols for what they were, stripped of all they had added to them. "Torso" is not in the original; literally, "only Dagon was left to him".

1Sa 5:5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor anyone who comes into Dagon's house will tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod, to this day-

The Philistines are therefore those who jump over the threshold, but that term is used to describe the priests of Yahweh's temple who were no better (Zeph. 1:9 "In that day, I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their master's house with violence and deceit"). The priests may particularly be in view, whose master was Yahweh and whose house, the temple, they had defiled by their idolatry. The idea is that the temple of Yahweh had been effectively turned into that of pagan gods- despite Josiah's apparent reforms. This whole message is a stern warning against mere tokenism in repentance and reform, and challenges to the core all our self-examination and the results thereof. These priests were filling Yahweh's house with the rewards of their violence and deceit. Typical of the prophets, Zephaniah focuses

upon the apparently negligible (the personal gains arising from deceit) rather than what we might consider the more obvious issues of offering children to Moloch.

1Sa 5:6 But the hand of Yahweh was heavy on the people of Ashdod and those nearby, and He destroyed them, afflicting them with tumours-

This is the reference of Ps. 78:66, which refers to how the ark was taken from Shiloh in Ephraim into the land of the Philistines, who were smitten in their private parts with tumours; but then the ark was returned, not to Shiloh in Ephraim, but to Kirjath Jearim in Judah, and thence to Jerusalem in Judah. But the question for us is the degree to which God ordered this transfer of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem (as the pro-Davidic author of Ps. 78 claims); or whether David manipulated it that way, and God went along with it.

1Sa 5:7 When the men of Ashdod saw what was happening they said, The ark of the God of Israel must not stay with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god-

This was a tacit recognition that the God of Israel was real, and was greater than their god Dagon. Yet like many, they preferred to trundle along undisturbed in their religious ways, even when they had been demonstrated as false and the true way offered to them. They didn't want His abiding presence to continue with them; for "stay" is the usual word used for God's dwelling or abiding amongst His people.

1Sa 5:8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines together and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? They answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried over to Gath. They carried the ark of the God of Israel there-

As noted on :7, they could have had the presence of Israel's God amongst them, but they chose not to. The language recalls how the Gentile inhabitants of the land asked the Lord Jesus, the true ark, to leave them- even when He had done great miracles amongst them (Mt. 8:34).

1Sa 5:9 But after they had carried it there, the hand of Yahweh was against the city, causing panic, and He struck the men of the city, small and great, and tumours broke out upon them-

I suggest that this was not because God didn't want the ark nor His presence to be amongst them. He did. The punishment was because they were misusing the ark. "Tumours" were the punishment for disobedience to the covenant (Dt. 28:27). The Philistines were being punished in this way because they had been called to accept Yahweh's covenant but had refused, as noted several times throughout this chapter.

1Sa 5:10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. As the ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!-

Perhaps the thought was that Ekron worshipped Baal Zebub and not Dagon, and therefore the ark of Israel's God would be vanquished by that god (2 Kings 1:2). But the entire Philistine confederacy knew that they were spiritually beaten before Yahweh. Literally, as in :11, "to me, to slay me and my people" (as AVmg.). The implication is that this was a message from the god of Ekron, tacitly recognizing that he was no match for Yahweh. See on 1 Sam. 6:9.

1Sa 5:11 They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and they said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place so that it does not kill us and our people. For there was a deadly panic throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there-

The Philistines knew the story of the Exodus (1 Sam. 4), and now they perceive that the ark represents Israel; they reason that they should let it go, and give it gold and silver, lest they suffer worse plagues and the fate of the Egyptians who refused to let Israel go. The story of the ark's journey into exile from Shiloh and return to Jerusalem therefore speaks of Judah's exile and return; see on 1 Sam. 4:22. The ark narrative material in 1 Sam. 4-6 is clearly a literary unit, perhaps edited under inspiration in the exile. The exile and return of the ark becomes the exile and return of God's people, although they returned without an ark and without the visible shekinah glory. That physical religious symbolism was replaced by them, people, the people of God, with His presence in their hearts.

See on :10; 1 Sam. 6:20. The same phrase for "go back to its own place" is used in :3, where the worshippers of Dagon had to return their god to his place by themselves; but the ark was returned to its place by God working through the oxen and cart, which represented the cherubim.

God's experience with Israel led to His humiliation before the nations. Seeing the ark represented the very presence of God, the capture of the ark was in a sense the capture of God (1 Sam. 5:7,11 cp. 4:7). Ps. 78:61 comments: "He delivered his power to captivity, his glory to the hand of the foe". And likewise at the cross, crucifixion meant humiliation in some sense. But the point for the exiles to understand from this record was that even in captivity, Yahweh was still alive and active, and would not be mocked. We too are to personalize the history of Israel and see it speaking to our situations.

1Sa 5:12 The men who didn't die were struck with the tumours, and the cry of the city went up to Heaven-

A cry going up to heaven is the language of God's sensitivity to situations upon earth. The subtext is clearly that God was sensitive even to the sufferings of His Gentile enemies. And as noted on :3, it was God's desire that the Philistines repented. He was not at all heartless towards them.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 6

1Sa 6:1 The ark of Yahweh was in the country of the Philistines for seven months- LXX adds "And their land swarmed with mice" (as in :4). The question of course which dominated their thinking was whether their sufferings were all just coincidence, or whether this was due to Israel's God. And yet at the end of 1 Sam. 5 it is clear they recognized the supremacy of Yahweh; and yet by all means men seek to wriggle and squirm against the most evident proof, even if they are brought to admit His existence and activity, they will still seek to dismiss it later (see on :9). This is why "evidences for the existence of God" are not ultimately powerful of themselves; there has to be a movement within the heart of those experiencing them, and a conscious desire not to deny them further.

1Sa 6:2 The Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, asking, What shall we do with the ark of Yahweh? Show us how we should send it back to its place-

Circumstances repeat within the lives of God's people, both over time and space. The calling of diviners for help when they were clearly beaten and revealed as having no wisdom... all recalls the situation when seeking to interpret the visions of Pharaoh and the kings in the book of Daniel. There is the same hallmark left from the same Divine hand that was operating. And the continuities in God's operations can be perceived within our own lives, and between our lives and those of others contemporary with us. This is one advantage of meeting together in fellowship with other believers; if we talk about His hand in our lives [rather than social chit chat] we perceive that man is not alone, the same God is working and has worked in others' lives as He does in our life. See on :20.

1Sa 6:3 They said, If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, don't send it empty; by all means return Him a trespass offering, then you will be healed and you will know why His hand has not been removed from you-

The Philistines were aware of Israel's exodus from Egypt and the judgment upon the Egyptians (1 Sam. 4:8). The Egyptians had given presents to Israel when they left, so that Israel were "sent out" from Egypt "empty" (s.w. Ex. 3:21). It seems the Philistine elders had this in mind. They recognized they were as Egypt before Yahweh; and yet they didn't take the Divine hint to go further, and be those Egyptians who went with Israel to inherit the land. They also had some moral sense that they had sinned against Yahweh. All the time, as noted throughout 1 Sam. 5, Yahweh was seeking to bring them unto Himself; but they refused, thinking that a tokenistic offering to Him would allow them to just continue with their existing religious practices.

1Sa 6:4 Then they said, What should the trespass offering be, which we should send to Him?

The real existence of Yahweh and His claim upon them is recognized.

They said, Five golden tumours and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines, for the same plague struck you all and your lords-

The trespass offering was to be in the form of the judgments experienced for the trespass, mice (see on :1) and tumours. This was some kind of recognition that the judgments experienced were just.

1Sa 6:5 Therefore you must make images of your tumours and your mice that are destroying the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lift His hand from you, your gods and your land-

Eli's daughter in law had died muttering "Ichabod", the glory is departed, because of the loss of the physical ark. But she saw things only in terms of physical visible religion. Glory was in fact given to God even in the loss of the ark; He was to be given glory, *kabod*, heaviness, so that He would lighten His hand. It was a magnificent defeat; Israel on earth lost, but Yahweh won, hence Dagon falling mutilated and defeated before Yahweh. Giving glory to God meant repentance and acceptance He was right and they were wrong, and that they had stolen what was His (exactly the same context in Josh. 7:19). They were not far from the Kingdom of God. They very well perceived what had happened, and the path required to reconciliation with Yahweh. And yet in :9 we see their return to the idea that maybe this was all coincidence. As noted on 1 Sam. 5:12, God was seeking their repentance and coming to Him. The exiles were likewise asked to repent and give glory to God (s.w. Jer. 13:16); they too were guilty of mere religious tokenism toward Yahweh and His ark

and presence; they were no better than these Philistines, but just as there was a path to repentance for the Philistines, so there was for the exiles.

1Sa 6:6 Why do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had done wonders among them, didn't they send the people away and they departed?-

The Philistine logic equates the ark with God's people. They argued that the ark must be sent away just as the people were sent away. The argument also clearly recognizes Yahweh as supreme over them, as He was over Egypt. But then we come in :9 to the slipping back into secular thinking, wondering if after all this was all chance and coincidence. It's like the atheist confronted with empirical evidence for God, being forced to accept it, and yet slipping back into the hope this just all coincidence.

Hebrew thought and language tends not to use abstract terms but rather uses language which alludes to physical body parts- e.g. to be stubborn is to be 'hard hearted' (1 Sam. 6:6), 'look' becomes 'to lift up the eyes' (Gen. 22:4), anger is 'to burn in the nostrils' (Ex. 4:14), to reveal something is to 'unstop someone's ears' (Ruth 4:4), stubbornness is to be 'stiff necked' (2 Chron. 30:8), to prepare oneself is to 'gird up the loins' (Jer. 1:17), to determine to go somewhere is 'to set one's face' (Jer. 42:15; Lk. 9:51).

1Sa 6:7 Now therefore prepare a new cart, and get two milk cows which have never been yoked; tie the cows to the cart and bring their calves home from them-

The language of chariot ["cart"], calves and the ark of Yahweh's glory upon it recalls the cherubim of Ezekiel's visions. The exiles were being bidden believe that the prophecies of restoration could easily be fulfilled, just as they had been in these historical precedents.

1Sa 6:8 Put the ark of Yahweh on the cart and put the jewels of gold, which you are sending Him for a trespass offering, in a chest beside it- and send it away-

They had opened the ark because they wanted to get the jewels they imagined were hidden within it, and perhaps they really were there. Maybe when Hophni and Phinehas were slain, they were bearing the breastplate, which was then put within the ark or associated with it. But now they learned their lesson, not to open the ark. Rather, the jewels of gold which were the images of the tumors and mice were not to be placed within the ark, it was not to be opened again, but rather placed beside it in a separate chest. It was as if the "jewels" they made were appropriate penitence for seeking to steal Yahweh's jewels. "And send it away" alludes to the Egyptians sending the Israelites away with jewels.

1Sa 6:9 If it goes up to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, then He has done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that struck us; it was a chance that happened to us-

And yet the preceding verses speak of making a trespass offering to Yahweh and finely appreciating the nature of their sin and the appropriate repentance for it. We noted on 1 Sam. 5:10 their acceptance of Yahweh's supremacy over their gods. But as discussed on :1, in the face of every rational, empirical evidence for the one true God and His ways, men must still of themselves choose to come out of denial and believe. By all means men seek to wriggle and squirm against the most evident proof, even if they are brought to admit His existence and activity, they will still seek to dismiss it later.

1Sa 6:10 The men did so, and took two milk cows, tied them to the cart and shut up their calves at home-

The natural desire of the cows would be to return to their calves and not run away from them.

1Sa 6:11 They put the ark of Yahweh on the cart, and the chest with the mice of gold and the images of their tumours-

The cameraman of Divine inspiration is as it were zoomed in close up, so that we see the Philistines carefully doing these things.

1Sa 6:12 The cows went straight towards Beth Shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border of Beth Shemesh-

The drivers of an ox cart would go before it, not follow behind it. In this they were being further humbled, that they were not in fact in control, and were potentially being led by God's Spirit in this makeshift imitation of the cherubim... to the people of Israel. But they failed to follow. And again, the lesson was for the exiles, that they too should follow God's cherubic leading back to their God and their land. Just as Ezekiel's visions of the cherubim tried to teach them. The cows going "straight" is to be connected with the straight feet of the cherubim, and how they too travelled in a straight path (Ez. 1:7,9,12 etc.).

1Sa 6:13 The people of Beth Shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it-

This was a priestly city, which internally corroborates with the statement in :15 that the Levites were immediately present to offer sacrifice. It is this kind of internal consistency which to me is the greatest argument for a Divinely inspired Bible. This verse is the clear fulfillment of Ps. 126:5: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy". But that is specifically a song of degrees or ascents, a prophecy of the restoration of the exiles. The restoration was to be modelled upon historical precedents such as these. And this is why these historical records were rewritten under inspiration for the encouragement of the exiles.

1Sa 6:14 The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh and stood there beside a great stone. The people split the wood of the cart and offered up the cows for a burnt offering to Yahweh-

The cart came to Joshua / Jesus. Perhaps this too had intentional meaning for the exiles, who were to return at a time when there was a priest called Joshua (Hag. 1:1; 2:4; Zech. 3:1 etc.). "The field of..." may suggest he was a Levite or priest who had a "field" as permitted by the law.

I will suggest on Ecc. 10:9 that Solomon in his apostacy later cynically refers to this incident: "Whoever splits wood may be endangered thereby". The same phrase is used. They split wood and sacrificed with joy that the ark had returned to them; but then they looked inside the ark and were slain. And so, Solomon reasons, wisdom and Yahweh worship are pointless. But of course the point was that they were disobedient. The ark was indeed a blessing, but they abused it through harnessing its return to their own self interest and love of wealth, just as Solomon did.

1Sa 6:15 The Levites took down the ark of Yahweh and the chest with the jewels of

gold and put them on the great stone, and the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices to Yahweh that day-

See on :13. We noted on 1 Sam. 5:1 how the ark had been taken away from Ebenezer, the rock of help. For Yahweh was no longer their rock. Its return to a great rock / stone (:14) was therefore showing that God was eager to restore relationship with His people and undo what had gone so wrong between them; just as was the case at the restoration. But as the exiles refused to make use of it, so now also.

1Sa 6:16 When the five lords of the Philistines had seen this. they returned to Ekron the same day-

I discussed on :9 how they had previously been forced to accept the empirical evidence before them for the existence of Yahweh and His supremacy and claims upon them. But then they slipped back to the suspicion that it was all chance and coincidence. But now, they return to Ekron with this further demonstration that Yahweh is for real, and there was no question of chance coincidence. But they still refused to believe, just as so many today. Again we have to observe how men must still of themselves choose to come out of denial and believe. By all means men seek to wriggle and squirm against the most evident proof, even if they are brought to admit Yahweh's existence and activity; but they will still seek to dismiss it later. Being trounced by the power of argument and observed reality is still not enough to make men believe, because belief must ultimately be a human choice and not forced upon a man by the weight of empirical evidence alone.

1Sa 6:17 These are the golden tumours which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering to Yahweh: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath and one for Ekron-

We wonder if this alludes to the fact that the Philistines had labelled them.

1Sa 6:18 The number of golden mice was according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, fortified cities and country villages. The great stone on which they put the ark of Yahweh remains to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh-

Again we get the impression that they perceived very well the complete nature of their guilt, and their desire to demonstrate that their every village had to be covered by this admission of trespass against Yahweh, and seeking to do something about it. But see on :9.

1Sa 6:19 But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh because they had looked into the ark of Yahweh. He killed seventy of the men, and the people mourned, because Yahweh had struck the people with a great slaughter-

I suspect this was because they wanted to find any more jewels which the Philistines might have placed there. In the face and presence of the things of the supreme glory of Jehovah of Israel, they scavenged around in a spirit of petty materialism- just as men gambled for the clothes of Jesus at the foot of His cross. "Seventy" follows some manuscripts, whilst others give a figure of 50,070. Remember that "thousands" in Hebrew can refer not to the literal number but to groups, regiments, families etc. The idea may be the men of 70 families.

Ez. 7:19 defines "silver and gold" as Israel's stumblingblock- moreso than idols. They just so loved wealth. The men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark to see if there were any more jewels left in it (1 Sam. 6:19 cp. 6,15); they trampled upon the

supreme holiness of God in their crazed fascination with wealth. The early corruption of Christianity was due to false teachers who like Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15); they taught false doctrine "for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:11 AV). Time and again the NT warns against elders who would be motivated by the love of "filthy lucre" rather than the Lord Jesus and His people (1 Tim. 3:3,8; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2). The Greek translated "filthy lucre" is hard to understand; it doesn't just mean 'money'. It suggests profit that is somehow filthy, morally disgusting. This is what money turns into, in God's eyes, when men so love it.

The judgment upon the Israelites at this point was intended to teach them that their religious usage of the ark was wrong. They assumed that having the ark literally with them meant they were right with God. Just as they had wrongly assumed that having the ark with them would guarantee them victory against the Philistines.

1Sa 6:20 The men of Beth Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God?-

This was to be David's later feelings when Uzzah was slain for not being respectful to the ark (2 Sam. 6:9). Circumstances repeated, and David failed to learn the lesson. We wonder if indeed David consciously repeated the words of the men of Beth Shemesh. I suspect he didn't, but rather his words are recorded in a similar way, to show to us readers the similarity. We are intended to learn from history, even though so few do. This is why so much of the Bible is history. We note from 1 Sam. 7:3 that at this time, the Israelites were generally following other gods. They considered Yahweh one of many gods, and at this point, they wanted no more to do with Him because He seemed to them an unreasonable God.

The Israelites at this point are feeling and speaking just like the Philistines- they too want the ark, and Yahweh, to "go from us". They see God as His ark, the external visible religious symbol became God for them- just as so many fail to separate church from God. The loss of church, of religion, means they have no relationship with God. Israel now had the same religious view of the ark as the Philistines, and were punished for this. Form triumphed over content, religion over spirituality, and God was and is displeased by this. God's people too often view their God and their faith as mere religion, just as do the people in the world around us.

To whom shall He go from us?-

By reasoning like this they were repeating the very attitudes and words of the Philistines. As David failed to perceive the similarities between his position in 2 Sam 6:9 and that of the men of Bethshemesh, so they had failed to learn from the lesson of the Philistines. And ended up saying the same words as they did (1 Sam. 5:11).

1Sa 6:21 They sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath Jearim saying, The Philistines have brought back the ark of Yahweh; come down and take it up to your place-

This repeats the attitude of the Philistines, seeking other towns to take custody of the ark. As noted on :20, all concerned failed to perceive that history was repeating, and they were not learning the lessons. This is perhaps the greatest tragedy of history, of the entire Divine-human encounter.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 7

1Sa 7:1 The men of Kiriath Jearim came and fetched up the ark of Yahweh and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of Yahweh-

We assume they were Levites, and Abinadab and Eleazar are common Levitical names. "On the hill" is rendered "Gibeah" in 2 Sam. 6:3,4. Josh. 15:57,60 mention Gibeah as a village not far from Kirjath-jearim.

1Sa 7:2 The ark stayed for a long time in Kiriath Jearim, twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after Yahweh-

This lamenting after Yahweh may have been the result of 20 years of work by Samuel, at a time when they were oppressed by the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:19-22). The "twenty years" period doesn't bring us to any significant event; it doesn't bring us to the time of David or his bringing of the ark to Zion in 2 Sam. 6. It may therefore mean that it took 20 years for Israel to come to the repentance of :3,4, and that is the significant end of this 20 year period.

1Sa 7:3 Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you do return to Yahweh with all your heart-

Returning to Yahweh with all the heart was the appeal also made to the exiles. The same word for "return" is used about both repentance and also their literal return to the land. This is the phrase used of how an Israel who had broken covenant were to return to Yahweh with all their heart (Dt. 30:1,2,10).

Then put away the foreign gods and Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to Yahweh, and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines-

This worship of other gods would explain their attitude in 1 Sam. 6:20 "Who is able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God?". They considered Yahweh one of many gods, and at that point, they wanted no more to do with Him because He seemed to them an unreasonable God.

1Sa 7:4 Then the people of Israel removed the Baals and Ashtaroth and served Yahweh only-

Yahweh is "one", and this simple reality requires that He is served "only". This is an outcome of believing in one God. At baptism, we changed masters, from 'sin' to 'obedience'. It may seem that we flick back and forth between them. In a sense, we do, but from God's perspective (and Rom. 6:16-20 describes how *God* sees our baptism), we don't. The recurring weakness of natural Israel was to serve Yahweh *and* the idols (1 Sam. 7:4; 2 Kings 17:41; Zeph. 1:5). For the new Israel in the first century, the temptation was to break bread with both the Lord Jesus and the idols (1 Cor. 10:21,22). But there is no lack of evidence that this was actually counted as total idol worship in God's eyes; thus the prophets consistently taught the need for wholehearted devotion to Yahweh, and nothing else. In essence, we have the same temptation; to serve God and mammon, to have a little of both, to be passive Christians; to flunk the challenge of the logic of devotion.

Baal and Ashtaroth referred to here are not simply two separate gods. "Baals" is masculine plural, and "Ashtaroth" is feminine plural. The idea is, all the gods of whatever gender.

1Sa 7:5 Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray for you to Yahweh- "Mizpah", 'watchtower', was an appropriate place for Samuel the prophet to have a base. The gathering was intended for repentance, but also as a strategic beginning of a campaign against the Philistines. See on :6.

1Sa 7:6 They gathered together to Mizpah and drew water, poured it out before Yahweh and fasted on that day. They said there, We have sinned against Yahweh- Samuel's language and teaching was absorbed by David, who spoke of pouring himself out like water in repentance (Ps. 22:14; 62:8); and the same figure is used by the exiles in Lam. 2:19, perceiving the relevance of this history for themselves, as intended. But Samuel had in turn picked up this image from his mother Hannah (1 Sam. 1:15). We see here the passage of thought and imagery through the generations of spiritual people. And that passage can continue to us in our hearts. For who has not repented to the point of feeling poured out like water.

Samuel judged the people of Israel in Mizpah-

This could be a general statement, for Mizpah means "watchtower" and would have been an appropriate place for a prophet to issue his judgments from. But this information may specifically refer just to Samuel at that time, judging the people in the sense of warning them of their condemnation, which elicited their repentance.

1Sa 7:7 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. When the Israelites heard it, they were afraid because of the Philistines-

Repentance meant that God was with them. But they feared whether He really was with them enough to defeat the Philistines, because there was that nagging doubt as to whether they had really been forgiven. This is so typical of God's people of all times.

1Sa 7:8 The Israelites said to Samuel, Don't cease to cry to Yahweh our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines!-

Their desperate plea to Samuel reflects their recognition that prayer was the critical factor. This desperate request for Samuel's continued prayer in fact reflects a level of genuine faith and spirituality, even though as noted on :7, their faith was not total.

1Sa 7:9 Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to Yahweh, and Samuel cried to Yahweh for Israel, and Yahweh answered him-

The desperate crying of the suckling lamb was to reflect the crying of Samuel to Yahweh. They were to be living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), offered "whole", every part of the offering was to be given to Yahweh, none went to the priests, the entire animal was consumed.

1Sa 7:10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to fight against Israel, but on that day Yahweh thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and confused them; and they were struck down before Israel-

The pathetic bleating of the lamb elicited the mighty thunder of God's voice in response, so awful that the Philistines were paralyzed with fear because of it. This was an abiding illustration of the power of prayer, just as incense [prayer] in the book of Revelation elicits the pouring forth of bowls from Heaven upon the earth. But the Divine response had to be followed up on the ground- Israel had to go forth and strike down the paralyzed Philistines.

1Sa 7:11 The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and killed them, all the way to Beth Kar-

David's victory over Goliath led to the same kind of victory over the Philistines. Israel chasing their enemies was a blessing for obedience to the covenant. But until recently they had been disobedient. Their sincere prayer and repentance was counted as obedience to the covenant, and these blessings flowed from it.

1Sa 7:12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called it Ebenezer, saying, Yahweh helped us until now-

The ark had been taken into captivity from Ebenezer (1 Sam. 5:1), the rock of help, for God was no longer their rock. But the revival of the name Ebenezer was therefore showing that God was eager to restore relationship with His people and undo what had gone so wrong between them; just as was the case at the restoration.

1Sa 7:13 So the Philistines were subdued and they came no more within the border of Israel-

This may not be literally the case, but the sense may be that they didn't come and permanently settle within the borders as they had before.

The hand of Yahweh was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel-

This doesn't mean that they didn't invade Israel, but rather that Yahweh's hand was against them. That potential wasn't always made use of during Samuel's life.

1Sa 7:14 The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel recovered its border out of the hand of the Philistines. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites-

And yet Gath seems to have remained in Philistine control. For Goliath was from there, and David took refuge in Philistine controlled Gath. So the idea may be that the border was restored up until Gath and Ekron.

1Sa 7:15 Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life-

Seeing Samuel lived into the reign of Saul, we can assume that his judging in the sense of teaching and saving the people [the idea of 'judging' in Hebrew] continued into Saul's reign.

1Sa 7:16 He went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all those places-

There were later schools of the prophets in Bethel and Gilgal and we wonder whether Samuel founded them. This work covered at least 28 years of his life, a great example of "keeping on keeping on". This circuit was fairly localized, forming a circle with a circumference of about 35 miles.

1Sa 7:17 He always returned to Ramah where his home was, and there he judged Israel. He built there an altar to Yahweh-

Although from Ephraim, Samuel clearly acted as a priest, making offerings at various points in his life, as well as doing the priestly duties "before Yahweh" from a child. He was potentially set up to be prophet, priest and anointed, Messianic king (1 Sam. 2:10), but it seems he failed to live up to the potential. Instead, he anointed David to be prophet, priest and anointed king. And he too failed, as did Solomon, and so the potential came to ultimate term in the Lord Jesus. We note that Samuel also judged or

taught Israel at Ramah, his home. This was about four miles from "Gibeah of Saul". For Saul to have not recognized nor known Samuel speaks much of how Saul was totally not a religious, spiritual person.

According to Dt. 12:11-14, the people were to worship at the sanctuary and not build such high places for sacrifice. But Samuel had built an altar at Ramah (1 Sam. 7:17) and I suggest on 1 Sam. 9:6 that Saul met Samuel in Ramah on a day when Samuel was sacrificing at this "high place". This may possibly be another point [in addition to making his corrupt sons judges] where Samuel fails. Or it could be that he figured that seeing the people weren't switched on enough to go the sanctuary to worship, it was better to build an altar locally for them to at least make some dedication to Yahweh rather than none at all. One often faces such pastoral decisions.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 8

1Sa 8:1 When Samuel was old he made his sons judges over Israel-

Samuel was not that old; he died well into the 40 year reign of Saul and judged Israel all the days of his life, overlapping the kingship of Saul. So this was an exaggerated statement, made because they were making excuses to have a king. God's comment was that they had rejected Him as their king. But we have here possibly the only negative incident in the record of Samuel's life. He was indeed a fine man, but in his attitude to his sons he failed. His actions provoked Israel to demand a human king; but God doesn't blame Samuel for that, instead He sees that the people were using Samuel's misjudgment as an excuse. We also again observe that two men can commit the same sin or make the same misjudgment [think of Uzzah compared to others who touched the ark], but be judged differently. Because the heart position is all important.

Samuel was in his 50s or 60s at the time of 1 Sam. 8:1 when he made his corrupt sons judges over Israel. Eli had become judge of Israel at age 58 (1 Sam. 4:15,18). It seems that Samuel's later life had unfortunate parallels with that of Eli. Eli may well have had his sons Hophni and Phinehas in his 50s, because his daughter in law was pregnant at the time of his death at 98. It would seem that when Samuel was about the same age as Eli, he also had sons, who turned away from God just as had Eli's sons. And the people likewise complained (1 Sam. 8:4 = 1 Sam. 2:23). The fact Samuel made them judges despite their immorality would suggest he had gone the way of Eli in turning a blind eye to them. So although Eli's bad example to Samuel was apparently ignored by him and Samuel's spirituality was commendable, finally in later life it seems that example did rub off upon him.

1Sa 8:2 The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba-

1 Chron. 6:28 gives the name of the firstborn as Vashni, meaning "weak", rather than Joel as in 1 Sam. 8:2, meaning "Jehovah is God". But this could be a scribal error. If we stick with "Vashni", we have an example of how character and personal history became reflected in the names by which men were remembered by. We note they were judges in Beersheba, a long way from Ramah and the small circuit of towns judged by Samuel.

"Abijah", 'Yah is my father', probably reflects how Samuel found Yahweh to be his father, seeing his own two father figures somewhat failed him. Elkanah was passive and left the whole 'Samuel' project to Hannah, and agreed to Samuel being

abandoned at the temple as a toddler, only visiting him once / year. And his de facto father, Eli, was corrupt. But spiritual experience of a father can't be passed on to his sons. Yah was indeed as a Father to Samuel, but he got to that through his own hard life experience. Abijah presumably had a good father in Samuel- so he was a son of God in name only. This is all so psychologically credible- for a father who had hard times but came to God through them, to want to unload his experience onto his son.

1Sa 8:3 His sons didn't walk in his ways, but turned aside after money, taking bribes and perverting justice-

This is described in terms of breaking the law of Moses (Ex. 23:6,8; Dt. 16:19). To "pervert justice" was to break the covenant (Dt. 27:19 s.w.). So for Samuel to make them judges was a big sin on his part [although it could be argued they only did this after he appointed them as judges]. But the fact they took bribes and perverted justice says much about the general state of spirituality within Israel. Unlike Eli, Samuel could declare his personal innocence (1 Sam. 12:4); and his own personal "ways" are declared here to be of integrity. Nor was there any abuse of the sanctuary, for the sons were operating in Beersheba (:2), quite far from Samuel in Ramah and the surrounding towns where his ministry was focused. We note from 1 Chron. 6:33 that Heman, an active servant of the Lord as a temple singer, was in fact Samuel's grandson. So faith skipped a generation.

1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel to Ramah- "Israel" was far larger than the small circuit of towns around Ramah where Samuel judged, and Beersheba where his sons judged. So it could be argued that the "elders of Israel" were using the local situation in Beersheba as a pretext for demanding Samuel's blessing upon their idea of having a human king.

1Sa 8:5 and they said to him, Look, you are old and your sons don't walk in your ways; now appoint a king to judge us like all the nations-

They were hinting that the situation was Samuel's fault because his sons didn't walk in his ways. It may also have been somewhat of an exaggeration to cite Samuel's age as a reason, for he lived many years after this; and Eli had become judge of Israel at 58 and judged until his death at 98 (1 Sam. 4:15,18). The previous judges of Israel were rarely hereditary and had instead been specifically raised up by God. So their case was weak. The truth was that they wanted to be "like all the nations". This is the term used about the attitude of the Jews who were therefore taken into exile (Ez. 20:32). Again we see how the history here has been rewritten to show similarities with the exiles. "The nations" in Canaan believed that their king was the representative of their god Baal, and Israel wanted a king "like" that, on that basis. The request for a king was not therefore a total rejection of Yahweh, at least technically, although it seems connected with idolatry in :8. But they rejected the judges, 'saviours', whose role was intended to be teachers as we see from Samuel, because they wanted a warrior to be their military figurehead. They wanted a military leader and not a spiritual leader to be their judge. They were not simply asking for "judges" to now be called "kings". They wanted a different kind of structure as a nation, they wanted a leader to whom they could pledge their allegiance. Man needs a person to worship, to give allegiance to. That need is met in God, but they didn't want that. The problem, i.e. corruption of Samuel's sons, was actually unrelated to the answer they propose, i.e. a king. Injustice of judges didn't mean that a king would judge rightly. But this obvious flaw in their reasoning isn't exposed back to them. Their request is taken by God at face value and

responded to. His Son likewise refrained from pointing out obvious contradictions [e.g. the rich young man claiming he had served God from his youth, the Saducees who denied resurrection asking who will be married to whom at the resurrection]. Rather did He, like His Father, reason from the statements of men, accepting them for a moment as true.

1Sa 8:6 But this displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. Samuel prayed to Yahweh-

God did "give" them a king (s.w. 1 Sam. 12:13). In essence, we often get what we ask for. But the critical thing, therefore, is to desire the right things. In the end, we get the essence of what we desire, and God's response to prayer is part of that. Our desires are therefore critical. Instead of arguing back with them, Samuel takes their request to Yahweh in prayer. And this is often all we can do in the face of bad behaviour and unreasonable demands from others.

1Sa 8:7 Yahweh said to Samuel, Listen to the people in all that they tell you; they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them- Three times we read that Samuel was to "listen to the people" (:7,9,20). They were given what they asked for. Despite being warned of the consequences. We see the huge and even tragic extent to which God, like the father of the prodigal son, gives man what he really wants. This means that our heart desires are so critically important- because we will get them. The Psalms and Proverbs often make the simple point that the righteous will receive the desires of their heart:

"Delight yourself in Yahweh, and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4); "He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him" (Ps. 145:19); "What the wicked fear will overtake them, but the desire of the righteous will be granted" (Prov. 10:24); "The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing, but the desire of the diligent shall be fully satisfied" (Prov. 13:4).

All those who "love His appearing" will be saved; those who merely do good works and approve the Lord's teaching will not be, because "I never knew you". Our self examination should be well capable of answering the question "Do I want to be in the Kingdom more than anything else?". We should be able to say whether or not this is our dominant desire. If it is, we are assured that in the end we will have it.

"The voice of the people" is the same phrase translated "the noise of the people" in Ex. 32:17, when Moses and Joshua heard the voice of the people worshipping the golden calf. Clearly there is an association with apostasy. "Rejected" is the word for 'despise'. The other reference to Israel despising / rejecting Yahweh is in Num. 11:20, where the people despise the manna and demand meat to eat, and in saying this despise / reject Moses as their leader, blaming him for not providing a more varied diet. And again, God is angry. Their complaint now that Samuel is "old" wasn't quite legitimate; they were led by Moses until he was 120 years old. They despised him, they wanted a handsome, tall warrior to lead them, not Samuel on Yahweh's behalf. And thus they despised Yahweh, whose style it is to work through the weak and humanly weak.

Their rejection of God meant His rejection of them; if one side rejects another then the relationship is broken. The same word is used in Hos. 4:6: "Because you rejected knowledge [i.e. relationship], I will also reject you". God's ultimate response to this was to use this term of His rejection of Israel and Judah when they went into captivity: "Yahweh has rejected them" (Jer. 6:30; 7:29 s.w.), "my God will cast them away [s.w. "reject"]" (Hos. 9:17). He uses the same word of rejecting "Jerusalem the

city which I had chosen" (2 Kings 23:37). And yet there is good reason to think that this 'rejection' actually happened at Samuel's time: "Yahweh was angry, and greatly abhorred [s.w. rejected] Israel; so that He forsook the tent of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the adversary's hand" (Ps. 78:59-61). The destruction of the tabernacle at Shiloh, where Samuel grew up, appears to have been broadly around the time the ark ["His glory"] was taken into captivity by the Philistines at the end of Eli's life. It was around this time that Yahweh "rejected" Israel- in response to their rejection of Him. And yet He gave them a king and tried to work through the monarchy, until when that failed, He articulated that "rejection" by sending His people away, out of His house and His land. Which is the language of divorce. Israel were "the wife of youth" who was "rejected" and sent away (Is. 54:6 s.w.). Again we see a gap period between the pronouncement of judgment, and the realization of that judgment. His huge patience spanned the centuries during which the monarchy existed. "Yahweh rejected all the seed of Israel... until He had cast them out of His sight" (2 Kings 17:20). And yet in allusion to this, Jer. 31:37; 33:26 protest that God will not "cast off [s.w. reject] all the seed of Israel [note the repetition of that phrase] for all that they have done". His final grace is to force the marriage through to eternal success.

The idea of :7,8 is that 'They didn't reject you, they rejected me, but they rejected you, in that you are with Me'. A parade example of God manifestation or representation by a man. God comes over as sensitive to Samuel's feeling that he himself had been rejected, and we feel Him as it were putting His arm around Samuel and comforting him in his rejection; by saying that it was essentially all about a rejection of Him rather than Samuel personally. We learn if nothing else that God is sensitive to a person's feelings of rejection.

1Sa 8:8 As they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, in forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they also do to you-

This connects their desire for a king with idolatry. As noted on :5, "the nations" in Canaan believed that their king was the representative of their god Baal, and Israel wanted a king "like" that, on that basis.

Israel sinned not only by worshipping idols but by thereby omitting to worship God as He required ("forsaking Me and serving other gods"). Sins of omission are our greatest temptation. So let us really realize: none of us sins or is righteous unto ourselves. There are colossal ramifications of our every sin and our every act of righteousness on others.

1Sa 8:9 Now therefore listen to their voice, but protest solemnly to them and show them what the king who shall reign over them will do-

See on :19. God's hurt at this point opens another window into His comment in Dt. 17 that Israel would desire a king to reign over them, and therefore a king should be regulated by His laws. God foreknows human failure, and yet is hurt by it. It is indeed hard to be God, foreseeing so much failure. Dt. 17 said that Israel must have a king whom God chose, and God did choose Saul- but He chose a man exactly whom they would have chosen, the tallest man in Israel, strong, handsome and a warrior. God wanted to set Saul up for success not failure, and indeed the path of monarchy was not at all doomed to failure. Yet the choice of it was a stepping back from direct relationship with God as their King. They wanted a mediator, a go between, just as they didn't want the intimacy of hearing God speaking directly to them at Sinai. And

God didn't turn away from them because of this, He settled for a lower level relationship.

Yahweh gave them a king in His wrath (Hos. 13:11). He was angry with them as was Samuel, and expressed that anger by answering their prayer for a human king: "I gave you a king in My anger, and have taken him away in My wrath". As explained on Hos. 9:15, Israel's rejection of God for a human king made God "hate" them. It was effectively a divorce from Him; this is how seriously God sees our turning to visible human help rather than to Him. God so respected human freewill decisions that even when His wife wanted to go off with another man, He "gave" her this; and even worked through the system of human kingship in order to continue some level of relationship with Israel, such was His love for them. God sees a connection between His giving of a king, and His taking away of a king. Before they had a king, they were exclusively His. So the taking away of their king was in fact not simply a punishment, but in wrath He remembered mercy, and hoped that this would in fact be the path back towards their accepting Him as their king. So often we see God's hope for restoration expressed within and next to His angry statements of judgment. His anger is therefore unlike human anger; there is always the love which seeks longer term restoration.

He allows us our freewill; and yet seeks to persuade us against our requests. But God never forces. And here we see in this 'protestation' a parade example of this. He was willing to work through a human kingship, as He was through a physical temple, which He also didn't want. And yet by making use of such Divine concessions to human weakness, we make the path of true spirituality so much harder.

1Sa 8:10 Samuel told all the words of Yahweh to the people who asked for a king- The name "Saul" means "asked for". It is very similar to "Samuel", "asked of God" (1 Sam. 1:20). Samuel was called to be a prophet, priest and anointed king (see on 1 Sam. 2:10), but he apparently failed to live up to this potential and was potentially replaced by Saul. He too failed, as did David and Solomon later, with all the potentials only coming finally true in the Lord Jesus.

1Sa 8:11 He said, This is what the king who shall reign over you will do: he will take your sons and appoint them to serve with his chariots and to be his horsemen, and they will run before his chariots-

Israel were told three times that Saul would have many chariots (1 Sam. 8:11,12). If they were spiritually aware, they would have realized that by multiplying horses and chariots, he was going to be a King who ruled in studied disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Dt. 17:16-21). They were given the spiritual potential to grasp this. But they were already hard bitten in their rebellion, and this potential spiritual help went unheeded (although God still gave it to them potentially, even at a time when it seemed pointless. He is so ever willing to coax His people back!).

1Sa 8:12 he will appoint them to be captains of thousands and captains of fifties; he will assign some to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and to make his weapons of war and the equipment for his chariots-

The captains of thousands and fifties were originally appointed by God; and yet now they were hearing that Saul was going to appoint them. If they were truly spiritually minded, they would have perceived that such a king and situation was not for them. And yet it seems the more the point was made, the deeper was their insistence upon the path they had chosen. This is sadly typically human.

1Sa 8:13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks and bakers-

To take a daughter is a phrase elsewhere translated 'marry... daughters' (Gen. 19:14), and whenever the word "take" is used in connection with "daughters" the reference is usually to marriage. The idea could be that like many monarchs of the time, Saul would 'marry' his female slaves. They were then unable to marry anyone else, might never have children by him, and would be condemned to a dumb life of servitude as cooks, bakers etc. "Perfumers" seems a strange example to give, until we realize that this is the word for "apothecary", the word used of how apothecaries were to work in the tabernacle making the oils and incense for tabernacle service (Ex. 30:25,33,35; 37:29; 1 Chron. 9:30). What was clearly a service to God was going to be reappropriated to Saul. For he effectively was going to replace God as the master of their devotions and service.

1Sa 8:14 He will take your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves, even their best, and give them to his servants-

As we learn from the later incident with Naboth's vineyard, a man's fields were his inheritance from Yahweh. To sell them or be willing to give them to another was therefore a rejection of their inheritance. They were being told that God would give them an unspiritual and disobedient king. And they eagerly said yes to that. Perhaps because in their hearts they simply didn't register nor believe that Samuel was speaking God's word to them. Or this may be simply a case of how all spiritual logic is thrown to the winds in the face of a carnal course of action that the flesh has decided upon. The critical issue is whether or not we accept God's word as His word, and respond to it. Or whether our belief in Divine inspiration of His word, the Bible, is mere lip service, that crumbles to nothing in the face of group think and obsession with a carnal narrative.

1Sa 8:15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage to give to his officers and his servants-

As noted on :13, the king was to replace Yahweh to them. Instead of tithing to Yahweh, they would be tithing to their king.

1Sa 8:16 He will take your male and female servants and your best young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work-

The repeated stress upon "the best" recalled how "the best" was to be given to Yahweh, both specifically as the firstfruits, and also to fulfil the spirit of the entire law (Num. 18:12,29). Indeed "the best" was to go to the Levites (Num. 18:30). But to give "the best" to a human king, who was not a Levite, was going to preclude serving Yahweh with "the best", and the Levites also would suffer. They were therefore being told that effectively, this king was going to 'play God', and not merely be His representative on earth. Knowing this, their persistence in their choice was indeed a rejection of Yahweh.

The king was to take away their donkeys (1 Sam. 8:16), and the narrative of the call of Saul in 1 Sam. 9 begins with his almost obsessive desire for donkeys. Saul is presented as the exact fit to the prophecies of the awful king the people would be given if they wished to go the path of kingship. Yet Saul's failure was far from inevitable. The predictions about him could have been voided by his own freewill. Like Nineveh, he lived in the gap between the statement of judgment and its fulfilment. In the context of donkeys, he is told not to "set his heart on the donkeys", 1

Sam. 9:20 Heb. He is being invited *not* to be like the awful king he potentially could be. But like so many, he wasted that potential. Samuel never stole a donkey (1 Sam. 12:3), whereas Saul was to steal the donkeys of Israel (1 Sam. 8:9,11). Israel consciously chose a king who would take their donkeys, and rejected God's judge, Samuel, who never took their donkeys. The way Samuel protests this fact in 1 Sam. 12:3 suggests he felt some bitterness and resentment about his rejection by Israel. And God comforts him that He feels the same.

1Sa 8:17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his servants-

Again, the king was to replace Yahweh to them. Instead of tithing to Yahweh, they would be tithing to their king. These warnings were only perceptible by those who were aware of the law of Moses and were already tithing as required. And so it is that people are confirmed in the path they wish to go; if they are ignorant of God's word or not already practicing it, then in situations like these they are confirmed further down the path to spiritual disaster.

1Sa 8:18 You will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen, but Yahweh will not answer you in that day-

Now it was as if Samuel on Yahweh's behalf was crying out to the people, and they were refusing to listen (:19). And so their later crying out to Him would likewise go unheard. His response to us is related to our response to His word. If His word abides in us, we therefore will ask what we will according to that word, and be heard (see on Jn. 15:7). We may also note that although the people cried out at the abuses of Saul, many of them still preferred him to David and were fiercely loyal to him. Just as people are to abusive spiritual and secular leaders. These historical records help us see our human nature in the mirror. Samuel is alluding to Dt. 17:15, "You shall set him king over you, whom Yahweh your God shall choose". The same word for "choose" is used. Despite their desire to choose their own king, and God disagreeing with it, He and not they chose the king. He intervened to as it were make them obedient, even in this wrong choice they had made. We marvel at His grace. For Saul's choosing was totally of God and not man.

By insisting on their request for such a king, the people were asking for their own condemnation. Because Saul is presented as a judgment upon them, making them cry to Yahweh because of his oppression just as they did when ruled by Pharaoh. All condemnation is ultimately self inflicted, just as in the Lord's parable those who refuse the call to the Kingdom say "I beg you, have me excused / rejected". Here we read that they chose their king, but God chose Saul. But He chose according to how they would've chosen, so in effect, they chose. We marvel at God's deep attention to the essential desires of people on earth, and how He gives us what we really want. Therefore it is of paramount importance to desire the right things, to want His Kingdom above all, to love His Son's appearing; and all who do shall have their heart's desire.

There is no historical record of Israel ever crying out to God [for that is how the word for "to cry out" is usually used] because of their king. We can deduce that God by grace didn't judge them as severely as He now threatens. In wrath He remembers mercy.

1Sa 8:19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, No; but we will have a king over us-

"Refused" is related to the word for "reject" in :7. Their rejection of God was

essentially a rejection of His word through Samuel. Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to Him. "Refused to listen" is literally 'refused to obey'. Most texts add "the voice of Samuel". So we have an obvious connection with :9, where God tells Samuel to hearken / obey the voice of the people- because they refused to hearken / obey His voice to them through Samuel. So we are left with the conclusion: If we don't obey God's voice, then He will obey our voice. And our voice is that of our natural desires, obedience to which is the path to destruction. So by obeying God's voice, we are strengthened not to obey our own voice, the voice of the flesh. The same contrast is found in 1 Sam. 15:1,24: Saul is asked to hear the voice of Yahweh, instead of hearing the voice of the people. It's a case of the voice / word of man [including our own voice and the voice of men around us]- or the voice / word of God.

According to Hos. 13:10, they also asked for a new system of princes to replace the judges: "Where is your king now, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges, of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes?'" Often in Hosea, God appeals to Israel to let Him be their 'king'. But there is a Hebraism whereby a husband is called the 'king' of his wife. God's appeal was reflected in Hosea's desire for Gomer to as it were re-marry him, to let him truly be her king / husband. And yet she felt like Israel: "What then should a king do [for] us?" (Hos. 10:3). She was so selfish that she didn't see anything in it for her... when *so* much love was being offered to her. We will note on Hos. 9:15 that Israel's desire for a human king was a rejection of God as their king / husband, and had been tantamount to adultery. Israel's demand for a king as recorded in 1 Samuel graciously omits to record that they also asked for "princes", even though they had already had "judges" raised up by God. They wanted a king and a royal family, to be the equivalent to the Divine "judges" or saviours whom He had raised up. So often the Divine record reflects God's grace.

1Sa 8:20 so that we may be like all the other nations, and so that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles-

They may be alluding to the appointment of Joshua to "go out before" the people (s.w. Num. 27:17). Quasi spiritual or Biblical allusion is typical of people in this situation. They are blind to reason because the flesh has hardened their hearts, and they are confirmed in that by God's Spirit acting upon them. The people wanted a king to "go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20), but they were disappointed in Saul ultimately. For it was effectively David who went out before the people to fight their battles (s.w. 1 Sam. 18:13,16). And David was only successful because he recognized that it was Yahweh who 'went out before' to fight his battles (s.w. 2 Sam. 5:24), rather than any human king or leader.

Their desire for a king to judge them would have made Samuel redundant as their judge. But Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life (1 Sam. 7:15). So even under Saul's kingship, there was still recourse to God's man.

1Sa 8:21 Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them before Yahweh-

Samuel hereby acts as a mediator after the pattern of Moses. Yahweh of course knew the words spoken, so the repeating or mediating of the words of the people was therefore perhaps in the form of intercession for them. Or perhaps he was simply sharing them with Yahweh, just as David shares his situation with Yahweh in prayer, as Hezekiah did, and as we should. This openness before God, sharing our situation

and the words we have heard, is for our benefit; it serves as a reminder that indeed God hears every word.

1Sa 8:22 Yahweh said to Samuel, Listen to them and give them a king. Samuel said to the men of Israel, Every man is to go back to his town-

It could appear that Samuel didn't immediately tell them God's agreement. Perhaps this was because he still hoped they might yet repent of their choice. There is a strong manifestation of Yahweh in Samuel at this time. Samuel was to give them a king, but that was on behalf of Yahweh, for it was He who at this time gave them a king in His anger (Hos. 13:11).

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 9

1Sa 9:1 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of valour- The Hebrew phrase "mighty man of valour" is usually employed about military prowess. Kish had presumably got a name for himself in previous conflicts with the Philistines; "Kish" means "bow" so perhaps he was famed as an archer. The relevance to the exiles was that the "mighty men of valour" had not saved Jerusalem and had been taken into captivity (s.w. 2 Kings 24:14), because they had not learned the lesson taught by Samuel's mother Hannah, that the valour of the mighty is brought down before God, and the humble and weak exalted (s.w. 1 Sam. 2:4).

1Sa 9:2 He had a son whose name was Saul, an impressive young man; there was not among the people of Israel a more impressive person than he. From his shoulders and upward he was taller than any of the people-

The name "Saul" means "asked for"; for the people had asked for him (1 Sam. 8:10). It is very similar to "Samuel", "asked of God" (1 Sam. 1:20). Samuel was called to be a prophet, priest and anointed king (see on 1 Sam. 2:10), but he apparently failed to live up to this potential and was potentially replaced by Saul. He too failed, as did David and Solomon later, with all the potentials only coming finally true in the Lord Jesus.

Saul is described as both chosen by God, and also the one the people chose. It was as if God understood the spirit of what the people wanted, and gave it to them. All confirmation that we are given the essence of what we really desire, no matter how well or not we verbalize it. So the essence is to watch our desires. "Impressive young man" is literally "a chosen young man", and indeed he had been chosen by God, exactly in accordance with their desires. The word is used about David (Ps. 89:19). God's potential plan for Saul was transferred to him. And from thence to Solomon and finally to the Lord Jesus. This is how God works to this day, transferring potentials from one to another when the first option fails.

The height of Saul was of course irrelevant, because as Samuel was taught when anointing David, God looks on the heart and not the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). We note too how the handsome Absalom was spiritually empty. But it's as if God gave Israel exactly the kind of king they wanted- one who appeared well outwardly. Not just a king, but a king of the type they would want. Saul's physical height surely reflected his narcissism, contrasting with the humble king of God's choice, not the peoples' demand, "whose heart will not be lifted above his brothers" (Dt. 17:20). The heart is the mind, which is in the head- and Saul's head was higher

than all the other people, "his brothers". This is the scene described in Romans 1; God confirms sinful people in their own desires, giving them a mind that wants to commit perversion- because that is what they want to do.

1Sa 9:3 The donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. Kish said to Saul, Take now one of the servants with you and go to look for the donkeys-

Donkeys were the animal of nobility at the time (Jud. 5:10; 10:4; 12:14 cp. Zech. 9:9). The idea may be that Kish too had had the potential to be a leader but lost / failed it. Or that Saul was unconsciously seeking to be king but couldn't find it in his own strength. Yet the donkeys were found by God for Saul, even though he himself failed to find them. The idea may be that Saul was indeed lacking in spiritual qualification to be king, but Yahweh was prepared to make up for this, because He wanted Saul to realize the potentials He had given him. See on :6.

The king was to take away their donkeys (1 Sam. 8:16), and the narrative of the call of Saul in 1 Sam. 9 begins with his almost obsessive desire for donkeys. Saul is presented as the exact fit to the prophecies of the awful king the people would be given if they wished to go the path of kingship. Yet Saul's failure was far from inevitable. The predictions about him could have been voided by his own freewill. Like Nineveh, he lived in the gap between the statement of judgment and its fulfilment. In the context of donkeys, he is told not to "set his heart on the donkeys", 1 Sam. 9:20 Heb. He is being invited *not* to be like the awful king he potentially could be. But like so many, he wasted that potential. Samuel in :20 is asking him not to think about donkeys, but rather about being king on God's behalf. But he failed, and remained focused on the material and immediate things of himself.

1Sa 9:4 He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and the land of Shalishah, but they didn't find them. Then they went through the land of Shaalim and they weren't there; he went throughout the land of the Benjamites, but they didn't find them-

If as suggested on :3 the donkeys were a symbol of leadership or kingship, Saul was being taught that finding them was to be of God's grace or gift, and not any amount of human strength. "Shalishah" is literally 'the land of threes', and tripilisms were to occur throughout Saul's subsequent experience. Three signs, three men meeting him, etc. were all to be signs to him that God was working with him quite separate to his own qualification or human strength in seeking for it. See on :13.

Leaving out the vowels, "Shalishah" is related to the Hebrew word for 'Saul', and "Shaalim" to that for Shmuel, Samuel. Saul was searching for Samuel, in the hand of providence, just as Samuel was searching for Saul; when in secular terms, Saul was searching for donkeys and Samuel was probably mentally searching for a candidate to anoint as king as he had been commanded. See on :11 for how the hidden hand of providence was at work.

The theme of 'finding' is so stressed in this narrative. Saul didn't find the donkeys, despite his obsessive search for them which left him without money and bread. This is said twice in :4. We note that in the Hebrew of :20, they are called the donkeys which Saul had lost. He takes it therefore so seriously. But he 'finds' things from the way of God's Spirit. Truly "Vain was the good which in the world we sought". Things go so well once we are going the way of the Spirit. But perhaps this is why highly committed levels of following the Spirit are found in older people, who have had to learn empirically that you don't find what you seek in this world. You don't "find" what you seek, in family, in relationships, in wealth, in career... only in the things of the Spirit and the Kingdom. But many like Saul never really learn it. So consider all

the occurrences of the same Hebrew word for "find": Saul's servant 'happened' to find a coin so that Saul was confident to visit Samuel "I have here at hand [s.w. find] the fourth part of a shekel" (1 Sam. 9:8); "they found young women" who told them where Samuel was (1 Sam. 9:11), who told them that they would "immediately find" Samuel (1 Sam. 9:13), contrasting with how Saul didn't find his lost donkeys immediately nor after a long search; the donkeys were "found" anyway but not by Saul (1 Sam. 9:20; 10:2); Saul would "find two men by Rachel's sepulchre" (1 Sam. 10:2); three men would "find" ["meet"] Saul and guide him further (1 Sam. 10:3, showing how in fact it was God who was searching for Saul and "found" him); the Spirit would come upon Saul and he was to "do what your hand finds [s.w.], for God is with you" (1 Sam. 10:7). Saul didn't find the donkeys, and Samuel tells him to stop taking thought or 'setting his heart' on finding them, but rather focus on the things of the Kingdom. And like Saul, whatever we find to do for this will prosper. Saul was given God's Spirit to change his heart, from secular things to the things of the Kingdom. Possibly Ecc. 9:10 alludes here: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, where you are going". But instead, Saul became obsessed with 'finding' David in the desert scrub, just as he had been obsessed with finding the donkeys. But as Jonathan said, "The hand of Saul my father will not find [s.w.] you" (1 Sam. 23:17). Saul allowed personal pride and jealousy to lead him to search for the wrong things, which he never "found".

1Sa 9:5 When they reached the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, Come, let us return, lest my father stop caring about the donkeys and be anxious for us-

This indicates at least some humanity in Saul. He is presented as a secular, unspiritual man who has all the same not a bad person. Out looking for lost animals, he was met by God and called. He was encountered by God without previously searching for Him, just as he was when he returned from working in the fields and found Jabesh under attack (1 Sam. 11:5). The call of God comes in the midst of everyday life. Just as the disciples were casting their net into the sea, the Lord Jesus called them. Simon of Cyrene was coming out of the fields when he was pressganged into carrying the Lord's cross, and likely came to faith in Him because of it. The call of God is presented here as being of Divine grace alone. It's not that these men were searching for God, but rather He was in search of man. It's not so much that we know God, but rather than we are known of Him (Gal. 4:9). Nowhere is God's personal grace clearer than when we reflect upon our calling; and that is especially true for those who were called through being born into a believing family.

1Sa 9:6 The servant said, Look now, in this city there is a man of God, and he is a man who is held in honour. All that he says comes true. Now, let us go there; perhaps he can tell us which way to go-

There is quite a theme of servants bringing blessings or good news (1 Sam. 9:6; 16:16; 25:14 cp. Gen. 41:10; 2 Kings 5:3). This may be to reflect God's interest in the significance of the lowly. The servant doesn't even know Samuel's name, and Saul is ignorant completely about the presence of any man of God, nor did it occur to him to go there. We note the extensive search for the donkeys and the concern to find out their fate from a man of God. See on :7. This would be understandable if as suggested on :3 they were symbols of leadership or even kingship. "Which way to go" could imply they were lost. Or "tell us the way we go" may mean that they sensed their

journey was pregnant with undisclosed meaning, and they wanted a prophet to explain it to them. We note that the land of Zuph is literally the land of the prophet. They were taking the hints that something greater was afoot than merely a search for lost donkeys.

"This city" in the land of Zuph may be Ramathaim Zophim, the ancestral home of Samuel, Ramah in the land of Zuph (1 Sam. 1:1). We note that Saul's servant and uncle seem to know Samuel, but Saul is presented as the unspiritual one of the family who apparently has no clue about Samuel's existence. Samuel had built an altar at Ramah (1 Sam. 7:17), and it was this "high place" which is referred to in :12.

1Sa 9:7 Then Saul said to his servant, But if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the food is finished from our bags and there is no gift to bring to the man of God. What do we have?-

Again we see Saul's unspirituality. He assumed that one had to pay a man of God before getting a consultation. They were still far from home and were now without food. As noted on :6, this reflects the earnestness of Saul's desire to find the donkeys; see on :3. Saul clearly sees Samuel as no more than a fortune teller. Saul later would insist on offering the sacrifices without Samuel's presence in 1 Sam. 13, and in 1 Sam. 15 he thinks that his disobedience can be dealt with merely by offering sacrifice, leading to the condemnation from Samuel in 1 Sam. 15:22 "Has Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh?". Perhaps in this early incident we can detect Saul's legalism, his religious rather than spiritual mindset, and perhaps this was one reason he failed to retain the generous gift of the Spirit he received.

1Sa 9:8 The servant replied, I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God to tell us our way-

The need to be told their way, when they had given up searching for the donkeys, could mean that they were actually lost. Most people didn't travel far from their birthplaces. This is the same phrase as in :6, and it only recurs in the Bible in Jer. 42:3, where the Jews after the captivity ask Jeremiah to ask God to show / tell them the way to go. But when told, they refused to walk in it. This confirms our frequent observation that these historical records were rewritten for the instruction of the exiles.

1Sa 9:9 (In earlier times in Israel when a man went to inquire of God he would say, Come and let us go to the seer, for he who is now called a prophet was before called a seer)-

This clarifying note would be appropriate if as I have suggested these records were rewritten during the exile. Perhaps too the record is clarifying that a "man of God" or prophet was a seer of Divine visions, and not a person caught up in cultic, ecstatic "prophecy" as known amongst the Gentiles.

1Sa 9:10 Then Saul said to his servant, Good. Let us go. So they went to the city where the man of God was-

There is a strange repetition here of Samuel's command that Israel were to "go" to their own "cities" (1 Sam. 8:22 s.w.). It's as if Saul obeyed this by going to Samuel.

1Sa 9:11 As they went up the hill to the city they found young girls going out to draw water and they asked them, Is the seer here?-

The water may have been necessary for the religious service Samuel was doing there. In 1 Sam. 7:6 he had used the drawing and pouring out of water to symbolize the pouring out of hearts in repentance, and it cannot be coincidence that drawing water is again featuring in his work. We note that Saul was not present at such gatherings. In this case he was being asked himself to pour himself out to Yahweh in repentance.

We may wonder why this story is recorded in such detail. The details aren't random. They are all the hand of providence, the guidance of the Spirit, over and above Saul's freewill. He just happened to have a servant who knew Samuel, that servant [unknown to Saul] happened to have a coin without which Saul would've been ashamed to visit a prophet; they just happened to give up hope of finding the donkeys when they were near a place where Samuel was; it just happened to be a feast day when Samuel was in that village; and they just happened to meet water carrying girls who directed them to Samuel, who just happened to be walking the street where they were walking. He didn't meet Samuel near his home, but rather at the most distant point of Saul's journey searching for the donkeys. Putting these things together- this was all of God. And so we can be comforted that there is no random in our lives. See on :4.

1Sa 9:12 They answered, He is. Look, he is ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come today into the city because the people have a sacrifice today in the high place- This implies that Saul was ignorant of the sacrifices. Samuel travelled on a circuit, enabling the people to come and sacrifice. He acted as a priest although he was not a Levite and was a prophet. So Saul would later surely realize it had been of God's providence that he happened to be in the town when Samuel was there running a feast.

According to Dt. 12:11-14, the people were to worship at the sanctuary and not build such high places for sacrifice. But Samuel had built an altar at Ramah (1 Sam. 7:17) and I suggest on 1 Sam. 9:6 that Saul met Samuel in Ramah on a day when Samuel was sacrificing at this "high place". This may possibly be another point [in addition to making his corrupt sons judges] where Samuel fails. Or it could be that he figured that seeing the people weren't switched on enough to go the sanctuary to worship, it was better to build an altar locally for them to at least make some dedication to Yahweh rather than none at all. One often faces such pastoral decisions.

1Sa 9:13 As soon as you have come into the city you will immediately find him, before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not eat until he comes, because it is he who blesses the sacrifice. Afterwards, those who are invited eat. Now therefore go up, for at this time you should find him-

Their language was to make the point that Saul had not found the donkeys (:3 s.w.), but instead he had found Samuel; and through Samuel, God had found him. Although Saul knew nothing about these things, he was to find that he was in fact amongst those invited (:22,24). "Invited" is the common word for "call". The whole account here is a parade example of God's calling of men, always taking the initiative, and bursting into the lives of otherwise secular people. Standing on a street distributing New Testaments, we are the vehicles for that same call of God into the lives of men and women on the street.

The narrative has given the impression of Saul spending a lot of time searching for donkeys and getting nowhere. But now the tempo radically changes. He must "make haste" because Samuel "just now" had arrived to offer sacrifice "today". And Saul must encounter him "as soon as" he goes through the city gates. There is a sense

of urgency for Saul to just catch Samuel before he offers the sacrifice, and so he is told to quickly go to meet him "immediately". This is how the Spirit works. The years spent apparently coasting along in some pursuit or enterprise abruptly come to an end and we must respond to the calling of the Spirit "immediately". The record of the Spirit's work here is absolutely credible because this is how God works oftentimes with man.

1Sa 9:14 They went up to the city. As they came into the city, Samuel came out toward them, to go up to the high place-

The old Yiddish verse came powerfully true: "And going out to meet Him / I met Him coming toward me". But we note that Samuel is presented as coming toward them, on his way up to the high place. The impression therefore is that somehow they were walking away from the high place. And Samuel met them head on, and they turned around and followed him.

The Lord Jesus called men, arresting them with His radical call in the very midst of daily life, just when they were throwing a net into the sea, at the most utterly inconvenient moment, even the most humanly inappropriate moment- such as being on the way to your father's funeral. The Son of God was actually acting as His Father had done. Gideon was called whilst in the middle of threshing wheat in a time of famine (Jud. 6:1), Saul whilst he was out looking for lost cattle (1 Sam. 9:10) and again whilst he was coming home from work one evening (1 Sam. 11:5); David whilst he was looking after the sheep; Samuel whilst he was asleep; Amos whilst he was leading the flocks to water (Am. 7:14); and see too 1 Kings 11:29; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:1-13,18. In other words, the call of God comes to us right in the midst of ordinary, mundane life. Of this there can be no doubt. And the Lord Jesus called men in just the same way.

1Sa 9:15 Now Yahweh had revealed to Samuel a day before Saul came, saying- Heb. "had uncovered Samuel's ear". We see here the intimacy between God and His man. The idea is that God had lifted a corner of Samuel's turban so as to whisper a confidential secret into his ear. And this intimacy extends to all God's people. What we hear in the ear, that we must preach on the housetops (Mt. 10:27). This is built on the language of 1 Sam. 9:15,25, where God speaks in Samuel's ear, and then he speaks that word to Saul on the housetop. The Lord is saying that in essence, we are all in Samuel's position; we hear the word of this world's salvation, the word about "the Kingdom" as it was for Saul, and that very fact is in itself the imperative to overcome our natural reservations and share it with those for whom it is intended- even if, as with Saul, we consider them unlikely and unspiritual hearers.

"Revealed" in 1 Sam. 3:7,21; 9:15 is the word used of how Yahweh had revealed Himself to the tribe of Levi and called them to be His priests (1 Sam. 2:27), and Eli as it were was in the loins of his father Levi, according to the principle of Heb. 7:10. But the line of Levi and Eli had potentially been rejected because of Eli's apostasy. The Divine intention was to replace them with Samuel as a prophet-priest and perhaps king (1 Sam. 2:10), revealing Himself to him, although he was not a Levite. But this potential was only partially fulfilled by Samuel, and despite possibilities in David and Solomon, it only came to full term in the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

1Sa 9:16 Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you must anoint him to be prince over My people Israel, and he will save My people out of the hand of the Philistines, for I have looked on My people, because

their cry has come to Me-

"I will send you" was achieved through the chain of events which led to Saul coming to Samuel. Unknown to him, all this was God's hand in sending him to Samuel.

Their request for a human king was, as God Himself mightily demonstrated to them, an utter rejection of Him, and He grieved because of it. And yet when God gave them a King, He expresses His decision in quite a different tone; as if He had compassion upon their humanity, their wrong desire to have a human king. He is indeed compassionate to us even in moral failure, and here exhibits amazing understanding of the human condition. And that is even more enhanced through the work and mediation of His Son. Here God speaks as if the gift of Saul was akin to the provision of Moses, to save poor Israel from their unwarranted persecution. For God looking upon His people because of their cry is the language of His gracious deliverance of His weak, idolatrous people from Egypt. Actually, Saul was slain by the Philistines- in His foreknowledge, the Almighty knew all about Saul. But in His pure grace, He doesn't reflect this in the way He speaks at this time.

1Sa 9:17 When Samuel saw Saul, Yahweh said to him, Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He will have authority over My people-

Saul didn't recognize Samuel when they met (:18), so Samuel might have been disappointed that the chosen man was not one of his various protégés amongst the people he ministered to. But he would have recalled the chilling prophecy he had given Israel of the kind of man this was, or would become. It would have been hard for Samuel to be civil to him, especially seeing he so strongly disagreed with Israel having a king. But presumably he was also aware that God was going to try to work through this man, and that his words of prediction need not come true if the man repented. Indeed Samuel didn't resent Saul but seems to have even loved him, kissing him and weeping for him. Such was his humility. The intended impression is that Saul went out looking to find his donkeys, but the Lord found him through Samuel. Many likewise have been out searching and hoping to find something secular, didn't succeed or failed dramatically- and were found by the Lord for Himself.

1Sa 9:18 Then Saul came near to Samuel in the gate and said, Please tell me where the seer's house is-

It is unclear whether this means that they were in Ramah, Samuel's home, or whether this was one of the towns which Samuel visited on his circuit. If indeed it was Ramah, then this was only 5 miles from Gibeah of Saul. That Saul didn't know anything much about Samuel nor did he recognize him when they met... is all a tacit reflection of his lack of interest in spiritual things. It wasn't apparent that Samuel was the priest or prophet. Contrary to the style of that time, and religion generally, he wore no special clothes that pointed out his ministry. The girls in :13 had told Saul that he would find Samuel immediately he entered the city. He enters through the gate of the city and immediately meets Samuel "in the gate". But Saul doesn't quite believe the girls, and asks this person whom he meets where Samuel's house is. His slowness to believe is made clear. And yet we also note that although on some level he was expecting to meet Samuel immediately on passing through the gate, entering the city, he doesn't imagine that the man he meets is in fact Samuel. One conclusion would be that Samuel didn't look like a prophet or religious man. Perhaps that was one reason Israel rejected this humble, unassuming man for a king like Saul. Samuel's humility is shown by how he loves Saul, kissing him, weeping for him, and enthusiastic about his kingship- when Samuel was being replaced by Saul. And when Saul was replaced by

Samuel with David, there is no hint that Samuel considers that he himself is best qualified to be the replacement. He was a kingmaker, and this required humility. Clearly Samuel also perceived that Saul was not set up for failure, and that his prophecies about Saul's future failure were conditional.

1Sa 9:19 Samuel answered Saul, I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today. In the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart-

"Let you go" reflects how Saul was somehow under arrest by God, as it were detained before Yahweh. When he was earnestly seeking to now get home to his worried family as quickly as possible. It was the offerers who ate of their own sacrifices after Samuel's blessing. Saul had not sacrificed and yet he was invited to eat of the meat offered. This was only done by the Levites, and Saul was a Benjamite. All through, he is being shown God's grace, although sadly he refused to be permanently convicted by it. And perhaps he is being invited to act as a Levite, as Samuel did, although he was not from the tribe of Levi. In this case, the hope was that he would become a king-priest. For Saul to go in front of Samuel to the high place would have been a mark of extreme respect, perhaps implying that Saul was to replace Samuel's role as a non-Levitical priest. So much potential was lost by Saul, as it is in the lives of so many. Wasted potential is the tragedy of the cosmos.

We enquire when chronologically did Samuel's words come true, "and will tell you all that is in your heart". We can read this as Samuel saying that he would let Saul go in the morning. And now he would tell him all that was in his heart- i.e. the words of :20. Because in Samuel's later speech to Saul in 1 Sam. 10, he says nothing to Saul about what was in Saul's heart. So we conclude that what was in Saul's heart was the donkeys. He was obsessed about them. And he is told not to "worry", to set his heart, upon them- but rather upon the things of the Kingdom. And God's Spirit was given to Saul so that his spirit or heart would be taken over by the things of the Kingdom, and not secular things like donkeys.

Another option is that the words of 1 Sam. 10, told to Saul the next day, were a telling of Saul all that was in his heart. In that Saul subconsciously had thought about being king of Israel, and now this subconscious thread in his heart was being addressed and made possible. Just as the things of the Kingdom may be subconsciously in the heart of secular people, but the calling of God reveals them to them, and they are asked to consciously believe and grasp them.

1Sa 9:20 As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, don't worry about them; they have been found. To whom has all the desire in Israel turned? Is it not to you and all your father's house?-

This could equally be translated to mean that all that is desirable in Israel is for Saul and his father's house, and so he therefore need not worry about losing a few donkeys. Saul was being shown that God knew all about his situation; and knew how long he had been searching. The implication may be that Samuel had found the donkeys (hence Samuel later he insists he never stole donkeys, 1 Sam. 12:3); on :3 I suggested they represented kingship or leadership. They had been found by Samuel, by God, and were now being given to Saul.

Saul is introduced as a man obsessed with donkeys (see on :19); he combs a large area, reflecting almost an OCD, until he is left without bread and without money. The Hebrew suggests "the donkeys which you lost", as if he saw it as his fault; at least, they are called his donkeys, even if technically they belonged to his father. Three

times Saul has to be assured that the lost donkeys had been found (1 Sam. 9:20; 10:2,9), perhaps reflecting his deep distress and obsession about their loss. Samuel will warn Israel that their king will take their donkeys from them, and protests that he himself has never taken a donkey from them. But Saul's taking of Israel's donkeys wasn't inevitable, Saul wasn't set up for failure. For Samuel here pleads with him to quit his obsession with donkeys, not to "worry" or set his heart upon them, and instead focus upon leading God's people. Saul failed ultimately to take that appeal. But we see here how predestiny and foreknowledge are all the same conditional, and human freewill is always valued and respected. God indeed directs history, history is His story, but in a beautiful way, human freewill isn't compromised.

But we could as well translate the Hebrew here as "belonging to you are Israel's best / desirable things". He's being told not to worry about a few lost donkeys, because all Israel's best things are to be his. In this case, the allusion is to the prediction of the bad king in 1 Sam. 8:10-16. Saul is being warned that he would have all Israel's desirable things at his disposal. And the nudge is to warn him not to misuse them, not to set his heart upon them. Always there is the plea not to be that bad king. For he was not set up to inevitable failure; no man is. For God wants to save all men. See on 1 Sam. 9:3.

1Sa 9:21 Saul answered, Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me like this?

Benjamin was indeed the smallest of the tribes according to Gen. 49:27, but that tribe had been made even smaller and humiliated within Israel by the fairly recent events of Jud. 19-21. This could be genuine humility, or the standard expression of 'humility' which almost goes with the territory of being given a great promotion. Kish is introduced as a mighty man of valour (:1), and I suggested on :3 that the donkeys had significance as the animals of leadership or even kingship. These questions are left open by the record, to exercise our thinking. Was Saul initially humble, or only on a surface level?

1Sa 9:22 Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the guest room, and made them sit in the best place among the guests, about thirty people-

We see reflected here the very small scale of Samuel's efforts. He came to this town to enable the people to offer peace offerings; after he blessed the offering, the offerers then ate their own offering. But only 30 people did this, and as with Hannah and Elkanah, it is likely that there were married couples amongst those 30. For many years Samuel made his circuits, encouraging the people in their devotion to Yahweh. But only 30 [at the most] offered peace offerings. The impression from the record is that most of Israel were far gone in idolatry and secularism, at least until they faced a real crisis from their neighbours.

1Sa 9:23 Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you, telling you to set it aside-

Samuel clearly had been told that the king to be anointed was coming to him, and he absolutely believed this, to the point of making very detailed plans. "The cook" is literally the slaughterer. We get the impression that although Samuel was not a Levite, in practice he pretty much took over from Eli as high priest, and this "cook" who dealt with the sacrifices was effectively his Levite, an assistant with the sacrifices.

1Sa 9:24 The cook took up the thigh and what was on it and set it before Saul-
AV "the shoulder and that which was upon it". This is the imagery of Is. 9:6; 22:22
"The government shall be upon his shoulder", again hinting that Saul was to be king.
This was what was to be given to the priests (Ex. 29:27; Lev. 7:32-34; 10:14,15;
Num. 6:20; 18:18). Saul was set up to be a king-priest. His later condemnation for
offering the sacrifice was because of his attitude of heart, and not just because he was
not a Levite.

*Samuel said, Here is what has been kept for you! Eat it because it has been kept
for you for this occasion since I said, 'I have invited guests'. So Saul ate with Samuel
that day-*

This could be an intensive plural for the one great guest.

*1Sa 9:25 When they had come down from the high place into the city, he talked with
Saul on the housetop-*

What we say to the Lord Jesus in His ear in the bedroom in the darkness, will be
openly spoken by the Lord Jesus at the judgment (Lk. 12:2,3). God dwells in darkness
(Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12). Speaking in the bedroom in secret with the knowledge we
will be openly rewarded is the language of prayer (Mt. 6:6). Our private relationship
with the Lord now, praying to Him in our bedroom, meditating about Him there, will
then be spoken out loud. But there is a related statement from the Lord: What we hear
from Him in the ear, we must speak openly (Mt. 10:26,27; after the pattern of Isaiah
in Is. 22:14). Putting these passages together, we get the picture of us speaking to God
through Christ, talking in His ear, as one might whisper something very personal into
a friend's ear, in the darkness of our bedroom. And then the Lord whispers back in our
ear, i.e. His revelation to us (through the word) is very personal and not perceived by
others; but we must openly, publicly act upon it. And this private relationship we have
with the Lord in our prayer life will then be revealed openly at the judgment. God told
Samuel "in his ear" about Saul's future, and although the message must have been
hard to relay to Saul, Samuel did so, on the housetop (1 Sam. 9:15,25). The
similarities with the Lord's words are too close to be accidental. Surely He saw each
of us as passing through the essential experience of Samuel.

*1Sa 9:26 They arose early, at daybreak, and Samuel called to Saul on the housetop,
Get up, that I may send you away. Saul arose, and they went outside together-*
"Called" translates the same Hebrew word used for "invited" in :25. Consistently we
have the language of Divine calling. Saul is presented as being absolutely obedient to
Samuel and the Divine calling- at this stage.

*1Sa 9:27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city Samuel said to Saul, Tell
the servant to go on ahead of us (and he did so), but you stay here first, so that I may
tell you the message of God-*

"Message" translates the standard Hebrew *dabar* for "word". "Tell you" is better
"make your hear / be obedient". The same phrase is used of how Israel at Sinai were
made to hear the word of God (Dt. 4:10) as a condition for entering covenant with
Him. The subsequent activity of God's Spirit upon Saul was indeed to potentially
make him hear / be obedient to the word of God to him. Only the day before he had
been out looking for lost donkeys, with not a real thought for Yahweh. And now God
was seeking to make him obedient to the word of the Kingdom. But as Saul's

subsequent life demonstrates, although God through His Spirit does seek to make us obedient to His word, He will never ultimately force us.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 10

1Sa 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, Hasn't Yahweh anointed you to be prince over His inheritance?-

The significance of the kiss was maybe to simply show this secular man that actually, God really loved him. He really wanted Saul to work out well, and was not at all predestining him to failure. He was reminded that he was only prince over God's inheritance; the kingdom was always to be God's, and not Saul's. And yet he later reasoned with Jonathan as if the kingdom was theirs and not God's. All his angst about David becoming king would have not been an item had he believed that the Kingdom is God's and not ours. An inheritance was all a man had, and was more important to him than his own life. And we God's people are His inheritance... We are no mere plaything within the boundless function of an omnipotent being.

Samuel's kissing of Saul may reflect a genuine fondness for him (1 Sam. 10:1); hence he is told to stop grieving that Saul has gone wrong (1 Sam. 16:1). And yet it was through Samuel that God had foretold what a bad man Saul would be. But Samuel's grief and fondness for Saul surely reflects how he understood that those prophecies were not inevitably going to be fulfilled. Samuel knew that Saul could have acted otherwise as he lived in the gap between prophecy and fulfilment.

1Sa 10:2 When you have departed from me today you will find two men by Rachel's tomb, in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will tell you, 'The donkeys which you went to seek have been found, and your father has stopped caring about the donkeys, and is anxious for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? '-

Rachel's grave was on the road from Bethel to Ephrath / Bethlehem (Gen. 35:16-20; 48:7). Assuming Samuel and Saul were in Ramah, to go here was a long way out of Saul's way if he were returning home. Especially as he presumably wanted to get home as soon as possible to comfort his anxious father. Samuel's statement that Kish was anxious for Saul confirmed what Saul himself had been thinking (1 Sam. 9:5). To go there was therefore a test of his obedience- and he passed it. He did indeed begin well. Spiritual paths often do begin with simple tests like this.

This detail would be relevant for the exiles, for whom this history was apparently rewritten. For Jer. 31:15 seems to imply that as the exiles of Judah were marched into captivity from Jerusalem, they passed Rachel's tomb and wept there for their lost children. The idea was that not only Samuel but others were also prophets in Israel, and these were the men whom Saul ought to be associated with when he became king.

1Sa 10:3 Then you will go on from there and you will come to the oak of Tabor. Three men will meet you there, going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread and another carrying a bottle of wine- "Tabor" may possibly be a form of "Deborah", referencing the oak of Deborah, Rebecca's nurse; Deborah was buried beneath an oak "under Bethel" (Gen. 35:8), It could equally refer to the tree under which the judge Deborah had more recently judged Israel, again nearby, between Ramah and Bethel (Jud. 4:5). Saul was to be further introduced to the faithful within Israel, whom Samuel hoped he would associate with. Perhaps these faithful men also had Divine revelation about Saul as Samuel had had, or maybe he got word to them of his plans for Saul. .

The priests were God's representatives, and for a man to 'appear before the Lord' effectively referred to his appearance before the priest. When we read of "men going up to God at Bethel", the 'house of God' (1 Sam. 10:3), we aren't to think that God Himself lived in a house in Bethel. The reference is to the priests, His representative, being there.

1Sa 10:4 They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them-

A symbolic gift of food [for two loaves is not much] reflected acceptance of the person receiving the food, and even acceptance of them as a leader.

The extent of God's activity for us is simply huge. Just consider all the apparently insignificant details added in to God's plan for making Saul king here and in :3. One of this, two of that, three of those... why such detail? It's the same question as to why is the cosmos so vast, the range of plant and animal life on earth so huge and varied. Perhaps in Saul's case all the detail was necessary in order to try to build faith in him, and to demonstrate for all time the capability of God to have micro level involvement and control in human experiences.

Saul had no bread with him (1 Sam. 9:7); God saw his lack and would provide. His inadequacies were covered by God's potential provision. But the loaves were intended for offering to God, and Saul was to accept them, implying he was to eat them; Saul's lack of bread would be met in this way. By accepting the offerings intended for God, he was to act as a priest and to accept them on God's behalf. For the loaves were intended for sacrifice to God. He was to see that God wanted him as His representative, and if he accepted this, then his human inadequacy [lack of bread] would thus be met. He was being set up for success, not failure.

1Sa 10:5 After that you will come to the hill of God-

A place called Gibeath-Elohim. The hill of God probably means the ark was there. Again it was in Philistine hands, and again it had failed to help Israel. If this is the Gibeah of Saul where Saul was from, we learn that he had grown up where the ark was, admittedly under Philistine control, and where there was a school of the prophets taught by Samuel (1 Sam. 19:20). But he didn't recognize Samuel when he met him and apparently was totally disengaged with Yahweh worship. Hence the surprised "Is Saul also among the prophets?", and the wonder of how God's Spirit transformed such a secular man.

Where the garrison of the Philistines is, and when you come near to the city you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, a tambourine, a pipe and a harp being played before them. They will be prophesying- Again Saul is being shown that there were other spiritually minded believers in Israel, right under the noses of the Philistine garrison. Saul didn't even know Samuel to look at, and he clearly moved outside the sphere of believers. He appears to have felt lost when actually not that far from home (1 Sam. 9:6,8), so he may never have travelled far from his birthplace- like many rural folk in Israel at the time. The Biblical idea of prophesying is speaking forth God's word, not necessarily predicting the future. But it may be that these prophets were doing both, speaking under inspiration of Saul's future kingship.

1Sa 10:6 and the Spirit of Yahweh will come mightily on you, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into another person-

Here we see the essence of the work of the Spirit; it is not so much the miraculous

gifts, as the internal change of the person. And that is what we so desperately need, and is a strong reason in our age to encourage people to accept the Lord Jesus and be baptized, knowing that this leads to the gift of the same transforming Spirit in the hearts and persons of people. And this transformation is our greatest need. Whilst the gift of the Spirit as we currently experience it is predicated upon the Lord's death and resurrection, through which His Spirit is poured out upon His people (Jn. 7:39), yet clearly God even in Old Testament times was active through His Spirit directly on human hearts. The parallel in :9 says that Saul was 'given' (s.w. "changed" in :6) another heart. The same word is used in Ps. 105:25 of how God turned or changed the heart of the Egyptians towards hatred of His people. It is the word used of how Gentiles will be "converted" or turned to Yahweh (Is. 60:5)- by His work upon them, and not their own unaided intellectual searching for truth. The Spirit is not simply the power of God but also His mind and thinking, which precedes or is the essence of His actions. To be given God's Spirit is essentially to have our spirit changed; His breathing, His mind, becomes ours. And this is what happened to Saul. But as we see from his later life, God will not force a man to be other than what he himself wishes to be. If we wish to be spiritually minded, we will be helped toward this by the Spirit. If we do not, then as with Saul, an evil spirit from God will confirm us in the psychological path we prefer to take.

1Sa 10:7 When these signs have happened, then do as occasion demands, for God is with you-

"As occasion demands" is hard to translate. Literally, "do what your hand shall find". I have discussed on 1 Sam. 9:4 how Saul didn't "find" the donkeys but was "found" by God and "found" everything he needed whilst he was in the way of the Spirit, doing the work of the Kingdom. Although the Spirit would come upon him and transform him, he would still have freewill and was to act on his own initiative, having God "with" him as he did so. This gives quite some insight into the operation of the Spirit to this day. And yet this doesn't preclude the need to follow specific commands as we have in :8. Here we see the interplay between human action and God's confirmation. Saul was to do as he could in response to his calling, and God would work with that. This is the work of the Spirit. The idea seem to be that Saul had God with him and was to act in response to his calling. Whatever he did would prosper. The fact God departed from him (1 Sam. 28:15) was a sad reflection of how initially God had been with Saul (1 Sam. 10:7). In Saul's case it was given by the pure grace of how God calls otherwise unspiritual people. But in response to their rejection of His Spirit, God will send an evil spirit to confirm them in that rejection, as happened later in Saul's life.

1Sa 10:8 Go down before me to Gilgal and I will come down to you, to offer burnt offerings and to make sacrifices of peace offerings. Wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you must do-

It seems to me that all the Lord's servants are taught by increments, progressively, being given tests as to the degree to which they have grasped what the Lord has sought to teach them previously. Take Saul. At the beginning of his intended ministry, he was told by Samuel to wait for his coming, when he would offer sacrifices. Saul obediently obeyed; yet when he was tested on this very point in this very way at a later stage, he failed. It is for this reason that circumstances repeat so strangely in the lives of God's people. See on 1 Sam. 16:3.

An alternative is that this command was not for immediate obedience, and it was only later that Saul had to wait for Samuel at Gilgal- and he failed.

1Sa 10:9 When Saul had turned to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart, and all those signs happened that day-

This gift of another heart was through the Spirit coming upon him (see on :6,10). "The same word is used for the transformation of Moses' rod into a serpent (Ex. 7:15), or the Nile water to blood (Ex. 7:20)- and the "overthrow" of Sodom (Gen. 19:21,29). This is the work of the Spirit- a fundamental transformation and reconstitution of a person's mind. But they have to be willing to accept it in an ongoing way. I have seen so many transformed by the birth of water and Spirit- but not continuing to run with it. And so it was to be with Saul. "Gave" is the same word for "changed" in :6. So "Another heart" is clearly parallel with "another person" (:6). The heart is the person, and the Spirit is a term which embraces the heart / mind.

This is further evidence that God can work directly upon the hearts of people, including those like the Egyptians who are not His people. The heart of Saul was likewise turned (s.w. Ps. 105:25 He turned their heart"). This is effected today by the work of the Holy Spirit directly upon human spirits / hearts.

The association of an Angel with God's "good spirit" in Neh. 9:20 suggests that the good and evil spirits that troubled Saul were actually Angelically-controlled dispositions of mind, co-ordinated by two different Angels. This giving of a new heart to Saul by the Angel (1 Sam. 10:9) appears to be the basis of Jer. 31:33, where God says He will make a new Covenant with them (remember it was an Angel who made the Old Covenant also), when He "will put My Law in their inward parts... and will be their God". This giving of a new heart to Israel described here and in Jer. 32:39 and Ez. 36:26 appears to be over and above Israel's personal spirituality, although as with the case of Saul it will probably be a vast magnification of some small spiritual effort made of their own freewill, as Saul must surely have had. Again we see how the record of Saul was rewritten [under inspiration] for the exiles. Yet these words are quoted in the New Testament about God doing this to our hearts now (Heb. 8:10); inviting us to read the other passages in the New Testament concerning the Spirit creating a new mind or creation in us as referring to God being willing to do the same to us as He did to Saul (Acts 15:8,9; 2 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:14-20).

1Sa 10:10 When they came to the hill a band of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came mightily on him and he prophesied among them-

The hill was where the Philistine garrison was (:5). Although at that time the Israelites were allowed some autonomy, they were in power over Israel in this area. The association of this place with the outpouring of the Spirit was surely to teach Saul that he was going to be empowered by the Spirit to defeat the Philistines and lead Israel to freedom from them. It was he, therefore, who should have fought Goliath, and he would have won, through the work of the Spirit. But Saul didn't want to use the potential. Hence his bitter jealousy of David was based upon a sense that David had the faith to use the potential of the Spirit which he did not have. And it is spiritual jealousy which is the very worst and bitterest form of jealousy. Possession of the Spirit did not mean that someone was necessarily acceptable in God's sight, e.g. Saul possessed it for a time as did the judges of Israel (Num. 11:17) although they were not righteous; they did not believe the report of Joshua and Caleb and therefore were condemned to die like the other Israelites, despite their having the Spirit - Psalm 82:1-7 says as much.

1Sa 10:11 When all who knew him before saw that he prophesied with the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?-

It is possible that somehow there were people from Saul's home village who were present at the garrison of the Philistines when Saul began prophesying there. But it could also be that he continued prophesying on the way back to his home (see on :13), leading to this comment. The idea is that a totally secular man could instantly be transformed by the Spirit. This amazement by those who knew him, marvelling that he was the son of Kish, who also was not perhaps known for his spirituality, is also seen in the transformations of secular lives which the Spirit works today.

1Sa 10:12 A man who lived there answered, Who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb: Is Saul also among the prophets?-

As suggested on :11, the idea may be that Kish was not known for his spirituality. This amazing transformation of Saul therefore gave birth to the proverb, because it meant that the unspiritual way in which he was raised was no barrier to the work of the Spirit upon Saul's heart. This really does happen today also, and such transformations are the greatest advertisement for the Gospel. "Who is their / his father?" may mean that Saul now appears as a spiritual person, whereas his family background wasn't spiritual. Hence the comment "What has happened to the son of Kish?", as if Kish wasn't a spiritual person. The transformation of the Spirit means that we are a new creation, and bad family background or even apparent genetic spiritual disadvantage is nothing compared to the transformation of the Spirit. Old things have passed away and all things have become new- we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

1Sa 10:13 When he had stopped prophesying, he came to the high place-

LXX "to Gibeah". It's possible that on the way home to Gibeah of Saul, he met people who had previously known him (see on :11). If we retain the reading "the high place", we conclude that the work of the Spirit led him to come and make a sacrifice at the high place; when from the account in 1 Sam. 9, it seems he had never made such a sacrifice in his life. And this is where the work of the Spirit leads- to the principle of sacrifice.

1Sa 10:14 Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, Where did you go? He said, To seek the donkeys. When we saw that they were not to be found we came to Samuel- "Seek" is not really the word one would use for searching for lost cattle. It is the word more usually used for seeking in prayer or worship. The transformation of the Spirit led to Saul's vocabulary changing; and he now speaks of Samuel as if he was of course known to the family. When in reality Saul didn't recognize Samuel when he met him, indicating he had never attended Samuel's meetings. Such change in language is a typical reflection of the Spirit's transforming work.

1Sa 10:15 Saul's uncle said, Please tell me what Samuel said to you-

I suggested on 1 Sam. 9:3 that the donkeys were a symbol of leadership or even kingship. Therefore Samuel's commentary upon them being lost but then found was significant to Saul's uncle. We note that Saul's servant and Saul's uncle speak as if they know Samuel, whereas Saul doesn't recognize him nor apparently know much about him. He was not the spiritual one in the family, but he was the one chosen to be

transformed by the Spirit. Truly old things passed away and all things became new in this new creation of the Spirit; background and previous spirituality was and is irrelevant to the work of the Spirit.

1Sa 10:16 Saul said to his uncle, He told us plainly that the donkeys were found. But concerning the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel spoke, he didn't tell him-
We wonder why he didn't, especially given the amazing signs and wonders he had experienced in the wake of the statement about him becoming king. Indeed, he had been anointed to be king. His silence could have been bashful humility, or it could have been a lack of faith in running with the possibilities now opened up to him. The fact Saul does nothing until he is called by the Ammonite crisis indicates his passivity to the call. See on :21.

1Sa 10:17 Samuel called the people together to Yahweh to Mizpah-
"Mizpah" means watchtower, an appropriate place for a prophet to make statements. But Samuel called the people "to Yahweh". It was a calling to Him, to repentance. Just as Saul was called, so the people were called. 'Calling' is a major theme in this section.

1Sa 10:18 and he said to the people of Israel, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you-
This is said in the context of the people wanting a human king to lead them. They were bidden reflect how it was God who had led them and saved them from their enemies, even leading them out of Egypt. The local neighbouring tribes they were up against were nothing compared to Egypt. "Oppress" is the word used of how Israel were oppressed in Egypt (Ex. 3:9). But the intention, as with Israel's latter day oppression, is that it would lead them to cry out for Yahweh's salvation, 'Jesus': "For they will cry to Yahweh because of oppressors, and He will send them a saviour and a defender, and He will deliver them" (Is. 19:20 s.w.). All the judges were therefore types of the ultimate deliverance of Israel by the Lord Jesus in the last days.

1Sa 10:19 but you have this day rejected your God, who Himself saves you out of all your calamities and your distresses-
The stress is upon "who Himself". God had saved them by His direct leadership, and not through any human king. But always humanity shies away from the wonder of direct personal relationship with God. Many today prefer to hide at the bottom of a huge supposed hierarchy of priests, bishops, denominational membership etc.- rather than accept direct personal relationship with God. Just as God wished to speak directly to Israel, but they ran away from Him and wanted Moses instead to report to them what God had said. See on 1 Sam. 12:6.

You have said to Him, 'No! Set a king over us'. Now therefore present yourselves before Yahweh by your tribes and by your thousands-

God does make concessions to human weakness; He gave them a king in His wrath, Hosea says. But using those concessions ultimately makes obedience harder. It was God's wish that Israel would not have a human king; hence His sorrow when they did (1 Sam. 10:19-21). Yet in the Law, God foresaw that they would want a human king, and so He gave commandments concerning how he should behave (Dt. 17:14,15). These passages speak of how Israel would choose to set a King over themselves, and would do so. Yet God worked through this system of human kings; hence the Queen

of Sheba speaks of how *God* had set Solomon over Israel as King, and how he was king on God's behalf (2 Chron. 9:8). Israel set a king over themselves; but God worked with this, so that in a sense *He* set the King over them. God's ideal was that the Levites would live from the tithes given by Israel (Dt. 14:27); but He foresaw that this ideal level wouldn't be reached by them, therefore the Levites were given land on which to grow their own crops for survival. However, it must be noted that by opting to make use of God's concessions to human weakness, real spirituality became harder to achieve. Thus it was harder to accept Yahweh as King if they had a human king demanding their allegiance.

1Sa 10:20 So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel together, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken-

To gather representatives from all the tribes would have taken significant planning, and also their willingness to participate.

1Sa 10:21 He brought the tribe of Benjamin forward by their families, and the family of the Matrites was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken, but when they sought him he could not be found-

Clearly it was God who chose Saul by this very public method of drawing lots, probably chosen by the urim and thummim. Yet Israel chose Saul, we are told. God again shows how He chose the man they would have chosen, and the peoples' joy in Saul shows that indeed He had chosen as they would have done. Again we learn that we get what we really want if it is our heart's desire. And that principle applies positively to we who seek His Kingdom above all.

Again we have questions which the record leaves hanging intentionally open. Was he hiding because he was humble? 1 Sam. 15:17 could encourage us to read him this way; he was exalted when he was "little" in his own eyes. And this was understood by Saul, who changed his name to Paul, the little one, in seeking to emulate the early spirit of Saul. Or because as suggested on :16, he failed to have the faith to be proactive after his anointing? The fact Saul was present at the gathering surely means that he had come along expecting to be pronounced king. Perhaps his nerve failed him, a kind of stage fright at the last minute. Human motivation and spirituality is nearly always mixed, and perhaps that is why these questions are left hanging.

1Sa 10:22 Therefore they asked of Yahweh further, Did the man come here? Yahweh answered, He has hidden himself among the baggage-

We think of the Lord's parable of the man who hid his talent in the earth. Saul had after all been anointed to be king, and had experienced signs confirming that. David continually accuses Saul of "arrogance" in the Psalms he wrote reflecting upon Saul's persecution of him (e.g. Ps. 10:2); whereas Saul begins as an apparently humble man who doesn't feel worthy to be king, hiding himself to avoid being king (1 Sam. 15:17), and restraining himself when some mocked him as an inappropriate leader (1 Sam. 10:27). Saul's descent into apostasy was therefore primarily a descent into pride. Being called to do something for God so often makes men pride, when the invitation is intended to humble us; just as David's psalm of humility in Psalm 8 after killing of Goliath was a protestation of humility. "Who am I, to do this work for You?" ought to be our sense. However we will note on Ps. 10:10 that Saul had a false humility; so perhaps his initial humility was not genuine.

For the tallest man in Israel to hide... was impossible. It's as if resistance to the Spirit's call is futile. We cannot hide from it. In fact we have no choice but to totally surrender to the way of the Spirit, and resistance or backtracking on it will lead to the tragedy of Saul.

1Sa 10:23 They ran and fetched him, and when he stood among the people he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders and upward-

Truly God gave them just the kind of king they wanted. His unusual height made him the ideal person to fight Goliath, and his failure to do so suggests a failure to rise up to the potential given him. Perhaps the extensive prophesying from him and others right under the noses of the Philistines in :5,6 was about victory over the Philistines. Hence his bitter spiritual jealousy of David, who did rise up to the potential.

1Sa 10:24 Samuel said to all the people, You see the one whom Yahweh has chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? All the people shouted, Long live the king!-

As found often in Daniel, Gentile kings were addressed with the wish that "O King, live for ever". They were greeting their new king just as the Gentile nations did; and yet no man is immortal, and this was a phrase better not used by those who believed in the mortality of man, and that no king was in fact immortal. Or we could translate "Let the King save!". But this was a rejection of Yahweh as their saviour, and their insistence upon a visible leadership rather than accepting God's invisible leadership.

1Sa 10:25 Then Samuel told the people the regulations of the kingdom, wrote them in a book and laid it up before Yahweh. Samuel sent all the people away to their homes- These regulations were perhaps the laws in Deuteronomy about how the king of Israel should behave, not multiplying horses etc. Being laid up before Yahweh may have meant placing it in a pouch on the ark. But *mishpat*, "regulations", is also more commonly the idea of a verdict or judgment. It could be that Samuel wrote down his inspired judgment on this matter from God- that He didn't want them to have a king but was going along with their request, even though it meant their rejection of Him.

1Sa 10:26 Saul also went to his house to Gibeah and with him the valiant men whose hearts God had touched-

These men were those who like him had experienced the work of the Spirit directly upon their hearts (see on :6,9). The same word is used of how God touched [AV "plagued"] the hearts of the Egyptians (Ex. 9:14). He can work directly on the human heart; this is the work of the Spirit, which is exactly what is needed by we weak minded people who want to be spiritual. Our deepest need is met in the Spirit, and yet it is this very topic which has provoked so much fear and controversy in the circles of believers. "The valiant men" is AV "a band of men", presumably the prophets of :5. They were to spiritually teach him in order to prepare him for kingship. Whether he paid attention or not we don't know; all we next read of him is that he was working in his fields and came home one evening to hear of the crisis at Jabesh (1 Sam. 11:5).

1Sa 10:27 But some worthless fellows said, How can this man save us? They despised him and brought him no present-

Clearly Saul was considered a nobody who had no military experience. It could however be that these worthless fellows were those who considered him to be spiritually unqualified to be king; and by thinking that of the man God had chosen and

was in process of transforming, they were categorized themselves as unspiritual people.

But he was as though he had been deaf-

See on :22; Ps. 38:13. David learnt the secret of seeing the positive in our weak brethren, and he didn't let all that was wrong with Saul interfere with this. He describes himself as responding to criticism like this: "I as a deaf man, heard not" (Ps. 38:13). Yet he was alluding to how Saul, when likewise criticized by "sons of belial", "was as though he had been deaf" to their words (1 Sam. 10:27 RVmg.). He saw the good in Saul, he remembered that one good example he showed- and it empowered him to follow it.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 11

1Sa 11:1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, Make a treaty with us and we will serve you-

Nahash is the Hebrew word for serpent. Although God foreknew Saul's ultimate failure, he was set up as the potential Messianic seed who could crush the serpent; see on 1 Sam. 13:13. He failed to realize his potential, and was confirmed in that by the evil spirit from Yahweh which later afflicted him. For the significance of Jabesh, see on :9.

1Sa 11:2 Nahash the Ammonite said to them, On this condition I will make it with you, that each of you has his right eye put out, bringing disgrace on all Israel- Saul's work was to remove the disgrace or "reproach" from Israel. When Goliath reproached Israel, it was Saul, Israel's tallest man, who was potentially empowered to fight him and remove the reproach. But he failed to do so, and when David did (1 Sam. 17:26 s.w.), Saul fell into a complex of spiritual jealousy. See another example of this in :13. To put out the right eye was a living shame; perhaps the right eye was chosen because it was perceived as the eye most used in one to one combat. The relevance to the exiles is that very often, the word for "reproach" is used of their situation. Yahweh was powerful to remove this from them- if they accepted His leadership and didn't hanker for the immediate restoration of the kingly line as a condition for their return.

There are clear similarities between the situations in 1 Sam. 11 and that in David's victory against Goliath in 1 Sam. 17. The difference is that in 1 Sam. 16 we learn that God's Spirit departed from Saul and came upon David. It has been observed: "First a challenge is issued by an alien (11:2; 17:23), followed by terror and fear in Israel (11:4; 17:24). After a search (11:3-4; 17:24), a deliverer appears for Israel (11:5-6; 17:25), and succeeds in delivering Israel from the foe (11:7-11; 17:50). The deliverer is recognized and made a leader for Israel (11:15; 17:55-8, 18:5)". The significance is that Saul could have been the heroic Israelite saviour against Goliath and the Philistines in 1 Sam. 17, just as he had been against Nahash and the Ammonites in 1 Sam. 11. His victory over Nahash was set up to encourage him that he could likewise defeat Goliath. But he failed to be taught, and just flunked out of the exercise.

1Sa 11:3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, Give us seven days so that we can send messengers to all the borders of Israel, and then, if there is no one to save us, we will come out to you-

We wonder why Nahash agreed to this. His pride was apparently such that he considered that even if this were to be done, he would still win. It was again a case of pride going before a fall. Given the size of the land, it would have taken seven days to inform all Israel and get a response. See on 1 Sam. 14:10.

1Sa 11:4 Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these words to the people, and they all wept aloud-

The messengers went throughout Israel, just as messengers had recently gone throughout Israel inviting them to the gathering at Mizpah regarding having a king. And there was apparently no response. They were all therefore psychologically set up to hope that the promised new king would actually bring the charismatic deliverance they expected of a king. This setting up of expectation was all from God. He really wanted to arrange things so that Saul had the support and respect of all Israel. Saul's ultimate failure was therefore all the more culpable, because he had been set up for success- as is everyone called by God.

It's quite likely that Saul, being from Gibeah, had relatives in Jabesh. Because at the time of Jud. 19-21, a generation previously, the Benjamites from Gibeah had been almost wiped out by the other tribes of Israel. and those tribes had vowed not to give their daughters as wives to the Benjamites. Israel then lamented that the tribe of Benjamin would become extinct. But Jabesh was the only city that had not joined in the agreement, and so the tribes went there, massacred the people, and saved 400 virgins from there and gave them to the Benjamites to marry. The people of Jabesh were likely sceptical of the other Israelites, and would have looked to Saul as their only logical saviour. One reconstruction is that the people of Gibeah, who knew Saul had been anointed and who had exclaimed "Is Saul also among the prophets?", all the same assumed he couldn't save them. For they wept, rather than suggested Saul went and saved them. His earlier filling with the Spirit had dissipated and now he had to be filled again with the Spirit; indeed this is what the Spirit filled life is about, being refilled with the Spirit.

1Sa 11:5 Just then Saul came, following the oxen out of the field, and he said, What is wrong with the people that they weep? They told him what the men of Jabesh had said-

I pondered on 1 Sam. 10:16 why he didn't immediately tell others of his calling to be king, especially given the amazing signs and wonders he had experienced in the wake of the statement about him becoming king. Indeed, he had been anointed to be king. His silence could have been bashful humility, or it could have been a lack of faith in running with the possibilities now opened up to him. The fact Saul does nothing until he is now called by the Ammonite crisis could indicate his passivity to his calling. See on 1 Sam. 10:21.

The Lord Jesus called men, arresting them with His radical call in the very midst of daily life, just when they were throwing a net into the sea, at the most utterly inconvenient moment, even the most humanly inappropriate moment- such as being on the way to your father's funeral. The Son of God was actually acting as His Father

had done. Gideon was called whilst in the middle of threshing wheat in a time of famine (Jud. 6:1), Saul whilst he was out looking for lost cattle (1 Sam. 9:10) and again now whilst he was coming home from ploughing [following the oxen] one evening; David whilst he was looking after the sheep; Samuel whilst he was asleep; Amos whilst he was leading the flocks to water (Am. 7:14); and see too 1 Kings 11:29; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:1-13,18. In other words, the call of God comes to us right in the midst of ordinary, mundane life. Of this there can be no doubt. And the Lord Jesus called men in just the same way.

1Sa 11:6 The Spirit of God came mightily on Saul when he heard those words, and his anger was kindled greatly-

This seems another example of the Spirit of God touching his heart, giving him feelings, initiatives and ideas; all part of the Spirit of God touching his heart or mind (see on 1 Sam. 10:6,9,26). And the Spirit can work likewise today if we are open to receive it. The idea may be that when Saul heard those words, he became very angry in his spirit / mind, and the Holy Spirit then engaged with *his* spirit. His anger became God's anger, his flame of zeal to do something about the situation, to save... became taken over by God's Spirit and used by God. So far in the Biblical record, the phrase "his anger was kindled greatly" has only been used [twice] of God's anger being greatly kindled (Num. 11:10,33). And in that context, Yahweh's anger was greatly kindled when He "heard" (s.w. "heard those words") Israel's words of complaint (Num. 11:1). So as Saul could hear words and have his anger greatly kindled, so could God. God's Spirit and Saul's spirit intertwined. This is expressed as God's Spirit coming mightily on Saul. And we now better understand why Saul is condemned because he did not execute [literally "do"] Yahweh's wrath with Amalek (1 Sam. 28:18). In 1 Sam. 11:6, Saul's wrath had been Yahweh's wrath, Saul's spirit was Yahweh's Spirit, they both heard the words about Jabesh and the threat of Nahash, and were filled with kindled wrath. When Saul sought to express that against Nahash, God's Spirit was with him. But with Amalek, Saul had fallen out of sync with God's Spirit. And so that Spirit departed from him. His will was no longer that of his heavenly Father. This was the struggle of the Lord, "not My will but Yours", the subjugation of the human spirit and will to that of God.

1Sa 11:7 He took a yoke of oxen, cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, Whoever doesn't come forth after Saul and after Samuel, this is what shall be done to his oxen-

See on 1 Sam. 14:28,31. This is similar to what was done to call Israel to action against Gibeah and Benjamin (Jud. 19:29,30), and Jabesh were the ones who singularly refused to participate and respond. I suggest on :9 that Saul was seeking to show grace to them. Samuel was clearly identified with Saul and was effectively the joint leader at this point. He fades from view as Saul becomes more confident, and pride took over within him. Saul was a Benjamite, from Gibeah, sometimes called "Gibeah of Saul". Jabesh had been the only town to show grace to his tribe and city. Clearly this recent history is in Saul's mind because he cuts up the oxen and sends out the pieces just as the Levite did in the drama that led to the battles of Gibeah. His anger was that they were to be shamed, when he considered them the best of the best. And as discussed on :6, these feelings were God's. He feels of all His people that we are the best of the best, simply because He loves us.

The dread of Yahweh fell on the people, and they came out as one man-

This continues the theme of the Spirit of God being at work on human hearts, giving not only individuals but a whole people the required psychological attitudes and dispositions. The falling of the Spirit of God upon Saul is perhaps reflected in how an awareness of Yahweh "falls" on the people. And it is the common experience of the Spirit which leads to unity, "the unity of the Spirit", "as one man".

1Sa 11:8 Saul numbered them in Bezek and there were three hundred thousand men of Israel and thirty thousand of Judah-

As often noted, "thousand" doesn't mean necessarily a literal 1000, but can refer to families or military regiments. The size of Judah, a tenth of the entire community, is roughly appropriate to the twelve tribe nation. Bezek is about 20 miles from Jabesh.

1Sa 11:9 They said to the messengers who came, Thus you shall tell the men of Jabesh Gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance'.

The messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, and they were glad-

Jabesh was the town who had refused to help the rest of Israel in the war against Gibeah and Benjamin in Judges 19-21. That Saul should now help them was therefore an act of grace; although it could be read as him rewarding them for not turning against his tribe, the Benjamites (1 Sam. 9:1). But the fact the other tribes came to support Saul in saving Jabesh would indicate that he was spearheading a movement of grace. He did indeed begin well. See on :7. "You shall have deliverance / you shall be saved" is a clear statement of faith. Saul was confident he would win and save Jabesh. In fact this is the ultimate statement of faith- that we will be saved by grace.

1Sa 11:10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said to the Ammonites, Tomorrow we will come out to you and you can do to us what seems good to you-

The implication was that they had not had any offer of help and therefore the Ammonites in the pride were off guard (see on :3).

1Sa 11:11 The next day Saul put the people into three companies, and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and slaughtered the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who remained were scattered, so that no two of them were left together-

They had marched 20 miles overnight from Bezek, and were exhausted- and then entered battle at dawn. The victory was clearly a case of God empowering the weak. By splitting the people into three groups, Saul was trying to imitate Gideon (see too 1 Sam. 13:2), and likewise when he prohibited the men to eat anything while they were pursuing the Philistines (1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 1 Sam. 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 1 Sam. 14:24,28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5). And yet it was Gideon who refused the request of Israel to make him king; Saul's modelling upon Gideon was only superficial. Likewise we see many similarities between Saul's victory against the Ammonites and that of Jephthah in Jud. 10. Possibly Jephthah's foolish oath, that cost him the life of his daughter, was behind Saul's later oath to slay even his own son Jonathan if he had eaten during the campaign of 1 Sam. 14. Perhaps that oath was because of his desire to be a cardboard imitation of Jephthah- but as with his imitation of Gideon, it was without spirit and purely superficial.

1Sa 11:12 The people said to Samuel, Who was it who said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?'. Bring those men out so that we can put them to death!-

Saul was set up by God to fulfil all the hopes and expectations of Israel about a

human king. See on :4. The desire to kill fellow Israelites reflects the degree of cult following which Israel felt towards Saul. They failed to perceive that it was Samuel and God who had effectively challenged whether Saul should reign over them.

1Sa 11:13 But Saul said, No-one is to be put to death today, for today Yahweh has worked deliverance in Israel-

And the principle holds true. If we are in awe at the great deliverance Yahweh has worked in His Son, there should be maximum forgiveness and no judgment of our brethren. See on 1 Sam. 14:45. As noted on :2, there is another connection with the conflict with Goliath. Yahweh again "worked deliverance in Israel" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5); but it was through David. It could have been through Saul, through whom He worked such deliverance at the start of his reign (s.w. 1 Sam. 11:13). It was because David had the faith and humility to do what Saul potentially could have done, that Saul fell into a complex of spiritual jealousy against David.

David many years later copies Saul's spirit here in 1 Sam. 30:23 ["But all the wicked men and troublemakers among David's followers said, Because they didn't go with us we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, just each man's wife and children; then he can take them away and depart.

David said, You must not do that, my brothers, with what Yahweh has given us. He has preserved us and delivered the forces that came against us into our hand"]; and we see his humility in being willing to credit Saul with something good, and even being willing to learn from a man who hated him and later went wrong before God.

1Sa 11:14 Then Samuel said to the people, Come, let us go to Gilgal and reaffirm the kingship there-

We may well ask why this was necessary, seeing God had publically chosen Saul by lot in 1 Sam. 10. And why do this exactly at this time, after rather than before the victory? Perhaps this was all part of God psychologically setting up Saul to be a successful king. The introduction of him to Israel as their king was at a time when God had made him fulfil all their secular desires for a king. He was riding a surge of mass support. His failure was thereby the more culpable.

"Reaffirm" can mean to "renew" [as AV], and the word is elsewhere translated "rebuild". Renewal of the covenant did happen several times in Israel's history, and always it was after Israel had broken the covenant. There seems an intentional ambiguity as to what "kingship" was renewed- was it Yahweh's kingship, or that of Saul? It could be argued that it was Yahweh's kingship and not Saul's that needed "renewal" or rebuilding. But perhaps the ambiguity was intentional. The people were being given the chance at Gilgal to "renew" their acceptance of Yahweh as their king. But the next verse shows that they there reaffirmed Saul as their king. And then right away follows the wrath of God upon Israel through the hailstorm and Samuel's speech in 1 Sam. 12, where he basically condemns Israel for having chosen Saul. This would explain Hosea's comment that "all their wickedness was in Gilgal" (Hos. 9:15). We look in vain for evidence of some particular Israelite wickedness in Gilgal- until we accept that their refusal to accept Yahweh as king in Gilgal was the epitome of their wickedness. But this appeal to renew the kingship, to reaffirm Yahweh as their king, happened right after Saul had won a great victory and shot to rock star status with the people. By choosing a human king, they were making their loyalty to Yahweh as their king so much more difficult.

Israel had been given a chance to reject the kingship of Saul. But they had insisted upon it, and so they were reaffirmed in their choice. Despite setting Saul up for success, God gave them a king in His wrath (Hos. 13:11) knowing how things would turn out and their motives in asking for a king, and this seems to be the reference of Hos 9:15: "All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them". The mention of Gilgal is difficult because we are unaware that there was any more idolatry there than elsewhere. But probably the reference is to the way that Israel's demand for a human king at Gilgal was the epitome of their unfaithfulness to Yahweh; they thereby rejected Him as their king, master and husband; see on Hos. 10:3. Here we see God split- on one hand giving them their desired king and setting him up for success, on the other, knowing how things would turn out, doing so in anger. They of course claimed to still have Him as their king, just as Gomer protested she was still Hosea's wife whilst having affairs with others. As Hosea went through flashes of hatred against Gomer, so did God. But His hatred was for a moment, because Hosea's prophecies go on to declare His undying love for His people. We see here how answered prayer isn't necessarily an indication that we are pleasing to God, just as unanswered prayer is no indication of His displeasure. For He answered their prayer, giving them exactly the kind of king they desired- "in His wrath".

1Sa 11:15 All the people went to Gilgal and there they made Saul king before Yahweh in Gilgal, and there they offered sacrifices of peace offerings before Yahweh, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly-

The fact we have peace with God must inevitably produce joy, not necessarily arms round the neck and grinning from ear to ear, but the real spiritual joy of being at one with God. 1 Sam. 11:13- 15 recounts the offering of the peace offering to commemorate God's salvation of Israel, and their renewal of their covenant with Him. We should be able to say, at any given point in time, that we are confident that if Christ comes now, we will be saved. And in our times the breaking of bread meeting is an equivalent for the peace offering.

We note however that they offered peace offerings and rejoiced- despite having rejected Yahweh as their king, and His giving them a king in His anger (Hos. 10:13). This was not necessarily to say that they didn't have peace and fellowship with God. It simply reflects the complex standing of sinful, weak man before God when He has made major concessions to human weakness, and they have been made use of. But we note that the usual sequence is of sin offering, burnt offering [dedication after receiving forgiveness] and only then peace offering, celebrating peace with God. Here they claimed to celebrate peace with God, without recognition of sin and consequently vowing devotion to Him. For that alone is the way to actual peace with God. We may sing hymns and "Amen" words which glorify peace with God, just as they did, without first passing through the prerequisite experience of repentance, forgiveness and dedication to Him. And we can claim peace with God, as they did, when God is in fact angry, as He was with them at this time.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 12

1Sa 12:1 Samuel said to all Israel, I have listened to all that you said to me, and have made a king over you-

It was God who made Saul king (Hos. 10:13); Samuel here speaks on God's behalf, although not as a mere instrument of communication. Rather he is very much of one mind with Yahweh. Indeed God had listened to all they asked for, because Saul was set up by God to be exactly what they asked for. He was not only tall and apparently a born leader, but he was set up with dramatic military success just before he was proclaimed king. And military leadership was what Israel were looking for.

1Sa 12:2 Now, the king is your leader; I am old and grey-headed and my sons are with you, and I have been your leader from my youth to this day-

Samuel is making it clear, perhaps not without a touch of resentment, that they had chosen Saul over himself. "My sons are with you" could imply that he knew they were worthless and were another indicator that he was unable to lead the people because of them. Or he could be saying that his worthless sons were on their side, and they along with his sons had rejected him. He comes over as a faithful, hard working old man who had been rejected by his people and his sons; and yet thereby came to close relationship with God, not merely speaking on His behalf, but having the very same thoughts and positions as God.

1Sa 12:3 Here I am. Testify against me before Yahweh and before His anointed-

The reference is to Saul; he would have had in mind how his mother had hoped that he would be Yahweh's anointed (1 Sam. 2:9,10). It seems Samuel and Saul stood together before the people. Again we see Samuel's humility; he was not the anointed whom his mother had expected him to be. So often pride in a person comes from parental expectations of them. They easily become frustrated that they are not the one they feel they were born to be. And twice Samuel anoints other men to be Yahweh's anointed. When one of them doesn't work out, he is not chosen as the alternative. All to help him overcome any potential pride, and we all have had the same Divine humbling hand at work. "Here I am" was the phrase he used to God as a child in the sanctuary, and perhaps he is addressing the words to God again at this point. He is before Yahweh, to be used even in retirement as He wishes and not as his parents expected or hoped.

Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Of whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you-

This speech clearly inspired Paul, when he likewise affirms that his ministry has been with integrity (Acts 20). The insistence he had not stolen donkeys may refer to the donkeys of Saul which were lost and apparently found by Samuel (see on 1 Sam. 9:20). Saul accepts here that Samuel never stole his donkeys. Samuel never stole a donkey (1 Sam. 12:3), whereas Saul was to steal the donkeys of Israel (1 Sam. 8:16). Israel consciously chose a king who would take their donkeys, and rejected God's judge, Samuel, who never took their donkeys. The way Samuel protests this fact in 1 Sam. 12:3 suggests that despite his humility, he felt some bitterness and resentment about his rejection by Israel, chafing a bit at God's humbling hand as discussed above on this verse. But God comforts him that He feels the same.

1Sa 12:4 They said, You have not defrauded us or oppressed us, neither have you taken anything from any man-

This is tantamount to saying that unlike Eli with his sons, Samuel was known not to have profited from the corruption of his sons (1 Sam. 8:3). For Samuel's sons are in

view (see on :2). We note they were judges in Beersheba (1 Sam. 8:2), a long way from Ramah and the small circuit of towns in that vicinity which had been judged by Samuel.

1Sa 12:5 He said to them, Yahweh is witness against you and His anointed is witness this day that you have not found anything in my hand. They said, He is witness- Samuel is setting this up as a kind of court case, where he is tried and found innocent, with Yahweh and Saul as witnesses corroborating the testimony of the people. Saul was witness in that Samuel is at pains to show that Saul never gave him anything in return for being anointed by Samuel. It was all God's choice. And we can infer from this that he never accepted the coin which Saul's servant intended to give him.

1Sa 12:6 Samuel said to the people, It is Yahweh who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt- Samuel had earlier made the point that it was Yahweh *Himself* who had brought the people out of Egypt (1 Sam. 10:19). But in practice He had done this through appointing Moses and Aaron. The judges and Samuel were appointed in the same sense. Hos. 12:13 uses the same phrase to say that it was by a prophet that Yahweh brought Israel up out of Egypt. And Samuel was the prophet of their times who had been used by God. But the ministry of prophets was to come to an end in Saul, who didn't continue prophesying after.

1Sa 12:7 Now therefore stand still, that I may plead with you before Yahweh concerning all the righteous acts of Yahweh, which He did to you and to your fathers- "To plead" is to enter into judgment, but the context implies a debate, hence the questions now asked. The process of final judgment likewise will involve questions and statements regarding our lives, such as the dialogues in the parable of Mt. 25.

The righteous acts Samuel now pleads with Israel to accept all refer to His gracious saving of a sinful Israel. For in acts of saving sinners, Yahweh declares His righteousness; and thus Paul perceives that His righteousness was supremely declared on the cross. These "righteous acts" were the great acts of :24; Yahweh's greatness is supremely shown in the way He saves sinners and continues working with them when they are unworthy and of minimal response to His grace. Indeed this is what the history of God's encounter with man is all about. Samuel was pleading with the people to realize that God's grace over history meant they should never abuse that grace as it had been abused before. And the record of God's history with His people is likewise an appeal to us not to abuse grace.

1Sa 12:8 When Jacob had come into Egypt and your fathers cried to Yahweh, then Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place-

The 'settling' in the land meant the destruction of nations like the Ammonites and Philistines who were currently threatening Israel. And this of course was done without any human king; the leadership by Moses and Aaron was the pattern Israel were intended to follow.

1Sa 12:9 But they forgot Yahweh their God, and He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them-

The danger was that through having a human king, Israel would again forget Yahweh their God. At Samuel's time, Israel were under Philistine domination, with the Israelites living under the control of Philistine garrisons in their towns (1 Sam. 10:5). This therefore was because Yahweh had brought this situation about, in response to Israel forgetting their God. The relevance to the exiles was that they felt forgotten by Yahweh when it was in fact a case of them having forgotten Him; and that was why they were in the hands of their enemies, in exile (s.w. Is. 49:14; 51:13; Jer. 3:21; 13:25; Hos. 2:13). They were not to look for a human king to lead them back from exile, but to rather believe that Yahweh Himself could do this.

1Sa 12:10 They cried to Yahweh and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken Yahweh and have served the Baals and Ashtaroth; but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies and we will serve You' -

This was not the best attitude. Surely they should have confessed and forsaken their sin of idolatry, promising to serve Yahweh; and then ask for deliverance from their enemies. But they appear to make serving Yahweh dependent upon whether He saved them from their enemies in response to their desperate plea. And yet despite this poor attitude, Yahweh was still pitiful toward them. Such was and is His grace. At the point of Jud. 10:13, Yahweh had said that because Israel had persistently forsaken Him and served other gods, "I will save you no more". But they did continue to forsake and serve other gods, and yet He continued to save them. This is simply His grace, exercising His right to not do according to the judgment He states, just as parents do with disobedient children.

1Sa 12:11 Yahweh sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety-

The deliverance from enemies was through judges like Samuel, and not through a king. Their request for a king to save them from their enemies was therefore a rejection of how God had worked with them in the past. It was as good as saying that they were rejecting Yahweh's salvation, which is what they did when they rejected Jesus, Yehoshua, Yahweh's salvation, and instead pledged their loyalty to Caesar as their only king.

We notice that Samuel refers to himself in the third person. When asked who he was, John's reply was simply: "a voice". Amos, in the same way, was told not to keep on prophesying; but he replies: "I am no prophet... the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy" (Am. 1:14,15 RV). It's almost contradictory: 'I'm not a prophet... I am a prophet'. He was truly selfless, like, John, just a voice for God. Samuel spoke of himself at a distance from himself when he told Israel: "The Lord sent Jerubbaal... and Samuel... and delivered you" (1 Sam. 12:11).

The history so far quoted has shown that Yahweh personally intervened to save His people [not a king], and that He had used the judges as leaders in order to militarily save Israel (:11), or had sent individuals like Moses to lead them (:8). All this is effectively appealing to Israel to abandon their desire for a human king, even at this late stage, and with Saul appearing such an ideal saviour and candidate. It is in fact a last minute appeal for repentance. God's desire that they abandon the plan was very strong. For this comes after the anointing of Saul, after the election of Saul by God before all Israel, and after the Divinely empowered victory over Amalek. God was leading them the way they wanted to go, and yet pleading with them to go a higher way. And so He oftentimes works with man. They repent after the thunder and

hail destroy their crops- but it was the poor kind of repentance which is only mental, and still they clung on to the wrong course, in their case, desiring a human king.

The kingship treaties of the surrounding world all presented the king as the chosen, blessed representative of the god they worshipped, absolutely commended by the god. The whole account of Saul's kingship is the very opposite; Yahweh, the God of Israel, warns the people against the king He is giving them.

In assessing the character of Samson and how he judged Israel 20 years (Jud. 15:20), we must factor in 1 Sam. 12:11, a comment about Samson that commentators have generally not given due weight to: "Yahweh sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety". The context is Samuel arguing that Israel didn't need a king to deliver them from their enemies, because they had had judges like Samson who delivered them. This certainly suggests that Samson did achieve something more than a few personal scraps with the Philistines, motivated by his personal anger issues. But it's not recorded. The Philistines themselves described him as "our enemy, the destroyer of our country who has slain many of us" (Jud. 16:24). Which encourages us to think that in God's wisdom, He has intentionally chosen to just record Samson at his worst, the low points of his life. To demonstrate that a believer [as Hebrews 11 treats Samson] may have very low moments, poor motivations etc. and yet still be a believer. It's no bad exercise to mentally write a spiritual autobiography of yourself, recording only you at your lowest moments. And yet by grace through faith, you too will be saved eternally.

1Sa 12:12 When you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to reign over us', when Yahweh your God was your king-

The threat from Nahash had apparently been there for quite some time, and was not only against Jabesh but "against you". Their desire for a king was not only a rejection of Yahweh as king, it was a seeking for military deliverance from their enemies by a charismatic, powerful army leader, rather than through faith in Yahweh. They may not have worked it all out psychologically, it was all unconscious; but the truth was, they knew subconsciously that for Yahweh to deliver them, they had to trust Him and be solely obedient to Him, and quit their idols. But if they could find a strong military leader to deliver them, then they were free to continue the status quo in their religious lives.

1Sa 12:13 Now therefore, see the king whom you have chosen and whom you have asked for; Yahweh has set a king over you-

The people chose Saul. But God did. We conclude that He chose the man whom they would've chosen- handsome, the tallest man in Israel etc. He knew whom they would've chosen, and so He chose such a person. As noted on 1 Sam. 11:4, God gave them exactly the kind of king they wanted; tall, strong, and now with a record of military deliverance behind him. God had thereby psychologically set them up to hope that the promised new king would actually bring the charismatic deliverance they expected of a secular king- and he did. This setting up of expectation was all from God. He really wanted to arrange things so that Saul had the support and respect of all Israel. And He gave them what they wanted. As Samuel stood there with Saul next to him, the tallest man in Israel who had just won a miraculous victory over their enemies- he was indeed the king they had asked for. Given in God's anger (Hos.

10:13). Saul's ultimate failure was therefore all the more culpable, because he had been set up for success- as is everyone called by God.

1Sa 12:14 If you will fear Yahweh and serve Him, listen to His voice and not rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then it will be well with both you and the king who reigns over you-

If all Israel had been obedient to Yahweh, then Saul would have been too and all would have been well for him. If a majority are spiritually minded, this can at times and in some ways influence a potentially weaker minority; even though the reverse is more often true. And yet Saul made the people "follow him trembling" because they weren't, *en masse*, spiritually stronger than him (1 Sam. 13:7). The application to the exiles was in that they had rebelled against Yahweh's commandment, and therefore things had not gone well for them and their king had been deposed (s.w. Is. 1:20; Lam. 1:18).

The principle explained here shows for all time that God didn't set Saul up to be a failure. The prophecies about him in 1 Sam. 8 could have been voided by his obedience. But he chose not to. As with Nineveh, there is always the real possibility of changing outcomes during the gap between prophecy and fulfilment. This is why it is foolhardy to try to work out chronologies of latter day events according to Bible prophecies- because Israel's repentance can affect the nature of their fulfilment and they are not duty bound to come to pass.

We note too that the new relationship between Yahweh and His people was still based upon some kind of covenant, disobedience to which would bring judgment (:15). Still He sought some level of covenant commitment with them, even if it was a lower level of commitment from them than He desired.

1Sa 12:15 But if you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh but rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then the hand of Yahweh will be against you, as it was against your fathers-

This point is being made in the context of warning them of the dangers of having a king. They were to be aware that humans are like sheep, and tend to go where they are led. By having a human king, they would be more likely to follow him rather than obeying the voice of Yahweh. In some contexts it is true that the stronger and more charismatic the human leader, the harder it is for the flock to have a personal relationship with Yahweh.

1Sa 12:16 Now therefore stand still and see this great thing which Yahweh will do before your eyes-

To "stand still and see" was the language of the invitation to behold the miracle of the salvation at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:13, cp. 2 Chron. 20:17). And again, thunder and water were involved. But it was here an invitation to see their material blessings destroyed, after the pattern of the plague of hail destroying the harvest of the Egyptians. But through that judgment, salvation was intended to come in that it would elicit their repentance. So "stand still and see" still has a salvation context.

1Sa 12:17 Isn't it wheat harvest today? I will call to Yahweh to send thunder and rain, and you shall know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the eyes of Yahweh, in asking for a king-

This recalls the plague of thunder and hail upon Egypt which destroyed their harvest. The language of calling to Yahweh also recalls Moses in Egypt. They had acted as

Egypt, who were led to destruction through their king; and so they were punished likewise.

1Sa 12:18 So Samuel called to Yahweh, and Yahweh sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared Yahweh and Samuel-

To fear Yahweh is parallel here with knowing and seeing the greatness of their sin (:17). And yet such is the perversity of human nature that despite perceiving their sin, there was no change of plan. And in fairness, it seems God had chosen to give them their request, and had set things up for Saul already by this point. We can imagine the people being angry with Samuel for destroying their harvest by his prayers, but they "feared" him, perceiving the connection between Yahweh and Samuel.

1Sa 12:19 All the people said to Samuel, Pray for your servants to Yahweh your God that we do not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king- They feared death from the hail, it was so strong. Again we note that they ask Samuel to pray for them not to die, rather than directly praying to Yahweh themselves and repenting to him. Humanity shies away from the wonder of direct personal relationship with God. Many today prefer to hide at the bottom of a huge supposed hierarchy of priests, bishops, denominational membership etc.- rather than accept direct personal relationship with God. Just as God wished to speak directly to Israel, but they ran away from Him and wanted Moses instead to report to them what God had said. See on 1 Sam. 12:6.

We see here how repentance has different levels. We expect them at this point to say something to the effect: 'And because we have sinned, we hereby ask that Saul not be our king, but just our military leader, our general; and we will go back to how things were before, we will "renew / rebuild the kingship of Yahweh over us as we were asked to in 1 Sam. 11:14". But there is none of that. Samuel however assures them that he will pray for them, and they should be careful to remain in covenant with Yahweh. We too face the reality of different qualities of confession, remorse and repentance in our own lives, and in those of others. Especially in family and church life. We are incapable of sifting through levels of remorse and repentance; our duty is to forgive. We see here how their rather low level of repentance, although sincere enough, was accepted. They could remain within covenant relationship with God even with that. But they were urged to remain in that covenant relationship. We likewise may choose to remain in relationship with those whose repentance or remorse appears shallow, and who remain in the grip of the wrong decisions they have taken because they aren't strong enough to retract them or totally quit them.

1Sa 12:20 Samuel said to the people, Don't be afraid. You have indeed done all this evil, yet don't turn aside from following Yahweh, but serve Yahweh with all your heart-

This is Samuel's response to their request that he pray for them and save their lives. He agrees (:23), showing the degree to which prayer for others can indeed save them; but not before warning them that they are not to think that his prayer for them releases them from personal spiritual obligation. The people were very prone to dump their spiritual responsibilities upon others, and this was all part of the reason why it were better for them not to have a king.

Serving God with the complete heart precludes turning aside to idols (:21). We have no mental space for them. If we don't serve God whole-heartedly, we will serve the idols of this present age. There's no third road.

As discussed on :14, there was no inevitability about the prophecies concerning Saul in 1 Sam. 8. They did not have to come to pass. Just as after his rejection as king, Saul could still have been saved- so after Israel's rejection of God as King, they could still be His people and serve Him with all their hearts. God so respects human freedom that He doesn't tell them to the effect 'Well if you are indeed penitent, then drop your idea of having a human king'. He accepts that having a human king is still their heart position, and seeks to still work with them and have them as His people. This is such a far cry from simplistic church judgments against 'sinners' and demanding quantifiable signs of repentance.

1Sa 12:21 Don't turn aside to go after vain things which can't profit or save you, for they are vain-

Only God can save [AV "deliver"]. The Israelites were looking for a king to deliver them, and they are being warned that only Yahweh can save / deliver, as He had done through the saviours raised at the time of the Judges. No king can deliver / save of himself, and to believe this was another form of idolatry. The idols are described repeatedly as vain and foolish- words which are so true of the spirit of our age today. Dt. 32:15–24 describes just how angry God gets when His people give their devotions to these things: Israel “scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know ... that your fathers did not fear... and He (God) said: ‘I will hide My face from them... for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith. They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols... I will heap disasters upon them”. Is. 65:3 LXX is just as clear: “[Israel] burn incense on bricks to demons, *which exist not*”. The idols of the nations, representing as they did the supposed ‘demons’ of the cosmos, were “vanity” because what the demons and gods they supposedly represented did not exist – they are “beings that are nothing” (1 Sam. 12:21 LXX), “a thing of nought” (Jer. 14:4). Their equivalent in our age is to fill the mind with things of nothing.

The lesson for the exiles was not to look to nations or idols which also could "not profit" (s.w. Is. 30:5; 44:9,10; Jer. 2:8,11 etc.).

1Sa 12:22 Yahweh will not forsake His people-

God forsaking Israel was a punishment for their sin (Jud. 6:13; 2 Kings 21:14; Is. 2:6; Jer. 23:33). God would forsake Israel if they forsook Him; and they had (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). God will only not forsake those who love Him (e.g. Dt. 4:31; 31:6; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14; Is. 41:17; 42:16). But Samuel assures them the paradoxically, Yahweh will not forsake them- because of His grace and desire to as it were will through His plan of salvation.

For the sake of His great name, because it has pleased Yahweh to make you His own people-

Samuel assures them that God's amazing grace to His people is part of His essential character which is "His great Name".

1Sa 12:23 As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh in ceasing to pray for you; I will instruct you in the good and the right way-

Samuel said that to cease to pray for sinful Israel would be to sin against the Yahweh. The need is in itself the call to prayer. To not pray for people is a sin- one of the easiest sins of omission to commit. And our sins against those sinful people we omit

to care for are sins against Yahweh. He watches very carefully our attitudes to hopeless sinners- because we ourselves are in that same category before Him.

1Sa 12:24 Only fear Yahweh and serve Him in truth with all your heart; consider what great things He has done for you-

The great things Samuel has just listed in their history all involved the greatness of God's grace in saving His sinful people, as discussed on :7. These "great things" were the "righteous acts" of :7, the paradoxical, fathomless grace of :22. Yahweh's greatness is supremely shown in the way He saves sinners and continues working with them when they are unworthy and of minimal response to His grace. Indeed this is what the history of God's encounter with man is all about.

1Sa 12:25 But if you still do wickedly you will be consumed, both you and your king-
In the face of so much Divine activity to save them, they would be destroyed if they continued to work against God's efforts to save them. And indeed Saul and Israel were "consumed" together in the massacre by the Philistines (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:10). It was because despite all God's efforts with them, they had continued to "do wickedly". "Your king" may be to contrast with Saul being called Yahweh's anointed in :3,5. If they sinned, and Saul refused to act as Yahweh's anointed, then he would simply become again "your king", the man they wanted. As with several Old Testament characters, Saul could have been Yahweh's anointed and was set up to be that. But he and Israel failed to be and want His Christ. And this came to its full term in their rejection of His Son as the Christ / anointed.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 13

1Sa 13:1 Saul reigned a year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel-
This may be some idiom now hard to understand, perhaps meaning 'when his reign was established'; some versions of LXX omit the verse. Or remembering that the chapter breaks are artificial and not inspired, it could be that the events of chapter 12 are within the first year of his reign and what we now read is in the second year. If Saul reigned forty years (Acts 13:21) but was rejected in the second year of his reign, then his reign would have been miserable indeed, the majority of it spent knowing he had been rejected. However the 40 year reigning period may need to be interpreted some other way, for his son Jonathan appears to already be an adult at this time (:2). I suggest that this is an idiom or metaphor here, which we may not currently be able to decode. Paul speaks of Saul reigning 40 years having just spoken of the 40 years wandering, which is also not an exact figure as they wandered 38 years. Saul, David and Solomon are all recorded as reigning 40 years, and we wonder whether this isn't a literary device rather than a literal figure.

1Sa 13:2 Saul chose three thousand men of Israel, of which two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the Mount of Bethel, and one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin, and the rest of the people he sent back to their tents-

This continues Saul's imitation of Gideon, sending potential soldiers back home because he believed God could save by many or by few. Saul was trying to imitate Gideon (see too 1 Sam. 13:2), and likewise when he prohibited the men to eat anything while they were pursuing the Philistines (1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 1 Sam. 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 1 Sam. 14:24,28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5). And yet it was Gideon who refused the request of Israel to make him king; Saul's modelling upon Gideon was

only superficial. As in 1 Sam. 11:11, he seems to have split the troops into three groups of 1000 each, again imitating Gideon. His aim was to use them to attack the Philistine garrisons in Gibeah, Michmash and Bethel.

It seems the 2000 and 1000 were some kind of permanent force under the command of Saul and Jonathan. Jonathan must have been very young at this time, if indeed Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21); although I suspect the reference to 40 years is symbolic. Paul says it to make a similarity with the 40 years in the wilderness he has just spoken about. The reigns of Saul, David and Jonathan were all 40 years, so this may be an example of where Semitic languages use numbers and periods in a non literal sense.

1Sa 13:3 Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear!-

"The garrison" could be "the governor", suggesting Jonathan assassinated him. If Geba is the same as Gibeah, the home of Saul and Jonathan, this would make sense. "Hebrew" is literally 'one who has passed over'; he may have in view the Israelites who were on the other side of the Jordan river. Having attempted to follow Gideon's example of not needing many men (see on :2), he now is desperate for every Israelite he can get; his faith didn't hold up. Despite Jonathan's victory it seems Saul himself didn't bring deliverance from the Philistines, for by the time of the conflict with Goliath the Hebrews were under severe threat from them. So Saul's early promise of being a military deliverer just didn't come true. His failure to live up to his potential as a king and military leader led to his depression and jealousy complexes. If he had humbly accepted he was not the man best fit to be king, and just lived a quiet life with the Lord after his rejection as king, then he would still have been saved.

1Sa 13:4 All Israel heard that Saul had attacked the garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were gathered together to Saul in Gilgal-

I suggest the sense of "All Israel heard..." runs on from :3. Saul asked all Israel to "hear" when he blew the trumpet. But they were to "hear say" that he had slain the Philistine garrison. When it was Jonathan who had done so. He clearly was seeking to present himself as the deliverer from the Philistines, which is what Israel expected from their king. We see too the seeds of jealousy which would twice lead him to try to kill his own son Jonathan.

As noted on :2,3, Saul's imitation of Gideon by sending soldiers home was merely surface level spirituality. Now he wanted every soldier he could get. We note that Saul was given credit in the publicity material [as it were] for the attack, when it was Jonathan who did it. We therefore see pride creeping in to Saul. See on :17. Saul was potentially enabled to free Israel from the Philistines, but he failed to have the personal faith required. The main victories against them were by Jonathan and David. And this explains his great jealousy against them both, even planning to slay Jonathan at least twice (1 Sam. 14:39; 20:33).

1Sa 13:5 The Philistines assembled themselves to fight with Israel: thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen and people as numerous as the sand which is on the seashore, and they came up and encamped in Michmash, east of Beth Aven-

See on 1 Sam. 14:28,31. As often noted, "thousand" doesn't mean necessarily a literal 1000, but can refer to families or military regiments. Otherwise in this case the

proportion of horsemen and chariots is wrong. It was Israel who were to be as the sand on the seashore, but the Philistines were a quasi Israel.

1Sa 13:6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in great peril and the people were distressed, they hid themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, coverts and in pits- This is alluded to in Heb. 11:38, implying amongst these people who hid were those with faith. And the context of Heb. 11 is faith in the things of the Kingdom and Messiah Jesus. They believed that although they were now in free fall before their enemies, the day of Israel's Kingdom and true saviour Messiah would one day come. To flee is not necessarily a lack of faith (Mt. 10:23).

1Sa 13:7 Now some of the Hebrews had gone over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead, but Saul was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling- Israelites persecuted for their faithlessness crossed the Jordan into the territory of Gad (1 Sam. 13:7). This is fair commentary upon the situation in Josh. 22:19,25, where the Israelites accused Gad of falling away from Yahweh worship, and the people of Gad explained that they feared that the other Israelites would make the Jordan a boundary which they would use to exclude them from Yahweh worship. All these fears and speculations about the future are here shown to be inappropriate. Actually the very opposite worked out. And this is the problem with so many divisions between brethren; they are based upon fears of possible futures, and the passage of time often shows the opposite working out. See on 1 Sam. 14:16.

1Sa 13:8 He waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel, but Samuel didn't come to Gilgal-

This refers to the command of 1 Sam. 10:8. All the other signs and commands had been fulfilled by Saul, but this one required patience and the need to remember it. Perhaps he assumed that because he had kept all the other commands at that time, this one needn't be obeyed. It's as if obedience to all those commands given in 1 Sam. 10 was required to make his kingship valid. And yet it seems rather a "one strike and your out" mentality to remove the future kingship from him for this one failure. The reasons for rejection were because of Saul's heart. There was nothing wrong with Saul offering the sacrifice. He had earlier been given the "thigh and what went with it" when first anointed by Samuel as king (1 Sam. 9:23,24). This was what was to be given to the priests (Ex. 29:27; Lev. 7:32-34; 10:14,15; Num. 6:20; 18:18). Saul was set up to be a king-priest. But God had been searching for a man after His heart. Saul had God's heart in the matter of rescuing Jabesh, but not in anything else. So Saul's rejection from the kingship was not because of a technical disobedience, but because his heart was not right. Another alternative is that in his opening training when first called to the kingship, Saul had been trained to wait until Samuel came and made the offerings (1 Sam. 10:8). And he obeyed. Now the lesson learned is repeated- and he fails. We have similar things in our lives. There are similarities of circumstance not only within our lives, but between our lives and those of others. Thus as Samuel tarried longer than Saul expected, so Amasa "tarried longer than the set time which [David] had appointed him" (2 Sam. 20:5). Circumstances repeat within our lives and between our lives and those of others in Biblical history; that we might learn the lessons and take comfort from the scriptures, that man is not alone.

"The time set" can refer to a feast, but also simply to a festival arranged by Samuel for the making of peace offerings. Samuel was not a Levite, and the gatherings for the peace offerings were therefore not necessarily to keep Mosaic legislation.

And the people were scattered from him-
They were no longer following him trembling (:7), but were scattered from him.

1Sa 13:9 Saul said, Bring here the burnt offering to me, and the peace offerings. He offered the burnt offering-

Saul was not wrong to offer the offerings because he wasn't a Levite. For neither was Samuel, and David wasn't either and yet made such offerings (2 Sam. 24:25). The point is that he wasn't obedient to Samuel's inspired words, and was likely not qualified to make the offerings as he was not at peace with God.

Are we going to be like those Israelites who offered a peace offering, when actually they were not at peace with God at all (1 Sam. 13:9; 2 Kings 16:13; Prov. 7:14; Am. 5:22)? Are we going to be like Israel, who offered peace offerings, and then rose up from their tables to worship idols and indulge their flesh (Ex. 32:5,6)? These are challenges especially appropriate to the breaking of bread meeting, which is a kind of new covenant equivalent for the peace offering.

We need to be aware how kingship was understood at that time in both Canaan and the surrounding area. The king was seen as a king-priest, his absolute authority meant that he was both a political and religious leader. God's style was different. Samuel continued as priest, and Saul was intended to be the political leader who could unite Israel according to their desire for a king, and then lead them to military victory. But they also wanted a king "like the nations" around them. And Saul's understanding of kingship was likewise influenced by the surrounding, worldly view of kingship. It was this which led him to sin by assuming the priestly office and thus considering Samuel unnecessary.

1Sa 13:10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, to greet him-

The idea seems to have been that the war of independence against the Philistines was to be begun by sacrifice and establishing peace with God first. But Saul didn't see the importance of this and impatiently wanted to get on with the campaign, without waiting for Samuel to pronounce God's blessing upon it. Saul wanted to push through the sacrifices as mere ritual, trusting in his own strength for the looming war. This was what was so displeasing to God; the issue was not that Saul wasn't a Levite. For neither was Samuel. He was judged for these things apparently harshly, losing the kingship because of it. But his actions which are condemned reflected deeper bad attitudes. We too have surely been guilty of over hasty prayer, dashing into enterprises in our own strength and with prayer and spiritual devotion effectively relegated to a mere formalism, assuming that time is of the essence rather than spiritual devotion. Circumstances repeated to give him another chance to learn the same lesson (1 Sam. 14:10), but he failed again.

It seems that Saul was about to offer the peace offering after having offered the burnt offering, but then Samuel arrived. And he never got to offer the peace offering. The burnt offering represented dedication to God, and always preceded the peace offering in the Mosaic legislation. Peace with God could only be celebrated after offering total devotion to Him. And Saul it seems was stopped from making the peace offering, because he was not at peace with God.

1Sa 13:11 Samuel said, What have you done?-

Surely said to recall the situation in Eden when God questioned Adam and Eve, who had been established by Him as the rulers of His Kingdom as it then was (s.w. Gen.

3:13; 4:10). And there is a similar initial attempt to deny any wrongdoing. See on :43. Saul repeats these words to Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14. It's a psychological classic-putting his own condemnation upon another, and transferring his punishment onto an innocent person whom he had set up to take that punishment.

Saul said, When I saw that the people were scattered from me and that you didn't come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines assembled at Michmash- Saul says the truth, to an extent. His trembling followers were deserting by the hour (:7,8) and the Philistines were only ten miles away. He needed to go ahead as quickly as possible instead of waiting for Samuel's religiosity. He gave in to the common human feeling, that religion is fine but we have to get on and live our secular lives as secular people. And he was severely judged for this attitude, as a warning to us all. And as noted on :16, his fears and perceived need to act quickly were in fact misplaced.

The people were scattering away from Saul, and he gives that as the reason for his disobedience. We may consider that rejection from kingship because of offering sacrifice was rather extreme and legalistic. I suggest that the essential reason for his rejection was that he had failed to lead Israel. They were scattering away from him; he had failed to inspire them spiritually to remain and fight in faith. I suggest on 1 Sam. 15:24 that this was the same reason why he was rejected from being king then. He was failing to be a true King for them.

In :2, Saul had sent some of his men home in imitation of Gideon. But now his remaining men start to leave him. Gideon's forces were twice reduced by God. But now Saul faces the second reduction, he goes into crisis mode and his faith fails. His imitation of Gideon had been of a surface nature. He had not really accepted the principle that God can save by many or by few.

1Sa 13:12 I thought 'Now the Philistines will come down on me to Gilgal, and I haven't entreated the favour of Yahweh'. I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt offering-

Saul passes off his inattention to spiritual things and treating the offerings as mere rituals by saying that in fact he wanted to ask Yahweh's favour. Saul had been commanded to wait for Samuel. That was the commandment he disobeyed (:13). "Forced myself" is always elsewhere translated "restrained myself". But the opposite was the case. He had no restrained himself and waited for Samuel. Yet Saul implies he had been tempted to dash into battle without seeking Yahweh's favour, but he restrained himself. We have a chilling insight here into mentality and self justification which we have surely all had at times. And it cost Saul the Kingdom.

"Said I" [NEV "I thought"] is Saul's self talk. We have a lot of information about his self talk. Later he says, clearly within his heart, that his daughter will be a snare to David, the Philistines will kill David etc. This is there to show that he was not a man after God's heart.

Saul argues he could not make any supplication to God without sacrifice. But he could have just prayed. He has the same misconception as Eli, who thought prayer could not be offered privately. Saul says he refrained himself to offer sacrifice, as if it had been an act of self control. When in fact it was his impatience and lack of trust in God which led him to do it, along with his fear that if he delayed more, his men would leave him. Samuel's delay was therefore to test what was in his heart. Would he personally pray and go to war? Would he delay further, losing more of his men as he

did so, trusting God could save by many or few? His response showed his heart and this was what God was looking at.

Samuel's telling Saul of his rejection by God was similar to how he had had to tell Eli the same, including that he was to be replaced by another. One experience, even in childhood, prepared him for another similar one.

1Sa 13:13 Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of Yahweh your God which He commanded you- Saul later admits he has "done foolishly"; but David uses the same term about himself several times, e.g. when he numbered Israel. He thereby shows that he doesn't consider himself essentially better than Saul; he rather sees himself as the one who believed in God's grace whereas Saul proudly believed only in himself.

Saul had been commanded to wait for Samuel. That was the commandment he disobeyed. David felt preserved by God from Saul and his other enemies (1 Sam. 30:23; 2 Sam. 22:44), because he had preserved or obeyed [s.w.] God's ways (2 Sam. 22:22,24; Ps. 18:21,23); whereas Saul didn't obey / preserve them and was destroyed (1 Sam. 13:13,14; 1 Chron. 10:13). Hence Ps. 145:20: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy".

We enquire why Samuel appears to judge Saul so harshly for this. It's true that Saul shouldn't have offered the sacrifices without a priest; yet David offered exactly the same types of offerings likewise, e.g. in 2 Sam. 24, and is accepted for doing so. And surely it counts positively that Saul even wanted to offer them? Whilst Saul was not set up to fall, it seems this hard judgment of him was because God knew that in his heart he was far from God and had not retained the major outpouring of the Spirit which he had received. And so he is told that he would be replaced by a man who had God's heart (:14), because he had shown here that he didn't have a Godly heart.

For now Yahweh would have established your kingdom in Israel forever- God had set up Saul with the chance of success, and even of becoming the Messianic king with an eternal kingdom. See on 1 Sam. 11:1. We see here the various possible futures which God is aware of and has set up. This makes us appreciate more the huge significance of human freewill decisions. They open up various pathways and destinies which God has enabled. Saul chose not to go this pathway towards the eternal Kingdom, and so there kicked into operation the pathway to destruction which Israel had been warned of when he first became king. But God's foreknowledge in no way made it inevitable that Saul go down that path.

This may not be removing Saul from kingship, but simply saying that his descendants would not be king. He would not be the father of a royal dynasty. The personal removal of kingship would come in 1 Sam. 15. Saul's later argument with Jonathan that Jonathan might not become king is therefore a disbelief of this judgement. Jonathan's comment to David that David would be king and he would be next to him... reflects his faith in this judgement.

1Sa 13:14 But now your kingdom shall not continue-

Perhaps it was God's plan to immediately remove the kingship from Saul, but in practice He yet further delayed it in the hope of Saul's more meaningful repentance.

Yahweh has sought for Himself-

God was and is in search of man, looking at human hearts. God's search for man is a repeated theme of the prophets. "Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like

the first fruit on the fig tree, I saw your fathers" (Hos. 9:10). "He found him in a desert land... He encircled him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of his eye" (Dt. 32:10). "I have found David my servant" (Ps. 89:20). "I said, Here am I, here am I... I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people... I called, no one answered" (Is. 50:2; 65:1,2; 66:4). Jeremiah speaks of running to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, searching her squares on God's behalf, to see if he could find a single man who did justice and wasn't greedy (Jer. 5:1,5; 6:6,13; 8:10). God looked, and was deeply shocked that He found no man: "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His own arm brought salvation" (Is. 59:16). It's not simply so that men search for God and then find Him in Truth. He is in search for man. So it's not us as it were reaching out to God; He is fervently reaching out to us, and we have to come to realize that. We don't so much as find God, as realize that He already is earnestly with us. This explains how wonderful is the moment when both sides meet; all heaven rejoices when the woman finds her lost coin, or the shepherd His sheep. As the Yiddish proverb says, "And going out to find Him, I met Him coming towards me".

The Hebrew for "seek" is that for "require". The requirement was that God's king would have God's heart and go the way of His will. The same Hebrew term is used for how Saul sought the man David, firstly when seeking a man to calm his mania, and then seeking the man David to slay him (1 Sam. 16:16; 25:29 and so often). Saul was surely being nudged to perceive that the man he was seeking was in fact the man God had been seeking to replace him. Jer. 5 speaks of God searching for those who are searching for "truth" with Him, and David so often speaks of searching for God in his psalms. But Saul was searching for David, for donkeys... God had given Saul a new heart (1 Sam. 10:9) but now his heart is found deficient. He had failed to retain the spirit / heart that he had been given. Just as men receive the Spirit at baptism, but fail to retain it or be re-filled with it. God is still in search of hearts / minds that are after Him, that want to do His will. We are to let the mind of Jesus be in us, to beg God to create in us a new heart, to feed that mind, to work together with God to form it.

We may well enquire why God would as it were be bothered to remove Saul, and find a good replacement in David. His reaction to Israel's insistence on having a king was to tell them what a bad man he would be, and how they would beg for him to be removed. God could have adopted the approach that "You chose the bed, so you must lay on it". But once Saul is being a bad king, God starts looking for a good man to replace him. We again marvel at how God changes because of His compassion.

Samuel surely would have thought of the curse upon Eli in 1 Sam. 2:35 "I will raise Me up a faithful priest who shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind". Surely this was to be him, Samuel? As discussed earlier, Samuel was surely the ideal candidate. But to save him from pride, he was to be the kingmaker rather than the king. God's search for a long and a priest with His mind only came to full term in the Lord Jesus, who came to do God's will having His law in his heart (Ps. 40:8). We too are to aspire to this, doing the will of God from or in our hearts (Eph. 6:6). We may too quickly assume that the man after God's own heart was David. God indeed "tried" with David as He did with Saul. But His search for such a man to be king was only finally met in the Lord Jesus. This would make better sense of our inevitable feeling that David was not totally after God's own heart- no man apart from the Lord has been.

A man after His own heart-

“After” can mean “in pursuit of” as in “the police are after him” and “the miner went after gold”. David's heart wasn't totally as God's, but it was his desire for this that Yahweh so loved.

David had been chosen to replace Saul because David was a man after God's own heart. But this didn't lift David up with pride. He realizes that the kingship would be nothing but grace (Ps. 119:76,77) and tender mercy toward him. We can also reflect that being after God's own heart didn't mean he was perfect; for Ps. 119 contains many verses where David at this time of scrutiny by God admits to sin and longs to be more spiritually minded. But we too can be after God's heart without being perfect; He looks at the overall desires of a person rather than actual achievement.

On the other hand, this high estimation led to David subsequently being over confident as to the state of his heart (e.g. Ps. 26:2). David was confident not only of legalistic obedience but also of a heart in which God would find nothing wrong. Indeed David had been considered a man after God's own heart, but it seems this led David to assume that from then on, his heart would be always found perfect before God. He didn't remain the idealistic, spiritually minded shepherd boy. And this assumption that how he was at one point in his life was how he would always be... led him into his sin with Bathsheba.

Spiritual mindedness is the seal of the Spirit, the guarantee that we will eternally be there with Christ in His Kingdom; for having “Christ in you” is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). To bring every thought into captivity to Christ; to be able to say with Paul “but we have the mind of Christ”. But I think that Paul got there (in the end), and like me you've probably met even a few in your ecclesial experience who apparently ‘got there’ by the end of their days – who had “the mind of Christ”, and whom we laid to rest in sleep knowing that truly, “I knew a [wo]man in Christ”. For all his failure and dysfunction, David is given the amazing accolade – ‘a man after God's own heart’ (Acts 13:22). And remember, this was God's very own estimation of David. We really can be ‘after God's own heart / mind’. We must not think that human nature of itself precludes this; for it didn't stop David coming to this point. May we find true fellowship with each other as we walk towards that same goal, knowing that “we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (Jesus), are (being, slowly) transformed into the same image, from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18).

It's worth remembering that at the point he was told that another person was to replace him, Saul didn't know David. He may well have assumed that the person in view as a replacement was in fact his son Jonathan. This would explain the tensions between Saul and Jonathan.

And Yahweh has appointed him to be prince over His people, because you have not kept what Yahweh commanded you-

The fact God allowed Saul to continue ruling may mean that even this change of purpose with Saul was open ended, and could still be changed if he repented. For David had not yet been anointed.

1Sa 13:15 Samuel arose and went from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men-

Decreased from the 1000 in each brigade of :2. Some would have deserted or fled over the Jordan (:7), others were slain. We note Samuel's continued involvement in things. For indeed Saul had been raised up by God with the potential ability to free Israel from the Philistines.

1Sa 13:16 Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were with them stayed in

Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash-

Saul had justified his offering because he considered that time was of the essence in attacking the Philistines. But in fact it seems he didn't do so. And it was to be Jonathan acting alone who gained the victory and not himself. Saul was therefore dominated by thoughts of how the situation required him to act, and quickly; rather than waiting in faith, and then he would have realized that neither his action nor immediacy of action were actually required.

1Sa 13:17 Raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned towards Ophrah in the land of Shual-

This left the camp depleted, opening up the camp to Jonathan's attack. This raises the question as to whether acts of faith require us to all the same act wisely. Ophrah was the home of Gideon (Jud. 8:27), whom Saul was imitating at least on a surface level (see on :2-4). Perhaps the Philistines were aware of this and sought to reverse his "three companies" strategy in imitation of Gideon by sending out their marauders in three companies.

1Sa 13:18 another company turned towards Beth Horon, and another company turned towards the border land overlooking the valley of Zeboim facing the wilderness-

There seemed a particular emphasis upon the territory of Benjamin, as if the Philistines were punishing them for having a member of their tribe become king. This would have taught the people the folly of what they had done. And it thereby created pressure upon Saul to defeat the Philistines. The fact he personally didn't win the dramatic victories against them [Jonathan and David did] all contributed towards his failure and depression.

1Sa 13:19 Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears-

The Babylonians did the same to the Jews in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; they took captive all the metalworkers so they couldn't make weapons (2 Kings 24:14; Jer. 24:1; 29:2). Again, we see evidence that the choice of events to record is in order to help the exiles see that their situation was not unique and was not without historical precedent.

1Sa 13:20 All the Israelites went down to the Philistines to have their ploughshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened-

"Went down" suggests a reversal of the situation at the conquest of the land, where the local inhabitants remained in the mountains and Israel in the lowlands.

1Sa 13:21 The price was two thirds of a shekel to sharpen a mattock and a ploughshare, and one third for the forks and axes, and to set the goads-

We may well ask why such detail is given. The amount of detail given in the Biblical record varies enormously. It can be likened to a cameraman zooming in and out; and here the zoom is very much on the fine details, the goads being "set", and coins being handed over. The prices were high, that may be the idea- with the implication that the Israelites were impoverished and unable to afford much agricultural technology, and therefore enduring a hard life under Saul's reign. This all sets up David for mass popularity after he led Israel to victory against the Philistines.

1Sa 13:22 So on the day of battle no soldier had either sword or spear among the people who were with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and Jonathan his son had swords and spears-

The result of this was that the Israelites became skilled in the use of slings and bows. It was this which resulted in David being an expert slinger and able to slay Goliath. If they had had access to swords, then the logical thing would have been to try to fight Goliath with sword and spear. But there was no expertise in the use of these weapons. And so we see how providence works out. Because of their oppressed situation, David became a skilled slinger- and slew Goliath.

1Sa 13:23 The garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash-

"When the Philistines heard that Saul with his six hundred men had joined the small force already at Geba with Jonathan, they sent a body of men to occupy an eminence higher up in the defile which lay between Geba and Michmash. The purpose of this was to keep the route open, that so, when they pleased, they might send a larger body of troops up the defile in order to attack Saul. It would also keep a watch upon his movements, though they could have had no expectation that he would venture to attack them. It was this garrison which Jonathan so bravely attacked, and by his success prepared the way for the utter defeat of the enemy".

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 14

1Sa 14:1 One day Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armour, Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison on the other side-

A fair case can be made for thinking that this young armourbearer was David. We marvel at Jonathan's initiative and spiritual ambition.

But he didn't tell his father-

It seems Saul was deeply aware that he had not delivered Israel from the Philistines because he hadn't the faith to do so; and so he was deeply spiritually jealous of Jonathan and later David. It's worth remembering that at the point he was told that another person was to replace him (1 Sam. 13:15), Saul didn't know David. He may well have assumed that the person in view as a replacement was in fact his son Jonathan. This would explain the tensions between Saul and Jonathan, and why Jonathan didn't tell Saul of his plans. For Saul had taken credit for Jonathan's previous victory (see on 1 Sam. 13:4).

1Sa 14:2 Saul stayed on the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron; the people who were with him were about six hundred men-

"Pomegranate tree" is "Rimmon" and could possibly refer to a place name. Saul no longer had two groups of 1000 under his direct control (1 Sam. 13:2).

1Sa 14:3 Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of Yahweh in Shiloh was there, wearing an ephod. The people didn't know that Jonathan had gone-

Yet Eli's family had been cursed in 1 Sam. 2,3. It could be that this person in later life experienced the curses. But it would be far from the only time in Bible history where a curse is pronounced but not carried out. There is a gap between Yahweh's prophetic pronouncements, and their fulfillment. And in that gap there is the possibility for

repentance. In 40 days, Nineveh was to be destroyed; but it didn't happen, because they repented. This is what gives intensity to our prayers and repentance, knowing we too live in such a gap. This Ahijah could be the Ahimelech of 1 Sam. 21:1.

1Sa 14:4 On each side of the pass by which Jonathan intended to go over to the Philistines' garrison there was a rocky crag; one was called Bozez and the other Seneh-

Literally, a tooth of rock. To climb it with enemies at the top would have seemed a mad idea. "Bozez" can also mean "slippery", again presenting the impression that to abseil it with enemies above and watching was almost suicidal. But Heb. 11:34 clearly sees what they did as "by faith".

1Sa 14:5 The one crag was on the north in front of Michmash and the other on the south in front of Geba-

Bozez was the northern crag, and Seneh the southern one. "Was on" is literally 'was set as a pillar'. We get the impression of needing to make an almost perpendicular, vertical ascent of sheer rock.

1Sa 14:6 Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armour, Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised people-

The implication was that because they were circumcised, they were in covenant with God; and therefore He was able to use them. Covenant relationship involves far more than circumcision, but clearly Jonathan felt in covenant with God, at a time when many in Israel were clearly not. He believed that for those in covenant, one man could make a thousand flee. And this is what indeed happened. Even though Israel were probably generally not in covenant with God and had effectively rejected that covenant by insisting on a human king, the blessing of covenant relationship could still apply to individuals. And so it is today for those who feel they live in the midst of an apostate church.

Perhaps Yahweh will work for us, for nothing can hinder Yahweh from saving, by many or by few-

The idea of the Hebrew underlying "Perhaps..." is rather that surely, Yahweh will do so. We note that Jonathan's motivation was to save- to save others. There was no desire merely for personal glory nor settling perceived old scores.

1 Sam. 30:21 LXX says that in his fight with the Amalekites, David "had caused them [the 200 weaker of his soldiers] to remain by the brook of Bosor". This would mean that the decision to leave them was David's and not theirs. He had learned the lesson of Gideon, and knew he didn't need numbers for victory. It was the lesson of his friend Jonathan's victory, that the Lord could save by many or by few (1 Sam. 14:6). We may learn a lesson [and David may have been Jonathan's companion at that time], and then find our grasp of it tested again, decades later.

"Hinder" or 'restrain' [as in restraining the clouds from raining, or a woman's womb from pregnancy] is the same word used [unusually and rather strangely] in 1 Sam. 9:17 of how Saul would "reign over" the people. He would restrain them. But Yahweh is not restrained. As the Lord was to later teach, if we can believe, anything is possible; it's not the case that "If You can do anything, please do". Rather is it that we limit what God will do by our own faith level. The unrestrained nature of Yahweh, His boundless possibility, should inspire our faith as it inspired Jonathan.

1Sa 14:7 His armour bearer said to him, Do all that you have in mind; I am with you

according to your heart-

This is a colloquial expression and is therefore hard to translate. We really are reading the actual words said by this brave young man in response to Jonathan's spiritual ambition. The idea is "On with you; I will follow". "According to your heart" is the same Hebrew as we have recently encountered in 1 Sam. 13:14- Yahweh sought a man "after his own heart". At one with Him. It's as if we are given now an example of what that means. If indeed the armour bearer was David, he was both after God's heart and after Jonathan's heart- which implies Jonathan's heart in this matter was God's heart.

Ps. 35:2,3 presents God as our armour bearer- if we do His will. He carries our shield and draws out and gives us the spear or weapon we need in whatever conflict, 'With us wherever we go'. Armour bearers were seen as totally loyal- as Jonathan's was to him, and as Saul's was to him. We are therefore given the impression of God's total loyalty to us wherever we go on our initiative in His service. Jonathan took amazing initiative here. He was alone before God, neither the people (:3) nor his father knew what he was doing. Such is the spirit of all God's true children- we think of Nehemiah looking around the ruins of Jerusalem at night, alone. Relationship with God is about individual initiative and enterprise, no matter how tiny and low level- and He is so eager to be our armourbearer in it.

It seems that the armourbearer was David. He and Jonathan grew up only 10 miles away from each (Jonathan in Gibeah of Saul, David in Bethlehem). In the early Israel of those days, it is almost certain that they knew each other from their youth. So it is possible to speculate that David was in fact "the young man that bare (Jonathan's) armour" in the heroic conquest of the Philistine garrison in 1 Sam. 14. Note how Saul also calls him "young man" in 1 Sam. 17:58. There was evidently an intense spiritual and physical rapport between Jonathan and his armour bearer which was similar to that described between Jonathan and David. "I am with thee according to thy heart" (14:7 AV) has firm connection with David and Jonathan being described as having their souls knit together in 1 Sam. 18:1. The record of David's battle with the Philistines in 2 Sam. 5:17-24 has certain similarities with the exploits of 1 Sam. 14:8-11; as if, years later, David replicated his early adventure of faith. David already had a reputation in Israel for being "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war... and the Lord is with him" (1 Sam. 16:18), even before the Goliath incident. This would be understandable if he had gone with Jonathan in chapter 14. His becoming *Saul's* armourbearer (1 Sam. 16:21) would then be seen as a logical promotion from being Jonathan's armourbearer.

1Sa 14:8 *Then Jonathan said, We will cross over to them and let them see us-* "See us" is the word for denuding, also translated "exile". The exiles were encouraged that what seemed impossible could be achieved.

1Sa 14:9 *If they say 'Wait until we come to you!', then we will stay where we are and will not go up to them-*

This seeking for a sign connects with Gideon's similar desire before going into battle. There are clear connections between Jonathan and Gideon; compare 1 Sam. 14:10-20 with Jud. 7:3,10,11,14,22. Jonathan's son was called Merib-baal (1 Chron. 9:40), meaning 'rebellion against Baal', an epithet for 'Gideon'. Gideon was Jonathan's hero; it's not wrong to have such Biblical heroes! Saul also imitated Gideon, but on a surface level; for Gideon refused to be king over Israel because Yahweh was their king. See on 1 Sam. 19:5.

1Sa 14:10 But if they say 'Come up to us!', then we will go up, for Yahweh has delivered them into our hand. This will be the sign to us-

Such an invitation would be a sign of pride, laughing at the two young men who had no chance of climbing up and then fighting them. Again, as with Nahash (see on 1 Sam. 11:3), pride was to go before a fall. And Jonathan perceived this, hence his giving them an opportunity to mockingly and arrogantly invite them up to them.

1Sa 14:11 So they revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, and the Philistines said, Look, the Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in!-
From their perspective so high above them, indeed the two men would have appeared as small animals emerging from their holes and crawling upwards to their destruction.

1Sa 14:12 The men of the garrison shouted to Jonathan and his armour bearer, Come up to us and we will show you something! Jonathan said to his armour bearer, Come up after me, for Yahweh has delivered them into the hand of Israel-

Jonathan's confidence was because he saw their extreme arrogance. He was utterly persuaded after the victory over Nahash because of his pride (see on 1 Sam. 11:3) that therefore God would surely give the victory.

1Sa 14:13 Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet and his armour bearer followed, and the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour bearer followed and killed behind him-

It has been observed that "a single stone rolled down upon them while thus clambering up the precipitous side of the cliff would have sent them to the bottom". The arrogance of the Philistines in not doing so was what brought about the victory; see on :10. If indeed David was the armour bearer, we have the impression that he who began inspired by Jonathan, following his example, moved ahead to in turn inspired Jonathan. And this is indeed what true spiritual fellowship and friendship is all about.

"Killed behind him" suggests Jonathan brought the men down, presumably with sling stones (:14 LXX), and then the armour bearer killed them after they had fallen. Just as David did to Goliath.

1Sa 14:14 That first slaughter by Jonathan and his armour bearer killed about twenty men in an area of about half an acre-

LXX "with darts and slings and stones of the field". I noted on 1 Sam. 13:22 that because of their lack of iron weapons, the Israelites became skilled in the use of slings and bows. It was this which resulted in David being an expert slinger and able to slay Goliath. If they had had access to swords, then the logical thing would have been to try to fight Goliath with sword and spear. But there was no expertise in the use of these weapons. And so we see how providence works out. Because of their oppressed situation, David became a skilled slinger- and slew Goliath. And Jonathan likewise. This was all a preparation for the victory against Goliath.

1Sa 14:15 Then panic struck the whole Philistine army, those in the camp, in the field, and among all the outposts and raiding parties, and the ground shook. There was panic-

Unaware that there were only two attackers, the Philistines would have run in confusion to the narrow tongue of land where the exit was, which served as a

bottleneck. It seems that Yahweh then sent an earth tremour, which would have added to their sense of panic. This was also the Divine element in it all, lest it appear totally a victory for human strength and bravery. God likewise works in human life today, lest any man should boast. The Philistines out in the field on raiding parties would have been panicked by the sight of the garrison rushing down the pass at great speed.

1Sa 14:16 Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin saw that the army had melted away and scattered-

They would have had a wonderful view across the pass of two men causing an army to flee. It was the view in mind in Heb. 11:34: "Through faith... turned to flight the armies of the aliens". It was a powerful visual fulfilment of how one man in covenant relationship with God could cause a thousand to flee before him. The Philistines would have fled down steep descent of Aijalon toward Bethel (:23)—the same pass where Joshua had won his first great victory. The idea is that there was a reconquest of the land, in God's strength. The tables had turned; the people had followed Saul trembling and melted away (1 Sam. 13:7,8), but now the Philistines were doing just this (Heb.). "Melted away" is the same word used of how the inhabitants of Canaan were to melt at the conquest by Joshua. The impression is of a reconquest of the land.

1Sa 14:17 Then Saul said to the men with him, Count now and see who is missing from us. When they had counted, Jonathan and his armour bearer were not there- Saul was so proud that he was most concerned as to who was going to get the personal glory for this victory which he himself should have gotten; for he was Divinely set up as Israel's military saviour.

1Sa 14:18 Saul said to Ahijah, Bring the ark of God here. For the ark of God was with the Israelites at that time-

LXX "the ephod". The word "bring hither" is usually used of the ephod. "Withdraw your hand!" (:19) is more appropriate to getting a yes / no decision from the urim and thummim within the ephod, which was required in order to eliminate options and decide who was missing. The presence of the priest logically suggests the ephod with Urim and Thummim was present rather than the ark.

1Sa 14:19 While Saul was talking to the priest the tumult in the camp of the Philistines went on and increased, and Saul said to the priest, Withdraw your hand!- This again reveals Saul's impatience to put spiritual things first. He failed to learn the lesson he failed to learn in 1 Sam. 13:10. Circumstances repeated to give him another chance, but he fails again. He considered religious / spiritual things as a mere formality, and wanted to get on with the work in his own strength without waiting for God's word to him.

"Withdraw your hand!" could mean that Saul is asking the priest to give up enquiring of God through the ark, because he sees that there is great confusion amongst the Philistines and he doesn't want to waste any more time but feels he must move into battle with the Philistines as soon as possible. This was exactly the position he had been in in 1 Sam. 13- he had wanted to engage in battle with the Philistines quickly, and so he gave up waiting for Samuel to come. He is tested again on this point, and again fails. Situations repeated in his life, as they do in ours. We note that the ark actually doesn't help him- which is a great theme of 1 Samuel, that the ark doesn't help of itself. See on 1 Sam. 4.

1Sa 14:20 Saul and all the men with him were gathered together and came to the battle, and found that every man's sword was against his fellow; a very great confusion-

"Confusion" is the word used of how an Israel faithful to the covenant would destroy the inhabitants of Canaan with "confusion" (Dt. 7:23). Jonathan shows himself very aware of the covenant and word of Moses, presumably as a result of Samuel instructing him.

1Sa 14:21 Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines previously and had gone with them into the camp, turned to join the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan-

One letter different would turn "Hebrews" into "servants". This reading would make better sense here, and the idea would be that the servants were freed.

1Sa 14:22 Also all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines had fled, followed hard after them in the battle-

This again supports the impression that they were chasing their enemies as promised for obedience to the covenant. And yet by grace, the righteousness and blessing of Jonathan was really being extended to them.

1Sa 14:23 So Yahweh saved Israel that day, and the battle moved beyond Beth Aven-
The reference is to Bethel. See on :16. The judges had been Israel's saviours on Yahweh's behalf, and the idea seems to be that although they now had a human king, God saved them just as He had done under the judges.

1Sa 14:24 The men of Israel were in distress that day-

The same word used of how they had been distressed by the Philistines in 1 Sam. 13:6. The idea was that Saul was effectively oppressing them as the Philistines were. LXX "Saul did very foolishly".

Because Saul had bound the people with an oath saying-

He had called out to them the words of the curse, and made them shout back their consent. Again, a surface level imitation of Moses without any spirit to it, just as he imitated Gideon in the same way.

Cursed is the man who eats any food before evening, and I have been avenged of my enemies. So none of the people ate any food-

See on 1 Sam. 11:11 and on 1 Sam. 14:27,31. This was a surface level imitation of Gideon winning a great victory when desperately hungry. But he failed to follow Gideon's example of refusing to be Israel's human king when asked to be, because Gideon unlike Saul believed that Yahweh alone was to be Israel's king. Such surface level imitation of others' spirituality is something which can be fallen into so easily. Saul's desire for personal vengeance upon his enemies is sadly deficient in any desire to see God's glory. God patiently tried to correct him by then asking him to work for Him, as His agent, in executing *His* vengeance or punishment upon *His* enemies (1 Sam. 15:2). We would have given up with Saul, but God so patiently still wanted Saul as His man.

1Sa 14:25 All the army came into the forest, and there was honey on the ground-

The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And

yet Saul was precluding the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33).

1Sa 14:26 When they had come to the forest the honey was oozing out, but no-one tasted any because the people feared the oath-

As noted on :25, the idea is that the land was literally flowing with honey; and they were precluded from experiencing that blessing because they feared Saul and had made a covenant with him, rather than glorying in the fulfilment of Yahweh's covenant with them. "Oozing" is literally 'flowing like a river'. And likewise, obedience to narcissistic leaders precludes so many from experiencing the blessing of true covenant relationship with Yahweh on a personal level.

1Sa 14:27 But Jonathan hadn't heard when his father commanded the people with the oath, so he dipped the end of his rod into the honeycomb and ate some, and his eyes brightened-

The allusion is to Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit and having their eyes enlightened. But everything is inverted. Jonathan had done the right thing, and Saul's attempt to play God had gone totally wrong and brought curse instead of blessing. The allusion to the events of Eden is to demonstrate how Saul had everything so spiritually inverted, because he was just trying to follow spiritual precedent on a surface level without any spirit to it. We noted on 1 Sam. 13 that Saul's rejection as king was not simply because of some technical infringement, but rather because of his state of heart. And here we see the state of his heart, playing God, eager to condemn, to transfer his own guilt and need for judgment onto another.

Paul may have had Jonathan in mind as typical of the church when he spoke of our eyes being enlightened (Eph. 1:18), using the very words of 1 Sam. 14:27 concerning Jonathan. He was a type of us, devoted to David-Jesus. Saul saw Gideon as his spiritual hero, and this was a senseless, surface level imitation of Gideon devoid of spirit: 1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 13:6 = Gideon offering before fighting Midian; 14:5,20 = Jud. 7:22; 14:24 = imitating Gideon and his men going without food; 14:28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5; 11:7 = Gideon killing his father's oxen. But he failed to follow Gideon's example of refusing to be Israel's human king when asked to be, because Gideon unlike Saul believed that Yahweh alone was to be Israel's king.

1Sa 14:28 Then one of the people said, Your father bound the people with an oath saying, 'Cursed is the man who eats food this day'. The people were exhausted- "Cursed is the man..." reflects the Mosaic making of covenant with Israel. Again we see Saul attempting to mimic spiritual precedent, as he did the example of Gideon and God forbidding Adam to eat the fruit in Eden, but with no spirit to it. He was all about surface level spirituality and appearances, and he came therefore to such a tragic end. A true warning for us all.

1Sa 14:29 Then Jonathan said, My father has troubled the land-

Unlike Saul, Jonathan's Biblical allusions are appropriate. Here he refers to how Simeon and Levi provoked problems amongst the inhabitants of the land (Gen. 34:30), and how Achan stopped Israel from victory against those inhabitants by his own pride and narcissism (Josh. 7:25). A far greater victory could have been one against those inhabitants, but Saul had precluded it by his arrogant legalism.

In both the Achan story and here in 1 Sam. 14, the guilty party is chosen by lot and progressively going through families to reveal the guilty. Jonathan's perception of Saul as Achan is confirmed by the events of 1 Sam. 15, where Saul keeps for himself the best things which were intended to be dedicated to Yahweh- just as Achan did. And there are other parallels. Both Saul and Achan were associated with a group of 3000 soldiers when they stole the spoil (Josh. 7:4; 1 Sam. 13:2). Ai was near Beth Aven (" Ai, which is near Beth Aven", Josh. 7:2), and this is where Saul troubled Israel (1 Sam. 14:23). Saul expresses his sin in the very Hebrew words used by Achan, who said "I have sinned.... and broken the covenant" (Josh. 7:15), whereas Saul says likewise "I have sinned... and broken the commandment" (1 Sam. 15:24). Saul like Achan came to his end by dying along with his sons, and ultimately being burnt with fire ["burnt them" in Josh. 7:25 is the same phrase used of Saul and his sons in 1 Sam. 31:12). But Saul seems to challenge the connection with Achan; he instead transfers it onto Jonathan, in a classic case of psychological transference. For he uses the words of Joshua to Achan when he asks Jonathan "My son, tell me what have you done?" (1 Sam. 14:43 = Josh. 7:19). Saul is Achan, the troubler of Israel, and the connections made by the record make this clear. But he seeks to transfer this on to Jonathan. Again we see the Biblical record giving us in depth psychology of the human condition. We must beware of this tendency to transfer our guilt onto others, instead of trusting that it has been transferred onto the Lord Jesus as the ultimate guilt offering. Again the record makes a point in this connection; the people argue in 1 Sam. 14:45 "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance (Heb. 'shuah', alluding to 'Joshua', 'Yahoshuah', Yah's salvation) in Israel? ". They are saying: "Jonathan is Joshua and you are Achan, whereas you are trying to say that you are Joshua and Jonathan is Achan, talking to him in the very words of Joshua to Achan".

Please look how my eyes have been brightened because I tasted a little of this honey-

Jonathan is aware of how his father has alluded to God's command in Eden about not eating the fruit. He now acts like Eve, justifying what he has done and encouraging others to do so as she did to Adam. But he does so to demonstrate how Saul has got it all the wrong way around.

1Sa 14:30 How much better it would have been if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies? Would not the slaughter among the Philistines have been greater?-

This reflects Jonathan's humility. He had won a great victory against the Philistines, slaying many of them. But he considers it a small victory compared to the potential possible, which his father had precluded.

1Sa 14:31 They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. The people were exhausted-

Their exhaustion is now stressed again (:28). They still refused to follow Jonathan's example and eat. They so feared the oath to Saul, far more than seeing beyond that to the obviously correct spiritual argument of Jonathan. This reveals the fear of Saul in which they lived.

1Sa 14:32 and they pounced on the spoil, and took sheep, cattle and calves and killed them on the ground and ate them with the blood-

The essence of this has been seen so many times in church history. An insistence upon petty legalism leads people to commit major sin. They are more obedient to the party

line and the barked orders of their leadership, than to God. And the legalistic demands of their elders lead them to make utter shipwreck of their faith, breaking the most elemental principles of their covenant with God. Now that sundown had come and they were free from the oath to Saul, the people were totally disobedient to the covenant. They ate blood, and also killed calves and mothers on the same day (disobeying Lev. 22:28). For all this, they were to have God against them and be cut off from God's people; their behaviour in 1 Sam. 14:32 is portrayed as breaking every principle of the commands about eating blood in Lev. 17:10-14.

1Sa 14:33 Then they told Saul, Look, the people are sinning against Yahweh, eating meat with the blood-

The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33).

He said, You have broken faith-

He means, broken the covenant. But he has it all the wrong way around. For a land flowing with honey was a blessing for keeping the covenant, and he was precluding them from receiving that blessing by his arrogant legalism.

Roll a large stone here at once!-

This could represent the rolling away of their sin through repentance. But it may simply be that he was telling them to kill the animals and put their heads on a large stone to allow the blood to drain out. See on :35.

The great stone was to be a makeshift altar (:35), and he encouraged the people to offer sacrifice upon it. He was asking them to what he had done in 1 Sam. 13, and had been condemned by Samuel for doing so. It was as if he sought to justify his own sin by encouraging others to do it en masse. And that is psychologically credible. That's just what people do today. Likewise men insist upon some letter of the law when huge evil is in their hearts, in Saul's case, the plan to murder his own son for the sake of jealousy. We see the same in the hypocrisy of the Jewish leadership at the time of the Lord's crucifixion.

1Sa 14:34 Saul said, Go out among the people and tell them, 'Each man bring to me here his ox and sheep; kill them here and eat; don't sin against Yahweh by eating meat with the blood'. So each of them brought his ox with him that night, and killed them there-

But the commands of Lev. 17:10-14 were clear that doing this just once would lead to having God against them and being cut off from God's people. But Saul thinks that can just be disregarded if they get it right in future. He plays God, just as he did when framing his commandment in terms of the Mosaic covenant, and the command of God in Eden.

1Sa 14:35 Saul built an altar to Yahweh. This was the first altar that he built to Yahweh-

Saul had commanded them to roll a stone so as to prop up the slain beasts upon it and let the blood drain out (:33). It seems he now capitalizes on what had been done and declares this to be an altar to Yahweh, in surface level imitation of how the patriarchs had set up altars in thankfulness to Yahweh. But Saul is just declaring this an altar in an opportunistic sense; and unlike the patriarchs, he had never made an altar to Yahweh before. We get the impression that he just called it an altar and imagined the slain animals left to drain upon it as some kind of sacrifices. But typical of Saul, he didn't have the patience to do as David did, who built an altar and sacrificed burnt and

peace offerings upon it (2 Sam. 24:25). Literally "it he began to build as an altar to Yahweh", implying he didn't bother to finish it. Saul's impatience and subsequent lack of spiritual depth is what cost him the Kingdom.

We can infer that Saul rather liked building altars. As discussed on :33, he kept on sacrificing despite having been condemned for doing so in 1 Sam. 13. He was subconsciously struggling to accept God's rejection of him because of an issue relating to sacrifice. Accepting God's condemnation is critical. Having done so, we can move on to experience His grace. The argument in Romans depends upon this sequence.

1Sa 14:36 Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning, and let us not leave any of them alive. They said, Do whatever seems good to you-

David may be referring to this when he condemns Saul in Ps. 119:150: "They draw near who follow after wickedness, they are far from Your law". "Draw near" is a common idiom for offering sacrifice and worshipping God. But that sacrifice must be from men who are near to God's law, and not offering just as mere tokenistic ritualism. He may be alluding to Saul's insincere sacrifices and religious rituals which led to his rejection and David's choice as the next king (1 Sam. 14:36,38; 15:22).

But the priest said, Let us enquire of God-

Saul was not bothered about enquiring of God and having His blessing. It was all a question of external surface level religion. The law required that Israel go into battle having sought God's blessing. Saul wants to do this, but he gets no answer. Again he is being tested along the lines of how he was in 1 Sam. 13- to rush into battle without seeking God's blessing in the right way.

1Sa 14:37 Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel? But He didn't answer him that day-

Saul ultimately was judged as not enquiring of God (1 Chron. 10:14). Yet on a surface level he did (1 Sam. 14:36,37) and did so desperately at the end of his life. We have here a powerful challenge to our prayer life. For we can enquire of God on a surface level, as a kind of formality, to soothe the religious conscience which is somewhere in every man. But this is not to really enquire of Him.

Just before his final fight with the Philistines, "Saul enquired of the Lord (but) the Lord answered him not" (1 Sam. 28:6), and therefore he went to a witch. But in God's final analysis of Saul, Yahweh says that He smote Saul because Saul sinned against God's word by *not* enquiring of God, but of a witch (1 Chron. 10:13,14). But Saul *did* enquire of God (see 1 Sam. 14:37 s.w. 28:6), but God didn't answer him (note how often in the records it is stated that David enquired successfully of Yahweh). The point is that although Saul prayed to God and enquired of His word on the surface, in his heart, he did nothing of the sort; and therefore his prayer and enquiry was reckoned never to have happened. And we must ask how much of our prayer and Bible study is seen by God as being only spoken and read on a surface level. This was exactly the problem of natural Israel. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled (in prayer) upon their beds" (Hos. 7:14). "Though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him" (Hos. 11:7).

1Sa 14:38 Saul said, Come here, all you chiefs of the people and let us find out which of us has sinned today-

See on :36. Saul thinks that God's lack of answer by Urim and Thummim is because

someone amongst the people has sinned. But Saul's awful hypocrisy here was rebuked at the end of his life. God refused to give Saul an answer from Urim and Thummim because of his sin in not sincerely enquiring of the Lord (1 Sam. 28:6). He was made to learn that it was he and not Jonathan who had sinned at this time.

1Sa 14:39 For as Yahweh lives, Who saves Israel, even if it is Jonathan my son, he must die. But there was not a man among all the people who answered him-

Clearly Saul wanted to kill Jonathan. Saul was potentially enabled to free Israel from the Philistines, but he failed to have the personal faith required. The main victories against them were by Jonathan (1 Sam. 13,14) and David. And this explains his great jealousy against them both, even planning to slay Jonathan at least twice (1 Sam. 14:39; 20:33). See on 1 Sam. 20:30,31.

1Sa 14:40 Then he said to all Israel, You stand on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. The people said to Saul, Do what seems good to you-

The whole situation was contrived, so that Jonathan would stand publically before the people and be openly condemned. I suggest that Saul wanted to kill Jonathan because he was jealous of him, and he tried to do so again when he threw a javelin at him.

1Sa 14:41 Therefore Saul said to Yahweh, the God of Israel, Show me the right answer-

Or "show the innocent". Surely the armour bearer also ate the honey. Yet Saul intentionally sets up this kangaroo court to find Jonathan alone guilty. He sets up the choice as between the people on one side, and he and Jonathan on the other. Clearly he expected that he and Jonathan would be chosen, and then out of Jonathan and himself, Jonathan would be chosen. It was all set up by Saul from the start.

Jonathan and Saul were chosen, but the people escaped-

LXX adds: "And Saul said, O Lord God of Israel, why hast thou not answered thy servant to day? If the iniquity be in me or in Jonathan my son, O Lord God of Israel, give Urim: and if it be in thy people Israel, give Thummim". Saul sees the lack of immediate answer as being because Jonathan has sinned. And yet lack of immediate visible answer to prayer is not necessarily because of sin. We see here Saul's huge problem with impatience. He wanted everything immediately and before his eyes. When it didn't happen, he starts the blame game. We see this today in so many, who cannot wait for God because they demand He always acts in what they consider to be "real time", immediately and just as they envisage His response.

1Sa 14:42 Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. Jonathan was selected-

As suggested above, I think this was all orchestrated by Saul to lead up to a public condemnation of Jonathan, whom he wished to kill- so deep was his jealousy that great victories were won without him and by another. LXX adds: "And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son: whomsoever the Lord taketh by lot, let him die. And the people said unto Saul, This thing shall not be. And Saul prevailed over the people, and they cast lots between him and Jonathan his son, and Jonathan was taken".

1Sa 14:43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what you have done!-

This is the same question which Samuel rhetorically asked Saul when he condemned him to lose the kingship (1 Sam. 13:11). Yet Saul now assumes the authority of

Samuel in asking the question. It is a psychological classic; the man condemned by a question then asks that question of another, seeking to condemn him too. Things like this are powerful internal evidence that the Biblical record is true, and these words were actually said and these situations really happened.

Saul is also seeking to emulate the question of faithful Joshua to wicked Achan (Josh. 7:19). But he has it all the wrong way around, yet again. For Saul was like Achan, precluding the people from the victory which could have been theirs.

Jonathan told him, I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand, and now must I die?-

The Hebrew can also be read as him expressing willingness to die. But I suggest he phrases it like this, standing before all Israel, to elicit their sympathy and mass protest against his father's decision.

Jonathan's willingness to die may reflect the degree to which he understood that sins of ignorance are still sins and culpable. This principle is indeed true, and should be one driver in our desire to understand God's will.

1Sa 14:44 Saul said, God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan-

This indicates Saul's insincerity. He calls God as a witness that Jonathan must die; when clearly, he has orchestrated the whole situation because he wanted to slay Jonathan from jealousy. Saul's desire to slay his son is however deeper than simple jealousy. Saul has been told in 1 Sam. 13 that his kingdom, his dynasty, will not endure. Jonathan therefore was not going to be king, and Saul therefore viewed his son as useless. He was only interested in Jonathan insofar as his own dynasty could continue as king. If that had been cut off, then he wanted Jonathan dead. We have a window here into his extreme narcissism.

1Sa 14:45 But the people said to Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it!-

They are alluding to the words of Saul himself, who had put a stop to the call to slay those who resisted his kingship (1 Sam. 11:13). And the principle holds true. If we are in awe at the great deliverance Yahweh has worked in His Son, there should be maximum forgiveness and no judgment of our weak brethren. Jonathan had expressed absolute faith that God would work with him (:6), and He did.

As Jonathan wrought great salvation in Israel in 1 Sam. 14:45, so did David (the same phrase occurs in 1 Sam. 19:5). As Saul tried to kill an innocent Jonathan out of jealousy of his victory, so he did David- thus Jonathan shared the sufferings of David, as we do of Christ. Another example of this will be found in 1 Sam. 20:33, where Saul tries to kill Jonathan with a javelin, as he did to David. Yet wonderfully, David seems to have counted Jonathan *as if* he actually had been the champion against Goliath; he describes him as "the mighty" (2 Sam. 1:27), using the same Hebrew word translated "champion" in 1 Sam. 17:51 concerning Goliath. Likewise the Lord Jesus Christ shares his victory with us to the extent that he counts us *as if* we were the victors on Calvary.

As Yahweh lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day! So the people rescued Jonathan so that he didn't die- "Worked with God" alludes to Jonathan's trust that Yahweh would work with him regardless of his weakness (:6). Jonathan was therefore known as the worker together with God, and Paul makes him representative of us all when he uses this phrase of us. This is alluded to in Mt. 10:30; Lk. 21:18. See on 2 Sam. 1:23.

Paul speaks of the church as workers together with God (2 Cor. 6:1), probably alluding to Jonathan having "worked with God" here. Jonathan is seen as representative of us all. Our Lord too seems to have seen in Jonathan a type of ourselves. In the context of warning us that loyalty to Him would mean confessing him before men and conflict between fathers and sons, he encourages us that not a hair of our head will perish (Mt. 10:30 cp. Lk. 21:18). This is picking up the application of this phrase to Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14:45.

1Sa 14:46 Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own land-

It could be argued that the extent of the victory over the Philistines was again hindered by Saul. For we get the impression that after his loss of face regarding Jonathan, he stopped pursuing the Philistines. And so instead of wiping them out, they escaped to "their own land". Which of itself is a tacit recognition that the land of Israel was not free of the Philistines.

1Sa 14:47 After Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah and the Philistines; wherever he turned he defeated them-

However by David's time, he had to fight these same powers, and the situation at the time of Goliath indicates the abiding strength of the Philistines. Perhaps the record here reflects how Saul liked to see things; hence :52 reminds us that he failed to rid Israel of the Philistines throughout his reign.

1Sa 14:48 He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them-

Here we have an example, common in the Hebrew Bible, of a summary statement being made and then an explanation is given of how the stated situation came about. And so here we have the explanation concerning the Amalekites in the next chapter.

1Sa 14:49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi and Malchishua, and the names of his two daughters were Merab the firstborn and Michal the younger-

1 Sam. 31:2; 1 Chron. 10:2 read "Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua", whereas 1 Sam. 14:49 has "Jonathan, Ishvi and Malchishua". "Ishvi" may be another name for Abinadab; or we may note that the word means "and the second...", which would make sense in 1 Sam. 14:49. The genealogies of 1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39 also mention Esh-Baal or Ishbosheth; perhaps his name mentioning the "Baal" compound was the reason for its exclusion. Having such a name reflects upon Saul's lack of total devotion to Yahweh.

1Sa 14:50 and the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. The captain of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle-

God gave Saul's wives to David (2 Sam. 12:8), which would've involved David being married to both a mother and daughter- for he had married Saul's daughters. And this giving of Saul's wives to David may not have occurred simply after Saul's death. For David's eldest son, Amnon, was borne by Ahinoam (2 Sam. 3:2), who was initially Saul's wife (1 Sam. 14:50). Now this is not to justify sin. Adultery, taking another's wife or husband, is all wrong. Let there be no mistake. But God at times sees the bigger, or longer, perspective, and tolerates things which we may quite rightly find intolerable. And if He loves us despite of our sin and failure- are we surprised that we

are invited to show love to others in the face of their sin and failure toward us? A black and white insistence upon God's standards being upheld in the lives of others, demanding their repentance for having hurt us, is what has caused so much division between believers. Whilst God alone will apportion the guilt for this, in the final, unalterable, ultimately just algorithm of Divine judgment, it's worth observing that the fault for division isn't always with the sinners, the wider thinkers, the freewheelers; but with the inflexible intolerance of those in power. We must recognize that there will be anomalies in the lives of our brethren- just as there are in the lives of us all (if only we would examine ourselves ruthlessly enough to see them). And in some ways at some times, God goes along with them.

"Grammatically, "Saul's uncle" might refer either to Abner or to Ner, but it is almost certain that it must refer to the latter, so that Saul and Abner were first cousins". See on :51.

1Sa 14:51 Kish was the father of Saul and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel-

See on :50. Josephus reads this as: "And Kish the father of Saul and Ner the father of Abner were sons of Abiel".

1Sa 14:52 There was severe war against the Philistines all the days of Saul, and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he took him into his service-

This was in fulfilment of Samuel's inspired warnings of how Saul would pressgang men into his service. See on :47. He failed to rid Israel of the Philistines throughout his reign, even though he had been Divinely set up to do so.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 15

1Sa 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, Yahweh sent me to anoint you to be king over His people Israel. Now therefore, listen to the words of Yahweh-

We could interpret Samuel as meaning that he had anointed Saul to be king, and God had set Saul up for success. Yet he had been rejected from the kingship due to his impatient disobedience in 1 Sam. 13. But despite that, which apparently happened early in his reign (1 Sam. 13:2), he remained king. The fact God didn't immediately depose him may simply have been because he was being given a chance to repent. And perhaps now with the set of instructions given him regarding Amalek, he was being given an opportunity to prove he had learned the lesson, and to undo his mistake. He fails spectacularly, but we marvel all the same at God's grace in trying by all means to save him. We note too that Saul's calling began with sets of detailed instructions from Samuel, which he obeyed. Circumstances repeat in our lives, as God seeks to help us learn the lessons.

The Hebrew is literally "Listen to the voice of the words of Yahweh". See on :22. His "voice" was to be heard, but instead Saul heard the "voice" of the people (:24) and the "voice" of the bleating sheep which Saul coveted as his own (:14). And there we have it- the power of God's voice in His word must be louder than the voice of human opinion and the call of materialism and self-enrichment. This is the power of accepting God's word in the Bible as indeed His inspired voice. Hence :22,23 accuse Saul of not listening to the voice of Yahweh.

1Sa 15:2 Thus says Yahweh of Armies, 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel, opposing them when they came up out of Egypt-

It was God who was to do this; Saul is being invited to be His agent on earth, and not rule and fight in his own strength and to his own glory. For this was his problem. Saul's desire for personal vengeance upon his enemies in 1 Sam. 14:24 was sadly deficient in any desire to see God's glory. God patiently now tries to correct him by now asking him to work for Him, as His agent, in executing *His* vengeance or punishment upon *His* enemies, in respect of His people Israel. And yet Saul fails, because he is more interested in showing off the best animals he has captured and to have a powerful king whom he has conquered publically paraded. Rather than slaying the king and the animals as requested.

1Sa 15:3 Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have; don't spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and nursing baby, ox and sheep, camel and donkey'-

The reason for this command was because God wanted the glorification of His Name and His people, and if these things and persons were preserved, then they would have been paraded to Saul's glory. See on :2. And that was indeed his motive in preserving them. "Utterly destroy" translates the word used for religious devotion. Amalek was to be devoted to Yahweh in its condemnation, and the murder of everything living was to be seen as a sacrifice to Him. To keep some of His offerings for himself was therefore effectively Saul thieving from God.

Perhaps the command to destroy even the memory of Amalek meant that even their animals should be destroyed, lest any should even think "This is an Amalekite sheep". The call to spiritual mindedness means making similar decisions at times.

Despite his rejection by God in 1 Sam. 13 and poor behaviour to Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14, God now gives Saul a mission. Elijah likewise was relieved of his ministry on Horeb, and yet God still worked with him and gave him work to do for Him. We too must sense God's refusal to give up with man and His intense desire to work with us, even if on a lower level than what we were potentially capable of.

1Sa 15:4 Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim- 'Place of lambs'. The area was known for sheep and animals; the very best of the very best was kept by Saul for himself when clearly it was intended for devotion to Yahweh.

Two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah- The proportion of the men of Judah is very small. It could be that Saul was seen as showing nepotism to the tribe of Benjamin and his support within Judah was waning. "Thousand" more likely refers to a brigade or family.

We note that the large numbers who now came to Saul contrast with the 600 men he managed to summon in 1 Sam. 13, and the impression that many of his soldiers drifted away from him. Saul now seems to command Israel's loyalty again. Although it was Jonathan's exploits that had for a time reduced the Philistine threat, Saul perhaps had taken credit for that as he did for Jonathan's exploits in 1 Sam. 13:3,4. Despite his rejection from the "kingdom" in 1 Sam. 13, God is still clearly open to using him and giving him opportunities for obedience- and perhaps that is why He moved the men of Israel to loyal support of Saul at this time.

1Sa 15:5 Saul went to the city of Amalek and laid wait in the valley-

I have noted earlier that Saul tried to emulate the examples of faithful men like Moses

and Gideon. Here he is copying Joshua (Josh. 8:4). But he was emulating on a surface level only, with no real spiritual attention.

1Sa 15:6 Saul said to the Kenites, Go away from among the Amalekites so that I don't destroy you with them, for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites-

He could have been commanded to do this by God through Samuel. But if not, this shows some spiritual awareness and familiarity with Biblical history- which makes his sins all the more culpable. By doing this, Saul lost the advantage of making a surprise attack. But he put grace and care for people first (or perhaps at least Samuel insisted he did), and won the victory all the same.

1Sa 15:7 Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah to Shur east of Egypt-

This is not the Havilah near Yemen. It means "circle" and must refer to some spot in the south of Judah. "Shur" is literally "the wall", referring to the wall which ran from Pelusium past Migdol to Hero, resulting in the name "Mizraim" for Egypt, meaning 'the enclosed / fortified'. The idea is that Saul destroyed them to the Egyptian border.

1Sa 15:8 He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people-

"Agag" is the same consonants as "Gog", the leader of the latter day invasion of Israel in Ez. 38. But it is a generic name for the ruler of Amalek, like "Pharaoh". "Utterly destroyed" is the word for sanctification / devotion to Yahweh. The idea isn't that every Amalekite was destroyed, as David later fights with them. It could be argued that by keeping the best of the animals, and needing to care for them and not over drive them, Saul's men therefore didn't destroy as many Amalekites as they otherwise could have done.

We wonder why Saul spared Agag. Maybe Saul was so narcissistic he fancied having a great long as his personal slave. We wonder why otherwise Saul would have wanted to keep Agag alive.

1Sa 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, cattle, fat calves and lambs and all that was good, and wouldn't utterly destroy them; everything that was bad and worthless they destroyed utterly-

I suggested on :2,3 that the reason for this command was because God wanted the glorification of His Name and His people, and if these things and persons were preserved, then they would have been paraded to Saul's glory. And that was indeed Saul's motive in preserving them. By having a live, conquered king and impressive fat animals, Saul could boast of his personal military prowess. And the whole exercise he had been given in fighting Amalek had been designed to help him unlearn his personal pride, and work on God's behalf to God's glory, rather for his own. He failed totally. He ended up offering to God that which was "bad and worthless". And then trying to lie his way out of it. "Bad" is the word for "despise", and is used about how Eli and his sons had despised Yahweh's offerings (1 Sam. 2:30). Saul was intended to replace Eli but he had not learned from history. The relevance for the exiles was that they were in exile because they had likewise despised Yahweh's offerings (Ez. 22:8).

We observe that Saul spared Agag, although he was under the ban, and had to be slain; and yet had been so eager to kill his own son Jonathan. Clearly personal jealousy issues were huge in Saul's mind, rather than any obedience to Yahweh. We

see too how Saul's disobedience was also because of materialism. He wanted those fine sheep for himself, just as he enters the record obsessed with lost donkeys.

1Sa 15:10 Then the word of Yahweh came to Samuel saying-

Samuel was apparently not with Saul at this time (:12), although hovering nearby.

1Sa 15:11 It grieves Me that I have set up Saul to be king- God 'repented' (AV), He changed His mind about setting Saul up as king. And yet He gave them a king in His wrath, warning Israel how Saul would work out, although He set Saul up for success. And yet when indeed Saul fails, God changes His mind and as it were regrets having made Saul king. We have here an insight into how God feels. He enters fully into the human situation, limiting His omniscience and omnipotence to do so; and therefore has such conflicted feelings within Him, just as His many changes of mind within Him were kindled together in Hos. 11:8.

For he has turned back from following Me and has not obeyed My commandments-

"Turned back" suggests God did consider Saul to have initially followed Him.

Samuel was troubled and he cried out to Yahweh all night-

God tells Samuel of His rejection of Saul, implying this opportunity to change His earlier rejection of Saul in 1 Sam. 13 has again not worked out; and Samuel cries to Him all night. I think the implication is that Samuel was pleading with God to consider another future with Saul (1 Sam. 15:11,35; 16:1). We should be awed by Samuel's love for Saul and desire to make him work out spiritually. Amos 7:1-6 is another case- God reveals His intention regarding Israel, but then Amos makes a case against this and is heard. In fact, these and other examples suggest that this is almost a pattern with God- to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfillment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or amend those plans. This could be what Am. 3:7 is speaking of: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets". It's as if He reveals His plans to them *so that* they can then comment upon them in prayer.

1Sa 15:12 Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning- There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

And he was told: Saul came to Carmel and he set up a monument for himself, then went down to Gilgal-

We see here Saul's vanity, wishing to memorialize his own great victory, although that victory had been given by God. We must be warned by this not to glory in and

seek to memorialize that which was given us by God's grace and as part of His wider purpose.

"Monument" can mean "altar", so we note again Saul's love of building altars and sacrificing, as if to undo or disprove his condemnation for earlier offering offerings without Samuel. See on :22.

1Sa 15:13 Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Yahweh bless you! I have obeyed the commandment of Yahweh-

Saul speaks of "Yahweh your God" in :15, as if he felt unable to say that Yahweh was fully his God, even though he here uses the Yahweh Name as a formality. Personal relationship with God is not the same as using the right Hebrew names for Him and the correct religious language.

1Sa 15:14 Samuel said, Then what is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What does this lowing of cattle mean?-

We sense through the record how angry Samuel is that Saul can tell such a childish lie; we hear the bleating and lowing of cattle coming down through the centuries, such is the power of the inspired word.

The Hebrew in :1 is literally "Listen to the voice of the words of Yahweh". See on :22. His "voice" was to be heard, but instead Saul heard the "voice" of the people (:24) and the "voice" of the bleating sheep which Saul coveted as his own (:14). And there we have it- the power of God's voice in His word must be louder than the voice of human opinion and the call of materialism and self-enrichment. This is the power of accepting God's word in the Bible as indeed His inspired voice. Hence :22,23 accuse Saul of not listening to the voice of Yahweh.

1Sa 15:15 Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to Yahweh your God. We have utterly destroyed the rest-

Saul had defeated the Amalekites in the south, near the border with Egypt (:7), had then gone up to Carmel in the north to build a memorial (:12), and was now in Gilgal (:12). This must have required at least a week. And the animals were still alive. Saul's story was clearly untrue. We note he speaks of "Yahweh your God", as if he felt unable to say that Yahweh was fully his God, even though he uses the Yahweh Name as a formality (:13). Saul excuses himself by blaming it on the people, as if he is not really king. And further, he reasons that they devoted "the rest" to Yahweh. He refuses to see that the commandment was to devote all to Yahweh. But he considers he devoted something, so that, surely, was good enough. And this is not so far from our own weakness, faced with the demand for our all, and total devotion after the pattern of the crucified Christ.

1Sa 15:16 Then Samuel said to Saul, Stop! I will tell you what Yahweh said to me last night. He said to him, Tell me-

Samuel as a child had to tell Eli of God's rejection of him, a message he also heard at night, and His replacement of him with someone else. This prepared Samuel for doing this very same thing years later, with Saul (1 Sam. 15:16); and to some extent, he too failed in ways similar to Eli, and was in a sense replaced. Whilst it's impossible to attach meaning to events at the time they happen, they potentially prepare us for later use by God if we are willing to be used.

1Sa 15:17 Samuel said, When you were once little in your own sight, weren't you made the head of the tribes of Israel? Yahweh anointed you king over Israel-

"Little" is the word Saul earlier used in saying that he was from the littlest / smallest tribe in Israel. Pride was Saul's problem. A fair case can be made for his humility in not punishing those who initially mocked him, his hiding amongst the baggage, his not telling his uncle about his calling. But David in the Psalms frequently complains of Saul's pride. Saul appears to have changed his name to 'Paul', "the little one", at the time of his first missionary journey- in order to not be like Saul in his later life, but "little". His preaching of the Gospel was thus related to his own realization of sinfulness, as reflected in his name change. And so it has ever been. Saul becomes Paul in so many lives. True self-abnegation, recognition of our moral bankruptcy, our desperation, and the extent of the grace we have received...these two paradoxical aspects, fused together within the very texture of human personality, are what will arrest the attention of others in this world and lead them to the Truth we can offer them.

Another take is that we can translate: "Are you so little in your own eyes?". The argument is that 'You are the king of Israel, you are over the people not beneath them. So you can't claim to be king, and yet also argue that the people made you do what you didn't want to do. In fact you are very big in your own eyes, rebellious and stubborn, and not so little as you are now making out to be'.

1Sa 15:18 and Yahweh sent you on a mission and said-

"Mission" is AV "journey". It is the word used of how Saul went on his "way" to find the lost donkeys (1 Sam. 9:6,8), and as part of his calling process he was sent on journeys and was obedient. But now he had not been obedient. And yet Saul arrogantly insists that he has gone on the "mission" or "way" (:20 s.w.).

'Go, and utterly destroy those sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are destroyed'-

The mission had been total destruction of the Amalekites. But Saul was content with just a tokenistic victory. We learn here that he was told they were "sinners". He was asked to manifest Yahweh's judgment against sin. But he ignored that dimension, and saw himself as simply glorifying himself.

1Sa 15:19 Why then didn't you obey the voice of Yahweh-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18, although he hearkened to the voice of the witch, 1 Sam. 28:23). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7). See on :23.

But took the spoils and did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh?-

Sins of omission, serving God partially and not wholly, for the sake of appearance, are described here as "evil". And they are our most likely form of sin.

1Sa 15:20 Saul said to Samuel, But I have obeyed the voice of Yahweh, and have gone on the mission which Yahweh gave me and have brought Agag the king of Amalek-

This is Saul at his most inexcusable, seeking to save face before Samuel by lying when the evidence of the bleating animals was for all to hear in the background. He had indeed "gone on the mission" given by Yahweh, but had not fulfilled it as required. We too can have the illusion that because we are involved in God's work, have "gone on the mission", that we are thereby justified. But God works through all manner of sinful people, and awareness of His activity in and around our lives doesn't mean we are therefore pleasing to Him.

And have utterly destroyed the Amalekites-

He had not utterly destroyed them, for David later had to smite them (s.w. 2 Sam. 1:1). Saul was empowered to smite the Amalekites but he didn't completely do this. As often happens, God then passed on the job to another, in this case David. We can see His hand working in similar ways today. This seems to be the idea of Esther 4:14. If she had not saved her people, then God would have pursued another plan to the same end.

1Sa 15:21 But the people took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of the devoted things, to sacrifice to Yahweh your God in Gilgal-

This is alluded to by Solomon in Prov. 21:27: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind!". Solomon may have in view Saul's rejection from the kingship for his wrong attitude to sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:21,22). Likewise the attempts of Absalom and Adonijah to take the throne from David and Solomon involved the offering of sacrifices (2 Sam. 15:12; 1 Kings 1:9). What Solomon says in the Proverbs is true on one level, but he harnesses Divine truth to justify himself and his own agendas; just as we can.

Again we note "Yahweh *your* God". Not "our God" or "my God". Yet he freely uses the Yahweh Name in addressing Samuel in :13. It was as if he felt unable to say that Yahweh was fully his God, even though he here uses the Yahweh Name as a formality. Personal relationship with God is not the same as using the right Hebrew names for Him and the correct religious language.

1Sa 15:22 Samuel said, Has Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams-

The point was that God didn't need the sacrifices of themselves. The essence He sought was an obedient heart toward His voice. So often, form comes to eclipse content with religious people; the external sacrifices are seen as of supreme importance, rather than the attitude behind them. We recall how Saul earlier had thought that he couldn't go to Samuel unless he had a gift for him; and likewise it seems he thinks here that sacrifice of itself can somehow save him. David learnt from this and reflects this spirit after his sin with Bathsheba, when he accepts that God takes no pleasure in burnt offerings of themselves (Ps. 51:16,17). We too are to learn from these historical records, because there surely will come times when the essence of the lesson and the issues surfaces in our life experience.

The Hebrew in :1 is literally "Listen to the voice of the words of Yahweh". His "voice" was to be heard, but instead Saul heard the "voice" of the people (:24) and the "voice" of the bleating sheep which Saul coveted as his own (:14). And there we have it- the power of God's voice in His word must be louder than the voice of human opinion and the call of materialism and self-enrichment. This is the power of accepting God's word in the Bible as indeed His inspired voice. Hence :22,23 accuse Saul of not listening to the voice of Yahweh.

The reference may be to Saul's love of building altars and offering voluntary sacrifices. He is being told that this cannot replace obeying Yahweh's actual commands. Saul's stubbornness was in refusing to accept he had sinned. His own pride and ego thus became his idol, for there is no reference to Saul worshipping actual idols.

David may be referring to this when he condemns Saul in Ps. 119:150: "They draw near who follow after wickedness, they are far from Your law". "Draw near" is a common idiom for offering sacrifice and worshipping God. But that sacrifice must be from men who are near to God's law, and not offering just as mere tokenistic ritualism. He may be alluding to Saul's insincere sacrifices and religious rituals which led to his rejection and David's choice as the next king (1 Sam. 14:36,38; 15:22).

The words of Mk. 12:33 allude to a number of OT passages which also show the superiority of knowledge and practical service over sacrifices (1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8). Putting them together we find the following parallels:

- To obey God's word is better than sacrifice
- To listen to God's word is better than sacrifice
- To show mercy is better than sacrifice
- To know God is better than sacrifice
- To be humble and just is better than sacrifice
- To understand God is better than sacrifice.

Understanding God, hearing His word, knowing God in ongoing personal relationship (all acts of the intellect) are therefore paralleled with practical things like loving out neighbour, showing mercy, justice etc. These practical things are an outcome of our correct knowledge of / active relationship with God.

1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as the evil of idolatry-

We wonder if he destroyed all witchcraft in order to transfer onto the witches his own sin of rebellion and the punishment for it. This is again a psychological classic- to transfer personal guilt and need for punishment onto others. The sin of omitting obedience was as bad as committing witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23). Even though Saul partially obeyed God's commandments (1 Sam. 15:20), his omissions of some of them led to God declaring that Saul had in fact turned back from following His commandments (1 Sam. 15:11). Sins of omission are our strongest temptations. We note that Saul does commit the sin of witchcraft at the end of his life. When Samuel has taught him here that this sin is one of the greatest sins he could commit. But at this point, Saul had cut off all or killed all the witches he could find in Israel. He is being told that his sin of rebellion is as bad as the very sin he so hates and prosecutes.

Because you have rejected the word of Yahweh, He has also rejected you from being king-

Our attitude to God's word becomes His attitude to us; see on :19. We later read that God's "soul" departed from Israel, because "the Lord has rejected you" (Jer. 6:8,30). The connection is because these historical records were intended for the exiles to learn from. This is the same language used about Saul- God rejected him, and so His spirit departed from him (1 Sam. 15:23; 16:14). The implication was that God's very soul / spirit is "with" us, and therefore He can be so terribly wounded by us in His heart by the rebellions of those in covenant relationship with Him. For His heart / soul / spirit is *so* close to us His beloved people.

Although it is true as it was with Saul that those who reject Yahweh's word are rejected (1 Sam. 15:23), God's grace is beyond such a simplistic picture. Israel were to despise / reject God's word (s.w. Lev. 26:15,43), "and yet for all that.. I will not reject them / cast they away" (Lev. 26:44 s.w.). Israel rejected Yahweh when they wanted Saul to be their king (s.w. 1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19), and yet He did not reject them immediately because of that. The relevance to the exiles was in that they were in captivity because they too had rejected God's word and therefore God had rejected them (2 Kings 17:15 cp. 2 Kings 17:20; 23:27), because they rejected His prophetic words, He rejected them (Jer. 6:19,30; Hos. 4:6), "and yet for all that.. I will not reject them / cast they away" (Lev. 26:44; Jer. 31:37 s.w.). For ultimately God has not rejected / cast away His people (Is. 41:9; Jer. 33:26; Rom. 11:2). This is the mystery of grace, no matter how we may seek to explain it away by Biblical exposition and balancing Bible verses against each other. Although this rejection seems final, later God still have Saul His Spirit, as if in a desperate attempt to bring him, almost force him, to personal spirituality and salvation. Even if he was not to be king, he could still have been saved. But he rejected even that. This willingness of God to re think even at that stage is perhaps reflected by Samuel returning or repenting (s.w.) after Saul in :31. And it is clear from 1 Sam. 16:1 that Samuel did consider Saul to still have some chance with God.

1Sa 15:24 Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned-

The very words of Judas (Mt.27:4). Again, we see clearly David as a type of Christ. David said these same words to Nathan and was accepted, but Saul wasn't. Clearly the words were like so much in his life, a mere religious formality and not from the heart.

David was after God's heart. We see for all time that repentance can be feigned, a mere form of words with a desire to appear right before men. And this merits rejection.

I have transgressed the commandment of Yahweh and your words because I feared the people and obeyed their voice-

This fear of the people contrasts with the warning given to him in 1 Sam. 12:14: "If you will fear Yahweh and serve Him, listen to His voice and not rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then it will be well with both you and the king who reigns over you". He feared the people rather than Yahweh. And so many likewise fear the opinion of others rather than feel the depth of their personal relationship with God.

Their words, and the unspoken 'word' of their silent opinion of Saul, struggled within Saul's mind against the words of God. And because he didn't have a deep seated respect for God's word as the ultimate authority, he therefore gave in to their words. We have this same struggle almost minute by minute in daily life. It's not only our familiarity with the Biblical text which will assist us towards victory, but our base, core conviction that God's words are of ultimate authority. One reason for Saul's lack of respect for Yahweh's words is that he seems to see them as Samuel's words ("your words"); hence he feels he has sinned against Samuel more than against God; see on :25. Our attitude to God's word, our approach to the inspiration of the Bible, will be related to our obedience to it.

Saul had been anointed king of Israel, on God's behalf. His duty was to lead them, not be led by them. In this sense he is admitting his failure to be king. He had already been removed from being king but had insisted on remaining king. He is admitting his failure as a king. We need to ask: 'And what should he have now done?'. So he should have now recognized his failure as a king, resigned from the kingship, let David take over- and walk humbly with his God to ultimate future salvation. But

as with so many, the pride and prejudice of the flesh took over. Saul's second rejection at this point was not simply because he didn't kill Agag and kept the cattle for himself. The essence was that he was on his own admission listening to the people, being ruled by them, rather than spiritually leading them. I suggested on 1 Sam. 13:15 that this was the same reason why he was rejected from being king then.

Saul obeyed the voice of the people and the voice (s.w.) of the sheep and oxen that he covered (1 Sam. 15:24,24). Later he obeys the voice of Jonathan and promises not to kill David (1 Sam. 19:6) the voice of the witch and of his servants who persuade him against his will to eat (1 Sam. 28:22,23). We have the impression of a man readily persuaded by voices. If he had had a fundamental commitment to obey the voice of Yahweh as he was repeatedly asked, he would not have listened to these other voices. Nor the voices in his own head. Likewise those without a fundamental commitment to God's word are open to all the other voices around them, and likewise have no moral compass nor ethical direction. The Hebrew for 'to hear' is the same as 'to obey'. Samuel had told Saul he would be made to hear or obey God's word (1 Sam. 9:27 "that I may tell you the message of God" uses the word for to hear / obey, the hint being 'that I may make you hear / be obedient to the message'). But he failed to make use of this because he found the voice of other things more attractive to hearken to.

1Sa 15:25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and come back with me so that I may worship Yahweh-

Saul's religiosity is reflected by the way in which he asks Samuel to "pardon my sin", when he ought instead to have been asking this of God. For Yahweh is the God who delights to pardon sin (s.w. Ex. 34:7). But whilst Saul uses the correct vocabulary, he misdirects it- to Samuel and not to God. And he ends up using the very phrase of Pharaoh (Ex. 10:17), also without ultimate sincerity. And we note Pharaoh also asked Moses to pardon his sin, rather than asking Yahweh directly. By contrast, David asks God directly to "pardon my sin" (Ps. 25:18; 32:5). In this we see how David was a man after God's heart and Saul wasn't. They both sinned, but it was the response they made to their sin which reflected the real state of their heart. Saul's motive is clear- he wants Samuel to return to Gilgal and publically justify Saul by presiding over the sacrifice of the best animals at Gilgal, although this was perhaps not what Saul had initially planned. For he kept them for himself.

That the repentance was insincere is shown by the statement in :26 that Saul has rejected Yahweh's word, and has "turned away from following Me" (:11). True repentance would have involved still following Yahweh; the righteous man falls seven times but rises up again. And in this we see the difference with David's heart, who wanted to continue following despite his conviction of serious sin.

1Sa 15:26 Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of Yahweh, and Yahweh has rejected you from being king over Israel-

For "rejected", see on :23. Samuel appears to have concluded that Saul is now finally rejected and beyond the hope of reformation by repentance. "Return" is the word usually used for repentance. Samuel didn't see Saul's repentance as sincere, and so he would not turn again with him. And yet he apparently gives in and does so in :31. This could have been due to fear of Saul, who apparently got physically violent with him (see on :27). Or it could have been because he still entertained the desperate hope that perhaps Saul had turned again / repented. And perhaps he is rebuked for this in 1 Sam. 16:1.

1Sa 15:27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul grabbed the skirt of his robe and it tore-

The translation here is misleading. He grabbed the hem, the outer border of the garment, probably at the neck or shoulder, literally grabbing him by the collar. It's possible that Saul intended the mantle to tare, because it symbolized Samuel's prophetic authority. And Saul dearly wished for God's words through Samuel to be untrue. But denial of God's word, rejecting the inspiration of the Bible, will not save us. And we see that such positions are ultimately motivated by a desire to demonstrate God's judgments of us as being untrue and somehow negated by our negation of them.

This can also be translated as Samuel tearing Saul's robe. When David does the same to Saul, he is alluding to this.

1Sa 15:28 Samuel said to him, Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you-

Put this together with later verses in :29,35: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee (Saul)... and hath given it to (David)... the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that he should repent... and the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel" (AV). This juxtaposition of such conflicting statements seems to intentionally give us insight into the deeply conflicted feelings of God, which were perhaps reflected in Samuel (see on :31).

I suggested on :27 that it was Saul who had torn the Kingdom. Those who are deprived of the Kingdom will have made the decision themselves. Samuel knew that Yahweh had already decided to give the kingdom to another, as already expressed in 1 Sam. 13; and he knew that God had already selected this "neighbour"; for Bethlehem was only 12 miles away from Gibeah of Saul. But Samuel had still gone on hoping for Saul, and was apparently not proactive in seeking for this replacement- hence the implicit criticism of him by God in 1 Sam. 16:1.

Perhaps David took a cue from these words, and started thinking of Saul as his neighbour. And then his mind went to Lev. 15:18; if Saul was his neighbour, he was to love him as himself, and not take vengeance.

"Better" recalls the description of Saul in 1 Sam. 9:2: "and there was no man among the sons of Israel better than him". David was "better" than Saul in that he was a man "after" God's own heart, i.e. he was seeking for that heart, as in "the Police are after him", "the miner is after gold". In the same way as there are to be shepherds according to God's heart (Jer. 3:15), and Eli was to be replaced by such a man: "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is within my heart and within my soul" (1 Sam. 2:35). And the reason for choosing David is stated in 1 Sam. 16:7- Yahweh looks to the heart. Externally, David was not necessarily "better" than Saul, and his Psalms frequently reference his "sins and faults of youth".

1Sa 15:29 The Strength of Israel will not lie nor change His mind, for He is not a man that He should change His mind-

We read in this very context that God has changed His mind about Saul. Why the obvious contradiction? It is so glaring that it must be intentional. I suggest the impression being given is that God is conflicted within Himself. He could have not changed His mind about Saul- He had after all predicted how Saul would be, Israel had agreed to that, and so there was nothing more for God to do. His change of mind was in that He didn't want His beloved people to suffer under Saul, and so He had changed His mind about leaving them to suffer the results of their choice- and had

gone on to choose a king who would be good for them. It is the choice of David which is wherein God changed His mind; His mind change was in not leaving Israel to the consequences of their sin. His change of mind was about judgment upon His people. They had absolutely consciously chosen it for themselves despite warning- but still God feels sorry for them, despite no real signs of repentance. From His basic pity for His people. And such relenting from judgments, or ameliorating their effects, is to be found all through the prophets. But this feature of God should lead us to repentance, rather than abusing His grace. Joel 2:13 is clear- because Yahweh does relent from judgment, therefore "Tear your heart, and not your garments, and turn to Yahweh, your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and relents from sending calamity".

God does change His mind; the Hebrew for "lie" here can mean "retract", and clearly God does often retract His judgments upon men if they repent. So these words may solely and specifically reference this case of God's rejection of Saul as king and His choice of David. Saul wants God to change His mind about this, but he is clearly being told that in his case, this isn't going to happen. Saul's "kingdom", either his personal kingship or his dynasty, had already been removed in 1 Sam. 13:13,14- but God had been open to amending that. Saul's behaviour in 1 Sam. 14 and then with the Amalekites in 1 Sam. 15 meant that the window of opportunity was now closed. And meantime, it seems God had "found" David as a replacement; we are given the impression that God began searching in 1 Sam. 13:13,14, and then in 1 Sam. 15:28 He says that He has given the kingdom to Saul's neighbour. The statement that God will not lie i.e. retract is perhaps referencing the choice of David as a replacement: "Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David" (Ps. 89:35- also alluded to in Ps. 110:4 "Yahweh has sworn, and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek"). His choice of David would not be changed, but this didn't mean that Saul personally was rejected from salvation. Sadly he saw only the kingship and not personal salvation and relationship with God.

And yet despite these apparently final words of rejection of Saul and replacement with David, Samuel mourns for Saul with the implication that he is begging God to even so, rethink and find a way for Saul (1 Sam. 15:31); hence God's rebuke of Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul... since I rejected him", 1 Sam. 16:1. He knew God well enough to know that He does rethink. We have many examples likewise in the prophets. 'This is it... no re-thinking, no about turn again... I will save you no more'. But still God does.

God does not "repent" as men do, but He can still change His mind. Samuel therefore wept to God for Saul to change his mind, and therefore for God to relent on His stated purpose concerning him (1 Sam. 15:11). Saul had been rejected in 1 Sam. 13, but he was given a chance to change that (see on :1), and continued as king. So perhaps the idea here is that God would not any longer change His mind over Saul. The rejection of him in 1 Sam. 13 was now confirmed. Yet despite telling Saul that "the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent", Samuel appears to have continued praying for a change of mind from God and Saul; we can conclude this from the way God had to keep telling Samuel to stop (1 Sam. 15:25; 16:1). This is very similar to how God told Ezekiel that He would not spare nor repent of His attitude to Israel, and will judge them according to their ways (Ez. 24:14); yet according to His grace, it is many times recorded that He did and will spare them, and does not judge them according to the merits of their sins.

LXX adds: "And Israel shall be divided to two: and God will not turn nor repent, for he is not as a man to repent". The division of the kingdom was therefore ultimately traced back to Saul's apostasy.

1Sa 15:30 Then he said, I have sinned, yet please honour me now before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me so that I may worship Yahweh your God-

Again we note "Yahweh your God". See on :21. It really was all about appearances before men in the religious group, rather than before God. We note that all the elders of Israel were present there in Gilgal. Perhaps there was some truth in Saul's excuse that in fact he intended to offer the best animals to Yahweh at some big gathering proclaimed at Gilgal; for he had had at least a week to gather the elders. Saul had gone up to Carmel in the north of the land to proclaim his victory (:12), and perhaps he intended to offer the best animals in front of an Israel gathered to behold his military glory, and to view the humbled Agag before him. What was wrong with all this was that he had disobeyed Yahweh's commandment for the sake of his own pride, and was using the service of God for his own ego. And this pride was so disgusting to God, as it is to this day. Saul was therefore desperate that his display of victory, his victory triumph, not be marred by Samuel snubbing it.

1Sa 15:31 So Samuel went back with Saul-

"Return" or "went back" is the word usually used for repentance. In :26, Samuel didn't see Saul's repentance as sincere, and so he would not turn again / go back with him. And yet he apparently gives in and does so now. This could have been due to fear of Saul, who apparently got physically violent with him (see on :27). Or it could have been because he still entertained the desperate hope that perhaps Saul had turned again / repented. And perhaps he is rebuked for this in 1 Sam. 16:1.

And Saul worshipped Yahweh-

Worship like prayer can be on a surface level, or the real thing. Saul "worshipped the Lord" merely for the sake of appearances, because this was what his position required of him, the hymn being sung which he had to go along with.

1Sa 15:32 Then Samuel said, Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites! Agag came to him confidently, thinking, Surely the bitterness of death is past-

I explained on :31 that the gathering at Gilgal had been set up as a kind of victory triumph to Saul's glory. Saul did not intend to kill Agag, and Agag had got that impression, that he would not taste the bitterness of death. It had been Saul's idea to parade him live, in some kind of Roman victory triumph- to Saul's glory. He had been commanded to kill him immediately exactly so that this would not be the case. Samuel therefore killed him, although it seems not at the victory triumph but privately, so that Saul could not glory in him.

1Sa 15:33 Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so your mother will be childless among women! Samuel cut Agag in pieces before Yahweh in Gilgal- See on :32. "Before Yahweh" implies there was a high place there, or possibly the ark.

1Sa 15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul-

The idea is that they both returned to their homes, for Samuel had his home in Ramah.

The fact Saul returns to his home village at this point could suggest he was as it were resigning from being king.

1Sa 15:35 Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death-

This is proof enough that Samuel was resurrected to see Saul on the day of his death. Ramah was less than ten miles from Gibeah so it could be implied that Samuel went into hiding until his death.

Yet Samuel mourned for Saul, and Yahweh grieved that He had made Saul king over Israel-

We note the parallel in feeling between Yahweh and Samuel. Samuel's desperate desire for Saul to repent, for the project with him to work out, reflected that of God. And God's efforts with people are similar to this day. And like Samuel, we should have His saving, hopeful heart for the lost and stubborn.

Any separations from brethren are brought forth from much sorrow; Corinth ecclesia were told that they should have mourned as they withdrew from one who had left the faith (1 Cor. 5:2). "The whole house of Israel" were commanded to "mourn" the necessary destruction of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:6). Samuel mourned and God repented when Saul was finally rejected (1 Sam. 15:35). Paul wept when he wrote about some in the ecclesia who had fallen away (Phil. 3:17-19). It must be said that 'block disfellowship'- the cutting off of hundreds of brethren and sisters because theoretically they fellowship a weak brother- hardly enables 'mourning' and pleading with each of those who are disfellowshipped.

Samuel's mourning for Saul reflects his love for him and his desire to make things work for him. This is an essay in humility, seeing he was himself the ideal candidate for king and his maternal expectations were that he would be the anointed one.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 16

1Sa 16:1 Yahweh said to Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?-

This sounds like a rebuke of Samuel for still entertaining the hope that Saul might repent. For his mourning may be mourning in prayer before God, asking Him to still accept Saul. I noted on 1 Sam. 15:26 that Samuel appears to have concluded that Saul is now finally rejected and beyond the hope of reformation by repentance, and therefore refused to "return" with Saul. "Return" is the word usually used for repentance. Samuel didn't see Saul's repentance as sincere, and so he would not turn again with him. And yet he apparently gives in and does so in 1 Sam. 15:31. This could have been because he still entertained the desperate hope that perhaps Saul had turned again / repented. And he is now rebuked for this. We learned from 1 Sam. 15:28 that Samuel knew that Yahweh had already decided to give the kingdom to another, as already expressed in 1 Sam. 13; and he knew that God had already selected this "neighbour". But Samuel had still gone on hoping for Saul, and was apparently not proactive in seeking for this replacement- hence now the implicit criticism of him by God.

God tells Samuel of His rejection of Saul, and Samuel cries to Him all night. I think the implication is that Samuel was pleading with God to consider another future with Saul (1 Sam. 15:11,35; 16:1). Amos 7:1-6 is another case- God reveals His intention regarding Israel, but then Amos makes a case against this and is heard. In

fact, these and other examples suggest that this is almost a pattern with God- to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfillment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or amend those plans. This could be what Am. 3:7 is speaking of: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets". It's as if He reveals His plans to them *so that* they can then comment upon them in prayer.

Samuel's kissing of Saul may reflect a genuine fondness for him (1 Sam. 10:1); hence he is told to stop grieving that Saul has gone wrong (1 Sam. 16:1). And yet it was through Samuel that God had foretold what a bad man Saul would be. But Samuel's grief and fondness for Saul surely reflects how he understood that those prophecies were not inevitably going to be fulfilled. Samuel knew that Saul could have acted otherwise as he lived in the gap between prophecy and fulfilment.

Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided a king for Myself from among his sons-

"Provided for Myself" could be an implied rebuke that Samuel had not been more proactive in searching him out. Literally, "seen", which could suggest God had searched for David and found him, having foreseen him from afar.

1Sa 16:2 Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hears it he will kill me. Yahweh said, Take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh-

We get the impression that this is intended to recall Moses' weak reluctance to do God's work. Samuel was it seems rebuked for holding on to the dream that Saul would work out well in the end, and for not being proactive in seeking the neighbour of Saul whom Yahweh had already appointed to be king. "Go" in :1 is responded to with apparent defiance: "How can I go?". It seems Samuel was well known for going to villages and homesteads to offer sacrifice. They would have been voluntary peace offerings, with the people invited to eat of the offering; even though in this case Samuel himself brought the animal. That could imply that Jesse was not forthcoming in providing the offering.

1Sa 16:3 Call Jesse to the sacrifice and I will show you what you must do. You are to anoint for Me the one whom I name to you-

Samuel had commanded Saul earlier to wait until God would show him what he must do (the very same phrase is in 1 Sam. 10:8). Now, God was telling Samuel to do what Samuel had told Saul to do. And Samuel had observed Saul's testing, his initial obedience and his later failure. This is how God works, repeating circumstance between the lives of people, bringing people into our lives from whom we are to learn; and then we are tested just as they were. David may have reflected on this, for he in turn uses the phrase of how he was waiting for God to lead him further (1 Sam. 22:3). He would have remembered how Samuel had come to his father's house and likewise waited for God to show him what he had to do.

1Sa 16:4 Samuel did what Yahweh said and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Do you come peaceably?-

This may reflect their deep fear of Saul. For the last we knew, the elders of Israel, including of Bethlehem, had gone to Gilgal and witnessed Samuel snubbing Saul over the matter of Agag; and it was known that Samuel had withdrawn credibility from Saul. And Saul was doubtless fuming and cussing Samuel about that. So a visit from Samuel was not particularly to be welcomed.

1Sa 16:5 He said, Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to Yahweh. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. He consecrated Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice-

We wonder whether Jesse and his wife were very faithful people. His other sons all supported Saul (1 Sam. 17:13). He was surely one of the elders of Bethlehem who were not comfortable with the idea of a visit from Samuel, the peripatetic priest (:4). He was here asked to consecrate himself, but Samuel ends up having to consecrate him, and Samuel has to provide the animal for the peace offering himself (:2). And it's possible to understand Ps. 51:5 as meaning that David may have been an illegitimate child. The description of David's other sons as "rejected" (:7) uses the same word as used of Saul's rejection by God; a rather strong term, which seems to imply they were rejected by God as they had rejected Him.

1Sa 16:6 When they had come he looked at Eliab and said, Surely Yahweh's anointed is before Him-

The very structure of Biblical Hebrew as a language is often instructive as to how God wishes us to perceive things. There is actually no literal word in Biblical Hebrew for 'to think' – instead there is a word meaning 'to say in one's heart'. And there are times when the word is wrongly translated simply "say" – here NEB correctly renders as "thought" instead of NEV "said". This provides a window into understanding how the Greek *logos* means both 'speech' and 'reason'; and sets the backdrop for the repeated teaching of Jesus that God counts human thoughts as if they are the spoken word or acted deed. But my point is that the Hebrew Bible continually focuses our attention upon the internal thought processes – for here is the real 'Satan', the real enemy to true spirituality.

Samuel's comment about Eliab was presumably to himself (1 Sam. 16:6); Saul's "I'll strike [David] to the wall" was surely said to himself (1 Sam. 18:11); likewise his explanation of his plan to trap David via his daughter Michal was all hatched out within his own brain (1 Sam. 18:21); other examples in 1 Sam. 27:12; 1 Kings 12:26 etc. Only God knew what those men 'said in their heart'; and yet He has recorded it in His inspired word for all generations to see. In this alone we see how ultimately, nothing remains secret; at the day of judgment, what we spoke in darkness (i.e. In our own minds) will be heard in the light of God's Kingdom (Lk. 12:3).

We enquire why Samuel apparently didn't learn from God's rejection of Saul, who like Eliab was young, handsome and strong. The similarities between Eliab and Saul are clear. Perhaps it wasn't so much that Samuel had failed to learn his lesson. Rather he may have thought that God was still going to choose on the basis of how He had chosen Saul- choosing the man whom Israel would've chosen. But in this case, he was wrong- God had changed approach. He was not giving Israel the kind of king they would want, but rather He was now more proactively working through their desire for kingship, and giving them a man after His heart, who would be good for them rather than bad. We see in this case how God's thinking develops over time. He repented or changed His mind about leaving Israel to suffer the results of their conscious choice of a king. Now He intervenes to choose a good king for them. But Samuel is still assuming that God is choosing as He had done previously.

1Sa 16:7 But Yahweh said to Samuel, Don't look at his appearance or height, because I have rejected him. I do not look at the things man looks at; man looks at the outward appearance but Yahweh looks at the heart-

Samuel appeared to have assumed that Eliab must be Yahweh's anointed, seeing he was tall and handsome (1 Sam. 16:7). But he had not learnt the lesson he should've learnt from his experience with Saul, who was exceptionally tall, and yet was no leader of God's people. God tries to remind Samuel of this by saying of Eliab: "I have rejected him"; God had used the very term about Saul very recently (1 Sam. 16:1,7 RV). Ps. 89:19,20 imply that God had specifically told Samuel to anoint *David*- so his desire to anoint tall, handsome Eliab appears to have been a failure on Samuel's part, rooted in simply not joining the dots. And even when David was brought in, Samuel seems to have somewhat failed in his judgment- for he was impressed by David's fair appearance (1 Sam. 16:12), when God had just laboured the point to Samuel that the choice of a ruler was *not* to be based upon his appearance. See on :5.

1Sa 16:8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, Neither has Yahweh chosen this one-

In all close friendships there are some aspects which just could not have been contrived by human arrangement, and which add to the closeness and sense of specialness which those relationships have. There were such aspects with David and Jonathan, intensifying the love of David for Jonathan. For example, it was a beautiful coincidence that they both happened to have a brother called Abinadab (1 Sam. 16:8 cp. 1 Chron. 8:33).

1Sa 16:9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. He said, Neither has Yahweh chosen this one-

It's unclear whether the sons and Jesse knew what was happening. We get the impression Jesse ushered each of his sons before Samuel, perhaps to receive from him a part of the meat of the peace offering. However by this stage they had not yet sat down to eat the peace offering (:11). As they passed by him, Yahweh signalled to Samuel whether or not this was the chosen son. And David was anointed in the presence of his brothers (:13). See on :10.

1Sa 16:10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. Samuel said to Jesse, Yahweh has not chosen these-

This statement is hard to understand unless Samuel had told Jesse his intention. In which case there was clearly some agreement from Samuel in this risky venture. For Samuel is alluding to Dt. 17:15, "You shall set him king over you, whom Yahweh your God shall choose". The same word for "choose" is used. Despite their desire to choose their own king (1 Sam. 8:18 s.w.), and God disagreeing with it, He and not they chose the king. He intervened to as it were make them obedient, even in this wrong choice they had made. We marvel at His grace. For David's choosing was totally of God and not man.

1Sa 16:11 Samuel said to Jesse, Are all your children here? He said, There is still the youngest; he is keeping the sheep. Samuel said to Jesse, Send and get him, for we will not sit down until he comes here-

It's possible to understand Ps. 51:5 as meaning that David may have been an illegitimate child. This would also account for the diffidence in inviting him, and answering the question as to whether David was one of "your children". The youngest son had a bad lot in life, serving his older brothers and doing the dumb jobs like minding the sheep. But from this kind of hopeless, bottom of the ladder or hierarchy situation, God prepares those whom He can use.

"The youngest" is literally "the littlest / shortest", and David is presented as not as tall as Eliab. We wonder whether he was short- again, showing how God chooses not as man does. The short, youngest, runaround servant brother. The Septuagint includes a Psalm 151, which was also found in the Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 at Qumran. In this psalm David speaks in the first person about himself, and says: "Smaller was I than my brothers" [see J.A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*]. In Ps. 119:141, reflecting on his younger life, David recalls: "I am small and despised". Saul and Eliab are both noted as tall, as is Goliath. But it was David the small who was chosen to bring down Goliath and not those with the human qualification of being tall.

1Sa 16:12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with a beautiful face and handsome appearance. Yahweh said, Arise, anoint him, for this is the one-
"Ruddy" could mean he was a redhead, which was unusual for Semitic peoples and considered handsome. A red head amongst dark haired Semitic folks may well have been seen as weird and unusual. As any unusual appearance was seen sceptically. Again, it is the outside God uses. We have just read that Yahweh doesn't look at the appearance. It could be that God is as it were making a concession to human weakness by giving them a good looking king. Or it could be that like Moses, the idea is that he was "fair to God".

1Sa 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers-

It's unclear whether or not they understood this anointing to be as a king to replace Saul. For they "followed Saul" (1 Sam. 17:13). Perhaps they did perceive what it was all about, but their jealousy over his choice led them to support Saul. There are similarities with the hateful jealousy of Joseph's brothers concerning his choice, as one of the youngest. David's Psalms connect being "anointed" with having opposition, and this was doubtless rooted in his own experience (Ps. 2:2; 89:51; 105:15). But surely Ps. 45:7 was also based upon David's case: "You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows". The choice of David is here predicated upon his love of righteousness "above" his brothers. The "gladness" at the anointing was likely only for Samuel and David, as the brothers were doubtless bitterly jealous onlookers. However when this is quoted about the Lord Jesus in Heb. 1:9, "gladness" is translated by a Greek word meaning 'exaltation'; as if the anointing was a sign of David's exaltation above his brothers.

And the spirit of Yahweh came mightily on David from that day on. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah-

This is the same phrase used of how the Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul and empowered him after his anointing to liberate Jabesh (1 Sam. 10:6,10; 11:6). This is in line with how in Judges the Spirit comes upon men to liberate Israel from their enemies. So we wonder whether David's victory over Goliath which we will now read of is the result of this rush of Spirit upon David. Saul didn't win the victory because the Spirit was now not with him, but with David.

Anointing is clearly associated here with the gift of the Spirit. The oil poured on the head represented the Spirit influencing the mind. Is. 61:1 continues the connection: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me". But Paul says that if we are "in Christ", in the anointed one, we too are anointed. The promise of baptism with the Spirit (Jn. 1:33) appears to allude to the idea of

anointing with oil. We thus become the specially chosen ones, empowered to do God's will and influenced in our hearts. It is the power to be obedient: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ez. 36:27). It is the way to understanding and relationship with God: God "filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Ex. 31:3). The Spirit gives ability or empowerment: "I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord" (Mic. 3:8; Zech. 4:6). But as we learn from Saul, we must continue to be filled with that Spirit and not resist the operation.

The Spirit departed from Saul and came to David (:14). This was the Spirit which had made Saul a new man and given him new heart in order to do God's work. This spoke of his psychological strengthening and transformation, which continues to be the work of the Spirit to this day. But the Spirit as it were transferred from one to the other because it was given for the intention of making them saviour king of Israel. That intention transferred from Saul to David and therefore the Spirit was transferred from Saul to David.

The Spirit came on David as it did on Samson (1 Sam. 16:13); they were both empowered to kill lions, whilst keeping the fact a secret. And in both those acts they were taught that they would deliver God's people from the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Indeed, David's confident words that God would deliver him from the Philistines were evidently inspired by Samson, the renowned one-man deliverer from Philistine armies. Both Samson and David wrought "great salvation" for Israel (1 Sam. 19:5 cp. Jud. 15:18). As Samson was characterized by his love of that riddle (the word occurs nine times in Jud. 14:12-19, and Jud. 15:16 Heb. is also some kind of riddle), so David uses the same word to describe how he chose to put forth a riddle (Ps. 78:2). Psalm 3 is full of reference to Samson's fight at Lehi. It was also written at a time when David was betrayed by his own people. And his failures with women would make another parallel.

1Sa 16:14 Now the spirit of Yahweh had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled him-

See on :13. In Old Testament times, an evil or unclean spirit referred to a troubled mental state (Jud. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10); and in every Old Testament reference to evil spirits, they were sent by God, not an orthodox 'Devil'. In New Testament times, the language of evil spirit/demon possession had come to refer to those suffering mental illness. The association between demons and sickness is shown by the following: "They brought unto Him (Jesus) many that were possessed with demons: and He cast out the spirits with a word... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Mt. 8:16,17). So human infirmities and sicknesses are described as being possessed by "demons" and "evil spirits". See on :15. But in this case we can also understand this as an inclination towards moral evil. Saul was being psychologically confirmed in the path he wished to go.

Saul's moral decline is clearly related to this evil spirit from God. But he didn't lose personal responsibility. It's like probing whether a drunk man is responsible for his actions whilst drunk, and is he responsible for getting drunk if he is alcohol dependent. Human responsibility cannot be totally removed from the equation. The Kingdom was torn from him (1 Sam. 15:28) and so now the Spirit is taken from him. Clearly one function of the Spirit was to enable him to lead Israel. Hence it was transferred to David, the chosen king. And yet Saul remains king of Israel and God

gives him His Spirit still at times- because He never loses hope of winning Saul back to Himself.

The same word for "departed" is used in 2 Sam. 7:15 of Yahweh's mercy or grace departing from Saul. One dimension of having the Spirit is to abide in God's mercy and grace. In that position, our sins and indeed our whole person is covered and we are accepted as we are. David uses the same word in 2 Sam. 22:23 and Ps. 119:102 of how he has not departed from God's ways. God confirms this by saying that indeed David had not departed from Him (1 Kings 15:5). This clearly doesn't mean he never sinned. 'Not departing' seems to be the same idea as the Johannine concept of us abiding in God and Him abiding in us through His Spirit.

1Sa 16:15 Saul's servants said to him, See now, an evil spirit from God troubles you- See on 1 Chron. 21:30. "Troubles" is the word for 'made afraid'. Saul became paranoiac as a result of his own insecurities, which in turn were rooted in his own lack of faith and security in God's grace. His pride also contributed majorly, so that he ever feared losing his crown and glory. These psychological processes were confirmed by God. This is how His Spirit works upon the human spirit. His Holy Spirit will likewise confirm us in the upward spiral of spirituality we wish to take, working through our own psychological processes. Had Saul accepted he was not to be king any longer, he wouldn't have had this fear of losing the crown. And could have lived at peace with God and been eternally saved.

1Sa 16:16 Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp. When the evil spirit from God comes on you, he can play and you will feel better-

There is quite a theme of servants bringing blessings or good news (1 Sam. 9:6; 16:16; 25:14 cp. Gen. 41:10; 2 Kings 5:3). This may be to reflect God's interest in the significance of the lowly. I suggested on :15 that God's Spirit worked to confirm Saul's own psychological processes, freely chosen by him. No amount of music would change this. At best only a surface level, placebo effect would be achieved. We too must beware of the power of music. It is good if it confirms us in the upward path we are going; but we must beware of the possibility that like Saul, we can be unspiritual people who are made to feel only temporarily better by music. The essential issues are as outlined in :15, and will not be changed by music.

1Sa 16:17 Saul said to his servants, Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me-

"Find" is literally to see or provide. The Hebrew language reflects certain realities about the nature of God's ways. The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide'. Abraham comforted Isaac that "God will see for himself [AV 'provide'] the lamb" (Gen. 22:8 RVmg.); and thus the RVmg. interprets 'Jehovah-Jireh' as meaning 'the Lord will see, or provide' (Gen. 22:14). The same word is used here when Saul asks his servants to "provide" him a man. When Hagar said "You God see me" (Gen. 16:13) she was expressing her gratitude for His *provision* for her. What this means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things. "Provide me" is the same phrase used of God also seeing or providing Himself a man, also David. We wonder what is the purpose of this parallel. Possibly Saul was being led to see that Yahweh had done just what he had done- searched and found a man from Jesse's sons,

called David. And further, Yahweh actually used Saul's searching for and finding David in order to Himself search for and find David and bring him to the court.

1Sa 16:18 Then one of the young men said, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skilful in playing, a mighty man of valour, a man of war, who speaks well and is good-looking, and Yahweh is with him-

"Seen" means "provide"; see on :17. "Young men" means just that, and is not the usual word used of Saul's servants. Perhaps they had grown up with him, having also been taken from Bethlehem to serve Saul, as Samuel had predicted Israel's king would do. They say nothing of David's victory over lion and bear which he mentions in 1 Sam. 17:34-36. Instead, David was known by the other youngsters for having fought valiantly against the Philistines. His fights with the wild animals were personal things to him, he didn't share them with others, and only *in extremis* did he tell Saul about them in order to let him fight Goliath. There are private things which occur within our experience with God, deliverances so amazing and personal it's not appropriate to publically share them with others.

1Sa 16:19 Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, Send me David your son, who is with the sheep-

This was in fulfilment of Samuel's warning that Israel's king would take their young men to serve him. And yet through this curse, blessing was to come. God is never defeated by sin but somehow works through it in a wider sense. They only had a "few sheep" (1 Sam. 17:28); David was not from a wealthy family, he was "a poor man" as he says himself (1 Sam. 18:23). His later abuse of the "poor man" Uriah once he was rich (2 Sam. 12:3 s.w.) was therefore the more culpable.

Saul adds the detail that he knows David is with the sheep. We wonder whether the story of David's calling from the sheep to be anointed had been shared to him. Presumably by David's rejected brothers, who we are told "followed Saul".

1Sa 16:20 Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a bottle of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul-

Bread and wine had been sent to Saul during the process of training him in 1 Sam. 9. Perhaps this was to recall that, in an attempt to prod Saul back to his earlier spirituality. We marvel at God's continued working with this man, despite having already twice rejected him. His activity with those who apparently leave Him is amazing. Situations are arranged to restimulate their previous spiritual connections.

1Sa 16:21 David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul loved him greatly and he became his armour bearer-

For "loved him", see on 1 Sam. 18:20. But by 1 Sam. 17:15,56, David has returned to the sheep and Saul is ignorant of him. Saul's mental illness may well have involved short term memory loss, and he may have totally forgotten about the young David who came to play for him and was then dismissed; or perhaps David himself wanted to leave the court. This verse could also be a summary statement of what happened, and then 1 Sam. 17 explains how it came about, with that chapter climaxing in David's glory and, as we would learn here, promotion to Saul's armourbearer, carrying the very armour of Saul which he himself had declined to use.

Saul loved David. David had spiritually helped him, and the very special relationship between the spiritual helper and the helped had fully developed. Yet in

such cases it isn't uncommon for there to arise a bitterness between the convert and the converter; exactly as happened with David and Saul.

However it is quite legitimate to translate: "He loved him greatly" as meaning David loved Saul. It is in fact ambiguous, although the NEV like most versions opts for Saul loving David. But "it seems unlikely in a verse in which David is undoubtedly the subject of three of the four waw-consecutives, and Saul the referent of each of their respective object markers, that we would switch subject and object for the penultimate waw-consecutive verb with no indication that this is taking place". After all it is hard to understand Saul loving David when he must surely have guessed that David was the chosen replacement for him; I noted on :19 that Saul seems to have known what happened when Samuel visited Jesse and anointed David. Of course it can be that love and hatred coexist in human relationships- that would make the record yet again, psychologically credible. But David's love for Saul likewise was mixed with much anger and hatred for him, as expressed in the Psalms. This again is the coexistence of love and hatred in relationships- which we actually see all the time. Love-hate is indeed a feature of the records. Jonathan and Michal loved David but Michal seems not to have been always loyal to him. Saul loves Jonathan and wants the best for him but then also hates him and at one point tried to kill him, and then they die together on Gilboa. Samuel loved Saul but was angry with him. All this is perhaps background to the feelings of God towards Saul- anger but love, and therefore multiple second chances. Withdrawing His holy Spirit, giving Saul the evil spirit, but then seeking still to put His Holy Spirit back into Saul. Likewise between God and Israel, giving them a king in His anger, but then re-working the whole thing to still keep loving them.

1Sa 16:22 Saul sent to Jesse saying, Please let David stay with me, for I am pleased with him-

See on :21; 1 Sam. 17:58. "Stay with me" is "Stand before me", as if this was an official position. But as noted on :21, we may be reading here a summary statement of what Saul did to David after the victory over Goliath, and now in 1 Sam. 17 we are to read how this situation came about. This is typical of Hebrew writing and prose style.

1Sa 16:23 When the spirit from God was on Saul, David took the harp and played, and Saul was refreshed and felt better and the evil spirit departed from him-

The effect was produced not just by unaccompanied music of itself, as if some kind of music therapy could of itself make a man spiritually minded rather than carnally minded; but because David says that he sung hymns, or at least, words, upon the harp: "sing praises to Him with the harp" (Ps. 33:2); "I will open my riddle on the harp" (Ps. 49:4); "I will praise You with the harp for Your faithfulness, my God" (Ps. 71:22); "Sing praises to Yahweh with the harp, with the harp and the voice of melody" (Ps. 98:5); "sing praises on the harp to our God" (Ps. 147:7). These Psalms are all clear that David's playing of the harp meant singing spiritual songs as he did so. Ps. 92:2,3 is clear: "to proclaim Your grace in the morning and Your faithfulness every night... with the harp". Harp playing along doesn't proclaim grace, but singing words accompanied by a harp does indeed do so. It was through David's Holy Spirit inspired words, in those Psalms just quoted, that the Holy Spirit drove out the evil spirit from Yahweh. Although the Holy Spirit had been removed, God still wanted to give it to Saul and He sought to do so through His Spirit-words through David.

Saul would be "well" after David played for him. But the Hebrew word is never used in a medical sense, of feeling well rather than sick. Often it has the sense of well

spiritually. Obedience to the covenant meant things would go "well" (Dt. 5:33; 19:13). "It shall be well" with the righteous (Is. 3:10). The evil spirit from Yahweh departed and then Saul was spiritually well. We can conclude that the evil spirit was therefore confirming Saul in his sin. We note too the power of spiritual music in helping people depart from the way of sin, and how third parties can play a role in helping spiritual victory. But it was not simply the music that calmed Saul, the idea surely was that it was David's Spirit inspired Psalms that he sung which gave Saul spiritual strength. It's a good exercise to think which Psalms he used for this; I have suggested above that all the Psalms that mention "the harp" may have been those David played at this time. We see how God's Spirit through David's Psalms was still at work to reverse the effects of the evil spirit. Always God's desire is for us to be spiritual, even if He confirms us in our choice of sin. This explains why Saul was "refreshed" by David's Psalms; this is a form of the word *ruach*. He was re-spirited by the Spirit from David's Psalms. Just as later God would as it were force His Spirit upon Saul as he went to persecute David. Again we see God's desire for Saul to be spiritual. Just as the kingship was taken away from him on 1 Sam. 13 and again in 1 Sam. 15, so the Spirit is removed and yet still given to him. God is the God of second and multiple chances. And so God works oftentimes with man, giving us the consequences of our actions, the withdrawal of His Spirit- and yet always seeking to impose His Spirit again upon us. This ebb and flow is what spiritual life is about, but we either go the way of an upward spiral, or like Saul, downward to destruction.

According to Ps. 35:13 "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I afflicted my soul with fasting. My prayer returned into my own bosom". Saul is in view (see on Ps. 35:12). The sickness of Saul was psychological, and David not only played the harp for him but also prayed and fasted in sackcloth for him. This again is something we don't see in the historical records.

I explained on :16 that Saul's illness was confirmed by God through His Spirit working on Saul's psychological issues, which arose from his own unspirituality. Music could not resolve those issues, apart from by some temporary placebo effect. And we must be aware likewise of 'feel good' religion caused by music. This is not to decry the use of music, but it is a caveat sounded by Saul's case.

We could also entertain the possibility that God departing from Saul may mean that the Angel physically left him; for God makes His Angels Spirits, and He works through them (Ps. 104:4)- the Hebrew for 'depart' can imply physical movement (it is also translated 'withdraw', 'pluck away' etc.). At times in our lives we may feel the presence of God coming and going. Perhaps such feelings are connected with the presence or absence of our Angel, although the Angel leaving us does not necessarily imply God's displeasure with us. The Angel may return to God (cp. Angels ascending and descending on Jacob's ladder) to report on His actions or to seek further commands; or they may depart from us in order to give us a feeling of spiritual depression so that our faith is tempted all the more. Job and Jesus on the cross are prime examples of this- hence the real anguish of the Lord's cry "My God, My God (a reference to His Angel?), Why hast Thou forsaken Me". In this case, an added trial of the crucifixion would have been that Jesus did not feel at His spiritual strongest to face the ordeal. Job explains how all things in life come and go in rhythms, and so also does our spirituality (Job 12:15; 34:29; 36:32; 39:3- the context of each of these needs to be studied to get the point). So the Lord was perhaps on a spiritual 'low' cycle due to the Angel not being with Him. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between

Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. However, the essential reference here is as explained on :16; God was confirming Saul's spirit psychologically by His Spirit acting upon him.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 17

1Sa 17:1 Now the Philistines gathered their armies to battle and assembled at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and they encamped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephesdammim-

David and Goliath

David must be one of the greatest types of Christ. At this time of the David and Goliath conflict he was a shepherd, despised by his brethren, trying to save Israel at a time of dire physical suffering and spiritual apostasy. These connections alone should make us scan this record for deeper Messianic allusions. The giant strongman falling to the earth because of a stone suggests Nebuchadnezzar's image of Dan.2, where the stone refers to Christ. Note how lion and bear (17:34 cp. Dan. 7:4,5) and brass and iron (17:5-7 cp. Dan. 2:32,33) are all mentioned in the record. Goliath's death by a fatal wound in the head (1 Sam. 17:49) must look back to Gen.3:15, again connecting David and the stone with the seed of the woman (Christ) and equating Goliath with the seed of the serpent. This is confirmed by the repetitious description of Goliath in battle with David four times as covered in "brass" from head to foot (17:5,6); which is related to the word translated "serpent" and is a symbol of sin. According to some etymologists, "Philistine" fundamentally means 'one who rolls in the dust', i.e. a serpent; and significantly, Goliath is several times described as "the Philistine". But he may also look ahead to a latter day personification of militant Palestinians, also to be brought down by the Son of David. Six being the number of the flesh it is significant that his "height was six cubits and a span... his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels" (17:4,7). It is even possible that the "man of sin" of 2 Thess.2 refers back to Goliath as his prototype, in which case the image of Dan. 2 and the man of sin are equated.

Goliath, representing the seed of the serpent, a personification of sin (i.e. the Biblical devil), needed a man to fight him (17:8,9). The men of Israel cowered in fear, wishing they could only have the strength and courage necessary, but looking one on another helplessly as the invincible giant made his boast. How to overcome him and the evil intent of this man against God's people was what the men's conversation revolved around: "Have you seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up". They also discussed the glorious reward being offered: "It shall be, that the man who kills him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel" - and throw in his daughter for good measure too (17:25). But "all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (17:24). This may well refer to those who thought about being Israel's "champion" in fighting Goliath, rather than speaking about the Israelite army as a whole. Now what more precise description could we wish for of our feelings in the struggle against sin? There seems a similarity here with men and Angels weeping because no man was found worthy to look upon or pen the book of life (Rev.5:3-5)- until our Lord prevailed on the cross. 'Golgotha' meaning 'The place of the skull' or even a form of Gol Goliath,

may well be the place near Jerusalem where David buried Goliath's skull (17:54), greatly strengthening this connection. "Ephes-Dammim" meaning 'border of blood' suggests 'Aceldama', the "field of blood". Goliath coming out to make his challenges at morning and evening (1 Sam. 17:16) coincided with the daily sacrifices which should have been offered at those times, with their reminder of sin and the need for dedication to God. The thoughtful Israelite must surely have seen in Goliath a personification of sin which the daily sacrifices could do nothing to overcome.

The ultimate wager

If David represents the Lord Jesus and Goliath represents sin personified, then his supporting Philistines must be the armies of our individual sins, depending for their strength and power on this principle of the devil (cp. Goliath). The Israelites were effectively the servants of the Philistines before this battle, although with a theoretical chance of freedom; and similarly with mankind before Christ's death. However, this relationship between Israel and the Philistines was now to be formalized and made permanent: "Choose you a man for you...if he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants" (17:8,9). This was exactly the contest between sin and our Lord; if He had failed in His mission, we would have permanently been in bondage to sin, as we were effectively even before the cross.

Something of the same wager is implied in Gen. 3:15, another prophecy of the cross- either the man kills the snake by hitting it on the head, or the snake will bite the man's heel. He has to kill it outright, first time. Yet thanks to His victory we are now free from sin- and more than that, our sins (cp. the Philistines) should now be subservient to us; Rom. 6:17,18 may even be referring back to this passage: "You were the servants of sin, but (by baptism into Christ's death)... being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness". This sheds more light on the immense pressure on our Lord, knowing that just one slip would result in the permanent servitude of man to the sin which he hated. No wonder He appeared a man of sorrows.

Despised and rejected

Plenty of other details now appear relevant to the Lord's crucifixion. Both his family and the men of Israel generally rejected David's claims to be able to save Israel (1 Sam. 17:28-30). Eliab's "Why did you come down here?" matches Christ's brothers telling him "depart hence" (Jn. 7:3). The crucifixion psalms emphasize how the Lord Jesus felt rejected by both Israel and His family as He fought His Goliath then (e.g. Ps. 69:8). Arguing back from the experience of his Lord, it would seem that David was really hurt and cut by the discouragement he received. 'Eliab' meaning 'God of my father' invites comparison with the Jews who despised our Lord's claims at the time of His death. The alternative rendering 'God is my Father' would connect with Israel being God's son (Ex. 4:22).

It is twice stressed that David's brothers "followed Saul" (1 Sam. 17:13,14); is it possible to argue back from this that Christ's brothers were strong Judaists? His family appear to have later disowned him during Saul's persecution (Ps. 31:11), fleeing from him, as the Lord's friends also did (Ps. 31:11 = Mt. 26:56). David's being sent by his father to see his brethren has echoes of Joseph's experience- which was also highly typical of the Lord Jesus. Joseph's problems with his brothers may well indicate a great barrier between the Lord Jesus and His natural brothers (who surely would have always resented the fact He was the firstborn in the eyes of their mother, whilst they were most likely convinced He was illegitimate).

David's other brothers also have names which have connections with an apostate Israel; see on :13. Similarly, Saul too represented the Jewish system, as the one who appeared superficially to Israel to be the one who could overcome all enemies, i.e. sin in the parable (1 Sam. 8:20). Doubtless one of the reasons they were attracted to Saul was because his large warrior physique made him seem a match for the giant Philistines in these man to man duels that often decided whole battles in those days. And the men of Israel should have learnt at the time of the crucifixion that the Law which appeared so powerful to save was unable to do so. By contrast we are specifically told that David was not of unduly great height (so 1 Sam. 16:7 implies), but was chosen because of the spiritual state of his heart.

We have seen how Goliath was a 'man of sin'; the New Testament concept of Satan can describe both the Jewish system and also sin, because "the strength of sin is the (Jewish) law". The great height of both Saul and Goliath would inevitably have been noticed; as if to imply that Saul (representing the Law) was as superficially as powerful as Goliath was. There seems to be a verbal connection at least between the Jews' mocking question of Christ "Where is Your father?" (Jn. 8:19) and Saul's "whose son is this youth" (17:55)- or was Saul's question also a subtle accusation of illegitimacy? Ps. 106:13 also seems to describe Israel's rebellions in language relevant to Saul, as if he represented them: "They sang His praise (cp. Saul prophesying). They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel" - cp. Saul in 1 Sam. 13:8. Note how Saul lost the animals (asses) he was given to look after; while David preserved his father's sheep, maybe looking forward to the Jewish system's inability to save its people compared to Christ's keeping of us.

Of sheep and shepherds

We can now attempt a more chronological analysis of the confrontation between David and Goliath: "And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and went, as Jesse commanded him" (17:20). There being no human reason for David to leave his shepherding (17:28), there may be the implication that Jesse knew more about David's mission than appears on the surface. Thus David could say to Eliab concerning his coming to the battle "Is there not a cause" (17:29)- i.e. 'I'm not just here to bring provisions- but for something far more important'. It would be fitting if Jesse represented God, in which case the commandment to go and see the brethren would correspond to Joseph being told by Jacob (cp. God) to go and see his brethren (Gen. 37:13). This resulted in his figurative death and resurrection in the pit, comparable with the Son being sent by the Father to inspect the Jewish vineyard, with the subsequent murder of Him by the husbandmen (Lk. 20:14).

"As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise..." (Jn. 14:31) is in the context of Christ's going to fight sin on the cross; and it connects very nicely with David receiving the father's command and arising to go. David leaving the sheep and going to fight Goliath recalls the parable of Christ as the good shepherd leaving the flock and going to save the lost sheep (Lk. 15:4-6). The shepherd goes alone at night up into the hills (cp. Isaac going to be sacrificed in the hills), and carries the lamb on his shoulder- as Christ carried the cross of our sins on his shoulder to redeem the lost sheep of mankind (Is. 53:6). This lost sheep parable is also picked up in 1 Peter 2:25: "For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (i.e. Christ the shepherd). But this in turn is quoting Is. 53:5,6: "All we like sheep have gone astray... but he was wounded (on the cross) for our transgressions", which is thus the parallel to the saving of the lost sheep. This interpretation of the lost sheep parable- i.e. that the shepherd going to save the sheep

represents Christ going to die on the cross- was first prompted by David leaving the sheep with the keeper to go and fight Goliath, representing Christ's saving us from sin on the cross. The leaving of the sheep with the keeper perhaps looks forward to Christ's entrusting the disciples to the Father's care in those agonizing days while death parted him from them, as David's encounter with Goliath did. David's subsequent leaving of them altogether to go and live in the King's court clearly looks forward to our Lord's ascension to Heaven after his victory over the real Goliath.

Note how in the fight with Goliath, David progressively shed all human distractions; he left the sheep with a keeper, then on arrival at the battlefield he "left his things in the hand of the keeper of supplies" (17:22), and finally left Saul's armour behind, representing the Law as a means of overcoming sin. And there must also have been progressive stages in our Lord's coming towards that state of total faith necessary for His final victory. David "ran into the army" after leaving behind "his things", and also ran towards the Philistine. The eagerness of our Lord to fight sin, despite knowing the supreme difficulty and seriousness of failure, sets us a matchless example of the enthusiasm we should have in our striving against sin.

Revving up the faith

"He came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle" (17:20). What a terrifying sight and sound that must have been; and similarly the strength of sin and man's inability to overcome must have struck fear into our Lord's heart as he came closer to the cross. David as a newcomer and onlooker would especially have noticed the obvious weakness of Israel. His seeing the weak knees of all the warriors of Israel must have made him feel like his Lord did on contemplating the fact that He personally would have to overcome sin: "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation... for he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation... the garments of vengeance" (Is. 59:16,17). Connect this with David's shunning of such physical armour for its spiritual counterpart. Is there a conscious allusion to David and Goliath here?.

David asked about the promised reward for killing Goliath as if it was a genuine motivation for him to rev up his faith and go ahead. "The man who kills him, the King will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel" (17:25). Our victorious Lord received these rewards in the form of the spiritual riches of greater understanding of the Father, being given us, God's spiritual daughter, in marriage, and us being made free from the legal requirements of the Law. This again suggests that Saul in his heavy duty taxation system represented the demands of the Mosaic law, from which the victory of the cross made us free. Amazingly, it was the beauty which our Lord saw in us which inspired him to take a deep breath of faith and step forward.

Angelic help

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (17:26). At least three times David stresses that he will overcome Goliath with the help of the Angelic armies: "This... Philistine shall be as (the lion and bear I killed with Angelic help), seeing he (also, like them) has defied the armies of the living God ('God of the living ones'?- i.e. the Angel cherubim, 17:36). Thus David says to Goliath "I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts (invariably an Angelic title of God), the God of the (Angelic) armies of Israel" (17:45). The Messianic parable is so complete that this triple emphasis on David's Angelic help must have relevance to

Christ's overcoming of sin on the cross. It seems highly likely that it is through the Angels that Christ (and ourselves in our crosses) received power to overcome sin (cp. Goliath), over and above any human strength which we can muster. One can therefore better understand the spiritual panic of our Lord when He felt this Angelic presence and help withdrawn on the cross (Mt. 27:46).

Total faith

"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (17:32). This must be another John 14 allusion- this time to "Let not your heart be troubled" (Jn. 14:1), spoken by Jesus as he was about to go forth to the cross, as David was about to fight Goliath. His subsequent references to his earlier delivering of sheep out of the mouth of the lion and bear indicate that Israel were in the same situation as those lambs had been; again, as if the good shepherd David/ Jesus had left the sheep safely (17:20) and gone to save the lost- and almost killed- sheep of Israel, both natural and spiritual. And on another level our Lord's previous triumphs of faith, not least in the wilderness temptations, would have given him courage for the ultimate spiritual test of the cross.

Such was his totality of faith that David could calmly call out "I will smite you, and take your head from you" (17:46). David's emphasis on cutting off Goliath's head (cp. :54) and the stone hitting the forehead perhaps indicates that the significance of Christ's victory over the devil was that men now have the possibility of sharing His victory over the mind of the flesh. This is where the real David and Goliath battle is worked out so many times each day. David continued: "That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel", which seems to be referred to in Jn.14:31: "That the world may know" that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself through Christ's loving obedience to the Father (cp. Jn. 17:23).

Brief battle

David crossed the brook and then cast the stone at Goliath (17:49). This connects with our Lord crossing the brook Kidron, and maybe echoes him being a stone's cast distant from the disciples (Lk.22:41). There is a continued emphasis on David's zeal to fight Goliath- as the Lord had to fight sin: "David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and" disarmed him (17:51). There is a possibility that this is consciously referred to in Col. 2:15, where we read that Christ on the cross "Disarmed (NIV) principalities and powers, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them"- as if Goliath represented the Law and the sin engendered by it which our Lord conquered on the cross.

Triumph over every sin

"And the men of Israel and Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines" (17:52). That shout of glee and triumph should be ours on considering Christ's victory- and because the devil has been destroyed by his death, we should enthusiastically pursue our sins right back to their source, confident we will have the victory- as the Philistines were chased back to their home towns, such as Sharaim, meaning 'two gates'- as if hinting at the promise that Abraham's seed, both Christ and us, would inherit the gate of our enemies. Note that the enemies that the seed of Abraham would conquer are our sins (Gen. 22:18 cp. Lk. 1:73-75; Acts 3:25-27; Mic. 7:19). David seemed to have anticipated that his victory would be pressed home by the Israelites attacking the individual Philistines: "The Lord... will give you into *our* hands" (17:47). And no doubt our Lord hoped that He eventually would see that the travail of His soul had produced the same effect in us. So let us too arise, shout, and pursue those sins which appear so triumphant.

The "reproach" was taken away from Israel by David's victory (1 Sam. 17:26), as Christ carried away the reproach of our sins on the cross (Ps. 69:9; Rom. 15:3). Therefore we can stand unrepachable before God at judgment, with no sin at all against us- due to Christ's victory (Col. 1:22).

Additional homework for the enthusiast would be a study of Psalms 8 and 144 (see notes there), both of which appear to be about the David and Goliath struggle, and are therefore a description of our Lord's feelings after his resurrection. Ps.144:3 is amazing: "What is... the son of man (Jesus) that You take account of him?", showing our Lord's humility is such that even now He is amazed that God bothered to help Him.

Political aspects

The different metals which feature in the description of Goliath all find their place in the beasts of Daniel 7, which are destroyed by the coming of Christ. This implies that the nations of the world are confederate under one charismatic, seemingly invincible leader; the latter day Goliath. Hit by David's stone, Goliath keeled over "upon his face to the earth" (1 Sam. 17:49), just as Dagon his god had done earlier. Thus Goliath was treated like his gods, as the lives of people of this world consist in the idols of materialism they possess. Perhaps this "man of sin" will likewise be a Philistine / Palestinian? We have mentioned the evident similarity between Daniel's image and the Goliath man of sin. The place of the conflict was a little South of Jerusalem, halfway between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean. This sounds suspiciously like the king of the north planting his tents (cp. the Philistine's) "between the seas (Dead and Mediterranean) in the glorious holy mountain" (Dan. 11:45). The Philistines making their constant painful incursions into an apostate Israel may well have links with the Palestinian activities today. Goliath was from Gath (1 Sam. 17:4), meaning "winepress", with its Armageddon and judgement hints. Similarly the conflict lasted for 40 days (1 Sam. 17:16)- another link with the coming Divine judgements. David's mocking "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" matches "Who are you, O great mountain?" which was to be destroyed "not by might.. but by My spirit" (Zech. 4:6,7), as Goliath was killed by David without a sword in his hand, i.e. not by human might. Note that the Philistines were pitched on a mountain, comparing with the description of Babylon as "O great mountain". Thus the king of the North, the man of sin, Babylon, Daniel's image of the last days are all alluding to Goliath, implying that Christ will destroy all of them during one conflict. It is worth questioning whether all these various systems in opposition to Christ will be separate at the time of His return; present developments suggest there may be one huge opposing system (the beast) which incorporates all these historical precedents. But now the possibilities are opened up to the reader to work through 1 Sam. 17 again from this political/ latter day prophecy perspective.

Matchless Jonathan

It must be significant that straight after the fight between David and Goliath, representing Christ's conquest of sin on the cross, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul... then Jonathan and David made a covenant" (1 Sam. 18:1,3). After the cross, a new covenant was made between Jesus and us, making Jonathan representative of us. The extraordinary bond between David and Jonathan then becomes a type of our relationship with Jesus after His victory on the cross. To confirm the covenant, "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle", pointing forward to our total divesting of human strength

and giving it to our Lord when we appreciate the greatness of His victory without those things (cp. 1 Sam. 17:39).

Jonathan lived in an environment which was bitterly opposed to David; yet he stuck up for him, at the risk of embarrassment and opposition, and certain damage to his own prospects (1 Sam. 20:31); as we should in this wicked world. As Saul cast a javelin at David, so he did at Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:33); as we should fellowship the sufferings of David's greater son. Saul's hate of David resulted in Jonathan being "grieved for David, because his father had done him shame" (1 Sam. 20:34). Is this not our response to our world in its' ceaseless blasphemy of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Only occasionally could Jonathan and David meet, brief moments of intense fellowship away from the rest of the world, strengthening each other's hand in the Lord (1 Sam. 23:16), reconfirming their covenant together (1 Sam. 18:3; 20:8,16; 23:18). No wonder their goodbyes were so hard: "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20:41). Not surprisingly, they looked forward to the promised day of David's Kingdom: "You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto you" (1 Sam. 23:17). Our communion meetings with the Lord during our wilderness journey must surely mirror those meetings.

The depth of the David/Jonathan relationship introduces to the pages of Scripture the idea of *agape* love- a love higher than normal human experience. "The beauty of Israel is (singular- about Jonathan, :25) slain upon your high places... I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant have you been unto me: your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:19,26). Such love should typify our relationship with Jesus. But does it?

Our Inspiration

The David and Goliath conflict was not only inspirational to Jonathan, but to the men of Israel generally. It seems from 1 Chron. 11:13,14 that soon after the fight with Goliath, there was another skirmish with the Philistines at Pas-Dammim [RVmg. 'Ephes-Dammim'- the same place where David fought Goliath]. Again, the men of Israel fled, but those who held fast were given a "great deliverance" ["salvation", RVmg.], just as David is described as achieving. Those men who stayed and fought were doubtless inspired by David; just as we should be, time and again, by the matchless victory of our Lord on Golgotha.

1Sa 17:2 Saul and the men of Israel assembled and encamped in the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines-

The idea seems to be that the Israelites were proactive in setting the battle in array against the Philistines, but once faced with Goliath, they lost their nerve. As explained on :1 this reflects our confidence in overcoming sin in our strength being dented once we realize the enormity of the struggle and strength of the opposition.

1Sa 17:3 The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them-

The valley of Elah was described by one visitor as "strewn with rounded and waterworn pebbles". Consistently, the Biblical record is credible.

1Sa 17:4 A champion went out of the camp of the Philistines named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span-

Joshua / Jesus had destroyed most of the Anakim (Josh. 11:21,22), but the Israelites failed to capitalize on his victory. With the result that the few Anakim left in Gath had

spawned Goliath. It's all a parable of what happens unless we totally root sin out of our lives and capitalize on the Lord's work. Depending how a cubit is defined, Goliath's height was between nine feet nine inches and eleven feet four inches.

1Sa 17:5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head and he wore a bronze coat of mail which weighed five thousand shekels-

About 157 pounds. It is copper which is really being referred to here as bronze was unknown then. I have often suggested that these historical records were rewritten under inspiration in Babylon for the encouragement of the exiles, and maybe the reference to bronze was inserted then. "Coat of mail" is literally 'scale armour', strengthening the connection between Goliath and the seed of the serpent, to be slain by a blow to the head. Goliath's scales also made him the embodiment of their fish god Dagon.

1Sa 17:6 He had bronze shin armour on his legs and a javelin of bronze between his shoulders-

"Javelin" could also be translated as some kind of armour, possibly for the throat. He was covered in armour, that is the impression. David's slingshot was therefore amazingly accurate, entering the one point which was not covered. He would have looked like a living metal image (see on :1).

1Sa 17:7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam and his iron spear's head weighed six hundred shekels, and his shield bearer went before him-

About 25 pounds. All the armour made Goliath very cumbersome in movement. David had the faith to see through all this, whereas the external appearance was all that the other men saw.

1Sa 17:8 He stood and shouted to the armies of Israel, Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me-

The Targum adds: "I am Goliath the Philistine of Gath, who slew the two sons of Eli the priest, Hophni and Phinehas, and carried away captive the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Dagon my idol, and it was there in the cities of the Philistines seven months. Moreover in all the wars of the Philistines I go forth at the head of the army, and we have been victorious in war, and have cast down the slain as the dust of the earth, and hitherto the Philistines have not honoured me, to make me captain of a thousand over them. But as for you children of Israel, what valiant deed has Saul the son of Kish of Gibeath wrought for you, that ye have made him king over you? If he be a valiant man, let him come down and do battle with me; but if he be a coward, choose you". Saul as the tallest Israelite was indeed the appropriate, intended person to fight on Israel's behalf, not least because God had given him the potential power to defeat the Philistines. The idea is that Israel were to send the man they had chosen to fight Goliath. And the man they had chosen as their leader was Saul. But he failed to respond. Literally, Goliath says he is "*the* Philistine". He was the personification of all human strength represented by the Philistines. Saul's failure to face Goliath really sets him up for the path of jealousy which will now wreck the rest of his life. Had he had the humility to accept he was not really the one to be king, and accepted the twice repeated statements from God about this, he could have lived humbly with his God and been saved, and lived a calm and peaceful life.

There are clear similarities between the situations in 1 Sam. 11 and that in David's victory against Goliath in 1 Sam. 17. The difference is that in 1 Sam. 16 we learn that God's Spirit departed from Saul and came upon David. It has been observed: "First a challenge is issued by an alien (11:2; 17:23), followed by terror and fear in Israel (11:4; 17:24). After a search (11:3-4; 17:24), a deliverer appears for Israel (11:5-6; 17:25), and succeeds in delivering Israel from the foe (11:7-11; 17:50). The deliverer is recognized and made a leader for Israel (11:15; 17:55-8, 18:5)". Saul is therefore being shown to be no longer able to lead Israel.

1Sa 17:9 If he is able to fight and kill me, then we will be your servants, but if I overcome him and kill him, then you will be our servants, and serve us-
This wager (see on :1 for the typical significance), typical of how conflicts were resolved at the time, meant in practice that Saul was wary of allowing anyone to take it up. His allowing David to do so, without armour, without explaining his planned strategy of using a sling, but only on the basis of his faith in Yahweh... therefore shows at least some spiritual perspective in Saul. And it is also a tacit admission of his own lack of such personal faith.

"Overcome" is the word Saul will later use about David (1 Sam. 26:25), where he sees in David's prevailing over / overcoming Goliath a sign that David will ultimately prevail to become king in his place. Saul realized that Samuel had indeed chosen his successor as king, and it was David; and that kingship was guaranteed by his victory over Goliath. For Saul to seek to kill David when David had overcome even Goliath... was therefore futile. Saul realized this, but obsessively continued in it. Such is the obsessive, blind nature of jealousy.

Nations at the time saw all conflicts as between their gods and those of the enemy. Hence Goliath curses David by his gods (:43). "Serve" has the frequent connotation of serving in worship. Whoever won this duel would make the losers serve them and their gods. Hence Goliath's claim that he defies "the armies of Israel" (:10), alluding to the title "Yahweh of armies". And David's perception that this was all about the glorification of Yahweh's Name in all the land.

1Sa 17:10 The Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day! Give me a man and let us fight one another!-

Goliath's defiance of Israel is a major theme (1 Sam. 17:10,25,26,36,45). Later Philistine defiance is described with the same word (2 Sam. 21:21; 23:9). David's victory over Goliath was inspirational to other Israelites, just as the Lord's triumph on the cross should be to us. The history here would have been inspirational when the Assyrians likewise defied the living God, and again this is a theme of the record (2 Kings 19:4,16,22,23; 2 Chron. 32:17 s.w.). It was also inspiration for the exiles when they were reproached / defied (s.w. Neh. 6:13). For another allusion to David and Goliath in the Assyrian context, see on :11.

Earlier, Nahash had "defied" Israel (1 Sam. 11:2, to make Israel a defiance / reproach, s.w., by making them gouge out their right eyes). Saul had then saved Israel from that reproach and defiance, but now he cannot or will not do so. The Spirit has departed from him and is upon David, and it is he who removes the "reproach" from Israel (:26).

1Sa 17:11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine they were dismayed, and terrified-

Being "dismayed and terrified" is the term David in turn uses to his son Solomon (1

Chron. 22:13; 28:20). He was thereby urging Solomon not to worry if he was out of step with all Israel; if they were dismayed and terrified, he was still to walk in faith as David had done at the time of the Goliath crisis. It is also used to urge the people toward the spirit of David rather than that of Israel in 2 Chron. 20:15,17. The same phrase is also used in urging the people of Judah in Hezekiah's time to consider the Assyrians to be as a Goliath which they like David could vanquish (2 Chron. 32:7). See on :10. The exiles likewise were urged not to be dismayed and terrified at the reproach of men (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10), very clearly making the history with Goliath relevant to their times. Saul is clearly not acting as king of Israel. For he had been desired by the people so that "our king will go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20). But Saul flees from Goliath, whereas David runs toward him. Later Saul asks David to "fight Yahweh's battles" (1 Sam. 18:17). This was the job description of Israel's king, and so Saul is effectively showing himself not fit for purpose as king, and suggesting David is better as king. It was only pride that made him want to cling on to the throne. He should've accepted he was not the man to be king, and lived humbly with his God and let David be the king.

1Sa 17:12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse. He had eight sons and was considered an old man in the days of Saul- Heb. "that Ephrathite", meaning 'the one already mentioned'- in the account of David's anointing.

1Sa 17:13 The three eldest sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. Their names were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab and the third Shammah- I suggested on :1 that the sons of Jesse, David's brothers, were against him and were identified with Saul. In the type being worked out here and as explained on :1, they represented Israel after the flesh in their initial rejection of the kingship and anointing of the Lord Jesus. Abinadab means "The Father is willing"; cp. "All day long have I stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:21). Shammah means 'desolation, astonishment, ruin'. God would "make your land desolate (*shammah*)" (Jer. 4:7), and Israel were to be an astonishment to the world after their rejection.

1Sa 17:14 David was the youngest; and the three eldest followed Saul- It is stressed that David's brothers "followed Saul" and were "gone after Saul" (see on :13). And yet Saul had been dismissed from his kingly role, and in the presence of Jesse's sons, David had been anointed as his replacement. This could suggest that the brothers jealously refused to accept this and were strongly supportive of Saul.

1Sa 17:15 Now David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem-

AV "went and returned from Saul", as if this was a permanent leaving of Saul by David. In :56, Saul is ignorant of him. Saul's mental illness may well have involved short term memory loss, and he may have totally forgotten about the young David who came to play for him and was then dismissed; or perhaps David himself wanted to leave the court. Rather like Daniel slipping away from high profile court life when promoted to it, because of his conscience toward God.

1Sa 17:16 The Philistine drew near morning and evening and took his stand for forty days-

"Forty" seems a round number; Saul, David and Solomon are all recorded as reigning 40 years, but there are some chronological difficulties if the figure is taken literally. Ancient battles rarely took so long. It seemed that the Philistines really wanted to resolve things by a duel, but the Israelites were scared. The idea may be that he offered the duel for 40 days, and if Israel refused, then the confident Philistines would attack the psychologically worn down Israelites. Perhaps it was on the final day of the challenge that David intervened. This would also explain why Saul was so desperate that despite the serious implications of the wager, he agreed to allow David to do it.

1Sa 17:17 Jesse said to David his son, Now take an ephah of parched grain and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers- Perhaps the information about the 40 days wager, and the time running out, is inserted in :16 to show the hand of providence in Jesse sending David at the end of the period. If David was famed as a man of war already, we wonder why he was not with the army. Perhaps his return from Saul was because he didn't want to be in such an unspiritual environment; and his brothers considered him too young for army service (:28).

We note that both Saul and David were sent by their fathers with the words "Take now" (1 Sam. 9:3 "Take now one of the servants with you and go to look for the donkeys"). Likewise in :22 David leaves his things or [Heb.] "bags". The same word is used of Saul hiding amongst the bags (1 Sam. 10:22 s.w.). We continually see parallels between the two men. They both sinned seriously, but the difference was David's heart for God and willingness to go His way. Perhaps shown by how he left the bags and ran to battle, whereas Saul tried to hide amongst the bags.

1Sa 17:18 and take these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand- Supporting evidence for the comment I often make that the word "thousand" is not always to be taken literally, and can refer to a group / regiment / family. This avoids the problem of otherwise unrealistically large numbers being spoken of at places in the record.

See how your brothers are doing and bring back news- The Hebrew means "their pledge"; they were to return a collateral on a loan. This is rather curious, until we note that David's son Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis). Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan (Ex. 22:25-27); what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. See on Prov. 6:1.

1Sa 17:19 Saul and David's brothers and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines-

The two camps were on two mountains, divided by the valley where Goliath made his challenge twice / day. It seems both sides fought a bit in the valley and then returned to their mountain top camps.

1Sa 17:20 David rose up early in the morning- There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather

does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Left the sheep with a keeper and took the gifts, and went as Jesse had commanded him; he came to the camp as the army was going forth to the battle, shouting the war cry-

See on :20. "The war cry" likely included some reference to Yahweh, and yet clearly the Israelite didn't really believe it; whereas David did.

1Sa 17:21 Israel and the Philistines put the battle in array, army against army-
David was walking with his brothers at this time (:23), so this may not have to mean that actual combat was going on. Rather would there have been an exchange of curses and facing off against each other, as was typical of ancient battles, rather than actual combat.

1Sa 17:22 David left his things with the keeper of supplies and ran to the army and came and greeted his brothers-

David could have returned home after leaving his things. But we get the impression from his "running" that he was zealous for involvement in this conflict.

1Sa 17:23 As he talked with them Goliath came up, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, out of the ranks of the Philistines. He shouted the same words, and David heard them-

"The same words" might mean 'the same words which David had heard that he was shouting, but now, David heard them for himself first hand'. David's desire was clearly to engage with him.

1Sa 17:24 All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were terrified-

The armies were each on a mountain, divided by a valley. They fled back to the top of the mountain. Fleeing before their enemies each day was living out the curse for disobedience to the covenant, and surely they were being taught that this was their essential problem. Here we have an example of how as explained in the previous chapter, man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. His terrifying appearance ought not to have disconcerted those who had God's outlook, and looked not on the outward appearance. David's smallness / shortness (see on 1 Sam. 16:11) contrasts with Goliath's unusual tallness. But we have learnt from the rejection of Saul and Eliab that height is not to be feared. This perhaps also prepared David not to fear Goliath's height.

1Sa 17:25 The men of Israel said, Have you seen this man who keeps coming up? He

comes up to defy Israel. The king has promised to give great riches to the man who kills him, and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel- I have noted several times that Saul seeks to emulate previous Biblical characters. This offer of his daughter in return for a military victory recalls Caleb's offer of Josh. 15:16. But always Saul is portrayed as only imitating on a surface level. And in this case, he didn't give David his daughter on the terms here offered.

1Sa 17:26 David said to the men who stood by him, What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine-

It is as if David wishes to clarify the reward. It could be that to marry Saul's daughter, whom he would have met in his time playing the harp for Saul, was something which further motivated him.

These are David's first recorded words. It has been argued that the first recorded words of Biblical characters are highly indicative of the real nature of the person. We think of Jacob and Esau's first recorded words in Gen. 25. David's first words here possibly indicate a dual motivation; he was interested in the reward, possibly captivated by the offer of Saul's daughter; and yet wanting God's glorification through the removal of reproach. Perhaps we are being introduced to David's abiding weakness for women. If he were the illegitimate son of his mother ["in sin did my mother conceive me" and we note the absence of any birth account for him, strange when compared to the information about other leaders], rejected and despised by his older half brothers, sent off to mind the sheep... a kind of male Cinderella, he would have longed for love. So his tendency to womanizing and wanting love is on one hand understandable. David's final end, being warmed by Abishag, with the frail Bathsheba nearby... is perhaps an appropriate tragic ending to this aspect of his life. If Saul were tall and handsome presumably his daughters were attractive women, and so David asks twice about this promised reward... as it made the unattainable apparently attainable for him.

And takes away the reproach from Israel?-

Saul's work was to remove the disgrace or "reproach" from Israel (s.w. 1 Sam. 11:2), as he had done with the Ammonites. When Goliath reproached Israel, it was Saul, Israel's tallest man, who was potentially empowered to fight him and remove the reproach. But he failed to do so, and when David did, Saul fell into a complex of spiritual jealousy. See on 1 Sam. 19:5 for another example.

Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?-

David was inspired by Jonathan's similar attitude in 1 Sam. 14:6; he may have been the armourbearer for Jonathan at that time. This is the intention of true fellowship, to take inspiration from each other.

1Sa 17:27 The people repeated to him what they had said: This is indeed what is promised to the man who kills him-

See on :26. The freedom from taxation, which was one of the bad things Saul was prophesied as doing to the people, meant that for that man, Saul was no longer to have kingly power over him. David was to be king, and his victory freed him from Saul's kingship.

1Sa 17:28 Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?-

They only had a "few sheep"; David was not from a wealthy family, he was "a poor man" as he says himself (1 Sam. 18:23). His later abuse of the "poor man" Uriah once he was rich (2 Sam. 12:3 s.w.) was therefore the more culpable.

I know your pride and the presumption of your heart; you have only come down to see the battle-

He may mean that David was just trying to provoke someone to go out and fight Goliath, so that he could watch the fight. For the two armies were not themselves engaged in battle, being on opposite mountains divided by the valley of Elah. David comes over as anything but proud. The false accusation of Eliab reveals more about himself than it does about David. It is a classic case of transference; in this case, transferring his pride onto David and judging him for it. For Eliab was smarting under his own sense of hurt pride in that he had been rejected from being anointed king in favour of his kid brother. "I know the wickedness of your heart" of course recalls how Yahweh had found David to be a man after His own heart. Eliab thereby places himself at variance with God's judgment, because he judges according to the outward appearance. Again we see the state of the heart, and the invisibility of it, to be such a major theme in the Saul-David story. Clearly Eliab was aware of David's anointing as king, and yet like Saul, personal bitterness at being rejected as king in favour of David had made him bitter. Both Eliab and Saul are noted as tall men. But their human advantage and resource didn't empower nor qualify them. They both became parade examples of how human might doesn't bring victory nor even qualification for the fight.

1Sa 17:29 David said, What have I done now? Can I not speak?-

This has the ring of credibility to it; it is exactly how a youngest brother would talk to his oldest brother when falsely accused. We get the impression that false accusation of David was frequent; as noted on :28, the brothers transferred guilt for their own attitudes onto David.

1Sa 17:30 He turned away from him toward someone else and said the same, and the people answered him as before-

David seems to have wanted the reward clarified; it was attractive to him. There can be few men who do not have at least some attraction to the father and family of their wife. David really loved Saul's daughter, indeed the prospect of marrying her may have been a large motivator behind his zeal in fighting Goliath and the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:26,30; 18:26). Saul was not a totally unspiritual man; there are many hints that he had a spiritual side. It's rare indeed that a totally unspiritual person can love a highly spiritual person like David. And yet this fine relationship ended in an intense love-hate affair. So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

1Sa 17:31 When the words of David were heard, they repeated them to Saul and he sent for him-

I suggested on :16,17 that the 40 day period of the challenge to a duel was coming to an end and Saul was desperate.

1Sa 17:32 David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of this Philistine. Your servant will go and fight him-

LXX has this as addressed to Saul, urging him not to have a faint heart because of this Philistine. These were the words of the Lord to His people just before going out to the cross (Jn. 14:1).

1Sa 17:33 Saul said to David, You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight him; you are only a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth-

David makes a play on these words by saying that he is "not able" (s.w.) to go against Goliath with Saul's armour. He was indeed not able to fight in human strength, only in God's. See on :42. Goliath had challenged Israel to provide a man "able to fight with me" (:9). Saul sees as Goliath sees, on the external rather than the internal and spiritual. He considers David not able. He fails to see that ability and empowerment is from the Spirit, which has now been taken from him and given to David.

1Sa 17:34 David said, Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock-

The young men in 1 Sam. 16:18 say nothing of David's victory over lion and bear which he mentions here. Instead, David was known by the other youngsters for having fought valiantly against the Philistines. His fights with the wild animals were personal things to him, he didn't share them with others, and only *in extremis* did he tell Saul about them in order to let him fight Goliath. There are private things which occur within our experience with God, deliverances so amazing and personal it's not appropriate to publically share them with others.

1Sa 17:35 I went out after it and struck it, and rescued it out of its mouth. When it turned on me I caught it by its beard and killed it-

Lions and bears don't have beards, so the "beard" likely refers to the chin, as the place where the beard grows. The 'rising up' ["turned on me"] of the wild animal against David was to prepare him for the 'rising up' of Goliath against him (:48 s.w.).

Circumstances repeat in our lives; even incidents from youth are used to prepare us for similar circumstances, in essence, so that we have our faith tested and developed.

"Turned on me" is literally 'arose against me'. The same word is used of Goliath 'rising' to attack David (:48). There are other similarities between Goliath and the lion / bear. David 'went out' after the lion/bear (:35); as he would "go out" (s.w.) after Goliath. (:55). David "smote" the animals (:35) as he "smites" Goliath (:46,49,50). David "forcibly [seized]" the animals (:35) just as he "prevailed" (s.w. 'seized') Goliath (:50). He killed the beasts (:35) just as he killed Goliath (:50,51). As God saved him from the hand / paw of the beasts, so He would save David from the hand of Goliath (:37). David perceived this, in faith, he realized that his past experiences alone in the desert scrub were being used to prepare him for this moment; and so he can confidently say that "the uncircumcised Philistine" would "be like one of them [the lion/bear]" (:36).

"Killed it" is better as AV "Smote and slew". Two separate Hebrew words are used. David's two fold killing of Goliath reflected this. The same two words are used in :49,50- David "smote" Goliath with the stone and "slew" him by decapitation. He clearly had this as his intended battle plan. Because he perceived that how he "smote and slew" the lion in his youth was programmatic for what he was now called to do. We too can perceive at times how earlier experiences, including those in childhood and youth, were intended to set us up for later experience.

1Sa 17:36 Your servant-

Often David calls Saul his master, describing himself as Saul's servant (1 Sam. 17:32,34,36; 20:8; 24:6; 26:16,19; 29:3,4; 30:15). This was no formal "Sincerely your brother and fellow-servant". This was a real conscious putting of himself down, as the Lord Jesus felt he was a worm rather than a man (Ps. 22:6). If only we would concentrate upon our own status and show some true respect for others on account of their being in the ecclesia, having even been anointed spiritually at their baptism (2 Cor. 1:21) as Saul was.

Killed both the lion and the bear. This uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God-

The armies of God are the Angels, but David saw the trembling armies of Israel as their manifestation upon earth.

1Sa 17:37 David said, Yahweh who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. Saul said to David, Go; and Yahweh be with you-

To agree to take up the challenge, with the conditions attached of :9, meant that Saul must have believed David had a chance of victory. And yet David was just a youngster with no armour. He didn't explain to Saul that he would be using a sling, he gives his confidence for victory as being in God Himself, and his previous experience of this. So Saul's decision to let the duel go ahead, given the consequences attached to it, was surely based on faith and spiritual reasoning. Saul was not completely unspiritual; and that is the tragedy of the man. Although it could have been a case of not being able to tell my courage from my desperation, as the 40 days of challenge were drawing to a close.

"Delivered me" is 'snatched me'. The connection is with how David had snatched / delivered / rescued the lambs from the paw of the beasts (:35 s.w.), saving them at the last moment; and God in like manner would give David snatching away / deliverance from Goliath as he snatched Israel from him. It is salvation for salvation. Our experience of God's salvation leads us to save others. He saves us that we might save others. And our salvation by God is on account of our salvation of others. Although in this case, David reasons that his salvation of the sheep was achieved by God saving him. This deep interconnection between our saving others and God saving us means that witness and ministry to others, unto their salvation, is an inevitable part of the believing life.

1Sa 17:38 Saul dressed David in his own clothes. He put a bronze helmet on his head and put a coat of mail on him-

To be dressed in the clothes of a king effectively meant that the king was ceding power to the person now wearing his clothes. The significance of this would only afterwards have been apparent to Saul. Saul would have realized that his anger with Samuel for as it were deposing him from the kingship was inappropriate- for he had effectively resigned it to David himself. We note that Saul's armour was parallel to Goliath's, who also had a bronze helmet on his head, a sword and a coat of mail (:5,51). David would not fight the enemy on the enemy's terms but in the totally different paradigm of trust in Yahweh. We too are not to match helmet for helmet, armour for armour, human sword for human sword. All human resource is as nothing compared to simple trust in Yahweh, motivated by seeking His glory. We wonder whether Saul's dressing of David in his own clothes was so that if David won, people would think it was Saul. We recall the significance of a king wearing his own clothes to battle in the battle of Ahab and Jehoshaphat against the Syrians. A king in battle

was known by wearing his own clothes. Again we see Saul's vanity and pride; for earlier he took credit for Jonathan's victory against the Philistines. All we know so far in the Bible about slingers is that the tribe of Benjamin were excellent slingers (Jud. 20:16), able to hit a target "at a hair's breadth". Saul was from Benjamin. Victory against Goliath with a sling would've been possible for him. But he thought in terms of human defence and strength and so it was for David to win in this way.

1Sa 17:39 David strapped his sword onto his tunic and he tried to move, but he was not used to it. David said to Saul, I can't go with these; I am not used to them. So David took them off-

He didn't explain to Saul that he would be using a sling, he gives his confidence for victory as being in God Himself, and his previous experience of this. The human method he would use was secondary, David is presented as going ahead in total faith. Our human methods must likewise be sidelined. See on :37.

1Sa 17:40 He took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag. His sling was in his hand as he drew near to the Philistine-

David took five stones but used only one. Was he faithless and doubting that the first one would hit home? Do those five stones represent the five books of Moses which Ps. 119 tells us was Christ's study all the day, it being through the word that Jesus overcame the mind of sin? Or did he aim to use the other four on Goliath's four giant sons (2 Sam. 21:16-22)? That shows supreme spiritual ambition. In reality those four were killed later by David's closest followers- and they must have their counterparts amongst us.

David and Goliath are indeed compared in terms of resources, of which they each have five. Goliath has: helmet, armour, shin protectors, sword [scimitar] and spear (17:5-7). David also has five items: stick, stones, bag, pouch, sling (:40); and picked up five stones, perhaps also in reference to Goliath's five items of armour. We see God's man operating according to a totally different paradigm. He has no defence in contrast to Goliath's heavy defence; Yahweh is his defence, as David often says in the Psalms. We enquire why David took a staff in his hand. It played no role in his slinging, and presumably he dropped it as he ran and then slung his stone. I suggest he took it as intentional parody of Goliath's mighty spear. David went into battle dressed as a shepherd. Shepherds were despised, but the image of shepherding / feeding flocks is used by God as His picture of what it is to be king over His people: "He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes that have their young, He brought him to be the shepherd of Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Ps. 78:70-72 and elsewhere). David was therefore acting as king- because he had been anointed king of Israel. Again we see paradigms turned upside down. The despised shepherd is the king and functions as a king.

1Sa 17:41 The Philistine advanced and came near to David with his shield-bearer in front of him-

The focus of the record is zoomed close in on the characters, so that it is easy to play Bible television with the record.

1Sa 17:42 When he looked at David he despised him, for he was only a youth, ruddy

and handsome-

Goliath and Saul had the same attitude towards David's youth (:33). As Goliath despised David (1 Sam. 17:42), so did Michal. The same word is used (2 Sam. 6:16). Goliath despised David because he was "ruddy" or redheaded. As discussed earlier, David's red hair would have been highly unusual in Semitic society. And anything unusual was not seen as cute, but rather as something strange and worthy of ridicule. Perhaps this too contributed to David's craving for love and intimacy, and contributed to his problem with women.

"When he looked..." shows again how Goliath was looking at the outside. But David's anointing showed how God "looks" at the heart and not at the external appearance.

1Sa 17:43 The Philistine said to David, Am I a dog that you come at me with sticks? The Philistine cursed David by his gods-

LXX adds "David said, Nay, but worse than a dog". This would reflect his deep humility, which we also see in his later reflections in Ps. 8 and Ps. 144 that he was most unworthy to have attained the victory. We note that in 1 Sam. 24:14 he also likens himself to a dog. He had a low self image.

"Sticks" suggests Goliath saw his supremacy in terms not only of his height, but his superior military equipment. Again and again, he [like Saul and Eliab] looks at the external and human resource. The whole story shows how experience [David was young compared to "the man" Goliath], stature and resources do not necessarily give victory, and God works outside of them according to a totally different paradigm.

1Sa 17:44 He said to David, Come here and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the animals of the field-

The same phrase is used in Ps. 79:2 of how Israel were indeed given to the birds and beasts. The implication is that there was no David to arise to save them, because they had rejected him.

1Sa 17:45 Then David said to the Philistine, You come against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of Yahweh of Armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied-

David could have drawn the contrast between Philistine weaponry and his own sling and stone. But instead he makes the contrast between human strength, and the name of Yahweh. Although the armies of Israel were cowering in unbelief or at best, very weak faith... David has the grace to talk not simply about *his* God but the God of those weak armies of Israel. We note the parallel between the armies of Israel and the Angelic armies of Yahweh in Heaven. We note the same parallel in 1 Chron. 14:15. David believed this, even though the armies of Israel didn't.

1Sa 17:46 Today Yahweh will deliver you into my hand-

The idea behind "today" is "right now" (as in 1 Sam. 14:33 s.w.).

I will strike you down and cut off your head. I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines today to the birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth- Note how the Angelic 'hosts' of God are contrasted with the 'hosts' of the enemies of God's people (2 Sam. 5:24; 1 Sam. 17:45,46; Is. 37:36). David and Goliath is the great example- David came to the *hosts* of the Philistines in the name of the God of Angelic *hosts*. And hence his faithful confidence that "the battle is the Lord's" (1 Sam. 17:47). This is a comfort not only in times of physical danger but in realizing

that in any situation, there are far more with us than with our opponents. In every 'battle', we of course should be 'on the Lord's side'- and the battle is His, and ultimate victory assured. Perhaps these things are the reference of the enigmatic Song 6:13, which speaks of the dance or company of the two hosts- those of Angels and the corresponding hosts on earth?

That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel-

David had a vision of all the *eretz* promised to Abraham coming to accept Israel's God, and he often develops this thought in the Psalms. His language here seems to have inspired Elijah (1 Kings 18:36). May our language likewise be an inspiration to others rather than pulling them downwards spiritually.

1Sa 17:47 and that all those here may know that Yahweh doesn't save with sword and spear, for the battle is Yahweh's and He will give you into our hand-

David's language inspired others (see on :46), but he himself in these words seems to have been inspired by the song of his ancestor Hannah (1 Sam. 2:2-10), which is so similar in spirit to these words. This is how functional believers interact with each other, inspiring and encouraging to faith and good works and words. This was especial encouragement for the exiles, that God would restore them without their own military strength but by faith (Hos. 1:7; Zech. 4:6).

1Sa 17:48 When the Philistine came closer to attack David, David ran quickly towards the Philistine army-

Goliath 'rose up against' Yahweh and His people (s.w. 1 Sam. 17:48) just as a lion had 'risen up' against David in his youth (s.w. 1 Sam. 17:35). Goliath was in view in Ps. 139:21, where David speaks of how those who rise up against Yahweh are hated by him. The visual image is of David running towards the huge army and them fleeing; one man was as it were chasing thousands, because he was in covenant with God and receiving His blessing.

1Sa 17:49 He put his hand into his bag, took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead and he fell on his face to the ground-

LXX "The stone penetrated through the helmet into his forehead". The hyper accuracy of the slingers of Benjamin is mentioned in Jud. 20:16. Again there could be the hint that this victory ought to have been won by Saul or his tribe of Benjamin. But they didn't rise up to it, whereas David did; and this heightened the sense of chronic jealousy against him afterwards. Goliath fell forward, face down. The force of being hit by a stone would have naturally made him fall backwards. But God made him fall forward to show the victory was from Him. And Goliath in this way bowed before Yahweh. Just as his god Dagon had done in 1 Sam. 5:3. Goliath's head was cut off (:51) as was Dagon's (1 Sam. 5:4). Again we see how the battle was a vindication of Yahweh over the gods of the Philistines.

1Sa 17:50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him without a sword in his hand-

The record seems to glory in the fact that David didn't use the human strength and most powerful technology, but triumphed by faith through the weaker things of this world.

1Sa 17:51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine, took hold of his sword, drew

it out of its scabbard and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled-

We see here the way that whole masses have their faith focused in one person who is their figurehead. By contrast, the Israelites had no equivalent champion. God sent a young unarmed man out of nowhere to save His people.

1Sa 17:52 The men of Israel and Judah arose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gate of Ekron. The wounded of the Philistines fell down all the way to Shaaraim, Gath and Ekron-

The geography is absolutely accurate, as Gath was at the entrance to the valley of Elah. The mass of historical and geographical material in the Bible is so great that any uninspired writer would have made many slips.

1Sa 17:53 The Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camp-

David was as one man chasing the Gentile armies because he was experiencing the blessings of obedience to the covenant; but all Israel seem to share in them. We note that after Saul was anointed, he was granted victory over Nahash, the serpent. Now after his anointing, David is granted this victory. The idea was that God was repeating His project with Saul with David. Thus the Spirit was transferred from Saul to David.

1Sa 17:54 David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem-

This was done at a later date, as Jerusalem wasn't then in Israelite hands. This would have given rise to the name Golgotha, skull of Goliath; see on :1. Or it could be that as Nob was near Jerusalem, it is counted as Jerusalem. For this was where Goliath's sword was taken (1 Sam. 21:9).

But he put his armour in his own tent-

A man's own tent refers to his own house (1 Sam. 2:35; 4:10; 13:2); presumably back in Bethlehem. But he later presented Goliath's sword as an offering to Yahweh, and it was laid up at the tabernacle at Nob (1 Sam. 21:9). Or this can be translated that David wrapped Goliath's armour in Goliath's tent. The Israelites spoiled the camp of the Philistines, but all David wanted was Goliath's armour to be displayed as a reminder of God's triumph over human might. His later request for Goliath's sword to defend himself therefore reflects a low ebb for David spiritually.

1Sa 17:55 When Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the captain of the army, Abner, whose son is this youth?-

Saul's mental illness may well have involved short term memory loss, and he may have totally forgotten about the young David who came to play for him and was then dismissed; or perhaps David himself had wanted to leave the court and had slipped away.

Abner said, As your soul lives, O king, I don't know-

He doesn't swear as Yahweh lives, as is commonly found in the Bible, but by Saul's own life. Perhaps he felt that Yahweh was no authority to Saul to make an oath by. We note that this way of swearing by the life of the person being spoken to [rather than by Yahweh] is used of men to Saul (1 Sam. 17:55), by Uriah to David when he knew David had slept with his wife (2 Sam. 11:11) and by Hannah to Eli (1 Sam. 1:26). In every case the implication is that the speaker didn't think that the person being addressed really feared Yahweh.

1Sa 17:56 The king said, Find out whose son the young man is!-

David had previously played the harp before Saul. In :15 AV we read that he "went and returned from Saul", as if this was a permanent leaving of Saul by David. Now Saul is ignorant of him. Saul's mental illness may well have involved short term memory loss, and he may have totally forgotten about the young David who came to play for him and was then dismissed; or perhaps David himself wanted to leave the court. Rather like Daniel slipping away from high profile court life when promoted to it, because of his conscience toward God.

The question 'Who is this?' as asked by Boaz of Ruth (Ruth 2:8) is to be understood as a statement of intended action and not read on face value. Likewise Nabal's 'Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?' (1 Sam. 25:10). The same kind of question is asked by David about Bathsheba, even though he knew who she was because she lived next door to him and was the wife of his close friend (2 Sam. 11:3). Likewise when Saul enquires about who David is after his victory over Goliath, it is not because he doesn't know him. For David had been already at the court of Saul. The question 'Who is this?' means that the questioner wants to do something for the person being enquired after.

1Sa 17:57 As David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him to Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand-

This could imply that David was seeking to slip away from the battlefield and return home, but Abner "took him and brought him", possibly implying the use of an element of force. In this we see David's humility; that having done the job for God, he wished to slip away out of the spotlight, and return to his few sheep in the wilderness. We have in Psalm 8 David's thoughts at this moment, looking at the stars, the work of God's fingers, as his success with the sling stone had been the work of David's fingers, and marvelling at God's grace to him as a man.

1Sa 17:58 Saul said to him, Whose son are you, young man? David answered, I am the son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite-

This cannot mean that Saul didn't know David, or who his father was; for in 1 Sam. 16:19, before the Goliath incident, "Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son" to ease Saul's depressions. So the question here perhaps maybe implied something like: 'Whose son are you? Jesse's? No, from now on you're adopted into my family, you're *my* son now, after all, you've been like a brother to Jonathan all down the years'. The fact that David replied that he was *Jesse's* son may have been a polite refusal to accept this position. It may be that Saul had tried to adopt David earlier, when after David had been at the court for some time, Saul asked Jesse if David could "stand before me" (1 Sam. 16:22). Another way of understanding Saul's apparent lack of knowledge of David, after having had much intimate association with him at the court in the past, is to conclude that Saul *pretended* not to know David. In chapter 16, David has left his shepherding and is at the court, as Saul's personal counsellor and armourbearer. In chapter 17, he is back keeping the sheep. It may be that he ran away from the court after Saul tried to adopt him. In other words, he found that despite the close spiritual relationship he enjoyed with the family, Saul was overpoweringly possessive, and he just had to leave. Accordingly, Saul disowned him, hence his very public appearance of ignorance concerning who David was (17:55,56). When David later "avoided out of (Saul's) presence" (1 Sam. 18:11), this would not have been the first time he had gone through this. His desire and need to do

this was made all the more complex by his falling in love with Saul's daughter, Michal (1 Sam. 18:26,28). We can well imagine how we would have loved to be Jonathan's brother-in-law. David and Michal were a marriage made in Heaven- that went wrong.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 18

1Sa 18:1 When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan became bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul-

The same phrase is used of Jacob's love for Benjamin in Gen. 44:30: "seeing his soul is knit up with the lad's soul". This phrase does not therefore speak of any homosexual love between David and Jonathan. We note that David was both hated and loved by many people. Jonathan and his sister Michal, even Saul at one point, all Israel, all Saul's servants (:22)... but David is never recorded as loving anyone. This perhaps all sets him up for his sin with Bathsheba.

See on 1 Sam. 17:1; 23:16,18. Saul loved David. David had spiritually helped him (1 Sam. 16:23), and the very special relationship between the spiritual helper and the helped had fully developed. Yet in such cases it isn't uncommon for there to arise a bitterness between the convert and the converter; exactly as happened with David and Saul. In response to his victory over Goliath, "Jonathan loved him as his own soul. *And Saul* took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house" (18:1,2). This seems to show Saul's response to David as parallel with Jonathan's response. Saul's possessiveness towards David was surely an indication of how closely he felt towards him. That he wouldn't allow him to return to his father's house suggests that Saul wanted to have David as his adopted son. His delight that David was in love with Michal was a strange mixture of motivations; genuine joy at having David as his son-in-law, and also glee that perhaps David would die whilst raising that strange dowry. See on :20.

It must be significant that straight after the fight between David and Goliath, representing Christ's conquest of sin on the cross, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul...then Jonathan and David made a covenant" (1 Sam. 18:1,3). After the cross, a new covenant was made between Jesus and us, making Jonathan representative of us. The extraordinary bond between David and Jonathan then becomes a type of our relationship with Jesus after his victory on the cross. To confirm the covenant, "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle", pointing forward to our total divesting of human strength and giving it to our Lord when we appreciate the greatness of his victory without those things (cp. 1 Sam. 17:39). A good example of how the souls of David and Jonathan were spiritually knit together is shown by the identical style of prayer they had (1 Sam. 20:12 cp. 23:10; the question arises: Who influenced whom?). After Christ's victory on the cross, He entered into a covenant with us His church. The intricately related friendship between David and Jonathan thus becomes typical of that between the Lord Jesus and ourselves. The idea of souls being knit together occurs in Col. 2:2,19, concerning how our hearts and souls are knit together with the Lord Jesus Christ. This alone encourages us to see Jonathan as typical of ourselves.

1Sa 18:2 Saul took him that day and would not let him go home to his father's house-

This seems to show Saul's response to David as parallel with Jonathan's response. Saul's possessiveness towards David was surely an indication of how closely he felt towards him. That he wouldn't allow him to return to his father's house suggests that Saul wanted to have David as his adopted son. His delight that David was in love with Michal was a strange mixture of motivations; genuine joy at having David as his son-in-law, and also glee that perhaps David would die whilst raising that strange dowry. David was "pleased" to be Saul's son in law, as Saul too was "pleased" at the prospect (1 Sam. 18:20,26, the same Hebrew word is used); this indicates the complexity of the relationship.

1Sa 18:3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul-

See on :1,2. We are not told what were the terms of that covenant, but I suggest it was that Jonathan as the heir to the throne resigned that to David, aware that God had chosen David and not himself to replace his father. This shows a great humility towards God's word, requiring the resignation of human advantage in this life. The covenant was reaffirmed in 1 Sam. 20:8. This was the nature of Biblical covenants, and we reaffirm the new covenant [which is what Jonathan and David's covenant pointed forward to] each time we take the cup of the covenant in breaking bread.

1Sa 18:4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe he was wearing and gave it to David with his tunic and even his sword, his bow and his belt-

The robe was his royal robe. Jonathan was resigning all power and hope for future kingship to David. I suggested on :3 that the covenant was to the effect that Jonathan agreed that David should replace Saul as king, rather than the throne going to himself. To give clothes to another suggests giving of an office, as we see in the experiences of Joseph and Daniel. He gave the clothes appropriate to the next in line to the throne to David. For his / *the* robe- see on 2 Sam. 1:23. Jonathan stripped himself of his "robe... and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (1 Sam. 18:4 AV). The triple phrase "and / even to..." indicates the totality of this stripping. "Bow" and "sword" often occur together as almost an idiom for human strength (Gen. 48:22; Josh. 24:12; 2 Kings 6:22; 1 Chron. 5:18; Hos. 1:7). Not only did he give David the weapons of his human strength (cp. 1 Sam. 13:22), but he appears to have stripped himself almost physically bare (cp. Mic. 2:8). Stripping like this is almost always associated with shame. The same word occurs in relating how the Philistines stripped Jonathan of his clothes and weapons, as he lay slain on Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:8,9). This all seems to suggest that Jonathan was saying to David: "I deserve to have been killed by Goliath (cp. the devil), so in a sense I will 'die' now by entering into a covenant with you, knitting my life / soul with yours. Rather than the Philistines (cp. our sins) killing, shaming and stripping me, I'll do it to myself. Isn't this exactly our response to the cross in the ongoing 'baptism' we commit ourselves to? And of course we shouldn't miss the connection with Israel stripping themselves, deeply conscious of their sins, and then entering into covenant with God (Ex. 33:6). Yet does the cross of Christ really fill us with that sense of shame, that desire to throw away all our human strength and knit our souls with that of Christ...?"

1Sa 18:5 David went out wherever Saul sent him and behaved himself wisely, and Saul set him over the men of war, which pleased all the people and Saul's servants-

We get the sense that David pitted his wisdom against Saul's anger and bitter persecution; David's wisdom is mentioned in tandem with Saul's anger against him (1

Sam. 18:5,11,15,30). "David behaved himself wisely (AVmg "prospered") in all his ways; and the Lord was with him" runs like a refrain through 1 Sam. 18:5,14,15,30. These words are referring back to Dt. 29:9: "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do" . David's charmed life and prospering despite all manner of plotting against him was due to his single-minded devotion to the Law; to those very chapters which tired Bible readers are wont to skip over as boring and not motivating. Yet David found something immensely inspiring and practical about the Law. The word made him wiser than his foes (Ps. 119:98), and Ps. 119 was written at the time of Saul's persecution.

1Sa 18:6 When David and the men returned from the slaughter of the Philistine the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tambourines, with joy, and with instruments of music-

See on 2 Sam. 1:23. The women were of course attracted to David, the young, handsome bashful hero. Yet ostensibly they came out to greet Saul; whereas the focus was clearly upon David. It was a perfect set up for Saul's jealousy.

We could read this as out of sequence with :1-5. Now the narrative addresses Saul's jealousy and explains how it arose. David returned from killing Goliath; the women come out to congratulate David, all apparently in love with the classic handsome hero; and Jonathan also loves him. Possibly David alludes to this when he laments that Jonathan's love for him surpassed the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26).

1Sa 18:7 The women sang one to another as they played, Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands-

It became a kind of proverb in Israel that David was worth ten thousand; it was said right towards the end of his life (2 Sam. 18:3). This further developed Saul's jealousy, because he failed to perceive that the whole conflict was about the glory of God and not the human channel through which that was achieved. "His ten thousands" may refer specifically to Goliath through the idea of a plural of majesty; hence David is said to be worth ten thousands of Israelites (2 Sam. 18:3).

1Sa 18:8 Saul was very angry; this song displeased him and he said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands and to me they have ascribed only thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom?-

We have a record here of what he said in his heart. He kept recycling those words in his mind, and it made him jealous and bitter. We too must beware of recycling upsetting words in our hearts. Saul was "displeased", the word used in Is. 15:4 of how "life shall be grievous unto him". But it was the fault of his own jealousy and lack of humility towards God's plans for David. What should Saul have done? Accepted Samuel's statements that he would not continue as king, because a replacement had been found. And walked humbly with his God the rest of his days.

1Sa 18:9 Saul eyed David from that day and onward-

Saul was precious in the eyes of David (1 Sam. 26:21 s.w.), although Saul's eyes were only to destroy David. We see the chasmic difference in outlook, in "eyes", or worldview between these two men.

1Sa 18:10 The next day an evil spirit from God came mightily on Saul, and he prophesied in his house. David played his harp, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand-

It could be that we have here a case of both the evil and holy Spirit working upon Saul. For prophesying is a term always used about the work of the Holy Spirit with men, and we recall how the holy Spirit had earlier made Saul prophesy (1 Sam. 10:10). His jealousy complex was confirmed by God's evil spirit. But Saul was given strength from the Holy spirit to resist this. It was as David was singing Psalms, a source of the Holy Spirit for Saul, that this was confirmed by a special outpouring of holy Spirit. And it was a strong influence insofar as it made him prophesy or speak forth God's word. But Saul allowed his jealousy complex, confirmed by the Lord's evil spirit, to triumph.

In Old Testament times, an evil or unclean spirit referred to a troubled mental state (Jud. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10); and in every Old Testament reference to evil spirits, they were sent by God, not an orthodox 'Devil'. In New Testament times, the language of evil spirit/demon possession had come to refer to those suffering mental illness. The association between demons and sickness is shown by the following: "They brought unto him (Jesus) many that were possessed with demons: and He cast out the spirits with a word... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Mt. 8:16-17). So human infirmities and sicknesses are described as being possessed by "demons" and "evil spirits". It is absolutely understandable that the day after the women greeted David as having slain his ten thousands, Saul suffered an attack of jealousy, depression and bitterness. It was his own fault, originating in his pride and narcissism. But because he didn't resist it and fed it, God confirmed him in the mental attitudes he chose, to the point that his evil spirit / disposition was sent by God. This is how the Spirit works, and also positively, through the Holy Spirit. See on 1 Sam. 19:8,9.

1Sa 18:11 and he threw the spear saying, I will pin David to the wall! David escaped from his presence twice-

The javelin or spear was like a diadem, the emblem of regal authority. Kings of the time are portrayed holding a spear or javelin as a sign of their kingship. So as with dressing David with his own clothes to fight Goliath, Saul was again inadvertently handing or throwing the kingship (represented by the javelin) to David. And later Saul would have reflected on this. He should have just humbled himself, resigned the kingship voluntarily, and lived at peace with God the rest of his days in hope of future salvation.

We note Goliath also had a javelin, which David was saved from. Again circumstances repeat in the lives of God's servants. We are taught and then the lesson is repeated. David returned to Saul after the first javelin incident presumably because he was sure that if it happened again (which it did), then surely God would again save him from a javelin. We note too that Saul's final end was to be pinned to the wall of Beth Shan. We are judged as we judge.

See on 1 Sam. 17:58. As noted on :8, the Biblical record states the self talk of people as if it is their actual spoken words. As the Lord Jesus was to later teach, thoughts are as culpable as the words and actions. Samuel's comment about Eliab was presumably to himself (1 Sam. 16:6); Saul's "I'll strike [David] to the wall" was surely said to himself (1 Sam. 18:11); likewise his explanation of his plan to trap David through his daughter Michal was all hatched out within his own brain (1 Sam. 18:21); other examples in 1 Sam. 27:12; 1 Kings 12:26 etc. Only God knew what those men 'said in their heart'; and yet He has recorded it in His inspired word for all generations to see. In this alone we see how ultimately, nothing remains secret; at the

day of judgment, what we spoke in darkness (i.e. in our own minds) will be heard in the light of God's Kingdom (Lk. 12:3).

1Sa 18:12 Saul was afraid of David because Yahweh was with him but had departed from Saul-

Saul came to this conclusion from observing things great and small in his life, as well as in his internal awareness of God's presence; and his watching of David (:9) revealed to him that the Spirit of Yahweh was surely with this man and not him. David was the fulfilment of Samuel's words to him about a replacement being raised up. To try to murder him was therefore not only futile but a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, going against God's clearly demonstrated intentions. And yet David in depression felt that Saul would one day kill him (1 Sam. 27:1), despite all the evidence in the bigger picture that God's Spirit was working to establish him.

1Sa 18:13 Therefore Saul sent David away from him and made him his captain over a thousand, and David went out and came in before the people-

See on :16. The idea perhaps was that he sent David off with some symbolic responsibility, to some outpost where he would not be in the public eye. To fire him from kingly service would provoke the wrath of the masses.

1Sa 18:14 David behaved himself wisely in all he did, and Yahweh was with him-

That Ps. 119 was written at this time is evident. It mentioned David as a young man devoting himself to the word rather than riches(:72)- the riches which could have been his if he mentally surrendered to Saul, or if he killed Saul and took the kingdom. He often laments how he is in exile from Yahweh's word (:43,46,54), which would have been on account of his being away from the sanctuary at Gibeah. He pleads the promise of the word that he would be preserved from Saul's persecution (v.41,58), and several times mentions Saul's attempts on his life (v.87,95,109,110). The following verses are evidently relevant to this period: 61,63,67,79,84 (= 1 Sam. 27:1),95,98 (= 1 Sam. 18:14,15),110 (cp. the 'snaring' with Michal),119 (the emphasis is on 'You will destroy the wicked like Saul- one day'),125 (David is often called Saul's servant),150,154 (= 1 Sam. 24:15),157,161,165,176. Therefore in the face of such hatred and pain, feeling he must be careful of every step he took, emotionally and physically, David could rejoice: "I will walk at liberty (AVmg. 'at large'): for I seek thy precepts".

1Sa 18:15 When Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he stood in awe of him-

Saul's jealousy was on account of David's spirituality and victories, especially over Goliath, which represented Christ's conquest of sin (1 Sam. 18:7,8; 19:8,9), and his subsequent popularity with the people. This was because these things were potentially possible for Saul, but he had refused to rise up to them. Saul watched David's spirituality, observing the close fellowship David had with God (1 Sam. 18:15,28). The Jews were jealous of the evident moral perfection of the Lord Jesus, and his popularity with the people which he seemed to effortlessly achieve. Joseph's brothers had a similar motivation to Saul. David as a type of Christ comes out clearly here. But "stand in awe" is also translated 'gathered together' in the context of Saul's persecution of David (Ps. 56:6; 59:3).

1Sa 18:16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before

them-

The people wanted a king to "go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20), but they were disappointed in Saul ultimately. For it was effectively David who went out before the people to fight their battles (s.w. 1 Sam. 18:13,16). And David was only successful because he recognized that it was Yahweh who 'went out before' to fight his battles (s.w. 2 Sam. 5:24), rather than any human king or leader. The victories granted him were clearly setting him up to be a popular king. Saul would've reflected how he himself had set David up for this, by letting him fight Goliath and then making him a military commander. He thereby was showing he himself was not fit to be Israel's king, whereas David was.

1Sa 18:17 Saul said to David, here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight Yahweh's battles-

"Yahweh's battles" is a repeat of David's phrase in 1 Sam. 17:47, where he triumphed that "the battle is Yahweh's" and therefore would not be won by human valiance or strength. Saul again is shown to be alluding to spiritual ideas, but getting things absolutely the wrong way around. Saul asks David to "fight Yahweh's battles". This was the job description of Israel's king, and so Saul is effectively showing himself not fit for purpose as king, and suggesting David is better as king. It was only pride that made him want to cling on to the throne. He should've accepted he was not the man to be king, and lived humbly with his God and let David be the king.

Saul thought, Don't let my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him-

Again as noted on :8 and :11, we have recorded the inward words, the self talk, of a man who lived thousands of years ago. The thoughts of Saul are recorded in Heaven, and in this case are recorded in God's inspired word. Our self talk is no less significant to God. Saul tried to kill David by sending him into dangerous battle; and that is what David did to Uriah. David failed to remain impressed by the grace shown him at this time- that he survived by grace. He ends up acting like Saul his abuser, as so many do, instead of being humbled by God's grace so that they break the cycle.

1Sa 18:18 David said to Saul, Who am I, and what is my clan or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?-

This reflects David's humility. He could easily have argued that by slaying Goliath, Saul should have given him his daughter for free as promised. But humility often involves not making the obvious argument, true as it may be.

1Sa 18:19 But when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as his wife-

There's a repeated circumstance of a woman promised in marriage to a man being given to another- in the lives of Samson and David. Circumstances repeat between the experiences of God's children; and if we perceive that, then we will realize that man is not alone. No experience is so awfully unique or without precedent. This is the value of the histories God chose to record in the Bible. Perhaps David was being warned by this not to be like Samson, for whom women were his downfall. And he failed to perceive that. It could possibly be inferred from :25 that Adriel paid Saul a large dowry for his daughter.

We could infer from :25 that Saul was paid a large dowry and this avarice is what led him to break his word to David.

1Sa 18:20 Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David, and when they told Saul he was pleased-

The statement that Michal loved David in 1 Sam. 18:20 is about the only example of love marriage in the Old Testament or a statement that a woman fancied a man. We note how by 2 Sam. 6:18 she watches David out of her window and "despising him in her heart". And she is punished for that by barrenness. She let him out of a window in loyalty to him (1 Sam. 19:12) but in 2 Sam. 6 she watches him from a window and despises him. The other women who watched from windows in the Bible are both bad- the bad woman of Proverbs 7 who watches a man from her window and goes out to seduce him; Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37) and Sisera's mother (Jud. 5:28,29). Infatuated love turned to hatred, and so again we see how psychologically credible are the Biblical histories. Her possession of teraphim and falsely telling her father that David had threatened to kill her... all suggest an unspirituality. We could assume that although her father was now dead by the time of 2 Sam. 6, Michal had moved from love of David to the love of her father Saul and what he stood for. Therefore in 2 Sam. 6:16 as she looks out from her window, Michal is described as being "Michal daughter of Saul". In the previous window scene she is called "David's wife Michal" (1 Sam. 19:11). And again we see this so often- one partner with a mission becomes hated by the other partner when they no longer support the mission, and return to the loyalties of their youth. Both Michal and her brother Jonathan are described as loving David with the same Hebrew word *ahab*. But her love didn't abide the test of time; Jonathan's did. David may well have this in mind when he laments at Jonathan's death that Jonathan's love was more wonderful to him than the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26).

David was "pleased" to be Saul's son in law, as Saul too was "pleased" at the prospect (18:20,26, the same Hebrew word is used); this indicates the complexity of the relationship. See on :1,2. As Jonathan's close friend, it was inevitable that David got to know his sister, Michal. David and Michal began their relationship on this basis. Jonathan's spiritual side would have had some reflection in his sister. For even Saul their father had a spiritual side, and it is fair to assume that Jonathan's mother was also a spiritual woman. It is easily overlooked that David later married Saul's wives (2 Sam. 12:8)- including the mother of Jonathan and Michal. So now we can reconstruct the complex spiritual and emotional situation. David without doubt experienced a state of 'in-loveness' with Jonathan. His lament of 2 Sam. 1 is proof enough of this. The spirituality which was in Jonathan was also seen in Michal his sister. And David loved Saul, too. Again, his lament over him is proof of this- it shows that David's loving respect for him was not just the result of a steely act of the will, forcing himself to patiently respect Saul. There was something in him which he loved. And we can assume that David did not just marry women whom he didn't spiritually love. There was therefore something in Saul's wives which was spiritual. And the whole thing was not just one way. Jonathan loved David, "Michal, Saul's daughter loved David" (18:20), and Saul clearly had love-hate feelings for David; there was something about him which he deeply loved and respected. The intensity of his hatred of David must have been psychologically connected to a deep-seated love. "He loved him greatly" is the comment of 16:21. The seeds of the love between David and the house of Saul would have begun early on. The reason *why* all this information is included is to provide comfort for us in the incredible emotional and spiritual complexities which we find ourselves in. In the flesh, David cannot have known which way to turn, mentally, spiritually, emotionally. Yet in the Spirit he

could turn to his Heavenly Father, whose mind can totally fathom our pain, who can know in totality our every situation.

Michal has many similarities to Rachel in the book of Genesis. They each had an older sister who was set up to be their husband's wife. The fathers were both obsessive and unpleasant, and both fathers pursued after their husbands. Both women present as not very spiritual in that they had teraphim [household idols], which they both use to deceive their fathers to save their own skin, and to help their husbands save their lives from the murderous intent of their fathers. They both lie to their fathers. In the teraphim incident, Rachel claims to be sick and Michal claims David is sick. Both have husbands who work for their father, who deceives their husbands. Both had to choose their husbands over their fathers. Both had an older sister, Leah cp. Merab. The fathers of both women made an agreement with the sons in law [David and Jacob] to give them their daughters in marriage for a dowry [years of labour, killing Goliath], but deceived them. David effectively paid two dowries in order to marry Michal- slaying Goliath, and then 100 Philistine foreskins. Jacob also pays two dowries, each of seven years labour. Each woman had a time of infertility. In Michal's case this is recorded in 2 Sam. 6:23 "Michal, daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death". That could imply she had a child the day she died- she died in childbirth. Which would be another parallel with Rachel. This verse however stands in tension with 2 Sam. 21:8 "the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel" (NEV). The translations squirm around this by translating "bore" as "brought up for", or by appealing to a changed text which read "Merab" for Michal. But the Hebrew is simply as NEV- that Michal had five children by the man whom her older sister was married off to rather than David, and then she marries David. All spaghetti junction in terms of relationships, and all reminiscent of the Jacob-Rachel-Leah mess. All so mixed up and intertwining it's hard to get any mental map of it. Apparently both Michal and Merab were at one point married to the same man, Adriel. By the intrigue of their father. Just as with Laban and his daughters Rachel and Leah.

Clearly Jacob, Laban and Rachel are reflected in David, Saul and Michal. All these connections cannot be mere coincidence. We naturally enquire why such similarities constantly occur between the lives of God's people. We see the same thing today, the deeper we engage with other believers and get to know them. The repeated circumstances occur over time [between us and earlier believers we meet in the Bible] and also horizontally between us and present believers whom we know. We see the same Divine hallmark and way of operating in our lives, as comfort that indeed man is not alone- not least because our apparently unique situations aren't in fact so unique.

1Sa 18:21 Saul said, I will give her to him so that she can be a snare to him, and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Therefore Saul said to David, You shall this day have a second opportunity to be my son-in-law-

See on :11. By describing his daughter as a "snare" to a righteous man, Saul shows his insensitivity to the way the law of Moses warned against women who were as snares. Even in the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, written in Solomon's later life, he still uses words and phrases which have their root in his father David- e.g. his description of women as snares in Ecc. 7:26 goes back to how his father dealt with women who were a snare (1 Sam. 18:21). And the whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai (2 Sam. 19:35). The lack of true faith amongst many raised as believers may be related to all this too. We each need to

seriously examine ourselves in this connection, and know the meaning of personal conversion.

1Sa 18:22 Saul commanded his servants, Speak to David secretly and say, 'Look, the king is pleased with you, and all his servants love you; now therefore be the king's son-in-law' -

All this intrigue was so far from the shepherd boy who simply loved God. See on 1 Sam. 20:13. It is quite clear that David distrusted Saul, and so he communicates through his servants. But it is all rather simplistic and primitive as it was obvious they had been set up by Saul. And if Saul were genuine, he would have fulfilled his promise and given David his daughter freely.

1Sa 18:23 Saul's servants told David this. David said, Does it seem to you a light thing to be the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man-

They only had a "few sheep" (1 Sam. 17:28); David was not from a wealthy family, he was "a poor man" as he says himself. His later abuse of the "poor man" Uriah once he was rich (2 Sam. 12:3 s.w.) was therefore the more culpable.

The young David in Saul's court in 1 Sam 18:23 calls himself a poor and lightly esteemed man; and he uses these words "poor and lightly esteemed" about himself in Ps. 119:141, suggesting Ps. 119 was written as reflection on this period of David's life. David's thought was that although he was poor, he believed Yahweh's word of promise that he would become king.

And little known? -

"Lightly esteemed" is the word David will later use in Ps. 38:7 about being "loathsome" after his sin with Bathsheba. What had been mere words expressing theoretical humility were now translated into actual ownership. Our expressions of humility likewise are brought into reality by God's hand, often working through our own sins.

1Sa 18:24 The servants of Saul told him what David said-

Saul had a network of spies watching David (1 Sam. 18:20,24; 19:11,19; 23:7,13,25; 24:1; 27:4). In the type of Christ, this looks ahead to Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Jn. 11:57.

1Sa 18:25 Saul said, Tell David, 'The king desires no dowry except one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged on the king's enemies'. Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines-

This could possibly suggest that Saul had given Merab to Adriel rather than David because Adriel paid a large dowry. That David casually killed 200 men instead of 100 reflects his failure to perceive the value and the meaning of the human person, even if they were Gentiles.

1Sa 18:26 When his servants told David this, he was pleased to be the king's son-in-law. Before the allotted time-

David was "pleased" to be Saul's son in law, as Saul too was "pleased" at the prospect (1 Sam. 18:20,26, the same Hebrew word is used); this indicates the complexity of the relationship. See on :2.

There can be few men who do not have at least some attraction to the father and family of their wife. David really loved Saul's daughter, indeed the prospect of marrying her may have been a large motivator behind his zeal in fighting Goliath and the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:26,30; 18:26). Saul was not a totally unspiritual man; there

are many hints that he had a spiritual side. It's rare indeed that a totally unspiritual person can love a highly spiritual person like David. And yet this fine relationship ended in an intense love-hate affair. So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

"Before the allotted time" is as AV "And the days were not expired". The days not expired may refer to the days he was given to bring the 100 foreskins. Or they could be the days during which he was supposed to have married Merab. By the end of those days he did in fact end up married to one of Saul's daughters. And so Saul had kept his side of the deal, to give David a daughter within a certain time period; and smugly thought how smart he was, seeing he had presumably received a big dowry from Adriel for Merab.

1Sa 18:27 David arose and went with his men and killed two hundred of the Philistine men, and David brought their foreskins-

We see here the beginning of hints that David sunk into blood lust, culminating in the comment that he couldn't build the temple because of his attitude to shedding blood. He need not have murdered these men in order to get their foreskins. And he did so "that he might" marry Michal. Rather than for any more spiritual motive. If he had circumcised them rather than murdering them, he might have brought them within the hope of Israel.

And gave them in full number to the king so that he might be the king's son-in-law. Saul gave him Michal his daughter as his wife-

A more arrogant man than David would have insisted that Saul keep his offer, that the man who slew Goliath could freely marry his daughter. He could likewise have insisted that Saul give him Merab as promised. But he instead is zealous to meet Saul's new demands, bringing 200 and not just 100 foreskins, and doing it earlier than the deadline given (:26).

1Sa 18:28 Saul saw and knew that Yahweh was with David, and Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him-

See on 1 Sam. 17:58. The fact his own daughter was one of the many daughters in Israel who loved David was all so hard for Saul. If he had accepted God's rejection of him as king, he could still have built a personal relationship with God and lived in sure hope of eternal salvation in the Kingdom. But he didn't, and only hoped that he would somehow be able to destroy David and establish his own kingdom, despite God's word to the contrary.

1Sa 18:29 Saul was yet the more afraid of David, and Saul was David's enemy continually-

The more Saul perceived the hand of God in David's life, the more he feared and hated him. He realized, as he thought about it, that the man set to replace the king... was now the king's son in law. But by the king's own device and encouragement. It seems that spiritual jealousy, the cancer which stalks churches and Christian relationships, is the worst form of jealousy. It knows no bounds.

1Sa 18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth and whenever they did so, David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was

highly esteemed-

David's commentary upon this is in Psalm 8, written in reflection upon his victory: "Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:9). It was David's name which was much set by (1 Sam. 18:30); but David's desire was it should be Yahweh's Name which was now made majestic after the defeat of Goliath, and not his name. The idea seems to be that David was more successful in the field of battle than the other servants of Saul; instead we read that he behaved himself more wisely than them. This is to equate his victories with his wisdom, rather than his own strength or felicity in combat.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 19

1Sa 19:1 Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David-

The simple appeal was that if David was no more, then Jonathan would be king, and the existing courtiers would remain in power. Whereas David, from another tribe, and with every reason for bitterness against Saul, would not remove them from power. But Samuel's words about David were surely known by Jonathan, and he had himself made a covenant to give the kingdom to David (see on 1 Sam. 18:3,4). It could be that Saul "told" them to kill David in a mad outburst of anger whilst throwing one of his tantrums. But those words are here recorded. It could be that Saul was sharing with them a specific plan of killing David the next morning (:2); and I note on :11 that it seems his servants go along with it. Saul had been told that David would be king and he was no longer to be king. To seek to murder David was a foolhardy refusal to accept God's word. Had Saul humbly accepted he was not to serve as king, he could've walked humbly with his God in sure hope of eternal salvation. And saved himself all his mental health issues that clouded the rest of his life and led to his tragic death by suicide.

1Sa 19:2 Jonathan told David, Saul my father seeks to kill you. Now therefore, please take extra care of yourself in the morning; hide in a secret place and stay there-
This is the same word for "hiding place" as in Ps. 119:114: "You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in Your word". When hiding from Saul in the wilderness [s.w. of David's "hiding places" at this time in 1 Sam. 19:2; 25:20], David hoped in the prophetic word that one day Saul would be no more and David would be king. See on 1 Sam. 20:13.

1Sa 19:3 I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are and I will talk with my father about you, and if I find out anything, I will tell you-

The idea seems to be that Jonathan would walk with Saul in the field, the open countryside in Gibeah where David also lived with Michal; and then Jonathan would tell David as soon as possible what he had learned. To facilitate this, David needed to be in the same "field" or area of countryside, so that when Jonathan had finished his chat with his father, he could immediately inform David. Presumably Jonathan wanted to talk with his father out of earshot of anyone else.

1Sa 19:4 Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, Don't let the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you and he has worked well for you-

Jonathan's intensity of relationship with David meant that he was not ashamed to speak up for him: "Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not *the king* sin against his servant... because his works have been to thee-ward very good: for he... slew the Philistine" (19:4,5). Note how he calls Saul "the King", suggesting a certain detachment from him. The vision of David standing triumphant over Goliath still motivated Jonathan, to the extent that he could stand up in that hostile environment and testify to the love of David, the extent of his selfless victory, and the urgent need for this to be recognized by men. The spirit of our preaching only occasionally matches this example. No wonder the record stresses Jonathan as being typical of ourselves.

1Sa 19:5 he put his life in his hand and struck the Philistine-

David lived permanently in the intensity of that victory (s.w. Ps. 119:109).

And Yahweh worked a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced- Yahweh had earlier "worked deliverance in Israel" through Saul (s.w. 1 Sam. 11:13); but now it was worked through David. It could have been through Saul. It was because David had the faith and humility to do what Saul potentially could have done, that Saul fell into a complex of spiritual jealousy against David. See on 1 Sam. 17:26 for another example. David's confident words that God would deliver him from the Philistines [which Jonathan here quotes] were evidently inspired by Samson, the renowned one-man deliverer from Philistine armies. Both Samson and David wrought "great salvation" for Israel (1 Sam. 19:5 cp. Jud. 15:18).

That Jonathan saw David as his personal hero, succeeding where he failed, can be found in the following consideration. Jonathan seems to have seen Gideon as his hero [compare 1 Sam. 14:10-20 with Jud. 7:3,10,11,14,22. Jonathan's son was called Merib-baal (1 Chron. 9:40), meaning 'rebellion against Baal', an epithet for 'Gideon']. Yet in 19:5 he says that "David put his life in his hand", exactly as Gideon did (Jud. 9:17). In other words, Jonathan saw David as the perfect fulfilment of all he spiritually wished to be, he felt that *David* lived up to the example of his hero Gideon, whereas he did not. Is this how dynamically and intensely we relate to our Lord Jesus? For this is what the David and Jonathan relationship points ahead to.

But there are similarities also with Samson. The Spirit came on David as it did on Samson (1 Sam. 16:13); they were both empowered to kill lions, whilst keeping the fact a secret. And in both those acts they were taught that they would deliver God's people from the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Indeed, David's confident words that God would deliver him from the Philistines were evidently inspired by Samson, the renowned one-man deliverer from Philistine armies. Both Samson and David wrought "great salvation" for Israel (1 Sam. 19:5 cp. Jud. 15:18). As Samson was characterized by his love of that riddle (the word occurs nine times in Jud. 14:12-19, and Jud. 15:16 Heb. is also some kind of riddle), so David uses the same word to describe how he chose to put forth a riddle (Ps. 78:2). Psalm 3 is full of reference to Samson's fight at Lehi. It was also written at a time when David was betrayed by his own people. And his failures with women would make another parallel.

Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?- The desire to slay innocent blood points forward to the Jewish desire to do the same to the Lord, articulated through Judas (Mt. 27:4).

1Sa 19:6 Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: As Yahweh lives, he shall not be put to death-

Yet Saul did try to kill David. He is here taking the Yahweh Name in vain.

Saul obeyed the voice of the people and the voice (s.w.) of the sheep and oxen that he covered (1 Sam. 15:24,24). Later he obeys the voice of Jonathan and promises not to kill David (1 Sam. 19:6) the voice of the witch and of his servants who persuade him against his will to eat (1 Sam. 28:22,23). We have the impression of a man readily persuaded by voices. If he had had a fundamental commitment to obey the voice of Yahweh as he was repeatedly asked, he would not have listened to these other voices. Nor the voices in his own head. Likewise those without a fundamental commitment to God's word are open to all the other voices around them, and likewise have no moral compass nor ethical direction. The Hebrew for 'to hear' is the same as 'to obey'. Samuel had told Saul he would be made to hear or obey God's word (1 Sam. 9:27 "that I may tell you the message of God" uses the word for to hear / obey, the hint being 'that I may make you hear / be obedient to the message'). But he failed to make use of this because he found the voice of other things more attractive to hearken to.

1Sa 19:7 Jonathan called David and told him all this. Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before-

We may consider both Jonathan and David to have been naive in believing this. But the situation was nuanced because all of them loved each other. Saul had loved David and told Jesse he wanted David as his son. Saul's daughters loved David and he likewise. It was all so interwoven, just as relationships are today, resulting in people doing things or trusting people when to onlookers, this is ridiculously unwise and naive. The record here has absolutely every verisimilitude to real life and is absolutely psychologically credible.

1Sa 19:8 There was war again. David went out and fought the Philistines and killed them with a great slaughter, and they fled before him-

The next verse records Saul suffering from an evil spirit. Clearly what is in view is the spirit of jealousy, arising from his own lack of faith, pride, refusal to accept Yahweh's word about the passing of the kingship to David, indeed a whole nexus of unspirituality. But Yahweh's Spirit worked to confirm that spirit, those wrong psychological positions which Saul allowed to operate and progress within him. Just as the Holy Spirit works positively in the heart / spirit / mind of the spiritual. Likewise in 1 Sam. 18:10, the 'evil spirit' also comes to Saul after a military incident which provoked his jealousy of David. Clearly 'spirit' is being used to refer to the spirit / mind of Saul, and not any external cosmic being. But then we will go on to read how the Spirit of God came upon Saul to influence him to repentance. We see God's careful balancing and working with men's hearts, always leading them to salvation. It's possible, from the use of the terms "that day" and "the morning", that all the events of this chapter up to :18 occurred on the same day and night. We could equally translate that "there had been war again" and David had done these things. The memory of David's recent victory kept re-playing in Saul's mind. And was confirmed by the evil spirit from Yahweh, although through David's psalms, which were of God's Spirit, He sought to ameliorate that.

1Sa 19:9 An evil spirit from Yahweh came on Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing his harp-

Saul's jealousy, confirmed by God psychologically confirming him in it through the Spirit, was on account of David's victories, especially over Goliath, which represented Christ's conquest of sin (1 Sam. 8:7,8; 19:8,9), and his subsequent popularity with the

people. Saul watched David's spirituality, observing the close fellowship David had with God (1 Sam. 18:15,28). The Jews were jealous of the evident moral perfection of the Lord Jesus, and his popularity with the people which he seemed to effortlessly achieve. Joseph's brothers had a similar motivation to Saul. David as a type of Christ comes out clearly here.

Saul was gripping his javelin or spear, the symbol of his kingship. By doing so his body language was reflecting his desire to grip on to power rather than resign it to David. Perhaps Saul also carried a javelin and held it in his hand at home because he was paranoid he might be assassinated and thus lose his kingdom. If he had humbly resigned power, he would have avoided all the mental and spiritual health issues.

1Sa 19:10 Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear-

Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8).

But he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and the spear went into the wall. David fled, and escaped that night-

Compare this with the Lord Jesus Christ slipping away from Jews bent on killing him, Jn. 8:59; 7:19. The stress on "that night" suggests the events of this chapter all happened on the same day and night. David fled- but just down the hill to his own house, because Saul later asks for him to be brought "up" to him.

1Sa 19:11 Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning-

We wonder why Saul wanted to wait until morning to arrest and slay David. Possibly the plan was to do as was done to Nabal, to falsely accuse him before a court and slay him. This would explain David's frequent complaint in the Psalms that he was the victim of false accusation.

LXX "It came to pass in that night, that Saul sent messengers to the house of David to watch him, in order to slay him in the morning". "That night" means the same night after the morning referenced earlier: "please take extra care of yourself in the morning". The events of this chapter all happened the same day. Saul had planned to murder David in the morning, Jonathan knew that and warned David of what would happen "in the morning". But then Saul repented and Jonathan and David believe this, and David stays at his home that night. This is psychologically credible; because Saul had loved David, he was a family member and friend, and Saul's behaviour against David would have been brushed off by them all as one of his bad turns caused by his mental illness.

They presumably didn't charge into the house and murder David there because Saul feared a public uproar if he did so. David's escape to his house implies he didn't think Saul would follow him there; he assumed this was just another temper tantrum. Ps. 59 refers to this time, and seems to speak of Saul's thugs roaming the streets looking to kill David. For the first time, the servants of Saul become proactively aggressive, having accepted his charge to kill David given in :1.

Michal, David's wife, told him, If you don't save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed-

Ps. 130:6 seems to allude here: "My soul longs for the Lord more than watchmen long for the morning; more than watchmen for the morning". Watching for the morning is

the phrase used about the plot to slay David by morning (1 Sam. 19:2,11). Ps. 130:6 would therefore have originated with David's reflections that whatever the careful watchings of man to destroy him, his focus was upon longing for the Lord.

1Sa 19:12 So Michal let David down through the window. He fled and escaped- Escape through a window and down a wall is something experienced by the spies in Jericho (Josh. 2:15), and Saul in Damascus (2 Cor. 11:33). Again we note how circumstances repeat between the experiences of God's children; and if we perceive that, then we will realize that man is not alone. No experience is so awfully unique or without precedent. This is the value of the histories God chose to record in the Bible. See on 1 Sam. 18:20. It is circumstantially likely that the house was on the town wall, repeating the situation of Rahab and Saul. For surely the house was surrounded by Saul's men.

1Sa 19:13 Michal took an idol and laid it in the bed-

This speaks so much of her unspirituality and that of her father. The use of teraphim was common in Israel at the time (Jud. 17:5; 18:14) and continued until the time of Josiah (2 Kings 23:24) and then were used even in exile (Zech. 10:2). These teraphim were often life size male images. Michal was barren (2 Sam. 6:23 implies she never had a child), and she may well have had this particular one as an idol for fertility, which involved using it as a kind of sex toy. Yet David, the man after Go's own heart, had fallen in love with this unspiritual woman and married her.

Put a pillow of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with the clothes-

Heb. "Put the quilt of goat's hair at its head, and covered it with the coverlet". She wrapped the head of the image in a hairy rug to resemble a man's hair, and then covered it with a square piece of woollen cloth.

Michal has many similarities to Rachel in the book of Genesis. They each had an older sister who was set up to be their husband's wife. The fathers were both obsessive and unpleasant, and both fathers pursued after their husbands. Both women present as not very spiritual in that they had teraphim [household idols], which they both use to deceive their fathers to save their own skin, and to help their husbands save their lives from the murderous intent of their fathers. They both lie to their fathers. In the teraphim incident, Rachel claims to be sick and Michal claims David is sick. Both have husbands who work for their father, who deceives their husbands. Both had to chose their husbands over their fathers. Both had an older sister, Leah cp. Merab. The fathers of both women made an agreement with the sons in law [David and Jacob] to give them their daughters in marriage for a dowry [years of labour, killing Goliath], but deceived them. David effectively paid two dowries in order to marry Michal- slaying Goliath, and then 100 Philistine foreskins. Jacob also pays two dowries, each of seven years labour. Each woman had a time of infertility. In Michal's case this is recorded in 2 Sam. 6:23 "Michal, daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death". That could imply she had a child the die she died- she died in childbirth. Which would be another parallel with Rachel. This verse however stands in tension with 2 Sam. 21:8 "the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel" (NEV). The translations squirm around this by translating "bore" as "brought up for", or by appealing to a changed text which read "Merab" for Michal. But the Hebrew is simply as NEV- that Michal had five children by the man whom her older sister was married off to rather than David, and then she marries David. All spaghetti junction in terms of relationships, and all reminiscent of the Jacob-Rachel-Leah mess. All so mixed up and intertwining it's hard to get any mental map of it. Apparently

both Michal and Merab were at one point married to the same man, Adriel. By the intrigue of their father. Just as with Laban and his daughters Rachel and Leah.

Clearly Jacob, Laban and Rachel are reflected in David, Saul and Michal. All these connections cannot be mere coincidence. We naturally enquire why such similarities constantly occur between the lives of God's people. We see the same thing today, the deeper we engage with other believers and get to know them. The repeated circumstances occur over time [between us and earlier believers we meet in the Bible] and also horizontally between us and present believers whom we know. We see the same Divine hallmark and way of operating in our lives, as comfort that indeed man is not alone- not least because our apparently unique situations aren't in fact so unique.

1Sa 19:14 When Saul sent messengers to take David she said, He is sick-
LXX adds: "they [the messengers] brought word that he was sick". This sounds a rather lame response by men who had been sent by Saul to kidnap David from his own home and then murder him somewhere (see on :1,11). Clearly they balked at actually performing what they had agreed to do.

1Sa 19:15 Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed so that I can kill him-
"Bring him up" may mean that Saul's home / palace was on the hill of Gibeah, and David's in the lower town. Saul now wanted to personally murder David; whereas it seems from :1,11 that the plan originally had been for his servants to do the job, and that is also the impression given in Ps. 59, which has a title assigning it to this time. We sense Saul drunk with the obsession of jealousy, with the hatred in his heart which leads to murder.

1Sa 19:16 When the messengers came in, there was just the idol in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head-
After this incident, circumstances repeat for Saul. He again sends messengers to take David at Naioth, but they are overcome by the Spirit; and then he goes himself. And still doesn't get David. He was unwilling to perceive the clear patterns in his life which reflected Yahweh's Spirit.

1Sa 19:17 Saul said to Michal, Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped? Michal answered Saul, He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I kill you?' -

We are surely intended to compare her response to that of her brother Jonathan, who stood up for David (:1) and was prepared to die for it at the hands of his father. "Why have you deceived me?" is word for word what Saul was later asked by the witch at Endor on the last night of his life (1 Sam. 28:12). Saul's words were to return to him, placed in the mouth of another woman. For by our words we are judged. The deceiver was deceived, as happened with Jacob.

1Sa 19:18 Now David fled and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. He and Samuel went and lived in Naioth-
"Naioth" means "the dwellings" and seems to refer to a kind of college of instruction Samuel had built up at his home in Ramah. The Targum renders the word "house of instruction". It would have been the first of the schools of the prophets. This would account for the prophets appearing at that place (:20).

1Sa 19:19 Saul was told, David is at Naioth in Ramah!-

Saul had a network of spies watching David (1 Sam. 18:20,24; 19:11,19; 23:7,13,25; 24:1; 27:4). In the type of Christ, this looks ahead to Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Jn. 11:57.

1Sa 19:20 Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as head over them, the spirit of God came on the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied-

As explained on :18, there was a school of the prophets at Naioth, headed up by Samuel. This incident is looking ahead to the experience of the enemies of the Lord Jesus in Jn. 7:46. These messengers were those mentioned in :1 and :11, the servants of Saul who had agreed to murder David. They, Saul and everyone involved is here given a taste of the power of God's Spirit. He is able to take over the human mind by His Spirit, and make us spiritual; but as discussed on :24, He will not treat us as robots, overpowering us so that we have no choice but to be saved. We are to follow onwards in the path His Spirit sets us upon.

1Sa 19:21 When Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. Saul sent messengers again the third time and they also prophesied-

We wonder if the content of the prophesy here mentioned was that David would be king.

1Sa 19:22 Then he went himself to Ramah, and came to the great well that is in Secu, and he asked, Where are Samuel and David? Someone said, They are at Naioth in Ramah-

LXX "the well of the threshing-floor that is in Sephi (or, the hill)". If we go with the LXX, we note that a well is not usually on a hill [LXX "the hill"], whereas a threshing floor is typically in an elevated area where the wind can blow the chaff away; the Hebrew can equally mean a cistern, perhaps for gathering rain water. And threshing is associated with judgment. He was brought to realize that in his attitude to David, he was facing judgment. And there was, unusually, water next to it, the symbol of cleansing. For there was a well or cistern next to this threshing floor. It was a nudge towards his repentance, and he apparently followed this for a short time and was confirmed in it by the Spirit. Or if Secu is the same as Shocoh of 1 Sam. 17:1, this was the scene of David's victory over Goliath. Again this would have prodded Saul's conscience, and the Spirit confirmed him in responding to this prodding.

Saul ought to have learnt from experience. He had sent messengers to take David from his own house and murder him, but when they failed, he went himself; and failed to find David. Now circumstances repeated, as they do in lives where God is at work. When he is calmly told that David is at Naioth, and realizes that his messengers have been overcome by the Spirit; he ought to have realized that he would not prevail alone. But he continues; and despite his headlong folly, by pure grace, God's Spirit attempts to yet again burst into his life and turn him around.

1Sa 19:23 So he went towards Naioth in Ramah. Then the spirit of God came on him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah-

See on :24. This overpowering by the Spirit was not due to encounter with people or some kind of group psychology. We get the impression Saul had come alone; and

now on the final stage of the journey, he was overcome by the Spirit in a deeply personal meeting with God. See on :24.

1Sa 19:24 He stripped off his clothes and he also prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?-

The Spirit of God usually confirms the human spirit in the way the person wishes to go. But here we see how God at times makes a direct entrance into a person's life through His Spirit, as He had initially with Saul as he was out looking for lost donkeys. Twice God had told him that he was rejected from the kingship for his disobedience. But God dearly loved Saul, and really wanted their relationship to work, despite his mental illness and unspirituality. We marvel at God's desire to save and not to condemn, to accept rather than reject; and His tireless attempts to work even with the proud who have apparently turned away from God. For here God yet again comes into Saul's life and tries to almost force him to be humble.

To take off his kingly clothes before Samuel represented his willingness to resign the kingship for the sake of Samuel's prophetic word about David replacing him. We noted how Jonathan had willingly done this of his own initiative. But time and again, Saul refuses to follow on from the path God's Spirit placed him upon. Although the kingship had been removed from him, Saul still could have been saved and lived a Spirit filled life. But he was now obsessed with retaining what he had, his status as king, and personal salvation and relationship with God simply didn't figure in his thinking. But God at this point forces Himself again upon Saul by giving him His Spirit, so eager to still have him as His child. And David seems to have recognized this abiding involvement of God's good Spirit in Saul's life, in that he refuses to kill Saul when given the opportunity- exactly because he is still Yahweh's anointed, the Spirit is still on him, as it were. We must remember that when dealing with God's fallen people; His Spirit is still working with them, nobody is totally abandoned by Him, He will still be trying with that person. So we see God on one hand pushing Saul downwards through His evil spirit, and yet countering that push with the influence of His spirit the other way. The question of course is how strong are those respective movements or pushes or influences. We cannot measure them as we have no metric for them, but we are assured that their respective strengths are in a perfect balance and proportion that can only be called Divine.

Saul removed his royal clothes and laid on the earth in penitence, moved by the Spirit. I suggest this was what happened and not some ecstatic trance or being slain in the Spirit in the style of modern Pentecostalism. This explains why in 1 Sam. 20, Jonathan believes his father now has no malice towards David as he's over it, and why David was even willing to come near Saul's court.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 20

1Sa 20:1 David fled from Naioth in Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, What have I done? What is my iniquity? What is my sin before your father- David was clearly upset that Saul's oath before Yahweh not to kill him had been broken so unashamedly (1 Sam. 19:6). He quotes the words of Jacob in Gen. 31:36; perhaps not because the surrounding context was relevant, but because God's word and Biblical precedent was ever on David's mind. See on 1 Sam. 20:13. This all

recalls "You seek to kill me... which of you convicts me of sin?" (Jn. 8:37,40,46). Again, we see clearly David as a type of Christ.

These three questions are all tantamount to saying "I have done nothing wrong and I am being unfairly persecuted". Psalm 7 appears to be relevant to this time. Especially Ps. 7:3: "Yahweh, my God, if I have done this, if there is iniquity in my hands...". This is one of those powerful incidental proofs that the scriptures are accurate and inspired; it is circumstantially credible that a man would use the same turn of phrase both to God and to his close friend. It was this experience of false accusation which perhaps led David to be over confident of himself spiritually, and is all part of the backdrop for the shameful failure with Bathsheba. Most people have experienced false accusation, and we must beware that this doesn't lead us to fail to perceive that we are sinners and liable to fall to temptation in other areas.

That he seeks my life?-

Saul sought the life of David (s.w. 1 Sam. 20:1; 22:23; 23:15; 25:29; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the Psalms, David frequently imprecates judgment upon those who sought his life (s.w. Ps. 35:4; 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13; 86:14). He loved Saul, the life of Saul was precious in David's sight, indeed the historical records seem to emphasize David's patient love of Saul; and yet in the Psalms he gives vent before God to his anger with Saul and desire to see Saul punished and judged by God. This is absolutely true to human experience; we may act with great patience and apparent love toward those who abuse us, and yet within we fume about it. The lesson of David is that we are to pour out those feelings to God in prayer, leaving Him to judge. And yet his bitterness with Saul must be balanced against his treating Saul's life as "precious" when he had the chance to murder him, twice. And his totally genuine weeping for him when he died. As with many strands in David's personality, the balance between the good and the bad was only lightly tipped towards the good in the overall analysis.

1Sa 20:2 He said to him, Far from it; you shall not die. Look, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me, so why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so-

In the type of Christ, this is Jn. 7:20. We see the complexity of the situation, psychologically. Jonathan loves David more than he does his father Saul, but he also doesn't want to believe that his father is an inveterate liar who would take Yahweh's Name in vain by making an oath and then breaking it (1 Sam. 19:6). Clearly his father did do things without disclosing them to Jonathan. But he is in denial at how bad his father really was towards David, the man and brother he dearly loved and respected. We see precisely the same kinds of apparently contradictory behaviours in relationships all around us. As observers we may see how people are obviously naive to believe others... but within those relationships, vision is not at all so clear. It was all so interwoven, just as relationships are today, resulting in people doing things or trusting people when to onlookers, this is ridiculously unwise and naive. The record here has absolutely every verisimilitude to real life and is absolutely psychologically credible.

Jonathan was persuaded Saul would not now harm David, despite all the evidence so far. Perhaps the gift of the Spirit at Naioth had led to Saul saying that he accepted David as king, and he had stripped off his kingly robe. But this intensity of spirituality was but for a moment as it is today with those who don't refill themselves with the Spirit.

1Sa 20:3 But David took an oath and said, Your father knows well that I have found

favour in your eyes, so he says, 'Don't let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved'; but truly as Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death-

As Saul had sworn by Yahweh not to kill David (1 Sam. 19:6), so David swears in response that Saul does want to kill him. The way Saul had broken that oath was clearly distressing to David. Yet David's faith in the message of Samuel that he would become king is now at maximum stretch. He feels Saul is about to kill him, and gives in further to these feelings when he says he will surely be killed by Saul (1 Sam. 27:1).

LXX "the space is filled up between me and death". Here we have a slip in David's faith that he would in fact become king. We see it again when he flees to the Philistines.

1Sa 20:4 Then Jonathan said to David, Whatever your soul desires, I will do it for you-

Jonathan recognizes that what David has said in :3 is true, and as noted on :2, he realizes that indeed he is just refusing to see evil in his father. His loyalties were torn between David and Saul, and now by saying this he comes down on the side of David. "Soul" is the word for "life" in :1, and Jonathan surely means 'Whatever it takes to save your life, I will do'. As noted on :3, we might wish to see at this point more faith by both of them in Samuel's prophetic word that David shall become king. Their faith in that word went up and down, with 1 Sam. 23:17 being a high point in it.

We naturally ask why David was even willing to accept an invitation to Saul's court, after all that Saul had done. Surely it was because Saul had removed his royal clothes and lain on the earth in penitence, moved by the Spirit. I suggest this was what happened and not some ecstatic being slain in the Spirit. David was willing to accept this as legitimate only if there was abiding evidence that Saul of his own will wanted to continue in that path.

1Sa 20:5 David said to Jonathan, Look, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to dine with the king; but let me go so that I can hide myself in the field until the third day at evening-

This dining was presumably to keep a peace offering and eat together of the sacrifice. Saul for all his unspirituality continued an outward semblance of religious obedience and peace with God- as we can through partaking in the breaking of bread (the Christian equivalent of the peace offering), whilst harbouring obsessive hatred against our brethren in our hearts. The breaking of bread is our peace offering... but do we slip back into the lack of peace with God and our brethren afterwards?

1Sa 20:6 If your father misses me at all then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem, his city, for it is the yearly sacrifice there for all the family'-

This was a lie, as David was in the field (:5). It raises the question as to whether a lie is acceptable at times. We think of the Hebrew midwives in Egypt and Rahab, whose lie was an act of faith. It is also the same lie that God encouraged Samuel to use when he went to Bethlehem to anoint David as Saul's replacement, under the guise of offering a sacrifice there. Possibly David was seeking to provoke Saul to recall this and to react badly, because he wanted to demonstrate to Jonathan that his father Saul hadn't really changed his attitude.

1Sa 20:7 If he says, 'Very well', your servant will have peace; but if he is angry, then

know that evil is determined by him-

The reference to "peace" is appropriate if as suggested on :6 a peace offering celebration is in view. This is appropriate language given that context, and confirms us in believing that we are reading the actual words spoken by men millennia ago.

1Sa 20:8 Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of Yahweh. But if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself; why should you bring me to your father?-

As discussed further on :9, there is an element of doubt now in David as to Jonathan's loyalty. He reminds him that their covenant that he should be king was before Yahweh. And he entertains the fear that Jonathan might bring David to Saul to be murdered by him; again, a lack of faith in the prophetic word that he would become king. See on :4. We note too that David calls Jonathan his master, recognizing that his life is completely in Jonathan's hands.

1Sa 20:9 Jonathan said, Never! If I should know that evil were determined against you by my father, wouldn't I tell you?-

We are reading a realistic record of the conversation between two friends, one of whom has conflicted loyalties, and the other naturally fears the integrity and trust in the relationship is thereby under threat. For :8 appears to be David somewhat doubting Jonathan, and Jonathan responds with passion, coming down on David's side with his loyalty.

1Sa 20:10 Then David said to Jonathan, Who will tell me if your father answers you roughly?-

Clearly the two of them were not to be seen together. And it seems Jonathan had not even one trusted servant who could take a message to David; they had to somehow meet so that Jonathan could tell David in person. This is a tacit reflection of the anti-David feelings amongst the courtiers of Saul.

1Sa 20:11 Jonathan said to David, Come, let us go out into the field. They both went out into the field-

Presumably they had this conversation in the field because they were scared of being overheard; see on :10. They also wanted to map out exactly the place where they would meet for Jonathan to share the news with David.

1Sa 20:12 Jonathan said to David, By Yahweh, the God of Israel, when I have sounded out my father, by this time tomorrow or the third day, if he is favourable toward you I will send and tell you-

- see on 1 Sam. 18:1-3. AV "Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel..."

He was aware that he was speaking to Yahweh, or before Yahweh, when speaking to David. And we should be likewise aware. Jonathan is seeking to allay the understandable fears of David, that Jonathan would sacrifice his loyalty to David for the sake of that to his father Saul. But Jonathan swears before Yahweh that his loyalty has come down solidly on David's side.

1Sa 20:13 Yahweh deal with me severely, if my father intends evil against you and I don't disclose it to you so that I can send you away safely. May Yahweh be with you, as He has been with my father-

The last phrase reflects the continued struggle of feeling within Jonathan, torn as he

was between loyalty to Saul and David. Perhaps he is putting in other words the Biblical comment that the Spirit departed from Saul and came to David; God's providential working to make Saul king was transferred to David, and Jonathan here recognizes that. The meaning in practice of the Spirit being with someone is that they have God "with" them. The promise of the Comforter is likewise of presence. But the Hebrew seems to imply that Yahweh had been with Saul and would continue to be with him. This surely bespeaks a lack of appreciation of the seriousness of Saul's apostasy. Despite Saul commanding Jonathan by clear pronouncement to kill David (1 Sam. 19:1 Hebrew), Jonathan assures David that Saul is not really intending to kill him; the implication is that he felt David's fear of Saul was somewhat exaggerated (1 Sam. 20:1,2). David gently pointed out, in the spirit of Christ, that Jonathan did not realize how deceptive Saul was (1 Sam. 20:3). Saul gave the impression that he 'delighted' in David (1 Sm. 18:22), using the very same word as in 1 Sam. 19:2: "Jonathan... *delighted* much in David". In other words, Saul and our surrounding world can appear to have the same attitude to David / Jesus as ourselves. The massive difference between the world's attitude to Christ and our own should become more and more apparent to us, despite the external similarities between us and them. Jonathan's familiarity with his father led him to overlook the manic danger which he posed for David, although at other times Jonathan seems to have faced up to it squarely. Our sense of the seriousness of sin likewise tends to blow hot and cold.

1Sa 20:14 But while I live, show me the grace of Yahweh so that I will not be killed- Jonathan here reverts to a stronger faith in the prophetic word that David would indeed be king. He imagined that this would typically involve the slaying of the family of the former king. David feared Jonathan would betray him to death at the hands of Saul; Jonathan feared David would kill him when he became king. It is all so absolutely credible as a psychological narrative, although at this point Jonathan appears to have more faith in the prophetic word of David becoming king than David himself does.

1Sa 20:15 Also, do not cut off your kindness from my house forever, not even when Yahweh has cut off all the enemies of David from the surface of the earth- Jonathan through faith in Samuel's prophetic word is sure that David will become king, and he sees this as requiring the cutting off of Saul and all David's enemies. He may use 'cutting off' in the sense of cutting off their descendants and family name, and he begs David to show mercy to his own line. As David is nervous of his friend Jonathan, so Jonathan here and in :42 seems also to have almost feared that David would take revenge or punish him in some way, on account of his close relationship with his sinful father. It must have seemed impossible to Jonathan, living at a time of kinship-based revenge, to believe that ultimately David would not react strongly against Saul's hatred of him. And we too, ever conscious of our sinful associations, struggle to reassure ourselves of the love of Christ that passes knowledge, just as Jonathan must have looked deeper and deeper into the malice-less love of his friend David.

The covenant between Jonathan and David was an eternal one ("for ever", 1 Sm. 20:15; 23:17), and was reconfirmed during their brief meetings together, during which they earnestly looked ahead to the Kingdom (1 Sam. 23:17). And as we are all too painfully aware, our friendship with the Lord Jesus reflects the frustration of the Jonathan / David relationship, the accumulated tension of being unable to express

their spiritual communication with each other, the pain of physical distance, Jonathan not knowing David's geographical location, having to live up to appearances and expectations in the David-hating court of his bitter father, struggling for the courage to stand up for his best friend. The sheer human pain of it all is so thoroughly revealed to the sensitive reader of the records. There is a purpose in this: it is to take us further in appreciating the true nature of our relationship with Christ.

1Sa 20:16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Yahweh will require it at the hand of David's enemies-

Jonathan proposed it, but David agreed to it. Jonathan accepts that Saul his father would have their behaviour against David "required" of them, at the hands of David. But the covenant was that Jonathan and his family would be spared.

1Sa 20:17 Jonathan made David swear again, for the love that he had for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul-

We might think that the motive for Jonathan requiring David's oath was more for the sake of his own security. But we are told here that the motive was love for David. Hence LXX "And Jonathan sware again to David". A double oath before Yahweh was the strongest kind of oath they could enter between them. Jonathan's love for David was based upon his respect for him and conviction that he would rightly be the next king instead of himself. It's as if in the tension of the storyline, with both sides distrusting the other despite their friendship, the Divine narrator steps in to assure us of Jonathan's absolute sincerity for David.

1Sa 20:18 Then Jonathan said to him, Tomorrow is the new moon and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty-

This implies that David regularly sat at the new moon peace offering feasts with Saul. Despite all the bitterness Saul felt toward him, he went through the motions of eating at the same religious table with him, in the name of celebrating our common peace with God. Those who complain of insincerity at the communion meal, with brethren hating brethren as they sit there, must realize that there is nothing new under the sun. Faithful men have passed this way before.

1Sa 20:19 When you have waited three days, go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself when this started, and stay by the stone Ezel-

Ezel is literally 'to go' and may refer to a stone set up as a signpost. LXX "heap of stones".

1Sa 20:20 I will shoot three arrows to the side of it as though I shot at a mark-

This whole intricate plan was because Jonathan lacked a single faithful friend or messenger through whom he could communicate with David. He had to do so himself directly. We see here his very difficult situation within the household of Saul, and the extent of opposition to David there.

1Sa 20:21 Then I will send the boy saying, 'Go, find the arrows!'. If I tell the boy 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them', then come, for you are safe, as Yahweh lives-

As noted on :20, Jonathan lacked even one faithful messenger. He couldn't even trust this "boy"; see on :39.

1Sa 20:22 But if I say this to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you', then go your way, for Yahweh has sent you away-

The plan was originally that Jonathan and David would not meet each other. But such was their love for each other, that we see that they did briefly embrace. It has all the makings of a wonderful story with every bit of psychological credibility, and the closer we analyze it we are left with no doubt that what we are reading actually happened. Histories and records of the time all tend to embellish events with so much extra that it is hard to know what really was said or done. But the Biblical record shows such powerful internal evidence of being what it claims to be, the inspired word of God.

1Sa 20:23 Concerning the matter which you and I have spoken of, behold, Yahweh is between you and me forever-

Jonathan is at pains to persuade David of his loyalty, as well as continuing to harbour just a slight fear that in the day of David's exaltation, he might be tempted still to wipe out the entire family of Saul including Jonathan and his family.

1Sa 20:24 So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon had come, the king sat down to eat-

I have suggested that eating at the new moon festival meant eating the peace offering, which Saul hypocritically did.

1Sa 20:25 The king sat on his seat by the wall as usual and Jonathan sat opposite and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty-

We enquire why the detail that Saul's personal seat was "by the wall". A king and leader would usually sit in a central place in the room. Perhaps the detail reflects how Saul feared someone might come behind him and kill him, and so in his paranoia or intense anxiety, he insisted that his seat was to be by the wall. Clearly Saul was ill, but those mental issues were intertwined with his moral issues and lack of heart for Yahweh. His mental illnesses or conditions were not ultimately a justification for his wrong behaviours towards David.

The Divine cameraman zooms in close up. "As usual" again shows that these peace offering feasts, the rough equivalent to the breaking of bread service under the new covenant, were held regularly. And David was usually in attendance at them, despite Saul's obvious insincerity towards him. See on :18. The fact Abner and not Jonathan sat by Saul's side, with Jonathan opposite Saul, would suggest a distance between them, with Abner now hoping to be next in line to the throne after Saul; an honour which Jonathan had resigned to David.

1Sa 20:26 Nevertheless Saul didn't say anything that day, for he thought, Something has happened to him. He is not clean. Surely he is not clean-

This reinforces the suggestion that the new moon feast was a religious feast, and the eating together was eating the peace offering, even though Samuel wasn't present to bless it. We note too how David was well known for his observation of the Mosaic law; for it was not allowed to eat the peace offering whilst unclean (Lev. 7:20,21).

1Sa 20:27 On the next day after the new moon, the second day, David's place was empty again. Saul said to Jonathan his son, Why didn't the son of Jesse come to eat, either yesterday or today?-

In the type of Christ, this looks ahead to Jn. 7:11. If David had been unclean, he would have been clean by sundown. If the excuse of :28 was true, it should have been presented at the start. Jonathan therefore clearly comes over as lying. "The son of Jesse" may suggest Saul found it hard to frame the word "David", meaning "beloved"-of God.

1Sa 20:28 Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem-

As noted on :27, this was obviously a lie as the excuse would have been given at the start of the feast. Jonathan's lie could be justified, but he might as well have been honest with Saul, and explained that David was frightened of Saul because of his erratic behaviour against him.

1Sa 20:29 He said, 'Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city. My brother has commanded me to be there. Now, if I have found favour in your eyes, please let me go away and see my brothers'. That is why he has not come to the king's table-

This would have restimulated Saul's memories of his daughter Michal saying that David had asked her "Let me go away...". He would have felt both his children were lying to him because of their greater loyalty to David. Jonathan's lie was really without any credibility, for nobody in Israel, let alone a Saul supporter like David's brother, would have demanded David's presence at home rather than with Saul at the palace. "Go away" is the word for 'flee'. It was again designed to probe the sincerity of Saul's apparent repentance when he took off his kingly robes and lay in penitence all night before Yahweh in the previous chapter. The expected response from Saul, if he were penitent, would have been 'Flee back home? No, he's safe here, I'm so sorry for what I did to him but I've repented now'. But instead we see Saul's angry reaction, showing how he had reverted to type. He failed to have what Paul would later call 'repentance not to be repented of'. So often one observes this in pastoral experience- someone is baptized, or has a deep spiritual experience at some point in their life, displays amazing spirituality and commitment- and then reverts to the previous mentality. They have failed to walk in the Spirit, to be refilled by the Spirit, to totally surrender their heart.

1Sa 20:30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, You son of a perverse rebellious woman, don't I know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the confusion of your mother's nakedness?-

David loved Saul, his daughters and his son Jonathan; and later David was to marry Saul's wives. These wives were given into David's bosom (2 Sam. 12:8); in other words, they were really close in their relationship; so close, 2 Sam. 12:8 implies, that David had no real emotional need to take Bathsheba. Even while Saul was alive there was probably some attraction chemistry going on between David and those women. This may well be reflected in Saul's fury with Jonathan, which hints at least two things: firstly, Saul had a bad relationship with his wife; and secondly, he suspected some kind of unfaithfulness in her with David, perhaps only on a mental level. His paranoia would have led him to suspect all his wives of unfaithfulness. Saul perhaps feared that when David became king and he was deposed, then David would marry his wives, including Jonathan's mother. Just as Absalom took David's wives and lay with them as a sign of his taking of power from David. Even if this were to be how David exercised his kingship, Saul was struggling against the prophetic word which

said David was to replace him as king. Literally "son of a woman that is snatching away a man" [as in the Vulgate, "traitorous woman" LXX]. We are familiar from Proverbs with the image of a whore snatching away a man into her clutches. Saul is cursing his own wife as a whore. NLT renders "You son of a whore". Possibly she had already had an affair by David and had had a child by him.

1Sa 20:31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth you will not be established, nor your kingdom. Therefore now send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die!- Saul assumed that Jonathan was to replace him as king, and assumed Jonathan would want this. He was deeply aware of Samuel's words that Saul's kingdom was not to be established, and was to be given to David. And yet he reasons as if this is not going to happen. This is typical of man's denial of the truth of God's word. The king of God's intention would only have his children as kings, i.e. become a dynasty, if he was devoted to Yahweh's ways. Thus Dt. 17:20: "That his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left; so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel". Saul didn't do this; and yet like most human kings, he was desperate for a dynasty. He refused to accept that a dynasty of kings was conditional on his spirituality. Rather he assumed the dynasty must happen.

All of us in Christ experience a massive sense of paradox. We live and work in this world, doing the things of this world in our daily occupations, yet in the more important side of our lives we have this high spiritual relationship with the Lord Jesus and the Almighty Sovereign of this universe. This is - or ought to be- part of our hour by hour experience in this life. A little imagination of Jonathan's situation soon shows that our dilemma was exactly matched by his experience. He was the King's son, heavily taken up with the day to day running of the Kingdom, clearly tipped to succeed the King, and possibly take over as regent on Saul's retirement. Saul effectively says as much during his explosion at Jonathan for befriending David. So there was Jonathan, going up the ladder towards Kingship, when he had no real interest in this, and when he had firmly decided that David would be king, not himself, when the Kingdom was established (1 Sam. 23:17). There must be hundreds of Christians-come-high flying executives worldwide who can identify completely with this scenario.

The bitterness underlying Saul's words in 1 Sam. 20:30,31 indicates a certain element of love-hate in Jonathan's relationship with Saul. We can sense this in the record of 1 Sam. 14, when Jonathan overcame the Philistine garrison whilst his father cowered away in nervous faithlessness. How jealous Saul must have been! Jealousy was one of Saul's characteristics, and it is subconsciously a major feature of the world's aggression towards us; for the world *is* passively aggressive (cp. Gen. 3:15), if only we manifest Christ as we should. Saul almost seems to have contrived his command not to eat on pain of death in order to incriminate his son, whom he knew would not have heard his prohibition. The way in which he says that even if it were Jonathan who had eaten, then he must die (1 Sam. 14:39), seems to suggest that Saul was actually looking for an excuse to kill Jonathan. This love-hate relationship between Jonathan and Saul is exactly typical of ours with the world and our own flesh.

1Sa 20:32 Jonathan answered Saul his father, Why should he be put to death? What has he done?-

We notice that when Saul tried to put Jonathan to death when he had done no wrong,

Jonathan accepted it (1 Sam. 14:43). But he protests strongly when his father treats David the same way. This reflects his deep humility, accepting his own death as he felt a sinner even if innocent of what he was accused of. But he stands up for David, as we should for the Lord Jesus. The answer to Jonathan's question was "Because Saul is jealous of him". When people are pressed to answer the hard questions which they cannot answer, they often become aggressive. And this is just what happened here (:33). Again and again, the record has every psychological verisimilitude and reality.

1Sa 20:33 Saul cast his spear at him to strike him. By this Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death-

Saul was potentially enabled to free Israel from the Philistines, but he failed to have the personal faith required. The main victories against them were by Jonathan (1 Sam. 13,14) and David. And this explains his great jealousy against them both, even planning to slay Jonathan at least twice (1 Sam. 14:39; 20:33). See on 1 Sam. 14:45.

A sensitive heart will constantly be looking to the Lord Jesus for inspiration. For it's hard to maintain the intensities of which we have written. Consider how Jonathan suffered the same suffering as did David, in that Saul tried to kill him with a javelin. Jonathan felt the shame of David, and grieved for him. David is set up in the record as a type of Jesus, and Jonathan as a type of those with whom Jesus has made a covenant after His defeat of sin on the cross [cp. the fight with Goliath]. Jonathan lived in an environment which was bitterly opposed to David; yet he stuck up for him, at the risk of embarrassment and opposition, and certain damage to his own prospects; as we should in this wicked world. As Saul cast a javelin at David, so he did at Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:33); as we should fellowship the sufferings of David's greater son. Saul's hate of David resulted in Jonathan being "grieved for David, because his father had done him shame" (1 Sam. 20:34). Is this not our response to our world in its' ceaseless blasphemy of Christ?

1Sa 20:34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully-

If as suggested this feast was a kind of peace offering celebration, this refusal to eat with them on the second day was a sign of refusing religious fellowship with his own father. To eat with someone, or not do so, was a major statement in ancient society. It was as good as quitting relationship with Saul. See on :33.

The Hebrew implies Jonathan felt shamed for the sake of the shame put on David, and was angry because of it. This again bears the hallmark of psychological credibility; for there's a definite link between shame and anger. Take a man whose mother yelled at him because as a toddler he ran out onto the balcony naked, and shamed him by her words. Years later on a hot Summer evening the man as an adult walks out on a balcony with just his underpants on. An old woman yells at him from the yard below that he should be ashamed of himself. And he's furiously angry with her- because of the shame given him by his mother in that incident 20 years ago. Shame and anger are clearly understood by God as being related, because His word several times connects them: "A fool's *anger* is immediately known; but a prudent man covers his *shame*" (Prov. 12:16); A king's *anger* is against a man who *shames* him (Prov. 14:35). Job's *anger* was related to the fact that he felt that ten times the friends had *shamed* him in their speeches (Job 19:3). Frequently the rejected are threatened with both shame and anger / gnashing of teeth; shame and anger are going

to be connected in that awful experience. They will "curse [in anger]... and be ashamed" (Ps. 109:28). The final shame of the rejected is going to be so great that "they shall be greatly ashamed... their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). Seeing they will be long dead and gone, it is us, the accepted, who by God's grace will recall the terrible shame of the rejected throughout our eternity. Their shame will be so terrible; and hence their anger will likewise be. Because Paul's preaching 'despised' the goddess Diana, her worshippers perceived that she and they were somehow thereby shamed; and so "they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:27,28). It's perhaps possible to understand the wrath of God in this way, too. For His wrath is upon those who break His commands; and by breaking them we *shame* God (Rom. 2:23); we *despise* his desire for our repentance (Rom. 2:4). But if we are saved from God's wrath through Him, if our sin is dealt with, we can live in this world without shame. Because all anger is dealt with.

1Sa 20:35 In the morning Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little boy went with him-

As noted on :39, Jonathan was driven to use a child because he didn't want to use anyone who might just guess something was going on in this apparent archery practice.

1Sa 20:36 He said to his boy, Run, find now the arrows which I shoot. As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him-

This apparent missed shot was to give Jonathan the excuse to shout out words to the boy which were really addressed to David.

1Sa 20:37 When the boy had come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy, Isn't the arrow beyond you?-

The boy ran to where the arrows had fallen, near the target. But the arrow shot beyond him was purposeful, so that he could shout the words of :38 which were really intended for David.

1Sa 20:38 Jonathan called after the boy, Go quickly! Hurry! Don't delay! Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master-

These words were intended to be heard by David, who was to not delay in fleeing. But Jonathan's love for David led him to change plans at the last minute; which is completely imaginable in such a relationship and emotional moment. The whole ruse with the archery practice had been in order to relay these words to David. But then the plans change- and Jonathan meets David face to face, because love overpowers him. For if Jonathan had shot the arrow not "beyond" the boy, and had instead called out something like "Come back to me", David would have understood that all was good and he could return to the palace and Jonathan. But still Jonathan insists on meeting David.

1Sa 20:39 But the boy didn't know anything. Only Jonathan and David knew the matter-

As noted earlier, this whole intricate plan was because Jonathan lacked a single faithful friend or messenger through whom he could communicate with David. He had to do so himself directly, and it was critical that even "the boy" didn't perceive

what was going on. We see here his very difficult situation within the household of Saul, and the extent of opposition to David there.

1Sa 20:40 Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy, and said to him, Go, take them to the city-

As discussed on :38, this was a change of plan at the last minute.

1Sa 20:41 As soon as the boy had gone David got up from the south side of the stone, fell on his face to the ground and bowed himself three times. They kissed one another and wept one with another, and David wept the most-

They agree that if Jonathan shoots arrows well beyond David, then David should flee. Obviously they did not intend to meet if this were the case; otherwise there would have been no point in the arrangement about the arrows. David did need to flee, so Jonathan shot the arrows beyond him. Yet somehow Jonathan and David took a chance and crept towards each other. David went towards Jonathan, somehow hoping that he would meet him. And Jonathan went to find David, hoping against hope that he *wouldn't* flee immediately, as they had arranged. This explains the intensity of their meeting together: "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (AV). "Until David exceeded" defies complete translation and interpretation. It clearly does not mean that David cried until he stopped crying. David "exceeded" in that he went somewhere beyond; Strong defines the Hebrew word as meaning 'to be made larger in the mind'. In a sense David broke down emotionally, and yet on another level he went beyond, into a level of relationship which was beyond normal emotional experience. In like manner he commented that his love for Jonathan was beyond the love of women; the love of David for Jonathan pointed forward to that special emotional and spiritual bond in Christ which passes the human experience of love (Eph. 3:19).

1Sa 20:42 Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, because we have both sworn in the name of Yahweh, saying, 'Yahweh shall be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed, forever'. David arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city- See on 1 Sam. 23:16,18. We are of course invited to see the two friends returning to such different lives. David to the outlaw life of the free scrubland, and Jonathan walked alone uphill back to the court life, fraught as it was with political tensions, anger and frustration. Both lives were equally serving Yahweh, and many servants of God in different situations have reflected upon this truth. We are all called to different situations.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 21

1Sa 21:1 Then David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech came to meet David trembling and said to him, Why are you alone and no-one with you?-

The same expression is used in 1 Sam. 16:4 of how the elders of Bethlehem feared when Samuel came to them. Saul's fear and paranoia had spread to the whole land. And that is psychologically credible. We see those on God's side, Samuel and David, rising above this spirit. Alternatively we can understand the priest's "trembling" as out of respect for David. The word is usually used in this sense; "Eli was trembling for the

ark of God" (1 Sam. 4:13), and men trembled at God's word (Ezra 9:4; 10:3; Is. 66:2,5).

This Ahimelech could be the Ahijah descendant of Eli of 1 Sam. 14:3 ["Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of Yahweh"]. He was the son of Ahitub (1 Sam. 22:9). As Ahitub's son, he was in the line of Eli. Yet Eli's family had been cursed in 1 Sam. 2,3. It could be that this person in later life experienced the curses. But it would be far from the only time in Bible history where a curse is pronounced but not carried out. There is a gap between Yahweh's prophetic pronouncements, and their fulfillment. And in that gap there is the possibility for repentance. This is what gives intensity to our prayers and repentance, knowing we too live in such a gap.

The Lord refers to Ahimelech as "Abiathar the high priest" (Mk. 2:26). There were times when two high priests held the office at the same time (Num. 19:3; 1 Chron. 24:3; 1 Kings 1:45 cp. 1 Kings 2:27). Or His idea may have been "Abiathar who was the high priest later on", just as we read of Jesse begetting "David the king" (Mt. 1:6), not immediately, but only later was he king. Or "Rahab the harlot" (Heb. 11:31), "Mathew the publican" (Mt. 10:3).

1Sa 21:2 David said to Ahimelech the priest, The king has charged me with a task and has said to me 'Let no-one know anything about it or what I have commanded you'. I have told the young men to go to a meeting place-

The LXX makes the last sentence part of Saul's supposed command, and makes it purposefully unclear what their mission was, giving it a code name which Ahimelech would not perceive: "and I have charged my servants to be in the place that is called, The faithfulness of God, phellani maemoni". But we wonder whether David's lie was right or even necessary. He was simply desperately hungry and needed help for his men. If he had told Ahimelech the truth, he likely would have helped him. But he clearly doubts Ahimelech's loyalty to him and therefore makes out that he is still working for Saul, and just needs some help whilst on a secret mission for the king. I noted throughout 1 Sam. 20 that David struggled with elements of distrust even for Jonathan. He must have felt so lonely, and must have had the impression that every man's hand was potentially against him. This again is absolutely how a man going through his experiences would have felt. It is absolutely psychologically credible, and such internal harmony gives us every reason to believe this record is true and is indeed inspired by God. Or it may be that he was seeking to preserve the priest from trouble with Saul.

We have to note that this was a lie, and that lie caused the deaths of men, even priests of Yahweh. There are so many lies in David's life. He told Jonathan to lie to Saul about why he was absent from Saul's table, pretends he is having a mental breakdown in order to get out of Gath, he deceived Achish later about his activities, killing innocent villagers so none would be left alive to reveal his lies, and then the whole deceptive mess over the death of Uriah... In those days, as in some areas today, lying your way out of something was seen as effective diplomacy. And yet David bleats on about his integrity and how he is innocent and has served God in truth... whilst on balance he seems to emerge as God's man, he undoubtedly was a mixture of good and bad. Even if the good just about triumphed, and the bad was ultimately trumped by his having a heart for God. We wonder about things so often with David. Did he lie in order to save Ahimelech from trouble with Saul or from Doeg? Did he lie from lack of faith? Was he giving Ahimelech a hidden message- that he was on a

job for the real king, Yahweh? As so often, there is no clear answer and we are left to conclude David's motives were mixed.

"What I have commanded you" is literally "what I have appointed you to do". The same word was used by Samuel when telling Saul that Yahweh had found another man to be king, whom He would "appoint" or "command" to be prince over His people (1 Sam. 13:14). It's possible that David is being subtle, or deceitful, by actually having in view that "the king" he speaks of is not Saul but Yahweh, who has appointed or commanded him. David so often refers to Yahweh as the true king (Ps. 5:2; 20:9; 24:7-10; 29:10; 68:24; 145:1).

I have argued on 1 Sam. 22:9 that David is lying to Ahimelech all through this encounter; see notes there.

1Sa 21:3 Now therefore what do you have to hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever there is here-

We wonder if David had only four men with him. Hence he asks for five loaves of bread. We note how although David was at a low point here, he still represented the future Lord Jesus- who was the only other man in scripture to have "five loaves", and who gave them to those who were "with Him".

1Sa 21:4 The priest answered David, There is no common bread here, but there is holy bread, if the young men have kept themselves from women-

It has often been said that there were no Mosaic restrictions upon how the shewbread could be used after it had been taken out of the holy place. It seems this request was adding a fence to the law. But Lev. 24:9 is clear: "It shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place". But we note Ahimelech calls it "holy bread", and his condition that the men had not slept with women would've been irrelevant if it were now not "holy bread". I suggest this was an ad hoc decision to give the holy bread to non Levites, but he sets this condition to at least give some semblance of sanctity. He surely knew what was going on, and that David's story about being on a mission for Saul was untrue. He knew surely these men hadn't slept with women recently. The Lord interprets the incident this way, commenting that Ahimelech gave these men the bread which was meant only for the priests, and so he did that which was "not lawful". It could be that Ahimelech perceived that David and his men were a new king-priesthood. Who had no sanctuary and served God spiritually rather than through ritual. We know that at this time, Ahimelech enquired of Yahweh for David (1 Sam. 22:10), so probably he asked whether David could have the hallowed bread- and got a positive answer.

1Sa 21:5 David answered the priest, Truly, women have been kept from us for about three days. When I go on an expedition the bodies of the young men are holy; they are even for an ordinary journey; how much more so today?-

We again note David's careful observance of the Mosaic law, even when on the run from Saul; and he often refers to this in Ps. 119, the Psalm he wrote at this time. It could be that David had last slept with Michal three days ago, before fleeing Gibeah. Or maybe he means that for sure, he could vouch that his men had been with him for three days without women nearby. Or maybe "three days" is a general statement.

David's argument seems to be that he was on a special journey, perhaps hinting at a holy journey; and "how much more so today?" could suggest this was a Mosaic feast day. We wonder why Ahimelech apparently has "no bread" at all to give David. How come they had no food? Possibly this was the day of atonement, the only fast

required under the Mosaic law. David's assurance that his men hadn't slept with women recently would then be behind his exclamation that it was bizarre to even think they had been sleeping with women on the day of atonement. That would well explain the force of "how much more so today?". David later asked Nabal to give his men food because they were asking on a feast day (Heb., 1 Sam. 25:8 NEV "at a good time"). This is a parallel with how he asks Ahimelech to give his men food because, he implies, it is a feast day (see on 1 Sam. 21:5). So circumstances had repeated. David's request for food from Nabal on a feast day ought to have reminded him of how at a low spiritual point, he had asked the priests of Nob for the same. And it led to their death. We likewise are to perceive the connections between our life experiences, and to learn the lessons. "How much more so today?" may also mean that it was the Sabbath, which would explain perhaps why Ahimelech couldn't prepare more food for David, rather than him implying they had not a morsel of food in the house. And it is in this context that the Lord uses the incident, in justifying His men for 'working' on the Sabbath.

1Sa 21:6 So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there apart from the Bread of the Presence that had been taken from before Yahweh, to be replaced by fresh hot bread-

The Lord Jesus speaks of how David ate the shewbread unlawfully, seeking to demonstrate that the spirit of the law replaces the letter. Some have argued that the bread they ate was not the actual shewbread, but the old shewbread; and there was no legislation governing what might be done with this. We could assume that true to the spirit of Jewish midrash, the Lord was making an exaggerated point. Or it could be that He meant that it was "not lawful" to eat the used shewbread according to the spirit of the law, but not the letter of it. However Lev. 24:9 is clear: "It shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place". "Aaron and his sons shall eat...the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of meeting... but an outsider shall not eat them, because they are holy. And if any... of the bread remains until the morning then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it is holy" (Ex. 29:32-34). And the Lord is clear too that David "ate the shewbread which was not lawful for him to eat" (Mt. 12:4). We also note that the Lord stresses that David himself entered the holy place and took the bread and himself gave it to "those with him", just as Mark records how the Lord chose His men to "be with Him". Lk. 6:4 is clearest: "he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone". But David's entry into the holy place is stressed in the other records: "he entered into the house of God" (Mt. 12:4), "he went into the house of God" (Mk. 2:26). Luke's language recalls the Lord taking bread and giving to His disciples. The priest "gave" him the bread, but *nathan* can mean he assigned him or permitted him to take the bread. Perhaps his enquiry of Yahweh for David had been specifically about whether to permit David to do this. "So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread" would seem to be saying that the bread was still holy or hallowed at the point the priest gave / allowed David to take it. We are thereby led to think that David's action was not so much because he was hungry, but because he wanted to take the bread and give it to his men as a religious act, acting as their priest. The loaves of shewbread weren't large- the table of shewbread, on which the shewbread was to be arranged in two rows of six, was only three feet long and one and a half feet wide. The loaves weren't large and could hardly have seriously met a hunger need. They were "cakes" (Lev. 24:5) rather

than loaves. Rashi translated "How much more then today, when there shall be holy bread in their vessels" i.e. bodies. This would confirm the suggestion that David's men ate "holy bread".

1Sa 21:7 Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before Yahweh; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the best of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul-

In the type of the things concerning the Lord Jesus, in some way Doeg may point forward to Herod, who was also an Edomite. We note that he was "detained before Yahweh", he was obedient to parts of the Mosaic law. So was Saul; and so were the wicked men who crucified our Lord, David's greater son. Or his being 'detained' may have been because it was the day of atonement (see on :5) and he was unable to travel over the feast. Saul had defeated the Edomites (1 Sam. 14:47), so Doeg had perhaps betrayed his own people and joined Saul. We have perhaps an insight into his character just because of this. Or Doeg being detained before Yahweh may have been because he had made a vow, or possibly, was becoming a proselyte. This then adds more background to David's ranting against him in Ps. 52:1-4 as being a liar, using deceitful words. What were these words? No specific lie of Doeg is recorded, but the accusation of being a serious liar makes sense if he had made false vows to Yahweh. Psalm 52 was likely later rewritten, under inspiration, during the exile; for Edom was a much hated ally of the Babylonians who eagerly destroyed Jerusalem and murdered the priests (Lam. 4:21,22; Mal. 1:2-5; Joel 3:19; Ez. 25:12; 35:3,15; Ps. 137:7; Obadiah 11).

"The best of the herdsmen" is LXX "tending Saul's mules / donkeys". In this case we see again how Saul was obsessed with donkeys. He is introduced to us like this, and Samuel warns that Saul when king would take Israel's donkeys. It seems this streak of petty materialism continued with Saul throughout his life.

1Sa 21:8 David said to Ahimelech, Don't you have here a spear or sword? I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me because the king's business required haste-

Scoring David out of ten for spirituality, he scores sadly here. He had turned down spear and sword when fighting Goliath, and had confidently stated that as the battles are Yahweh's, these weapons give no defence. And he lies about things in order to get them. And we even wonder whether he was correct to pretend to be a servant of Saul as king, when Yahweh had clearly rejected Saul as king and chosen David. But despite this weak point in his faith, he still also asked Ahimelech to enquire of God for him (1 Sam. 22:10).

1Sa 21:9 The priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you killed in the valley of Elah is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it; there is no other except that here. David said, There is none like that. Give it to me-

David's eager taking of the sword of Goliath ("There is none like that; give it to me") contrasts sadly with his earlier rejection of such weapons in order to slay Goliath. And David later reflects how he knew that his faithless taking of that sword and the shewbread would lead to the death of Abiathar's family (1 Sam. 22:22). But still he did it. This was one reason why he is criticized by God as having shed too much blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

Without doubt we have David here at a low point in his faith. But overall he was still seen by the Spirit in NT times as the man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

Stephen positively comments about David that he found grace before God (Acts 7:46), and often subsequent kings are judged according to whether they walked in the ways of David (2 Chron. 17:3; 7:17; 29:2; 34:2; 1 Kings 11:6; 14:8; 15:11). This is quite some benchmark. The fact his dynasty continued for 467 years is amazing, and surely some sign of God's acceptance of him. Positively, we think of David's valuing and respect for Saul's life as "precious", on two occasions refusing to kill him; his refusal to let Abishai kill Shimei; his anger over the murder of Ishbosheth, Saul's son; his grace to the crippled Mephibosheth; his insistence that soldiers too weary to go on fighting should still be equally rewarded; his appreciation of the men who risked their lives to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem; his love for Absalom; his desire to put things right for the Gibeonites whom Saul had wrongly abused, his mourning for the death of Abner- and Saul, for that matter. And there is the comment that he ruled with justice and equity (2 Sam. 8:15; 23:3).

Negatively, we think of his apparently casual slaying of 200 Philistines to get their foreskins; the whole mess with Bathsheba and Uriah; his request for the sword of Goliath and faithless flight to live with the Philistines; his ethnic cleansing of villages to save his own image with the Philistines; his hot blooded desire to kill Nabal and his family; his insistence on taking the census which led to judgment on Israel; his breaking up of Paltiel and Michal's marriage; his bloodthirsty desire for vengeance on his enemies portrayed in the Psalms, offsetting his grace to them in practice; his strange absence from the faithful listed in Hebrews 11.

The end synthesis of all this is that God saw him as having a heart after His own, and he found grace in God's eyes (Acts 7:46).

1Sa 21:10 David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath-

Ahimelech confirms to Saul that he had enquired of Yahweh for David (1 Sam. 22:10), and that he had also done so previously. We wonder what at this point David enquired about. The fact he went to Gath right afterwards makes it likely that it was something to do with this. But I suggest it was unlikely that Yahweh would have confirmed David in that decision, nor that He required David to take Goliath's sword. So we may well imagine David being disobedient to the answer to his enquiry.

Why did David take Goliath's sword to Gath, the home town of Goliath? Surely as an act of repentance. But to gift a sword was understood as a request for something or the permission to use something. Even as recently as the coronation of King Charles III in the UK, the practice persisted. The Crown's official website explained: "The Sword of Offering, which symbolises the protection of good and the punishment of evil, will be delivered to the Archbishop of Canterbury and will be placed in The King's right hand. The King will rise, and the Sword will be fastened at His Majesty's waist using the Sword Belt. The King will offer the Sword at the Altar, where it will be received the Dean. The Sword will then be redeemed with the offering of 100 newly minted 50ps, by the Lord President of the Council, who will carry it before The King for the remainder of the Service. Traditionally, the Sword is offered to Westminster Abbey in payment for hosting a Coronation Service, and redeemed by offering a symbolic payment". Egyptian art likewise depicts the gift of weapons as a sign of submission and dominance on the part of the recipient. David was surrendering to the Philistines. We recall how Jonathan gave his weapons to David as a sign of this and his surrendering of power to David. What was David requesting? Safety and protection from Saul. What property was he asking to use? Presumably somewhere for him and his men to live in Gath.

We sense he was utterly desperate to do this, he was not thinking straight. We wonder if he took Goliath's sword back to Goliath's home town in an attempt to make peace with the Philistines and live with them. They seemed the only people he could feel safe with. He would rather risk torture and death at the hands of the Gentiles than persecution from God's own people. His decision making here bears all the hallmarks of a man at the very end of his emotional and nervous ability to cope.

Many of the Psalms appear to be paired; Ps. 56 and Ps. 57 are an example. They are very similar. The title of Ps. 56 ["when seized by the Philistines in Gath"] therefore provides a context for Ps. 57, which was "A poem by David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave" (Ps. 57:1). David's time when seized by the Philistines in Gath could refer to some unrecorded capture and detention of him in Gath- the home town of Goliath, whose sons / relatives had also been slain by David's men, and David had slain "ten thousands" of Philistines. Or it could refer to the time when he was serving Achish king of Gath and had to feign himself mad in order to get released. Perhaps things were far tougher for David at that time than recorded in 1 Sam. 21:10-15. Whatever, David took comfort from his rescue from Gath (Ps. 56) and reapplied it to the situation with Saul (the subject of Ps. 57). And this is how we too pass through life- experiences in one situation strengthen us for another.

1Sa 21:11 The servants of Achish said to him, Isn't this David the king of the land? Didn't they sing one to another about him in dances saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?'

By going to Goliath's home town, David should have known this was a foolish decision and this was going to happen. As noted above, David's decision making here bears all the hallmarks of a man at the very end of his emotional and nervous ability to cope. We notice how the Philistines were not in close contact with the Israelites, and assumed David was the king; when this was far from the case. These words would have been potential encouragement to David to perceive that God's purpose with him, to make him king, would ultimately succeed. That passing encouragement was given to him at a time when all seemed hopeless for his cause. And God likewise works with us today.

1Sa 21:12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath-

This is the very phrase used of how Israel were "much afraid" of Goliath of Gath, whereas David wasn't but had calm faith (1 Sam. 17:24). The implication is that David's faith was at a far lower point than it had been then.

1Sa 21:13 He changed his behaviour before them and pretended to be mad, scrabbled on the doors of the gate and let his saliva fall down onto his beard-

Going down South to Achish of Gath and playing the mad man has sad connections with the patriarchs going down to Egypt in times of weak faith. I have noted that David was under extreme nervous stress at this time. Although he was acting, we sense he was not far off actually experiencing a mental breakdown; for his decision making was really very confused and desperate in running to Achish.

Psalm 34 was written as reflection upon his deliverance from Gath (Ps. 34:1). But in that Psalm, David reflects that it is good not to tell lies (Ps. 34:13 "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies"). But David himself has been noted for how many lies he told, not least in this context both to Achimelech [resulting in his flight to Gath] and then in Gath (Ps. 34:1). So here we have some kind of

repentance for his behaviour in Gath. And this leads to his higher point of faith as discussed on 1 Sam. 22:23.

1Sa 21:14 Then Achish said to his servants, Look, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me?-

We wonder whether Achish realized that David was acting, for he speaks of him 'playing the madman' (:15). In this case, he was trying to do David a favour by letting him get away from Gath, knowing that his people were close to murdering David. The reason why he should do this isn't clear, but David's desperate prayers were heard through God manipulating circumstance and situation to enable Achish to want to release David, the public enemy number one for his own people.

1Sa 21:15 Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?-

See on :14. Achish says he doesn't want David in his palace, but for David to get from the palace to safety in the wilderness would have required a further display of God's saving providence. Ps. 34 [title] says that Achish "drove him away"; but we sense that this may have been an appearance by Achish, because he may well have actually wanted to save David (see on :14). See on Ps. 34 for more on David's situation at this time.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 22

1Sa 22:1 David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him-

As noted on 1 Sam. 21:14,15 and Ps. 34, this was all an amazing deliverance by God through raising up situations in Achish's life where he apparently wanted to help David escape. David's brothers had originally been followers of Saul and appeared jealous and dismissive of David. Perhaps Saul's irrational obsession had led him to persecute them, even though they were his supporters, simply because they were David's family.

1Sa 22:2 Everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt and everyone who was discontented gathered themselves to him and he became their captain. About four hundred men were with him-

We could assume that the distress and discontent was with Saul, and the debts due to his excessive taxation of them. David was therefore their logical captain. "Distress" is the word usually used of suffering for disobedience to the covenant (Dt. 28:53,55,57; Jer. 19:9). But all the same, they were driven by their disobedience towards David. The lesson for the exiles was that despite their suffering "distress" in exile in response to their breaking of covenant, there was a way out- if they accepted the greater son of David.

"In debt" is translated 'taxed' in Ps. 89:20-22: "I have found David My servant, I have anointed him with My holy oil, with whom My hand shall be established; My arm will also strengthen him. No enemy will tax him, no wicked man will oppress him". By being on the run from Saul, David paid no tax; and this attracted those who were heavily taxed by Saul.

"Discontented" is literally 'bitter of soul'. The same phrase is used of Hannah (1 Sam. 1:10); these were her spiritual descendants.

David's men represent the followers of the Lord Jesus (cp. Heb. 13:13). David's motley crew were bitter men, "them that are set on fire... whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Ps. 57:4). It was push factors [such as the debts created by Saul's merciless taxation] rather than pull factors which led them to David, as it is sometimes with those who come to the Lord Jesus today. So rough were they that David says that having to live with them almost destroyed him spiritually (1 Sam. 26:19). This typology would explain why the body of Christ seems [at times] full of mixed up men and women with hard words- who eventually will be the rulers in Messiah's Kingdom, after the pattern of David's men.

1Sa 22:3 David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab, and he said to the king of Moab, Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you-

Samuel had commanded Saul to wait until God would show him what he must do (the very same phrase is in 1 Sam. 10:8). Then in 1 Sam. 16:3, God was telling Samuel to do what Samuel had told Saul to do. And Samuel had observed Saul's testing, his initial obedience and his later failure. This is how God works, repeating circumstance between the lives of people, bringing people into our lives from whom we are to learn; and then we are tested just as they were. David may have reflected on this, for he in turn uses the phrase of how he was waiting for God to lead him further. He would have remembered how Samuel had come to his father's house and likewise waited for God to show him what he had to do. We recall that David was descended from Ruth, a Moabitess. At the time of the Assyrian onslaught upon Jerusalem, "Let My outcasts dwell with you, Moab" (Is. 16:4) alludes here- and thus reflects how God saw Saul as being as bad as the Gentile, hate filled Assyrians.

Until I know what God will do for me-

This phrase is used in 1 Sam. 28:15 about waiting for a prophetic revelation. David had only been told that he would be king; the path there was not revealed to him, rather like our path to the Kingdom. Again it is hard to know David's level of faith here. He could on one hand be seeking God's guidance; or he could be overlooking the obvious plan of God that he should be king. "Know" can mean to understand or know, or, to experience. Again we are invited to ponder whether this was a calm statement of trust that he would experience what God would do for him in making him king; or whether he means that he has no idea what God has in store for him. Which would reflect a low point in his faith in God's promise to make him king. Time and again we have these invitations to ponder David's real spiritual strength, and to conclude that his strength was only made perfect through much weakness.

1Sa 22:4 He brought them before the king of Moab and they lived with him all the while that David was in the stronghold-

The singular "stronghold" may suggest that throughout David's time running from one hiding place to another, he was in fact in one great fortress provided by God. But "the stronghold" in :5 seems to refer to a fortress in Mizpeh.

We must compare Moab's apparent help of David with 2 Sam. 8:2 "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts". This could be because Moab had murdered or betrayed David's parents, or it could be another example of David just using people and being ungrateful. Despite his being a loyal friend to Jonathan and Abiathar, rewarding them for their loyalty.

1Sa 22:5 The prophet Gad said to David, Don't stay in the stronghold. Depart, and go into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and went into the forest of Hereth- This could be the time of Ps. 63. This was completely counter instinctive, just as many of God's directions are to us. They appeared to finally have found refuge in Moab, and the king had accepted David's parents. But now they were bidden return to Judah. There was to be an exact equivalent in the Lord's experience (Jn. 11:7,8 cp. Jn. 7:1).

David's whole experience with Saul was of course led and arranged by a loving Father. The sensible thing would have been for David to get out of Saul's way and lay quiet- and this is what he tried to do, by going to Moab. But then God tells him to go back into Judah. This was political suicide. It made no human sense to expose himself to Saul again. And then God tells David to go and fight with the Philistines in order to rescue the people of Keilah (1 Sam. 23:2). Yet the men of Keilah weren't allies worth having- even they were prepared to betray David to Saul, and by this action he made the Philistines hate him yet more, so refuge amongst them was no longer possible. Again and again, God led David into situations that were politically suicidal, that only made things worse for him... because He wanted David to trust in Him alone. And so it happens in our lives. Time and again.

1Sa 22:6 Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah under the tamarisk tree in Ramah with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him-

Again the Divine cameraman zooms in close up upon this man Saul, just as the record does as he sat under a pomegranate tree in 1 Sam. 14:2. However the Hebrew *eshel* is the usual word translated "grove", which has associations with idol worship. Saul's daughter Michal had an idol in her home and we suspect Saul was not totally averse to idolatry despite his obedience to parts of the Mosaic law. "Ramah" may be better translated "on the height", unless we take "Gibeah" as the name of the general district.

"With his spear in his hand" is the image we are repeatedly given of Saul in the records. It was the symbol of his kingship, and he was desperately gripping hold of it rather than giving it up as he should have done. Whether at home, sitting under a tree (1 Sam. 22:6)... he is pictured as madly gripping on to it. He even sleeps with the spear in the ground next to him (1 Sam. 26:7). In this lies the significance of David taking the spear from Saul but then returning it to him. What should Saul's response have been? To tell David to keep the spear and be king, whilst he retired and walked quietly with his God (1 Sam. 26:21,22). And it was that gripping on to power that was his death. If the Amalekite is to be believed, he said that Saul at his last end "was leaning on his spear" (2 Sam. 1:6), presumably before falling upon his own sword in suicide (1 Sam. 31:4). David by contrast had learnt from his victory over Goliath "that Yahweh can give victory without sword or spear" (1 Sam. 17:47).

David had a stronghold [s.w. fortress] in the cave of Adullam. But he was told by the prophet Gad to leave it and go into Judah, which seemed totally counter instinctive. As soon as David does this, his location is reported to Saul- but all this was to teach him that God was his stronghold / fortress, and Psalm 62 is perhaps his reflection upon that, leading him to conclude that God *alone* is his stronghold (1 Sam. 22:4-6). But David only got to that realization of Ps. 62:2 through losing his natural stronghold. We may lose a home, a relationship, use of a body part... all under God's hand, to bring us to Him.

1Sa 22:7 Saul said to them, Listen now, you Benjamites!-

Saul had failed to unite Israel into one nation as was intended for the king of Israel. He may have reasoned that although he was not to be king of Israel, he could still be king of Benjamin his tribe. Or his focus upon his own tribe reflects how Saul never really seriously wanted to act as king of all Israel, but only sought his own benefit. Thereby he himself showed that he was not fit to be king of Israel; his attitude asked for his rejection, just as the fool's mouth asks for the strokes of condemnation.

Will the son of Jesse-

Saul finds it impossible to speak of "David", the "beloved" of God. His despite of Jesse explains why Jesse had to flee to Moab as we have just read.

Give each of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds?-

The idea is that this is what Saul claims to have done for the men standing around him.

1Sa 22:8 Is that why all of you have conspired against me-

"None of you... You all conspired" reflects the extreme loneliness of the obsessively jealous man. This is where it leads to. We see here how his paranoia developed to such an extent that he felt so terribly alone. He had cursed his wife, Jonathan's mother, and had seen his children Michal and Jonathan defending David from his intentions.

So that there is no-one who tells me when my son makes a treaty with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or tells me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as he does today?-

Saul's cursing of any who didn't feel sorry for him is repeated by David, who often in his Psalms brings down curses upon any who don't feel pity for him in his brokenness, even if that brokenness was a consequence of his own sins. See on Ps. 109:22. What Saul says here is conspiracy theory gone wrong, but this is what happens when jealousy takes a grip upon the human mind. They come to see everyone as suspicious and somehow against them.

We have an example here of conspiracy theories breeding other ones and becoming established in the mind as fact. Saul decides that his son Jonathan wants the throne from him, and was using David's rebellion to get it. But Jonathan had made it clear he didn't want the throne, and was loyal to David. And Samuel had made it clear to Saul that his dynasty wouldn't continue.

It seems the covenant Jonathan made with David in 1 Sam. 20:16 he had now spoken openly of. And that is indeed how it is, our secret covenant relationship with the Lord we inevitably speak of to others, even if initially we intend to keep it secret.

1Sa 22:9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, said-

"Doeg" means 'the fearful one', and his name immediately suggests a connection between him and the paranoid Saul.

I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub-

The fawning courtier Doeg describes David as Saul does, "the son of Jesse". He gives Ahimelech's full name, which means "Brother of the king". He may even have somehow been Saul's relative by marriage. But jealousy leads to the destruction of every relationship.

In Psalm 52, David rants about Doeg being a liar. The historical record shows Doeg as being strictly truthful in what he said to Saul about David. "David came to

Nob to Ahimelech the priest" (1 Sam. 21:2) and this is exactly what Doeg says: "I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob to Ahimelech the priest." (1 Sam. 22:8). Doeg informs that the priest gave David the sword of Goliath. That is exactly what happened: "The sword of Goliath... is here... David said, 'There is none like it; give it to me'" (1 Sam. 21:10). Doeg informs Saul that the priest provided David with food, and that was the case: "The priest gave him holy bread" (1 Sam. 21:7). But David repeatedly claims that Doeg was a liar and had a "deceitful tongue". We could assume that in fact Doeg said other things about David which aren't recorded, and here we have a typical case of where the Biblical evidence must be put together in order to get the complete picture. Or it could be that even by saying things which are truthful, we can do so in a way that is in fact proactively destructive ["devouring", :4) and deceitful- in the sense of being unfaithful to David. We wonder why David's anger is not so much with Saul but with Doeg. It was Saul who commanded Doeg to kill Abimelech and the priests because of Doeg's informing on him. Possibly he as it were forbade himself to curse Saul- and so he redirects his anger with Saul onto Doeg. Rather than taking a more spiritual attitude. We also wonder why David's anger is with Doeg for being a liar, rather than a murderer: "The king said to Doeg, You turn and attack the priests! Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five people who wore a linen ephod. He struck Nob, the city of the priests, with the edge of the sword, men, women, children and nursing babies, and cattle, donkeys and sheep" (1 Sam. 22:18,19). David apparently never mentions this, but rather rants about Doeg being such a liar. Possibly Doeg had become a proselyte, and therefore was deceitful to then kill Yahweh's priests.

We also observe that it was David at this time who was the liar. But he likes to focus on Doeg as a liar. Doeg was more a murderer, seeking to ingratiate himself to Saul his boss in return for power and wealth- than a liar. I suggest that David is making Doeg out to be a liar and punishing him because this is what David is guilty of. Rather like the pastor committing adultery who beats up on a member of his congregation for falling into sexual sin. The evidence for David's lying at the time is significant. He lies to Abimelech: "The king has commissioned me with a matter and said to me, 'Let no one know anything of the matter with respect to which I am sending you and about which I have commissioned you'" (1 Sam. 21:3). David was in fact fleeing from Saul, who was determined to kill him (1 Sam. 20:30-42). He totally fabricates words which he claims Saul had spoken and that he is quoting verbatim. Neither did he receive any commission from king Saul. This was all deliberate deception. When asked why he is travelling alone, David lies by saying that his "young men" are going to meet up with him soon at a pre-arranged location: "And as for the young men, I have made an appointment for such and such a place" (1 Sam. 21:3). David wants the priest to believe that David is accompanied by an entourage from the king. When asked by the priest if the young men for whom he asks food are ceremonially clean, David tells another lie: "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?" (1 Sam. 21:5). The record is clear that David was alone and didn't have these "young men" actually with him. David comes to Nob alone (1 Sam. 21:1,2), and leaves Nob alone (1 Sam. 21:11). Then he alone flees to Philistine territory unaccompanied (1 Sam 21:11-16), and he leaves Philistine territory alone (1 Sam. 22:1). No one joins him until we learn from 1 Sam. 22:1,2 that after reaching the cave of Adullam, "his brothers and all his father's house heard and came down there, and there were gathered to him any man in distress". David's reason as to why he had no sword is so

blatantly untrue that surely Ahimelech must have wondered whether David was being truthful: "I took in hand neither my sword nor my weapons because the king's commission was urgent" (1 Sam. 21:9). If indeed he was commissioned by Saul to do something that needed a weapon, surely he would have taken the weapon with him. Quite possibly Ahimelech was telling the truth to Saul when he claimed that he knew nothing of David's rebellion. David's lies therefore led Ahimelech to a position which cost Ahimelech and his family their lives. Hence David later rues that he was responsible for their deaths, and we could even argue that Psalm 52 is David's self hatred over this matter, condemning himself as a liar.

1Sa 22:10 He inquired of Yahweh for him, gave him food, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine-

We only learn at this point that Ahimelech enquired of Yahweh for David. When David visited him, David was at a very low point spiritually. Scoring David out of ten for spirituality, he scores sadly here. He had turned down spear and sword when fighting Goliath, and had confidently stated that as the battles are Yahweh's, these weapons give no defence. And he lies about things in order to get them. And we even wonder whether he was correct to pretend to be a servant of Saul as king, when Yahweh had clearly rejected Saul as king and chosen David. But despite this weak point in his faith, he still also asked Ahimelech to enquire of God for him; we see here how complex is human faith and spirituality. Faith and unbelief can coexist, and only God can form the final judgment of men, simply because we cannot.

Ahimelech confirms to Saul that he had enquired of Yahweh for David (1 Sam. 22:10), and that he had also done so previously. We wonder what at this point David enquired about. The fact he went to Gath right afterwards makes it likely that it was something to do with this. But I suggest it was unlikely that Yahweh would have confirmed David in that decision, nor that He required David to take Goliath's sword. So we may well imagine David being disobedient to the answer to his enquiry. It was also likely that this enquiry was about whether David should be given the shewbread.

1Sa 22:11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub and all his father's house, the priests who were in Nob; and they all came to the king- Clearly it was Saul's intention to destroy the priest and all his family; the verdict was decided well in advance. That they all came to the king, unsuspecting, indicates their loyalty to him.

1Sa 22:12 Saul said, Listen now, you son of Ahitub. He answered, Here I am, my lord-

Again we see Ahimelech's loyalty to Saul. It is a sad feature of jealousy that it leads men to destroy even their best supporters, so blinded do they become by the objective of destroying their enemy.

1Sa 22:13 Saul said to him, Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as he does today?-

Again, we see how jealousy leads to an obsessive 'guilt by association'. And beyond that, an imagination of things which are simply not the case, e.g. that Ahimelech and David had made a conspiracy to murder Saul. And we see this sad nexus of broken down spirituality going on in groups of believers worldwide.

1Sa 22:14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, Who among all your servants is as faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and is taken into your council, and is honourable in your house?

Ahimelech like Jonathan bravely speaks up for David, as we should for Jesus, despite knowing the consequences he faced. For he was accused of treason and conspiracy to murder the king. We note that David had been so close to Saul that he had once been in his inner council, the group of men who now stood around Saul. And David was still respected in Saul's family. Ahimelech is bravely trying to make a desperate appeal for David and for his own life. He begins by justifying David before he moves to justify himself as innocent of any plan to kill Saul.

1Sa 22:15 Is this the first time I have inquired of God for him? Be it far from me! Don't let the king accuse his servant or any of the house of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of all this-

He protests that it is strange indeed to condemn David and Ahimelech for inquiring of God. But so we see happening today; if you break bread with this one or that, then you are guilty by association. And worthy of spiritual death.

1Sa 22:16 The king said, You shall surely die Ahimelech, you and all your father's house-

Saul is quoting the words of Yahweh concerning Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17). We have observed this earlier with Saul; he quotes Biblical phrases or alludes to Biblical characters, but far out of context. It's as if he wants to justify his own native jealousy and pride beneath a veneer of spirituality and vague Biblical allusion. And the same thing can happen today.

1Sa 22:17 The king said to the guards who stood around him, Turn and kill the priests of Yahweh because they have sided with David, and because they knew that he fled, and didn't tell me-

What began as a passing suspicion in Saul's mind, that David was planning to murder him, developed into something grotesque. Saul now assumed Ahimelech was in league with David; and so were all the priests with him. And so they must all be slain for conspiracy to murder him. There was no Mosaic legislation calling for the execution of those who conspire to murder, if it doesn't come to pass. And the unspiritual mind will go the same path; fantasy and unpleasant imagination about someone is dwelt upon, until it actually becomes true in the person's mind.

But the servants of the king wouldn't put forth their hand to strike the priests of Yahweh-

This reflects the tension which so many have felt, torn between loyalty to the politico-religious leadership of the time, and true spirituality. The same phrase "lift up the hand against" in the context of murder is used of how David refused to lift up his hand against Saul as Yahweh's anointed. But this family of Ahimelech were also that; for they too were anointed as priests. Yahweh's anointed referred to His priests as well as His kings. We see here how even Saul's inner circle had some conscience and were unhappy with Saul's position. But still they passively went along with him and legitimized his hold on power.

1Sa 22:18 The king said to Doeg, You turn and attack the priests! Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five people who wore

a linen ephod-

Clearly ephods were worn apart from the high priestly ephod. We noted this when discussing how Samuel wore an ephod as he ministered to Yahweh as a child. LXX has 305 people. "Turn" may suggest he was to surround them, to round them up, and then murder them.

1Sa 22:19 He struck Nob, the city of the priests, with the edge of the sword, men, women, children and nursing babies, and cattle, donkeys and sheep-

This may account for the figure of 305 slain, according to :18 LXX. We see how guilt by association is like a disease which spreads. Saul had assumed Ahimelech was guilty by association with David, and he then made the other 85 priests guilty by association. And now in turn, Doeg extends this guilt to include the entire town, including newborn babies and animals. Guilt by association is one of the most insidious sins of the Christian life. And yet it so easily becomes somehow sanctified and made respectable by church policies. This total destruction of everyone in Nob suggests Saul kidded himself that he was called to practice the 'ban' of total destruction upon them, or to fulfil the prophecy of 1 Sam. 2:33 that all Eli's descendants would be wiped out. But this was precisely what he had failed to do with the Amalekites, as he saved their cattle and many of the people. It was for this that he had been rejected as king. We have an insight here into his psychology, and it is an absolutely psychologically credible picture. He has transferred his guilt over not totally destroying the Amalekites, and now is totally destroying the people of Nob- imagining that in fact he has to do this in obedience to God. And this would explain why he also killed the animals at Nob- because this was what he was supposed to have done to the Amalekites. In a perverted way, he is seeking to overturn the reason for his rejection as king.

1Sa 22:20 One of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David-

If Doeg acted alone, as we have the impression he did from :18,19, the escape of at least one would be unsurprising. Again we see how the whole situation is so circumstantially credible.

1Sa 22:21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed Yahweh's priests-

Doeg slew them, but clearly Saul was the one counted responsible. Just as it was the Jews and not the Romans who slew God's Son. To slay such a large community of priests shows how Saul was not interested in true spirituality; for they would have been a major loss to God's people, and service of Yahweh would have been so much the harder without them.

1Sa 22:22 David said to Abiathar, I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul-

Yet again, the record has every semblance of absolute credibility. For this is the kind of premonition which is true to real life. Contemporary histories are full of flourishes and embellishments, in stark contrast to the truth of God's word.

I am responsible for the death of all the people of your father's house-

As with his feeling of unnecessary guilt over the plague that struck Israel for refusing to pay the required tax when they were numbered, so here again we mull whether David was rather too emotionally taking at least some false guilt. But constantly we are left to ponder things with David- because the overall judgment of him appears to

be that he was indeed a man after God's heart, a believer, but the good side in him only just tipped the balance against the other side. It would appear from Ps. 18:45 that Saul was supported by foreign mercenaries in his campaign against David. When Saul is no more, David therefore exalts that "The foreigners shall fade away, and shall come trembling out of their close places". This alludes to how Saul's persecutors of David included "foreigners" such as Cush (see on Ps. 7:1) and Doeg the Edomite.

David's eager taking of the sword of Goliath (1 Sam. 21:9- "There is none like that; give it me") contrasts sadly with his earlier rejection of such weapons in order to slay Goliath. And David later reflects how he knew that his faithless taking of that sword and the shewbread would lead to the death of Abiathar's family (1 Sam. 22:22). But still he did it. This was one reason why he is criticized by God as having shed too much blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

1Sa 22:23 Stay with me, don't be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you will be safe-

This is alluded to in Jn. 14:1 "Do not let your heart be disturbed. Believe in God, believe also in me"; 15:4 "Abide in me and I in you",²⁰ "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you". David's men are clearly presented as the disciples of Jesus, and ourselves. Saul sought the life of David (s.w. 1 Sam. 20:1; 22:23; 23:15; 25:29; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the Psalms, David frequently imprecates judgment upon those who sought his life (s.w. Ps. 35:4; 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13; 86:14). He loved Saul, the life of Saul was precious in David's sight, indeed the historical records seem to emphasize David's patient love of Saul; and yet in the Psalms he gives vent before God to his anger with Saul and desire to see Saul punished and judged by God. This is absolutely true to human experience; we may act with great patience and apparent love toward those who abuse us, and yet within we fume about it. The lesson of David is that we are to pour out those feelings to God in prayer, leaving Him to judge.

"You will be safe" implies David was now confident that he would be kept safe from Saul until he became king and Saul was dead. David has been through a very weak period, taking Goliath's sword, fleeing to Gath, lying to Abiathar... but now his faith rallies and he is again confident that he will indeed be preserved from Saul. 1 Sam. 23 goes on to picture David as strong in faith again. This resurgence of faith was triggered by his repentance for his visit to Nob, and by his commitment to Abiathar, his looking out of himself to the salvation of another.

Psalms 34 was written as reflection upon his deliverance from Gath (Ps. 34:1). But in that Psalm, David reflects that it is good not to tell lies (Ps. 34:13 "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies"). But David himself has been noted for how many lies he told, not least in this context both to Achish [resulting in his flight to Gath] and then in Gath (Ps. 34:1). So here we have some kind of repentance for his behaviour in Gath. And this leads to his higher point of faith as discussed here on 1 Sam. 22:23.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 23

1Sa 23:1 David was told, The Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors-

A lesser man would have considered that he had so many issues that he just couldn't possibly get involved in the issues of others. But like the Lord looking beyond His

own immediate pain to the fate of the women lining the via Dolorosa, so David looked beyond his immediate circumstance to the needs of others- even those who would later betray him. This grace is the more wonderful because the people of Keilah were for Saul and against David (see on :7); it was grace indeed on David's part, and he was confirmed in it by God.

1Sa 23:2 Therefore David inquired of Yahweh, Shall I go and attack these Philistines? Yahweh said to David, Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah- The Hebrew phrase "attack... and save" is used in Jud. 3:31 of the judge Shamgar, also in the context of attacking Philistines. David is being pointed back by this allusion to the zeal of Shamgar the son of Anath, 'the answer'. The answer to David's question was in Shamgar. David was spiritually and mentally exhausted at this time, and God's way forward for him at this time was to get up and be proactive for others. That is not always the right answer for us in our low moments, but when it is, we will be directed to it by God, perhaps through allusion to Biblical characters.

'Attack the Philistines' is the same phrase used seven times of 'killing the Philistine' when David killed Goliath (1 Sam. 17:26,36,46,49,50,57; 18:6). God was calling David back to his higher self- when he had just offered Goliath's sword back to the Philistines. The same term was used by the priest in reminding him that this sword had been taken when "you killed / slew / attacked" the Philistine.

We recall that just prior to this, David had taken Goliath's sword to the Philistines and sought to get onside with them against Saul. This was displeasing to God and yet he was saved by grace from the situation (see on Psalm 34). Now God seeks to help David never do this again, by sending him to fight the Philistines and kill them- the very people David has just been asking to help him and trying to live with. But despite God's arrangement of things, David will fail again when in 1 Sam. 27 he again flees to them for help against Saul and again tries to ingratiate himself to them.

1Sa 23:3 David's men said to him, Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then, if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?- David's whole experience with Saul was of course led and arranged by a loving Father. The sensible thing would have been for David to get out of Saul's way and lay quiet- and this is what he tried to do, by going to Moab. But then God tells him to go back into Judah (1 Sam. 22:5). This was political suicide. It made no human sense to expose himself to Saul again. And then God tells David to go and fight with the Philistines in order to rescue the people of Keilah. Yet the men of Keilah weren't allies worth having- even they were prepared to betray David to Saul, and by this action he made the Philistines hate him yet more, so refuge amongst them was no longer possible. Again and again, God led David into situations that were politically suicidal, that only made things worse for him... because He wanted David to trust in Him alone. And so it happens in our lives. Time and again. There was to be an exact equivalent in the Lord's experience in returning to Judah (Jn. 11:7,8 cp. Jn. 7:1).

1Sa 23:4 Then David inquired of Yahweh yet again. Yahweh answered him, Get up and go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand- Like Gideon, David's faith wavered and he wanted a second confirmation. He "inquired of Yahweh" as he had done through Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22:10), so presumably he did so through Ahimelech's son who had fled to be with David with the ephod (:6). "Get up and go" could be read as a slight rebuke of David's inaction; for God loves a "yes straight away" attitude from His children. Perhaps David was

being directed back to Gideon (Jud. 7:9) and Moses, who were addressed by God with the same words (Dt. 9:12). He would have earlier seen Moses as Judaism does today, the unreachable acme of spirituality and closeness to God. But now he was being taught, as we are, that no Biblical character is a mere Sunday School figure; but rather our real practical inspiration. Elijah was addressed in the same way in 1 Kings 21:18, directing him back to Gideon (Jud. 7:9), David (1 Sam. 23:4) and Moses (Dt. 9:12).

1Sa 23:5 David and his men went to Keilah and fought against the Philistines and carried off their livestock and killed them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah-

By doing so, David was burning any possible bridges he had with the Philistines; for he had taken refuge with Achish in Gath before and nearly perished because of it. When he again goes there in 1 Sam. 27:1, he is really going against God's education of him and intention for him. For God had sent him against the Philistines in 1 Sam. 23 to help him realize that he was not to consider refuge with them again.

1Sa 23:6 When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, he brought an ephod with him-

Here we have an example of how a statement is given either before or after a historical description, explaining how that historical situation came about. Here, the fact Abiathar was with David with the ephod explains how David had inquired of Yahweh in :4, and how he would inquire now in the next verses.

We can conclude that the priest brought the breastplate too- for the breastplate was not to be parted from the ephod (Ex. 28:28; 39:21). This therefore meant a mobile sanctuary, making everywhere they went holy ground.

The other reference to a town with gates and bars is in Jud. 16:3 [the same words used], where Samson is miraculously delivered from entrapment in Gaza / Gath, the very town from which David was graciously delivered. We keep seeing connections with the Samson story; David is being nudged to 'learn the lesson of Samson!', for whom women were his downfall. But he didn't ultimately do so; all these nudges went unheeded by him.

1Sa 23:7 Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah and he said, God has delivered him into my hand, for he is trapped by going into a town that has gates and bars-

Again we have an example of Saul's inner thoughts being described as his spoken words; because this is how God reads our words in our hearts- as if we spoke them. The Hebrew for "delivered" also means 'rejected' [s.w. "forsaken", Jer. 19:4]. We have an insight into how Saul justified his persecution of David. He liked to think that God had rejected David, and therefore David's thought to be king was treason. Of course it was Saul whom God has rejected, but in a classic case of psychological transference, Saul transfers this on to David as the rejected one, and sees it as his job to judge David for it. Otherwise it is hard to understand how Saul persecuted David, knowing that God had told him that he was rejected as king, and that God had chosen David to be king. Saul assumes that the people of Keilah are going to be on his side and will agree to betray David. David presumably knew this when he was first told about their calamity, and wondered if he should go and save them. His decision was therefore an example of him showing extreme grace. The pain of it was all the more tragic in that Keilah was in Judah and these people were from David's own tribe.

1Sa 23:8 Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David

and his men-

Keilah had just been attacked by the Philistines, and now it had Saul's army marching towards it; thus Saul is shown to be no better than the Philistines. He as the king of Israel ought to have saved Keilah from the Philistines; for Israel wanted a king to save them from their enemies. The fact David had saved them would have provoked Saul's jealousy.

1Sa 23:9 David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him, so he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here-

"Plotting evil" is the phrase only elsewhere used by Solomon, when repeatedly he condemns those who "plot evil" in his Proverbs (Prov. 3:29; 6:14; 12:20; 14:22). All Solomon writes is true, but he always harnesses God's truth to the agenda of his own self justification through knocking down the enemies of his father. And the house of Saul were still around and feared by Solomon as potential threats to his kingship. We can misuse Divine truths in the same way.

1Sa 23:10 Then David said, O Yahweh the God of Israel, Your servant has definitely heard that Saul intends to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake-

See on 1 Sam. 18:1-3. Saul had come to besiege Keilah and force them to deliver David to him. It could be that his guilt by association complex was so strong that Saul was wanting to destroy all Keilah because David had saved them and was living with them. But another possibility is that David is being as it were manipulative with God, alluding to the situation with Lot and Sodom, exaggerating Saul's desire to destroy him into Saul wanting to destroy all Keilah.

David's conscience was clearly dwelling on how 85 priests at Nob had been killed by Saul and Doeg for his sake. He was careful to learn his lesson and didn't want this to be repeated.

1Sa 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? Yahweh, the God of Israel, I beg you, tell Your servant. Yahweh said, He will come down-

"The men" is 'the lords'. The logical order of the questions would seem to require that David would first ask whether Saul would come down. Perhaps David assumed that Saul would come down, for after all, Saul was pursuing him. So we see some humility in David asking for confirmation of what appeared obvious. "Deliver me up into his hand" is a repeat of the situation in the life of Samson (Jud. 15:10-13), when again "the men of Judah" 'delivered [Samon] into the hand' of the Philistines. The similarity is clear- and so often we note how situations in David's life were directing him back to Samson. It's as if God was warning him about a weakness for women- and in the matter of Bathsheba, David failed to learn the lesson of Samson which God had been gently trying to teach him for many years previously.

We note the play on the idea of 'delivering'. The men of Keilah had been delivered by David from their enemies, but they wanted to deliver him into the hand of his enemies (:11,12,20). This is a classic cameo of human ingratitude. Grace didn't find any response, in this case. But David is taught to deal with it by simply accepting it, and not trying to force gratitude. Which is really how God deals with human ingratitude. Saul will now be 'delivered into David's hand' and he spares him (1 Sam. 24:18; 26:8). David learnt the lesson. We share God's grace to us with others, regardless of their response. Because this is how He sheds His grace upon men. And understanding that removes all the angst we would otherwise feel about human

ingratitude. Likewise although we aren't saved by good works nor earning points, it is also so that "God is not unmindful to forget" our labours of love. The natural desire for human appreciation and gratitude is felt strongly by parents, by carers for old people... by those in Christian ministry. The cross is the answer. There we see God's grace lavished upon all men. With so little response, appreciation and gratitude. David had been "delivered" from Goliath, so he was asked to "deliver" Keilah, but the men of Keilah didn't appreciate that but thought to "deliver" him to Saul. David is then delivered by grace from Saul on the conical hill, he is not "delivered into Saul's hand" (1 Sam. 23:14), indeed in the Psalms he often marvels at how God had not "delivered me into the hand of my enemies" (Ps. 31:8 etc.); and Saul is then "delivered" into David's hand so that he may release him by grace.

David had "definitely heard" that Saul would come down. But he doesn't trust his own intelligence or the hearing of his own ears. He wants this confirmed by God. Perhaps he was entertaining the dream of living safely with the grateful people of Keilah and thereby being safe from Saul. For surely his experience should have told him that Saul would come down. He probably got the impression that some of the people of Keilah would hand him over to Saul, but he struggled to believe that people he had saved from death at the risk of his own life... could be so ungrateful. And so he asks God to show him.

1Sa 23:12 Then David said, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? Yahweh said, They will deliver you-

God appears to only answer one request at a time. And then the other request has to be repeated. This would be understandable if the ephod contained the stones of urim and thummim, which flashed out only a binary, yes / no response to a question. Therefore only one question could be answered at a time. There seems something similar in 2 Sam. 2:1, when David had to ask twice before being told into which town he should move to establish his new kingdom: "'Shall I move into one of the towns in Judah?' The Lord answered, 'Yes!'" David asked, 'Move where?' 'To Hebron' He answered". And possibly "Hebron" was an answer given after many other requests for God to choose between various towns.

We note that both the propositions which God said would happen [Saul coming to Keilah, the men of Keilah delivering David to him] never actually happened. But in God's purpose they would have happened- had David not acted in the way he did. But we note that God didn't add any condition, such as "Unless you flee". David had to work that out. We see here how God's purpose is in a way open ended [cp. Nineveh's predicted destruction in 40 days]. But in the gap between pronouncement and actualization, human freewill can change the outcome on the ground. We marvel at God's knowledge- He knows how things would have worked out contingent on things like David choosing to trust the people of Keilah since he had saved them. He knew that *if* David remained in Keilah and *if* Saul had besieged Keilah with David inside the city, *then* the people of Keilah would have surrendered David to Saul. That scenario didn't happen, but God knew how things would have gone if it had happened. His knowledge of all potential scenarios makes His knowledge vast beyond words. He not only knows everything now happening, but all the possible situations. His pain at human failure is thereby the greater, as well as His joy when we respond rightly. For He sees all the dimensions surrounding human behaviour. He has 'middle knowledge', the contingent knowledge of everything on the scale in between the possibility of being and that of not being.

David here experienced extreme ingratitude- those he saved would turn against him. But he simply moved on from them. And this paved the way, in God's spiritual education of him, for him to show grace to the ungrateful Saul in 1 Sam. 24- and then moving on from him.

1Sa 23:13 Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and left Keilah, and went wherever they could go. Saul heard that David had escaped from Keilah so he gave up going there-

Saul had a network of spies watching David (1 Sam. 18:20,24; 19:11,19; 23:7,13,25; 24:1; 27:4). In the type of Christ, this looks ahead to Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Jn. 11:57. If the people of Keilah had appeared grateful for David saving them, and were vowing total loyalty to him even if Saul besieged their town, then David's actions here would have seemed foolish. People didn't know Saul was thinking of coming against Keilah. They would have wisely crowed after the event that David ought to have remained with the grateful people of Keilah. But the ways of God are always geared ultimately toward our salvation, and involve our doing things which seem counter intuitive and not the humanly smart thing to do.

1Sa 23:14 David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds and in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day-

Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn. 5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8).

But God didn't deliver him into his hand-

The contrast is with the men of Keilah, who would have delivered David into Saul's hand. Yahweh is presented as kinder than men; and any undue fear of Him as a hard God must always remember this.

1Sa 23:15 David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life when he was in the wilderness of Ziph, in the forest-

Saul sought the life of David (s.w. 1 Sam. 20:1; 22:23; 23:15; 25:29; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the Psalms, David frequently imprecates judgment upon those who sought his life (s.w. Ps. 35:4; 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13; 86:14). He loved Saul, the life of Saul was precious in David's sight, indeed the historical records seem to emphasize David's patient love of Saul; and yet in the Psalms he gives vent before God to his anger with Saul and desire to see Saul punished and judged by God. This is absolutely true to human experience; we may act with great patience and apparent love toward those who abuse us, and yet within we fume about it. The lesson of David is that we are to pour out those feelings to God in prayer, leaving Him to judge.

1Sa 23:16 Jonathan, Saul's son, went to David into the forests and strengthened his hand in God-

We observe how he is called "Saul's son", emphasizing the extreme difficulty of their relationship and their very different environments. And yet faithfulness to God was possible in both. Only occasionally could Jonathan and David meet, brief moments of intense fellowship away from the rest of the world, strengthening each other's hand in the Lord, re-confirming their covenant together (1 Sam. 18:3; 20:8,16; 23:18). No wonder their goodbyes were so hard: "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20:41). Not surprisingly, they looked forward

to the promised day of David's Kingdom: "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee" (1 Sam. 23:17). Our communion meetings with the Lord Jesus during our wilderness journey must surely mirror those meetings.

Just the same phrase is used of how David later strengthened himself in Yahweh, with 600 of his own men against him and wanting to kill him (1 Sam. 30:6). It happens with us too that the encouragement others give us, we later have to give to ourselves when alone and isolated.

1Sa 23:17 He said to him, Don't be afraid, for the hand of Saul my father will not find you; you will be king over Israel and I shall be next to you. Saul my father well knows that-

See on 1 Sam. 20:15 and 1 Sam. 20:30,31. As noted on 1 Sam. 20:3, when David feels Saul is about to succeed in killing him, we might have wished to see at times more faith by both of them in Samuel's prophetic word that David should become king. Their faith in that word went up and down, with 1 Sam. 23:17 being a high point in it, and 1 Sam. 27:1 being the low point in it. Jonathan totally believed Samuel's prophetic word, even though it meant that he would not be king himself. And Saul too knew this. His efforts to kill David were therefore futile, for he was thereby seeking to as it were disallow that prophetic word coming true. But knowing all this, Saul still tried to murder David. His jealousy blinded him to such an extent that he was simply blind to the implications of the Divine word which on another level he believed. We can know things on one level, but act totally contrary to that knowledge. Jonathan's utter faith in the prophetic word surely encouraged David, whose faith in that word [that he would survive to become king] often wavered. Jonathan's extreme, self-sacrificial loyalty to David contrasts with the fickle disloyalty of the Ziphites. God does counter negative experiences with positive ones, if we have eyes to perceive.

1Sa 23:18 They both made a covenant before Yahweh, and David stayed in the forests but Jonathan went home-

The record powerfully presents the picture of David and Jonathan as two men living in totally different worlds, and yet being bound together, despite the tangles of their lives, by the hope of the Kingdom, and the pure intensity of their spiritual bond with each other in the Lord. The love of David for Jonathan is surpassing. The juxtaposition of their lifestyles is shown by passages like this, where Jonathan goes to "his house" (Heb.) whilst David is in the forests; and 1 Sam. 20:42, where Jonathan returns to the city and David goes into the scrubland.

"Jonathan Saul's son (note the emphasis again!) arose, and went to David *into the wood*" (1 Sam. 23:16). We are invited to imagine Jonathan walking into the wood, stumbling through it, until he found David, concealed in some deep thicket; and then, after brief but intense fellowship, stumbling back through the undergrowth, brushing himself down, and returning to his stately home. The same impression is given by 1 Sam. 20:42: "We have sworn both of us... and David arose and departed (to his den): and Jonathan went into the city". There seems more than an echo here of Abraham and Lot parting company in Gen. 13:8-12. How many of us, coming out of a memorial meeting and returning to the world, have gone through the same emotions. The clandestine nature of the David: Jonathan friendship is surely replicated between us and Christ. The love of David for Jonathan is Christ's love for us. Their souls were "knit", a Hebrew word also translated "conspire", hinting at the secretiveness (1 Sam. 18:1). Yet as Jonathan became too involved in his surrounding world (so it seems), so

we run a similar gauntlet. The question arises: Should Jonathan have run away from his situation, and gone to join David in the wilderness, like others did? Should we? To close down a career, move down the property ladder, change our eating, travelling, holiday habits.... or stay where we are in Saul's court, to some degree living out a lie, hoping Gilboa won't come for us?

1Sa 23:19 Then the Ziphites came to Saul in Gibeah saying, Isn't David hiding among us in the strongholds in the forest, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of the desert?-

These people come over as proactively seeking to betray David. Doubtless Saul had been offering major incentives to people for information leading to the capture or destruction of David. That David could later weld these people together into one kingdom was only achieved thanks to his great grace and forgiveness.

1Sa 23:20 Now therefore, O king, come down when you are ready; our part will be to deliver him into the king's hand-

Saul's spies aimed to *deliver* David into Saul's hands, looking ahead in the type of Christ to Lk. 20:20. We are intended to compare this with :14: "But God didn't deliver him into his hand". The men of Keilah likewise would have delivered David into Saul's hand. Yahweh is presented as kinder than men; and any undue fear of Him as a hard God must always remember this.

1Sa 23:21 Saul said, Yahweh bless you, for you have had compassion on me- David's later criticism of Saul's blessing of the greedy (Ps. 10:3) may refer to his blessing of the Ziphites for betraying David to him. They were "greedy" in that they did so in hope of reward from Saul. Saul doesn't become an atheist. Rather he likes to think that Yahweh's blessing will be with those who take his side in his obsession against David. This is how extreme jealousy can totally unbalance and pervert the perspective of the believer who gives in to it.

In 1 Sam. 23:21 Saul thanks the Ziphites for their "compassion" to him by informing him of David's location. "Compassion" translates the Hebrew word for 'spare'. Saul felt the Ziphites had spared him. But in 1 Sam. 24:10 he finds that it is in fact David who spares him. So God continued to work with Saul, despite having rejected him as king- for He still wanted to lead Saul to repentance and ultimate salvation. This is an amazing reflection of how God never gives up working with men.

1Sa 23:22 Please go and make sure and find out where his haunt is and who has seen him there, for they tell me that he is very crafty-

The "they" refer to Saul's network of spies seeking to inform on David. Perhaps this desire for the names of those who had reported sightings of David was because Saul had promised a reward for every sighting. "His haunt" is literally 'his foot'; the idea is they were treating him like a wild animal they were tracking and hunting.

1Sa 23:23 So find out all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information, and I will go with you. If he is in the area I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah-

This sounds like some kind of 'final solution' to eliminate David by listing all his possible hiding places in the area. We note Saul's personal obsession: "I will go with

you... I will search him out". Jealousy can progress to a point where a man becomes shameless in his addiction to personal hatred.

1Sa 23:24 They set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul, but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah on the south of the desert-
"Arabah" is GNB "a desolate valley"; "to the south of Jeshimon" (ESV). "The wilderness of Maon" is the conical hill of Maon, identified as Tell Main about 10 km. south of Hebron. It was around this that Saul chased David.

1Sa 23:25 Saul and his men went to seek him. When David was told, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon-

"Stayed in the wilderness of Maon" is LXX "which is in the wilderness of Maon", i.e. the conical hill (see on :24). We could read this trust in a rock or hill as a denial of David's oft proclaimed trust in Yahweh as his rock. We may love the words of scripture, or the words of hymns or songs, but still not get the reality of them when tested. As will be explained on :26, it seems David thought this rock was an area where he could hide undetected from Saul. Perhaps he saw in it a kind of representation of God whom he often calls his rock. He would have really felt God was no longer his rock when that rock appeared to be his destruction (see on :26). But then when he was saved, he would have understood that God is a "rock" not in the sense of some obvious and visible fortress of defence; but in more subtle yet more powerful ways.

1Sa 23:26 Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other, and David hurried to get away for fear of Saul, for Saul and his men surrounded David and his men to take them-

"Surrounded" is 'encircled'. It's also the word for 'crown', as if Saul was crowning David as king. Just as casting his spear at David was giving him the symbol of kingship. David had been encircled in Gath, and had learnt there that Yahweh's Angel encamps around those who fear Him- for Ps. 34:8 is his commentary upon that deliverance. Now he is to learn the lesson again. And it will give him strength for his next life episode, in 1 Sam. 24, when he sees Saul encircled by his soldiers camping around him- and realizes that this is no barrier, because Yahweh's Angel encamps around him [David]. Perhaps the "messenger" that came to Saul in :27, and thus spared David's life, was indeed a *malak* in the sense of an Angel, the Angel encamped around David. In Ps. 5:12 David had expressed his faith and understanding that the righteous are encircled by God's grace: "For You will bless the righteous. Yahweh, You will surround him with grace as with a shield". But as with us, our theoretical understanding of grace, enshrined in the words we say to others, the words we sing, even in our statements of faith... has to be tested in practice. And this is really what so much of life is about, translating our head knowledge to felt experience, engrained in our core personality.

David bore a charmed life from Saul's persecution; humanly, he should surely have perished at this point (1 Sam. 23:26,27; 27:1). This looks ahead to Jn. 7:30 in the type of Christ. The "rock" or "mountain" was a cone shaped hill. David went one way around it and Saul another, chasing him; this is the idea behind "surrounded". David with his large company of men must have felt unable to stop and fight Saul because they were so outnumbered. David originally intended to hide out there. But now Saul was on him, and as David moved ever higher up the tracks towards the top of the cone

shaped hill, it was only a matter of time before Saul caught up with him at the top. David was very close to death at this point; but his desperate prayers as he went higher up the cone shaped hill received a truly miraculous answer (:27).

1Sa 23:27 But a messenger came to Saul saying, Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land!-

The way Saul returns from pursuing David because of a rumour of invasion is so similar to Rabshakeh's retreat from Jerusalem after rumours of incursions. Circumstances repeat within our lives and between our lives and those of others in Biblical history; that we might learn the lessons and take comfort from the scriptures, that man is not alone.

1Sa 23:28 So Saul returned from pursuing David and went against the Philistines. Therefore they called that place Sela Hammahlekoth-
ESV "The rock of escape", GNB "The rock of division", LXX "The divided rock", perhaps connecting with how Moses divided the rock in the desert to bring forth water whereby Israel survived when otherwise they would have died.

1Sa 23:29 David went from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi-
This verse appears to belong to the next chapter. The Bible's chapter divisions were not inspired and were added some time after the originals were written.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 24

1Sa 24:1 When Saul had returned from pursuing the Philistines he was told, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi-
Saul had a network of spies watching David (1 Sam. 18:20,24; 19:11,19; 23:7,13,25; 24:1; 27:4). In the type of Christ, this looks ahead to Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Jn. 11:57.

1Sa 24:2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel-
They were not all Benjamites. They were doubtless chosen for their loyalty to Saul, even if that loyalty had been bought. That David could later weld the kingdom together was only achieved by his great grace and forgiveness.

And went to seek David and his men-
Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8).

On the rocks of the wild goats-
LXX "in front of Saddaeem"; GNB "east of Wild Goat Rocks". Even in these desperate straits, David still had time to reflect that as "the high hills are a refuge for the wild goats" so Yahweh would be for him (s.w. Ps. 104:18). Goats were unclean and a symbol of the rejected. And yet Yahweh is a refuge even for the unclean. This was how David appears to have felt. Or we could note that Saul and his men were scampering over the rocks like goats, whereas David and his men were near the sheep pens, in a cave as if they were sheep (:3). The separation between sheep and goats is therefore being made clear.

1Sa 24:3 He came to the sheep pens by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were hiding in the innermost parts of the cave-

David and his men were temporarily living [“hiding” is a poor translation] in the cave, and must’ve watched Saul and his men drawing near. And then, Saul walks away from the men and starts walking right towards them. They withdraw deeper into the cave. As when being chased ever higher up the conical hill in 1 Sam. 23:26, it must have seemed that the end had now come. Saul puts his cloak down and goes further into the cave, to relieve himself and maybe have a rest; presumably he wasn’t feeling well and just wanted to be alone. He was after all an elderly man now, if indeed he reigned a literal 40 years (Acts 13:21).

It must’ve been so very weird; there was enough time for David to discuss with his men whether to kill him or not. But by the nature of the situation, the discussion lasted only a few seconds; for in the time it takes a man to go to the toilet, David cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe. There are times when in a few seconds we end up acting according to our true inner convictions. This was clearly no coincidence; it was all too weird. Likewise the way circumstances repeated in 1 Sam. 26 was so strange. Again David stands over the weak Saul, again his men urge him to murder him, giving the same reasoning as before, and again David resists. And again David calls to Saul and demonstrates his sincerity and integrity. Our lives aren’t random chance; circumstances repeat in order to give us the opportunity to learn from mistakes, i.e. to not make the same mistake again; or even when we respond properly, the circumstance can repeat in essence so that we have our right choice reinforced by repeated experience. Just as a teacher makes students repeat exercises so that they ‘get the point’. This gives extra point to David’s warning of Saul in 1 Sam. 26:19- that if Saul were doing what he was doing against David just because other men had stirred him up to it, then this was especially culpable. For David twice had been stirred up by *his* men to slay Saul, and had not done so.

Saul had 3000 warriors with him, and David and his few men were trapped in a cave. But Saul had a call of nature, the need to defecate, a moment when man is totally isolated, alone and vulnerable. It was at that point that God was trying to teach Saul something of His grace. And in essence, this is His style of teaching to this day. Saul would have removed his kingly robe to defecate and left it on the cave floor whilst he went to defecate. And it was then, as Saul was alone, vulnerable and defecating, that David cut off a corner of the kingly robe. Saul would have later reflected upon this.

1Sa 24:4 The men of David said to him, Look, the day of which Yahweh said to you, ‘I will deliver your enemy into your hand and you can do to him whatever you wish’. Then David got up and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe secretly-

There is no such oracle recorded; this doesn’t mean it wasn’t said e.g. by Gad or some other prophet. In this case, we might focus upon the phrase “That you may do to him as it shall seem good unto you”. There are times when there is no moral right or wrong in a situation; but what matters is the motive behind the decision we reach. God Himself slew Saul, so perhaps it wouldn’t have been a sin for David to have killed him; for David had never been told specifically that he was not to kill Saul just because Samuel had anointed him. But this was the position David came to in his conscience, and he therefore had to uphold it. We so often hanker after a right/wrong, black or white, this is a sin or it isn’t. But often the choices are left to us to exercise

our conscience, so that the choice is made by us, from the heart, rather than as a matter of legalistic obedience. David had to do what ‘seemed good unto him’. In 2 Sam. 18:4 there’s a sad contrast with David’s resoluteness here – for he uses the same Hebrew words in saying that “whatever seems good unto *you* I will do” at the time of Absalom’s rebellion. We are called to do what seems good unto *us* rather than what seems good to those around us.

There are times when we can assume too quickly what God's word or will is. Perhaps David's men assumed that surely God meant them to kill Saul at this point, and went on to assume that this was the word of the Lord. We think of Nathan too quickly telling David that his plan for a temple was indeed God's will. Or the disciples warning Paul, through the Holy Spirit, that he would suffer at Jerusalem- but then telling him that therefore he should not go there. When Paul had had revelation that he should in fact go to Jerusalem. The simple lesson is that we do need to pray and meditate before assuming we have Divine direction in a matter. And it is that process which leads to intimacy with Him.

Another reading would be that God hadn’t said this at all (1 Sam. 24:6 Heb. could be read as a denial that God had said this), but David’s men urged him to see providence at work, as if to say ‘This is the day that God is saying to you, that you can now kill Saul’. Trying to work out what providence is telling us is quite a challenge. There are some who claim to have 'had a word from the Lord' when as in this case, it is their imagination and flawed interpretation of circumstance. Even those within the ecclesia can urge us against our conscience, and David is presented as standing alone in his decision making. This is very hard when we’re surrounded by those who have stood with us in hard times, our friends and faithful supporters. We risk alienating them by our insistence upon following our conscience and the principle of respecting the value and meaning of persons, even if they are our abusers and enemies.

The skirt was the hem of blue which was to remind the Israelite of their dedication to Yahweh’s holiness. Num. 15:38,39 decreed that this was to be done so that they remembered to keep all the commandments of Yahweh; but Saul is noted for *not* having done this (1 Sam. 15:22-28). David forgave Saul but didn’t naively blind his eyes to Saul’s unspirituality; and he didn’t trust Saul again. Forgiveness isn’t the same as reconciliation. Often people needlessly beat themselves up that they’ve not forgiven because they don’t trust. It could be argued from the ambiguous Hebrew of that Samuel had torn Saul's kingly robe earlier- to show that his kingdom had been torn from him. David was clearly aware of this and was seeking to remind Saul of God's word. His intention was that Saul would humble himself before God's word and let David be king. We can imagine David approaching Saul with a knife in his hand. His thoughts were surely struggling within him as to whether to stab Saul to death, or use the knife to just teach Saul a lesson and appeal to him. And to David's credit, his better thinking triumphed.

1Sa 24:5 Afterwards David’s conscience smote him, because he had cut off a piece of Saul’s robe-

David's heart smote him- but David hadn’t done anything wrong. Indeed it could be argued that what he did was right and commendable in spiritual terms. Conscience isn’t ultimately reliable (1 Cor. 4:4); we will be judged in the light of God’s word, and not whether we have felt OK or not about our actions in life. His sensitive conscience appears again in 2 Sam. 24:10, where again his heart smote him for doing something which wasn’t wrong in itself, i.e. to number Israel. His conscience was aware,

perhaps, that we can do things which aren't wrong in themselves but which were performed with a wrong attitude. And this is no bad example for us to take. Perhaps we have another example when he said that he had caused the death of all the priests at Nob. The blame for that was surely more with Saul and Doeg than with David. I don't think that David is being presented as unusual in this; after all, we have more information about David than about any other OT character. Such fluctuations in the accuracy of conscience are normal to any man.

The only other time we read of David's heart smiting him is in Ps. 102:4, where he speaks of himself as a lonely bird in the wilderness, chased by his enemies, but with a heart so smitten that he feels like dying: "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread" (Ps. 102:4). It would appear that David's heart didn't just smite him for that moment; but it was an ongoing feeling he had during that period of his wilderness life. This was the power of false guilt for David. The lesson here is that we shouldn't just let our conscience smite us, do something about it at the time, and then forget all about the issue. Believing and feeling God's forgiveness may take a period of time; and the receipt of that forgiveness shouldn't necessarily take away our sense of failure, just as it doesn't within human relationships.

David's extreme respect for Saul is shown in the fact that Yahweh had explicitly told him that he would deliver Saul into David's hand, and David was free to do as he wished to him; but because of his genuine respect for Saul, David didn't take the liberty of killing him; indeed, he even felt guilty at cutting off the blue ribbon from Saul's coat (1 Sam. 24:4,5). Such was David's *respect* for Saul. It's shown again in the way that David fairly evidently wanted to fight against Saul with the men of Achish, evidently wanting to turn against them and fight for Saul- as they correctly guessed (1 Sam. 29:8). This would have been suicidal. For Saul wanted to kill him, and the Philistines also would have tried to kill David as a result of this. He would have had no place to run. But even to the point of political suicide and the serious risking of his own life, David so loved his enemy. This true love leads to and is related to true respect. This kind of respect is sadly lacking in our society, and has rubbed off upon our relationships within families and ecclesias. David's love for his enemy was perhaps shown in the way that cutting off the skirt of the robe, ripping Saul's kingly garment, showing him grace, was all angled towards leading Saul to repentance. And that is what we must wish for our worst enemies, sincerely and from the heart.

1Sa 24:6 He said to his men, Yahweh forbid that I should do such a thing to my lord, Yahweh's anointed, to lift my hand against him, since he is Yahweh's anointed- We are all anointed in that we are in Christ, the anointed (2 Cor. 1:21). The same radical respect which David showed, we should show to each other. David's attitude seems to have influenced Saul's men, for his armour bearer refused to slay Saul (1 Chron. 10:4,5). But David's attitude towards Saul was actually an encouragement to himself. For he too was Yahweh's anointed, and no hand could be lifted against him unless Yahweh allowed it. The same phrase "lift up the hand against" in the context of murder is used of how Saul's guards refused to kill the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:17). For they too were anointed as priests. Yahweh's anointed referred to His priests as well as His kings.

Often David calls Saul his lord or master, describing himself as Saul's servant (1 Sam. 17:32,34,36; 20:8; 24:6; 26:16,19; 29:3,4; 30:15). This was no formal "Sincerely your brother and fellow-servant". This was a real conscious putting of himself down, as the Lord Jesus felt he was a worm rather than a man (Ps. 22:6). If only we would

concentrate upon our own status and show some true respect for others on account of their being in the ecclesia, having even been anointed spiritually at their baptism (2 Cor. 1:21) as Saul was.

David has a clear belief that the man anointed by God is not to be slain. But he himself was God's anointed king. His respect of Saul's anointing was therefore the guarantee that he himself would not be slain, as God's anointed. We could wonder whether David's extreme emphasis upon not killing or harming Yahweh's anointed was because he hoped that this would be a guarantee that he too, as Yahweh's anointed, would not be harmed or slain. We are left to ponder such motives in Biblical characters, because we must likewise ponder our own motives. In 1 Sam. 26, David mocks Abner for not guarding Saul, Yahweh's anointed, and proclaims him worthy of death; but Abner had been struck by a deep sleep from Yahweh so he was innocent really of this. Likewise when the Amalekite comes to David with the news that he had slain Saul in his death throes, David has the man killed because he had killed Yahweh's anointed. This appears extreme. David certainly had no value for human life by behaving like this. So... we ponder whether his extreme position about "Yahweh's anointed" was purely motivated. As suggested above, he may possibly have been thinking that if he displayed respect for Yahweh's anointed, then Yahweh would not allow him to be slain- as he too was Yahweh's anointed. And possibly he was seeking to inculcate in Israel a respect for Yahweh's anointed, in order to safeguard himself [as also Yahweh's anointed] from ever being murdered by his own people. Human motivation is rarely pure. Perhaps this is why we have the idea of our very conscience being cleansed in Christ. And there is nothing like meeting the crucified Lord Jesus at the memorial meeting to elicit self examination of motives.

1Sa 24:7 So David restrained his men with these words, and didn't allow them to attack Saul. Saul got up out of the cave and went on his way-

David could easily have reasoned that if his men killed Saul, then he had not done it. But his ethics and spirituality were far higher than that. He realized his men were under his control, and so he restrained them. "Restrained" or "rebuked" is Heb. 'to tear apart'. David had to really 'lay into' his men to stop them killing Saul. By going the way of grace, he ended up falling out with his own friends and supporters. This frequently happens when we seek to live by grace in reality; it can be a very lonely path. It's clear from Abishai's attitude in 1 Sam. 26:8 that David failed to totally convince his men to share his attitude to Saul. For David's grace towards Saul was a hard act to follow.

David had restrained or withheld his own men from murdering Saul, but Abigail perceives that over and above his own mental effort to do this, Yahweh had confirmed David in it (1 Sam. 25:26 "since Yahweh has withheld you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand"). And she sees her appeasement of David as likewise controlled by Yahweh to preserve David as innocent from avenging himself, so that he could indeed become king.

1Sa 24:8 David also got up afterwards and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, My lord the king! When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and showed respect-

David's respect to Saul simply because he was the anointed king is really remarkable. He could easily have reasoned that Saul had twice been told by Samuel that his kingship had been removed and transferred to David, and therefore it was questionable whether Saul really was the anointed of Yahweh; for David had been

anointed king in his place. But grace always falls on the side of giving a man the benefit of the doubt. And in practice, David's grace, like all grace, was motivated by a simple love of Saul as a person. We are all anointed in that we are in Christ, the anointed (2 Cor. 1:21). The same radical respect which David showed, we should show to each other.

1Sa 24:9 David said to Saul, Why do you listen when men say 'David is trying to harm you?' -

We get the impression from the record that it was Saul who was creating this false accusation, as part of his paranoid mindset that had jumped from one conspiracy theory to another. It was Saul who was influencing men to think like that. But David had clearly chosen his words carefully for this brief speech. He seeks to give Saul the benefit of the doubt, as grace does (see on :8), and to make it as easy as possible for Saul to repent. He sets us a stellar example for behaviour in interpersonal conflict.

Part of the reason for Saul's obsessive conspiracy theories about David may have been that there were a group of Benjamites who wanted David dead. Because they didn't want the kingdom to go to a man from Judah. They fed Saul theories about David seeking his life. We noted earlier that Saul listened to the voices of many people rather than of God through Samuel- and here we have an example.

1Sa 24:10 Look, today your eyes have seen how Yahweh had delivered you into my hand in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, I will not lift up my hand against my lord, for he is Yahweh's anointed-

David is seeking to build psychological bridges with Saul. He is supposing for a moment that Saul only hated him because he listened to what others said about David (:9), and David is saying that he too had people in his life who told him to kill Saul, but he refused to listen to them. As discussed on :8, David could have reasoned that Saul was no longer Yahweh's anointed and the anointing had passed to him. And indeed it had. But by stressing that Saul *is* Yahweh's anointed, he may be following the position of Samuel, that despite all his rejection by God, Saul could still pull round and be Yahweh's anointed king. Grace includes this element of determined hopefulness for the repentance even of those who appear far gone.

"I spared you" reflects the fact that had David killed Saul, it would in a way have been legitimate. David was faced not so much with a choice between obedience and disobedience, but between showing a high level of grace and, on the other hand, doing what was politically expedient and legitimate. And it is in these choices that spiritual maturity is shown.

In 1 Sam. 23:21 Saul thanks the Ziphites for their "compassion" to him by informing him of David's location. "Compassion" translates the Hebrew word for 'spare'. Saul felt the Ziphites had spared him. But in 1 Sam. 24:10 he finds that it is in fact David who spares him. So God continued to work with Saul, despite having rejected him as king- for He still wanted to lead Saul to repentance and ultimate salvation. This is an amazing reflection of how God never gives up working with men.

1Sa 24:11 Moreover, my father-

Seeking to remind Saul of how he had asked Jesse to let David come and live at the court and effectively become his son.

Look, here is a piece of your robe in my hand; by the fact that I cut it off and didn't kill you, you can know and see that I have no desire to hurt you and have not

sinned against you-

"I have not sinned" was to later become "I have sinned" when confronted by his sin with Bathsheba. This is the same phrase as David later uses when he confesses his sins regarding Bathsheba, in Ps. 51:3: "For I acknowledge my transgressions". This very phrase is here used by David in insisting that he did *not* acknowledge any transgression in him whilst in exile from Saul. What he said and felt then may have been relatively true, compared to the unspirituality of Saul and the false accusations against him. But perhaps there was an element of the overly self righteous in his words, and the sin with Bathsheba made him realize this. When we experience abuse, false accusation and downright evil from others, this can result in our failure to realize that we too our sinners. We become fixated upon the sin of the other. David it seems fell into this trap.

Though you hunt me to take my life-

Despite all his radical grace toward Saul, David was not naive and he refused to slip into denial of the obvious misbehaviour of the object of his grace. Saul was trying to kill David; he was lifting up his hand against David as Yahweh's anointed, whereas David didn't do so.

1Sa 24:12 May Yahweh judge between me and you, and may Yahweh avenge the wrong you have done me; but my hand shall not be against you-

Despite the amazing grace shown, David cannot resist this reference to inevitable judgment which faced Saul for his behaviour. David at this time was meditating deeply upon the Mosaic law, as Ps. 119 makes clear. Perhaps a critical verse for him was Lev. 19:18: "You shall not avenge... but love your neighbour as yourself". God had already termed David and Saul neighbours (1 Sam. 15:28). Perhaps David took a cue from those words, and started thinking of Saul as his neighbour. And then his mind went to Lev. 15:18; if Saul was his neighbour, he was to love him as himself, and not take vengeance.

1Sa 24:13 As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness, but my hand shall not be against you' -

Alluded to in Ps. 5:4, where the same word for "wickedness" is used: "For You are not a God who has pleasure in wickedness, evil can't live with You". Despite showing such wonderful grace to Saul, David did not justify his wickedness but names it for what it is. Grace is not naivety.

1Sa 24:14 Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?-

This reflects the broken down psychological state of David. He felt himself as good as dead, powerless, tiny and insignificant as a flea. 1 Sam. 17:43 LXX adds "David said, Nay, but worse than a dog". This would reflect his deep humility, which we also see in his later reflections in Ps. 8 and Ps. 144 that he was most unworthy to have attained the victory. We note that here in 1 Sam. 24:14 he also likens himself to a dog. He had a low self image.

"A flea" is literally, one flea. Saul and 3000 of Israel's warriors were chasing one flea. This is how low David felt, and likewise "a dead dog" is a figure of a man who has run out of highway and is no longer what he once was. David's self perception was very low at this point. On one hand, he felt that he need not slay Saul as God would take care of this and be true to His word to him. But at one and the same time, he felt so low in his self image. And so it is oftentimes with man in Christ. This is not

hypocrisy, nor necessarily weakness of faith. It is what it is to be human. And our creator "remembers that we are dust".

1Sa 24:15 May Yahweh therefore be the judge and give sentence between me and you; may He plead my cause and deliver me out of your hand-

See on Ps. 119 (introduction). Solomon alludes here in Prov. 3:30 "Don't strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm". To strive or plead a cause is the very phrase used of the opposition of Saul (1 Sam. 24:15) and Nabal to David (1 Sam. 25:39); and in both cases, David had done them "no harm", the phrase used of David's innocence before Nabal (1 Sam. 25:21,28) and Saul (1 Sam. 24:11). Clearly Solomon has these incidents in view, and again his statements of truth have a subtext of justifying his father David, with whom he was psychologically obsessed.

That Ps.119 was written at this time is evident. It mentioned David as a young man devoting himself to the word rather than riches(:72)- the riches which could have been his if he mentally surrendered to Saul, or if he killed Saul and took the kingdom. He often laments how he is in exile from Yahweh's word (:43,46,54), which would have been on account of his being away from the sanctuary at Gibeah. He pleads the promise of the word that he would be preserved from Saul's persecution (v.41,58), and several times mentions Saul's attempts on his life (v.87,95,109,110). The following verses are evidently relevant to this period: 61,63,67,79,84 (= 1 Sam. 27:1),95,98 (= 1 Sam. 18:14,15),110 (cp. the 'snaring' with Michal),119 (the emphasis is on 'You will destroy the wicked like Saul- one day),125 (David is often called Saul's servant),150,154 (= 1 Sam. 24:15),157,161,165,176. Therefore in the face of such hatred and pain, feeling he must be careful of every step he took, emotionally and physically, David could rejoice: "I will walk at liberty (AVmg. 'at large'): for I seek thy precepts".

Legal language is disproportionately common in the Bible. The idea of a Divine, heavenly court is common. God is the judge who upholds the weak, those who are condemned by human judgment (1 Sam. 24:15; Ps. 9:4; 43:1; 140:12; Lam. 3:58; Mic. 7:9); He is even portrayed as the one appealing for justice (Ps. 74:22). If God is the only and ultimate judge, then *His* judgment is all that ultimately matters, and in this sense human 'sentences' or judgment from the court of human opinion are reversed by Him (Prov. 22:22,23). Yet the pain of being judged by those around us is highly significant to us mortals; and time and again, Scripture is reminding us that we should not pay deep attention to this, because God's judgment is what ultimately matters; and the Divine court is sitting in session right now, at the very same time as those around us are judging us with their meaningless human judgments. This, then, is the ultimate answer to the pain of being slandered and defamed, being misunderstood and misrepresented, or feeling that persecution by worldly powers is not noticed by God.

1Sa 24:16 When David had finished saying this to Saul, Saul said, Is this your voice, my son David? Saul wept aloud-

The shame with Saul is that he did have a conscience and a spiritual side. He thereby becomes an even stronger warning to us all; for obsessive jealousy can enmesh any of us if we allow it to. We wonder why Saul queries whether this is really David's voice. Perhaps there was a considerable distance between them; or David's voice was strained by emotion; or Saul so wished this was all a dream and this hadn't really happened. Again, each of these options has absolute credibility and reflects that this

record is true and accurate as to what really happened and was said. It is no cunningly devised fable.

1Sa 24:17 He said to David, You are more righteous than I, for you have been good to me, whereas I have done evil to you-

God's goodness to David was what empowered him to do good to Saul. 'Doing good' is the word used in Ps. 13:6 "I will sing to Yahweh, because He has been good to me", written by David reflecting upon the pain of Saul's persecution of him. Like us, our faith that God will finally come through for us *in the future* should give us joy *now*. This faith in God finally 'being good' to David led him to be the same to Saul- the word is used of how David was 'good' rather than evil to Saul, not slaying him when he had the opportunity (1 Sam. 24:17). Just as we deserve to die, but experience God's grace.

1Sa 24:18 You have declared this day how you have been good to me, because when Yahweh had delivered me into your hand, you didn't kill me-

David doing good to Saul is alluded to by him in Ps. 119:65: "Do good to Your servant according to Your word, Yahweh".

The doing good would specifically refer to the fulfilment of the prophetic word that David would be king and Saul's persecution would end. "Do good" is the phrase used of how David did good to Saul by not killing him, but rather trusting in God's word about Saul's destruction. And on that basis, David in Ps. 119:65 appeals for God to do him good, by ending Saul's persecution and establishing David as king.

It seems God would have given Saul into David's hand when "a deep sleep from the Lord" fell upon Saul at the very time David intended to kill him (1 Sam. 26:12). Saul himself realized that the Lord had delivered him into David's hand to kill him (1 Sam. 24:18). God thus confirmed David in his intentions- and yet at the last minute, it seems, David chose an even higher level; of love and deep respect for this spiritually sick man.

1Sa 24:19 For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away unharmed? Therefore may Yahweh reward you with good for what you have done to me today-

Saul knew of courses that Yahweh's reward for David would be that he would be made king in Saul's place (:20). Saul recognizes that David's grace is absolutely and radically different to all secular wisdom and ways of behaviour. Saul was out seeking to find David; and David had found Saul. "Unharmed" is literally "the good way". It is the term used of how Samuel taught Israel "the good way" despite their choice of Saul (1 Sam. 12:23; also 1 Kings 8:36). David alludes to this when he says that God teaches even sinners the good way (Ps. 25:8). This was relevant to the exiles, whom God also sought to teach the good way (Jer. 6:16). The idea is that even at this late stage, by preserving Saul's life, David was hopeful that he would still go in the good way. And Saul perceived this.

1Sa 24:20 Now I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands-

Saul is alluding to Samuel's words of rejection to him, "But now your kingdom shall not be established" (1 Sam. 13:14). Saul now at this point perfectly understood God's word to him. But he relapsed into his other narratives and continued to persecute David. The truth of Samuel's words about David replacing Saul now became apparent to Saul- when he perceived how gracious David was. This was to be the lead

characteristic of a king, a man with God's own gracious heart. Yet Saul's understanding was just theoretical, for he continues trying to murder David. Again we see how understanding God's word in crystal clarity is not of itself enough; it must be acted upon, and not just held in the mind for a few brief moments when the penny drops and we see everything clearly.

1Sa 24:21 Swear now therefore to me by Yahweh, that you will not cut off my seed after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house-

It was usual for a new king to destroy the family of the king he had usurped, and there are Biblical examples of this. Jonathan was likewise concerned about this. We note that Saul sees swearing by Yahweh as a binding oath, but earlier he had sworn by Yahweh to Jonathan that he would not kill David- and totally disregarded it. He must surely have been aware of this big paradox. We may wonder why David having the upper hand as he did at this point, didn't ask Saul to swear by Yahweh not to kill him. He was aware Saul had earlier made such an oath and broken it. Perhaps in love he didn't want to lead Saul yet further into sin, for he knew that Saul was likely to break such an oath. We can apply that principle too in our dealings with those in spiritual weakness.

1Sa 24:22 David gave his oath to Saul. Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold-

This continues the theme developed in the descriptions of David's meetings with Jonathan; one returns to their house, whilst David goes out into the scrubland again. Forgiveness is not the same as trust being restored. We must forgive, but we are not obligated to trust until that trust has been credibly restored.

It was usual for a new king to destroy the family of the previous dynasty. Through the incident with the Gibeonites in 2 Sam. 21, God took care of this. For there was a famine that was blamed upon Saul having slain the Gibeonites, and God judged that the bloodguilt rested upon Saul's descendants and they had to be executed: "There was famine during the reign of David, year after year for three years. David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord replied, "It is because of the bloodguilt of Saul and his house, for he put some Gibeonites to death" (2 Sam. 21:1). We ponder how there was bloodguilt on Saul's descendants. Saul's sins were not to be visited upon his descendants (Ex. 18:2; Dt. 24:16; Jer. 31:29) and Num. 35:33 is clear that Saul personally was responsible: "Blood pollutes the land and the land can have no expiation for blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it". When asked what can make amends, the Gibeonites naturally ask for the blood of Saul's family. But this is apparently in line with what Yahweh Himself had told David here. It seems rather politically convenient for David that here we have the destruction of the potential claimants to his throne. That is what David humanly would have wanted, but grace and his honouring of his promise to Saul stopped him from killing the descendants of his enemy, the previous king. Usually a new king destroyed the family of the previous dynasty. But God through the incident of the Gibeonites works to ensure that this happens anyway, as some kind of reward for David's attempt to live by grace and integrity in the matter.

We note that the two occasions when David spares Saul's life by grace are in 1 Sam. 24 and 26. In between them is the Nabal / Abigail story in 1 Sam. 25, where David is wildly eager to murder Nabal and his family and then is calmed down by Abigail. We see here how David, as every man, may reach peaks of grace and wisdom, and yet in between them act ungraciously. This is psychologically credible,

and reflects the struggle of every man to live on a level of high grace to others. But we wonder whether David's grace to Saul was possibly only achieved by psychologically transferring his anger onto another, in this case Nabal, and madly seeking to murder him rather than Saul. David resisted taking revenge upon Saul, but he over eagerly seeks to take revenge on Nabal- a man who unlike Saul was not seeking to chase and destroy him. In this case, Abigail becomes David's alter ego, the voice of his own better conscience speaking through another. David relents and repents of his desire to murder Nabal, and God then slays Nabal. But that is just what Saul did, relenting for a moment of his desire to kill David, and then being removed by God in God's good time. And God works thus oftentimes with man, putting our better side and better inner voice into the mouth of another... in my own case, often the mouth of my wife.

We reflect that Saul also had spared a king [Agag] whom he should have killed. And had lost the kingdom because of it. Now Saul is in Agag's position. For all time we see that the same action can be performed by men with totally different motives, just as David later acted as a priest when Uzziah was condemned for doing so.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 25

1Sa 25:1 Samuel died, and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and they buried him at his home in Ramah. David went down to the wilderness of Paran- In the type, we see a foretaste of the death of John the Baptist, the Lord's first teacher, and how He goes out afterwards into a deserted place. We note too how Israel loved Samuel and respected him, although they did the very opposite of what he had taught them. We can have an emotional, sentimental attachment to the things of our religion, whilst having hearts far from God's word in practice. Paran is LXX Maon, as in :2.

1Sa 25:2 There was a man in Maon who had property in Carmel, and the man was very wealthy. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel-

Nabal meaning "fool" is one of the sources for the Lord's parable of the rich / wealthy fool. Maon was a mile north of Carmel, and they are mentioned together in Josh. 15:55. The complete geographical and historical agreement of the books of the Bible, clearly written at different times, is such that there must have been a higher, singular hand behind them all. And that hand was that of God, through His inspiration of the entire volume.

The sheep shearing festival was known as a time of payment of debts. David was hungry, and recalled Nabal was in his debt. As David's men had guarded Nabal's sheep and servants without payment. So it was the logical time to ask for some payment in the form of food. The refusal was therefore especially irksome to David.

There are clear connections between Nabal and Saul, signposted to us by the comment that Nabal sat down to eat a meal like a king (:36 "like the feast of a king"). Probably subconsciously, David allows himself to be led by these connections into transferring his anger with Saul onto Nabal. Rather should be have perceived the similarities, and also allowed God in His own time and according to His will, to deal with Nabal. "Nabal" means "fool" and Saul has been called foolish by Samuel ("You have done foolishly", 'been a Nabal', 1 Sam. 13:13), and he will later admit to David "I have done foolishly", 'been a Nabal', 1 Sam. 26:21. David calls himself Nabal's son

(1 Sam. 25:8). But David also refers to Saul as his father (1 Sam. 24: 11) and Saul calls David his son four times (1 Sam. 24: 16; 26: 17,21,25). Nabal lived in Maon and Carmel (25:2), places associated with Saul (1 Sam. 15:5, where Saul built a monument to himself, so it was very Saul-associated territory; 1 Sam. 23:25). Both Saul and Nabal refer to David as the “son of Jesse” (1 Sam. 25:10; cp. 1 Sam. 20:30; 22:7), and both ask “Who is [he]?”. Both Nabal and Saul repay David “evil for good” (1 Sam. 25:21; cp. 1 Sam. 24:17). David graciously overlooked this for Saul, but he counts Nabal's drunken refusal to help David as a huge “evil”. The evil done by Saul was far greater than that by Nabal. But David wants to requite the evil of Saul so he transfers it onto Nabal. Nabal’s servants betray him to Abigail (1 Sam. 25:17), just as Saul's servants apparently did- for he complains that they “have conspired against me” (1 Sam. 22:8). As Saul’s daughter isn't loyal to him and is on David's side (1 Sam. 19:11–17), likewise with Abigail to Nabal (1 Sam. 25:19.36–37). Nabal has three thousand sheep (1 Sam. 25:2), and Saul has three thousand chosen men (1 Sam. 24:2; 26:2).

Saul describes himself as a “fool” (1 Sam. 26:21) and Samuel likewise calls Saul a fool (1 Sam. 13:13). So we can see here how David's desire to kill Nabal was a reflection of his desire to kill Saul. He had restrained himself from killing Saul, but transfers that death wish onto Nabal; rather like an addict quitting one addiction but moving to another one. He is restrained from killing Nabal by Abigail, who seems to imply that if he were to do so, then his own kingship would be somehow impugned. This is exactly how David had reasoned about why he refused to kill Saul when he had the chance to. And so Nabal dies by God's hand rather than David's sword, just as Saul would. The incident was to surely underline this lesson to David. This is why in the next chapter, 1 Sam. 26, David again is given the chance to kill Saul just as he was in 1 Sam. 24, and he refuses to. He needed the lesson from his near failure in 1 Sam. 25 in order to maintain his resolve not to kill Saul. We marvel at how God works through human weakness in order to strengthen His people.

1Sa 25:3 His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but the man was harsh and mean; he belonged to the family of Caleb-

Continually in Biblical history we encounter good men with bad descendants, and the opposite. This is to be expected, because true spirituality is not genetic; each must forge their own relationship with God, and Godly parenting is but setting a person on the right path, for them to later exercise their own freewill. “Harsh” is LXX “hard”, and is the basis for the “hard man” of Mt. 25:24. Continually we discern the Lord's mind saturated in Old Testament history, and consciously or unconsciously forming the characters of His stories from those He had encountered in the scriptures. Caleb's family had settled in Hebron in the south (Josh. 15:13; 1 Sam. 30:14), but it seems Nabal had separated from them and gone to live alone in the north near mount Carmel- although it makes more sense to understand Carmel as a place in Judah. Nabal the fool is alluded to in Ps. 14:1; Prov. 30:22. Solomon writes the truth in Proverbs, but he likes to allude to the enemies of his father, ever seeking to use God's truth to justify himself and his family.

1Sa 25:4 David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep-

David had been glad for just five loaves of bread from Abiathar. And now he was desperate for food again. Survival was based on a hand to mouth existence amongst the peasant class, and for those on the move without land to farm, just getting enough food would have been a major issue.

1Sa 25:5 David sent ten young men and said to them, Go up to Carmel and go to Nabal and greet him in my name-

David obviously knew Nabal, and had effectively worked for him as a kind of security service for his flocks and shepherds. He apparently hadn't been paid for this, and yet had not taken the liberty of helping himself to Nabal's flocks. Nabal's claim he didn't know David's name (:10) was in response to these greetings in David's name.

1Sa 25:6 Say to him, 'Long life to you! Peace to you and to your house and to all that you have-

These were standard terms of greeting, perhaps consciously omitting the name Yahweh because David considered that Nabal was effectively an atheist, the fool who said in his heart that there was no God (Ps. 14:1). One theme of the records is the invitation to consider the sincerity of motive in even the best of God's servants, in this case David and Abigail. David here wishes peace to Nabal and his family ["house"]. But very soon, he is charging off to murder them all. His statement here that he wished peace to Nabal's family is immediately shown to be lacking in integrity. It is mere formalism.

1Sa 25:7 I have heard that you are shearing your sheep. Your shepherds have been with us, and we didn't hurt them, nothing of theirs was missing all the while they were in Carmel-

This may be a way of saying that David and his men had not been paid for their protection services, and yet had not helped themselves to anything from Nabal's flock.

1Sa 25:8 Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find grace in your eyes, for we come at a good time. Please give whatever you can to your servants and to your son David'-

"Good time" is a phrase used about a feast day, and it is thus rendered in GNB. The Mosaic feasts were to celebrate God's saving grace, and implied that the memory of that was to be reflected in our giving / grace to others. And yet instead of demanding wages, David asks for "grace". David asked Nabal to give his men food because they were asking on a feast day (Heb., 1 Sam. 25:8 NEV "at a good time"). This is a parallel with how he asks Ahimelech to give his men food because, he implies, it is a feast day (see on 1 Sam. 21:5). So circumstances had repeated. David's request for food from Nabal on a feast day ought to have reminded him of how at a low spiritual point, he had asked the priests of Nob for the same. And it led to their death. We likewise are to perceive the connections between our life experiences, and to learn the lessons.

1Sa 25:9 When David's young men came they said this to Nabal in the name of David, and waited-

It is emphasized that they spoke in David's name (:5), and this was to elicit Nabal's denial of that name; see on :10.

1Sa 25:10 Nabal answered David's servants, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants who break away from their masters these days-

As noted on :5, David and Nabal knew each other. To claim not to know a man's name was a great insult, for all that a man was and stood for was bound up in his "name". This is the significance of the Yahweh Name. Nabal clearly knew that David

had been a servant of Saul, and he likes to believe the narrative that David was a runaway slave. He uses the same phrase as Saul contemptuously used of David, "the son of Jesse".

1Sa 25:11 Shall I then take my bread, my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I don't know where?-

We note all the personal pronouns, "I", "my". He presents as the classic narcissist. Nabal did know from whence they were, and he knew the name of David. This idea of 'I don't know your name, nor where you are from' is common in Semitic languages, and may explain why the Jews in Rome claimed not to know Paul. It is the language of absolute rejection, and was used about the Lord Jesus. We note all the personal pronouns in this sentence, just as in the parable of the rich fool, which is based upon Nabal. David later reflected that bread, water and meat was provided for Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 78:20); he saw his wilderness experiences as similar to theirs, being led towards the same kingdom of God.

1Sa 25:12 So David's young men turned and went back and told him all this-

David sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him, and they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail's grace and wisdom saved him from (1 Sam. 25). And yet the same situation repeated in its essence when he sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed (2 Sam. 10:3). Again, David got angry- but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he did get into an impossible fight... from which by grace God delivered him. Could it not be that David failed to learn from his previous experience...? Circumstances repeat within our lives and between our lives and those of others in Biblical history; that we might learn the lessons and take comfort from the scriptures, that man is not alone.

1Sa 25:13 David said to his men, Every man put on his sword! Every man put on his sword and David also put on his. About four hundred men followed David and two hundred stayed by the baggage-

The same word is used of David girding himself with Saul's sword, and then rethinking and taking it off. Abigail has jogged his memory by speaking of his enemies being cast out as sling stones. He has the humility to take off his sword. And it is that humility to admit error which was really his saving grace.

David has slipped from the day when he had fought Goliath without a sword, insisting that Yahweh saves without swords. And it was not so long ago that there was no sword amongst the Israelites apart from with Saul and Jonathan. This is clearly a low point of faith for David. "Hundred" may mean a family or military division. To have had 600 males with him would have meant that along with accompanying family, David's group would have been several thousand strong. They would have been very vulnerable if they were this many. David's anger and intention was wrong, but it can be understood very easily in terms of psychological transference. His repressed anger with Saul was transferred onto the family of Nabal. Again, the record is absolutely psychologically credible.

Taking 400 armed men to slay Nabal and his family was reflective of Saul coming with 3000 men to hunt David, "just one flea" in the desert. David's apparent forgiveness of Saul was not totally pure; because clearly he has transferred his anger with Saul onto Nabal, and now David the abused is the abuser.

1Sa 25:14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, Look, David sent

messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them-
There is quite a theme of servants bringing blessings or good news (1 Sam. 9:6; 16:16; 25:14 cp. Gen. 41:10; 2 Kings 5:3). This may be to reflect God's interest in the significance of the lowly.

1Sa 25:15 But the men were very good to us and we were not hurt, nothing was missing as long as we were with them in the fields-

The reason they praise David's men for not taking anything is because they realized Nabal hadn't paid for their services. They could legitimately have helped themselves to some animals for food. And yet the men of David hadn't taken this out upon them, because they recognized that they were not Nabal.

1Sa 25:16 They were a wall to us night and day all the while we were with them keeping the sheep-

We think of Jacob keeping the sheep day and night (Gen. 31:40), sustained by God's protection. The gift sent to pacify David in :18 is also an allusion to Jacob doing the same to Esau.

1Sa 25:17 Now therefore consider what you should do, for evil is determined against our master and against all his household; he is such a worthless fellow that one can't even speak to him-

As on :25, we note that this is an unusual way for servants to speak about their master. It seems Abigail was effectively running the household and the servants were in tune with her attitude to Nabal. She may even be one of the base images for the depiction of the wise woman of Prov. 31.

David had himself spoken evil ["determined evil"] against innocent people. But David was so sensitive to words spoken against *him* that he breathes out the deepest condemnation upon those who had spoken evil against *him* (s.w. Ps. 109:20). We get the impression that David is not adequately aware of the huge grace he himself had received. Otherwise there would have been at least some desire for the repentance and salvation of his enemies. This is so markedly lacking in the Psalms of David.

1Sa 25:18 Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread, two bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys-

This recalls Jacob's pacification of Esau by sending huge presents ahead of him. Abigail bows before David as Jacob does before Esau. David was coming against Abigail with four hundred men, just as Esau had come against Jacob with the same numbers (Gen 32:6); her learning from this incident surely reflects her spirituality. We note she uses the Yahweh Name a significant seven times; although all the same, her behaviour is clearly overarched by the simple human motive of self interest and self preservation. Abigail takes the blame. The "bottles" of wine would have been adult goat skins filled with wine; the whole animal had its insides removed through the head and the skin was then left intact. This was a fair amount of food, but it had to feed 600 males and likely many women and children.

1Sa 25:19 She said to her young men, Go on before me; I am following you. But she didn't tell her husband, Nabal-

As noted on :18, she seems to be seeking to follow Biblical precedent, copying the example of Jacob seeking to appease Esau.

1Sa 25:20 As she rode on her donkey and came down in a valley, and there were David and his men coming down towards her, and she met them-

The impression is that they both descended, she from mount Carmel and David from mount Paran, and they met in a valley. They would have observed each other from a distance coming down the valley side .

But "valley", AV "covert of the hill", is the same word for "hiding place" in Ps. 119:114: "You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in Your word". When hiding from Saul in the wilderness [s.w. of David's "hiding places" at this time in 1 Sam. 19:2; 25:20], David hoped in the prophetic word that one day Saul would be no more and David would be king.

1Sa 25:21 Now David had said, Surely for nothing I have kept all this fellow's possessions in the wilderness, so that nothing was missing. He has returned me evil for good-

The point was that Saul admits that he has done evil to David whilst David has done him good. So Nabal is another Saul, but David fails to display grace to him. Rather he transfers his anger with Saul onto Nabal. "For nothing" suggests that Nabal had not paid wages for the work of David's men, and now in their time of need he would not even share basic food with them. Solomon alludes here in Prov. 3:30 "Don't strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm". To strive or plead a cause is the very phrase used of the opposition of Saul (1 Sam. 24:15) and Nabal to David (1 Sam. 25:39); and in both cases, David had done them "no harm", the phrase used of David's innocence before Nabal (1 Sam. 25:21,28) and Saul (1 Sam. 24:11). Clearly Solomon has these incidents in view, and again his statements of truth have a subtext of justifying his father David, with whom he was psychologically obsessed.

1Sa 25:22 God deal with David severely, if I leave alive one man of his by the morning-

David is here quoting the words of Saul when he too sought to 'avenge himself' on his enemies; and he foolishly wishes to slay Jonathan: "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan" (1 Sam. 14:24,27,44,45). Like Jonathan, Abigail hadn't heard when Nabal [like Saul] made his statements (1 Sam. 14:27). David has transferred his anger with Saul onto Nabal, and comes out with a huge number of men to slay Nabal- and thus he is acting like Saul. And now we see him actually using the words of Saul. We have a tendency to become like what we hate, and the abused will always act like their abuser in some way- until and unless they learn God's grace. David's desire to destroy the entire family and animas [the dogs who urinate against the wall] of Nabal is similar to Saul destroying all the animals, family and children of the priests at Nob. I suggest therefore that David's apparent grace to Saul in the previous chapter was not total. Possibly his grace to Saul in the next chapter is more truly gracious, having learnt the lesson from the Abigail incident.

His anger with Nabal and desire to slay all "that piss against the wall" who lived with "this fellow" (1 Sam. 25:21,22 AV) is expressed in crude terms; and he later thanks Abigail for persuading him not to "shed blood" and "avenging myself with mine own hand" (1 Sam. 25:33)- the very things he elsewhere condemns in his Psalms (e.g. Ps. 44:3). Time and again in the Psalms, David uses that Hebrew word translated "avenging myself" about how God and not man will revenge / save him against his enemies, for God saves / avenges the humble in spirit not by their strength and troops but by His. But in the anger of hot blood, David let go of all those fine

ideas. He had some sort of an anger problem. And he surely swears by God's Name far too loosely here.

"One that urinates against a wall" could mean a dog; for it is dogs and not males who urinate against an object like a wall. David wanted to kill everybody there even down to all the dogs. But he has just told Saul that he feels like a dead dog. And now he wants to make dead dogs of Nabal's household, leaving him nothing but dead dogs. He is wanting to make people like him, which is typical human response: 'You make me feel a dead dog, so I'll kill your dogs'. Reading the reference to dogs would fit in with the mention that Nabal is descended from Caleb, which means "dog".

1Sa 25:23 When Abigail saw David she hurried and alighted from her donkey; she bowed down before David with her face to the ground-

Perhaps imitating the Godly Rebekah, of whom the same phrase is used (Gen. 24:18,46). She then copied Rebekah in immediately dropping all and accepting the invitation of marriage (:41).

1Sa 25:24 She fell at his feet and said, On me, my lord, on me be the blame, and please let your handmaid speak in your ears. Hear the words of your handmaid- Abigail's plea "Hear the words of your handmaid" (1 Sam. 15:24) was repeated by the woman of 2 Sam. 20:17. But Abigail herself had modelled her behaviour on women like Rebekah (1 Sam. 25:23 = Gen. 24:18,46). This is how functional fellowship occurs between God's people, both over time and in contemporary relationships. We copy that which is Godly and good which we observe in other believers, both those we know and those we meet in the Bible.

1Sa 25:25 Please pay no attention, my lord, to this worthless fellow Nabal. As his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is his nature; but I, your handmaid, didn't see your young men whom you sent-

It was unusual for a woman to speak like this about her husband, even if she thought this in her heart. For a woman was defined by the men in her life, particularly her husband. Abigail is truly unusual in her attitude here. But she was no mere liberated woman; she believed in David and wanted to serve him and take his side against Nabal her husband. Like Jonathan, her loyalties were conflicted, but she came down on the right side. See on :17.

1Sa 25:26 Now therefore my lord, as Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, since Yahweh has withheld you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now therefore let your enemies and those who seek evil to my lord be like Nabal-

Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8). Abigail was clearly very aware of David's sparing of Saul; indeed seeing that David and Nabal knew each other, she may have spoken with David before. David had restrained or withheld his own men from murdering Saul (1 Sam. 24:7), but Abigail perceives that over and above his own mental effort to do this, Yahweh had confirmed David in it. And she sees her appeasement of David as likewise controlled by Yahweh to preserve David as innocent from avenging himself, so that he could indeed become king.

"Yahweh has withheld you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand" is in the past tense. Abigail seems aware of what has happened in the previous chapter- Yahweh withheld David from killing Saul. And she asks David to consider Nabal as Saul and to do the same again.

Abigail's appeal to David not to avenge himself but let God do so... was exactly the reasoning of David to Saul and often in his Psalms. Abigail was David's better side speaking, his alter ego. She was of good understanding / insight (:3), so perhaps she consciously presents her argument as being that of David's alter ego. David is likewise described as both attractive / handsome, and wise (1 Sam. 16:12; 18:5,30). Six times Abigail calls herself David's maidservant, and fourteen times she calls him her lord. This is just as David has been calling Saul his lord and presenting himself as Saul's servant. Abigail is seeking to help David see himself as Saul and to pull out of the similarities with Saul. Through such language, she is also saying that she sees David as her king- with possible hints at seeing him as her husband. Hence her final comment, that David could "remember" her after Nabal dies. Straight after this incident, David again has the chance to kill Saul (1 Sam. 26), but surely he was fortified against that choice by the Abigail experience. Perhaps that second chance to take vengeance on Saul was provided as a test as to whether he had learnt the lesson from Abigail; and he had.

We note that the two occasions when David spares Saul's life by grace are in 1 Sam. 24 and 26. In between them is the Nabal / Abigail story in 1 Sam. 25, where David is wildly eager to murder Nabal and his family and then is calmed down by Abigail. We see here how David, as every man, may reach peaks of grace and wisdom, and yet in between them act ungraciously. This is psychologically credible, and reflects the struggle of every man to live on a level of high grace to others. But we wonder whether David's grace to Saul was possibly only achieved by psychologically transferring his anger onto another, in this case Nabal, and madly seeking to murder him rather than Saul. David resisted taking revenge upon Saul, but he over eagerly seeks to take revenge on Nabal- a man who unlike Saul was not seeking to chase and destroy him. In this case, Abigail becomes David's alter ego, the voice of his own better conscience speaking through another. David relents and repents of his desire to murder Nabal, and God then slays Nabal. But that is just what Saul did, relenting for a moment of his desire to kill David, and then being removed by God in God's good time. And God works thus oftentimes with man, putting our better side and better inner voice into the mouth of another... in my own case, often the mouth of my wife.

Abigail wishes all David's enemies would "Be like Nabal", implying she believes and wishes Nabal her husband would die. Her request to be remembered by David and frequently calling him her "lord" are all a hint she wants to become David's wife- and it's as if she wishes death on her husband to that end. Again we ponder her motives for wishing death to her husband... was it all so spiritually motivated, or was it simply a case of wanting "out" from a horrible marriage and dreaming of being the wife of the handsome, charismatic and up-and-coming David...

1Sa 25:27 Let this gift which your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord-

Abigail perceives David's men as not simply his servants, but following him as their lord. This again invites us to see David and his men as types of the Lord Jesus and His followers / disciples.

1Sa 25:28 Please forgive the sin of your handmaid, for Yahweh will certainly make for my lord a sure house, because my lord fights the battles of Yahweh-

Here Abigail uses the very words of Saul, when he offers his daughter in marriage to David if he "fights the battles of Yahweh" (1 Sam. 18:17). This could be another quite subtle 'come on' for David to consider marrying her.

She alludes to David's description of the conflict with Goliath as being Yahweh's battle. But she feels Yahweh will only give David a "sure house" if he doesn't take vengeance; the promise of his future kingship over Israel was conditional. And surely she had within her some desperate hope that she somehow might become his wife and help build that sure house. And that well motivated desire was allowed to come true by providence. Abigail quotes the promise of a priest being raised up with a "sure house" (1 Sam. 2:35), imagining that David was to become a Messianic king-priest; and to have blood on his hands would preclude that. Abigail's phrase "a sure / established house" (1 Sam. 25:28) is used in the promises to David (2 Sam. 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38). It's as if she was so in tune with God's ways that she had some premonition of His intentions with David, although she saw these as conditional upon David not shedding the innocent blood of her family. Or perhaps the promise of 1 Sam. 2:35 about a priest with a "sure house" had already been developed by Samuel in relation with David, and Abigail was aware of that. The promises to David which mention a sure house for him would therefore only be confirming what had already been promised. She implies in :30 that David had been promised quite a few "good things" beyond simply being king.

The reference to "a sure house" is repeated in Nathan's prophecy about David in 2 Sam. 7:5-17 and also she alludes to Samuel's prophetic words about David. Likewise Abigail's prediction that God would sling out all David's enemies connects with 2 Sam. 7:11 "The Lord will give you rest from all your enemies". We could conclude that her words were spoken under Divine inspiration. And yet she is David's alter ego, speaking his own better thoughts back to him. Clearly this was all from God. God spoke to David through Abigail, his alter ego, just as He does at times to us today. Her speech also presents as well formulated to the point that it could well have been by direct inspiration.

She begs David not to kill Nabal and her family "because my lord fights the battles of Yahweh". She implies that any taking of personal vengeance is not a battle of Yahweh.

Let evil not be found in you all your days-

This could be translated "evil has not been found in you / touched you all your days", the idea being that David had been miraculously preserved from Saul's "evil", and Abigail feared this would end if he now murdered the whole family of Nabal. Or she could simply be wishing that David continue to be innocent before God; a fine desire for any of us to have for another, especially for our future partner.

1Sa 25:29 Though men may rise up to pursue you-

David in the Psalms records how he hated those who 'rose up' against him, and that includes Saul. Saul 'rose up' against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29; 26:2), and then evil men 'rose up' against David out of his own family (2 Sam. 12:11 s.w.), especially Absalom who rose up against his father (2 Sam. 18:31,32 s.w.). But David has a tendency to assume that all who rose up against him were arising against God. It's not always so that our enemy is God's enemy. Relationships and the hand of God in human affairs and relationships is more complex than that. And David in Ps.

139:21,22 goes further, to assume that his hatred of people is justified, because they must, he assumes, hate God because they are against him. Solomon seems to make the same mistake when he alludes to such 'risings up' in Prov. 28:28. We must note that "all in Asia" turned away from Paul personally (2 Tim. 1:15), and yet according to the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Rev. 2,3, there were many faithful individuals amongst them.

And to seek your life-

Saul sought the life of David (s.w. 1 Sam. 20:1; 22:23; 23:15; 25:29; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the Psalms, David frequently imprecates judgment upon those who sought his life (s.w. Ps. 35:4; 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13; 86:14). He loved Saul, the life of Saul was precious in David's sight, indeed the historical records seem to emphasize David's patient love of Saul; and yet in the Psalms he gives vent before God to his anger with Saul and desire to see Saul punished and judged by God. This is absolutely true to human experience; we may act with great patience and apparent love toward those who abuse us, and yet within we fume about it. The lesson of David is that we are to pour out those feelings to God in prayer, leaving Him to judge.

Yet the life of my lord will be bound in the bundle of life with Yahweh your God- Abigail is convinced that Yahweh will preserve David from Saul's persecution, and she implies that she sees her husband as part of that persecution. She uses the figure of a valuable life carried in a bundle, alluding to a woman carrying her precious newborn baby swaddled and close to her body. But she implies that the woman represents none other than Yahweh Himself; an unusually intimate allusion. And she sees David, the angry man with his sword coming to slay her, as the newborn baby, about to become the new king, a life "bound in the bundle of living in the care of the Lord". Abigail was of very fine spiritual perception.

Abigail is reminding David that Yahweh has preserved him. But David's ire with Nabal was because David considered that he had preserved Nabal's men and interests- and he had not been rewarded for it. Abigail is pointing out what David himself often said in his Psalms- that Yahweh has protected David amazingly. What God does for us, we are to do for others- regardless of their gratitude.

"The bundle" could be a technical term from shepherding, referring to the cache of various animals kept within a storage space. The various animals each had a pebble which the shepherd used to count and ensure all his animals were safe. But the lives of the likes of Saul and Nabal would be hurled away; the pebbles representing them would be thrown away because they were lost. "A find encountered by archaeologists investigating burial sites in northern Iraq at Nuzi near the Tigris, dating to the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. In one of the graves, a clay oval container/carved stela filled with 48 stones was found, with an inscription on it: "the stones refer to sheep and goats: 21 mother sheep, 6 lambs, 8 adult males/rams, 4 lambs, 6 mother goats, 1 billy goat, 2 young goats." Beneath this inscription was another reading, "the seal of Ziqarru, the shepherd," suggesting the meaning and origin of this Assyrian artifact. According to archaeologists referring to other similar discoveries and texts, this type of object (a hollow tablet, container, or cloth bag/pocket) filled with pebbles and accompanied by an appropriate description was used by ancient shepherds of the Levant to count their flocks as they returned from pasture to their pens. Pebbles placed in such an object denoted animals in a safe place and no longer in danger".

He will hurl out the lives of your enemies as though from the pocket of a sling- She continues her allusion to his victory over Goliath in :28. Surely she had been amongst those women who praised David for slaying his ten thousands. And her words here are nothing less than a death wish against her own husband, leading up to

her pregnant request that at this point, David should "remember" her. Clearly she wanted to be his wife.

1Sa 25:30 When Yahweh has done to my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you prince over Israel-

I suggested on :28 that Abigail was aware of a body of material promised to David, far beyond simply the promise of kingship. She therefore mentions a promise that he would have a "sure house". This was one of "all the good" things promised to him.

When David writes in Ps. 110 of how "Yahweh said unto my Lord", he is quoting the very phrase used by Abigail years before, when they weren't even married. He was unconsciously alluding to the words of his wife before they were married, even years later. It is of course true that context plays a vital part in Biblical interpretation. But this can lead us to overlook the fact that many New Testament quotations of the Old Testament- many of those in the early chapters of Matthew, for example- are picking up words and phrases from one context and applying them to another. Paul himself did this when he quoted the words of the poet Aratus "We are all the offspring of Zeus" about our all being the offspring of the one true God.

1Sa 25:31 then this will not be on your conscience, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself-

She seems to perceive that the promises to David (see on :30) were conditional upon him not avenging himself. Whilst all Abigail says is wise, spiritual and true, we are again left in these records pondering the totality of her motives. She wanted to save her own life and that of her kids. Whatever higher motivation she had, of saving David from sin and encouraging his faith in God's prophetic word, she also wanted to save her own skin. We note that her 153 Hebrew words here are the longest speech of any woman recorded in the Bible. She is an unusual and powerful mediator.

Shedding blood "without cause" echos the very words David frequently uses in his Psalms about how Saul wanted to shed David's blood "without cause". Abigail, consciously or unconsciously, is leading David to see that he is behaving exactly like Saul. His desire to murder all Nabal's family with his few hundred armed men... was as bizarre and out of order as Saul with 3000 men chasing David to kill him, when David was but "a dead dog, one flea". The psychological credibility is amazing. For typically men act and become like those they despise the most. David's apparent stellar grace towards Saul is nuanced by him now behaving just like Saul. David the abused sets out to abuse just like he has been abused. And this nuances all his apparent grace, forgiveness and respect towards Saul. It was as was, but it was nuanced by not being total. 1 Sam. 24-26 is all about David avoiding bloodshed. But the apparent grace towards Saul in 1 Sam. 24-26 is nuanced by his acting just like Saul in 1 Sam. 25.

David was later precluded from building the temple because he had shed innocent blood. So her appeal didn't have abiding influence, and we read no more of her. The immediate reference to David's other wives in :43 perhaps leads us to conclude that she had morally misjudged David, and marriage to him was not to turn out as she fantasized. Her appeal is indeed spiritually based, but as with so many Biblical incidents and in so much of our "good deeds"- the motives were mixed. She wanted to save her life and that of her kids. And all the 'spiritual' reasoning was only to that end. She argues as if David has never sinned up until this point, but slaying her and her kids would be a sin. This was flattery- for David was hardly sinless at this point, as he admits about his early life in Ps. 119. Her speech appeals to David's self interest- to

achieve her self interest. She was both smart and beautiful, and she knew this- and clearly used it to get her end. This is not necessarily morally wrong, in the context of saving innocent life- but it was all the same human. She surely fell at David's feet with her cleavage showing, as charmingly as possible. She as a married woman definitely gives David the come on. She asks him to 'remember her', calls him her "Lord" 15 times, fawns at the feet of the landless, homeless David as his "handmaid" when she was clearly mistress of the situation; and as soon as Nabal dies, David responds by asking her to marry him. If she was indeed the peerless paragon of virtue, she would have responded that he was under the one man: one woman ideal of Genesis, and so she would prefer not to marry him as he was already married, and in fact Ahinoam is the name of one of Saul's wives so he was married to a woman whose husband was still alive [God comments: "I gave your master's wives into your bosom"]; and the king of Israel should not multiply wives (Dt. 17:17). She knew he was to be king, that was politically as well as spiritually obviously going to happen. And to be one of the new king's wives was something she clearly wanted. Even though she surely guessed he would take more wives once he became king. If the Lord's line were traced through Abigail and her children by David, we might have reason to think she was indeed spiritual. But that isn't the case and her offspring with David have no Biblical significance.

When Yahweh has dealt well with my lord, then remember your handmaid- Fourteen times, Abigail calls David her "lord"- which can hint that she saw him as her husband ["Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord"]. This could be taken as asking David to consider marrying her at some point if Nabal died. It could be that when the thief on the cross asked to be remembered for good, he had in mind Abigail's words: that when David returned in glory in his Kingdom, "my Lord, then remember thine handmaid". This was prefaced by her asking: "Forgive the trespass of thine handmaid... a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God: and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out" (1 Sam. 25:29-31 AV). And David's response was marvellously similar to that of the Lord to the thief: "Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person" (1 Sam. 25:35). It would seem that the thief saw in David a type of the Lord, and saw in Abigail's words exactly the attitude he fain would have. And the Lord accepted this.

1Sa 25:32 David said to Abigail, Blessed is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!-

We see here the interplay of Divine sovereignty and human volition. She purposed of herself to meet David, but David perceives that she had been sent to him by God. David perceives that God can withhold a person from sinning, just as He did to Abimelech with Sarah, and as His Spirit today can "keep us from falling" (Jude 24). There is an element in all this of God acting over and above our own strength against temptation. It is all the gift / grace of the work of His Spirit.

1Sa 25:33 Blessed is your discretion, and blessed are you for keeping me this day from the guilt of bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand-

We wonder if by this point David had already prayed the prayer of Ps. 19:13 asking to be kept back from presumptuous sins. If so, the answer came even when he was spiritually weak.

See on :22. David was tested by God in the matter of sparing the life of his enemy Saul- and he came through the test with flying colours (1 Sam. 26). But just

before that, he had been tested again in the same area in the matter of Nabal- and he initially failed, intent as he was to take the life of his enemy Nabal (1 Sam. 25). But before the Nabal incident, he had again resisted the temptation to take vengeance. Thus a circumstance can repeat over a matter in which we were previously both successful and unsuccessful.

Many have struggled to reconcile the statement that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) with the fact that his life contains many examples not only of failure, but of anger and a devaluing of human life. He was barred from building the temple because of the amount of blood he had shed (1 Chron. 22:8). The figure of 'shedding blood' takes us back to the incident with Nabal, where David three times is mentioned as intending to "shed blood" (1 Sam. 25:26-33), only to be turned away from his sinful course by the wisdom, spirituality and charm of Abigail. David started out as the spiritually minded, humble shepherd, full of faith and zeal for his God. Hence Jehoshaphat is commended for walking "in the first ways of his father David" (2 Chron. 17:3). It seems to me that the comment that David was "a man after God's own heart" refers to how he initially was, at the time God chose him and rejected Saul. But the trauma of his life, the betrayals, jealousies and hatred of others, led him to the kind of bitterness which so often surfaces in the Psalms and is reflected in several historical incidents where he lacks the value of others' lives which we would otherwise expect from a man who walked so close with his God.

1Sa 25:34 For indeed, as Yahweh the God of Israel lives who has withheld me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely there wouldn't have been left to Nabal by the morning light so much as a single male-

David recognizes that he has been kept back from sinning by a Divine force far greater than himself. And that kind of strengthening, the strength we so desperately need in our spiritual struggles, is no less available today through the work of the Spirit given to us (Jude 24).

We note the three references here to Yahweh withholding David from the sin in view (:26,34,39). And there are three references to David's desire to avenge himself (:26,31,33). Clearly God does withhold from sin- at His initiative. Likewise He did with Abimelech. This is another outpouring of His grace through His Spirit, and Paul explains that the work of the Spirit is the parade example of how God's grace and not human works lead His people to salvation.

1Sa 25:35 So David accepted from her what she had brought him and he said to her, Go up in peace to your house. I have listened to your words and have granted your request-

Note the similarities between the David / Nabal / Abigail experience and those of Jacob, whilst he too kept flocks (1 Sam. 25:35 = Gen. 32:20; 25:18 = Gen. 32:13; 25:27 = Gen. 33:11). Abigail had consciously sought to emulate Jacob in appeasing David with presents sent before her, and God's wider providence played along with this. The granting of her request suggests that David is effectively king in this situation- he has the power to slay Nabal but decides not to, because of the request from Abigail.

1Sa 25:36 Abigail came to Nabal while he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. Nabal's heart was merry, for he was very drunk. Therefore she told him nothing until the morning-

If the "feast" of :8 was a religious feast, then we have Nabal doing something similar

to what happened at the church in Corinth; the Lord's feast was turned into an excuse for drunken revelry. Nabal clearly pretended to kingship himself, and Abigail must have seen the stark contrast between him and David.

1Sa 25:37 In the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him what had happened; and his heart failed and he became like a stone-

To have been saved by a woman from death due to his own foolishness... was too much for him. If he had humbled himself in repentance and acceptance of grace, he perhaps wouldn't have had a stroke. The ten day period before his death was maybe a time of testing (Dan. 1:14,15), to see if he would repent deep within him. But he didn't, and so he was slain by Yahweh (:37). We marvel at God's desire to save even the likes of Nabal and Saul, and our outreach should be mightily inspired thereby.

1Sa 25:38 About ten days after that, Yahweh struck Nabal so that he died-

The experience of the Lord smiting Nabal led David to perceive that Yahweh would likewise smite Saul and he himself need not murder him (1 Sam. 26:10).

This was encouragement to David to realize that if he didn't take vengeance upon Saul, then likewise his time would come to die from Yahweh's hand rather than David's. This is how God works with us too; we are provided a smaller scale worked example of how things can be over a larger issue, if we continue faithful. We note that "ten days" is a period of testing in Dan. 1:14,15.

1Sa 25:39 When David heard that Nabal was dead he said, Blessed is Yahweh, who has upheld my cause against Nabal, and has kept back His servant from doing wrong. Yahweh has returned the wrongdoing of Nabal on his own head-

God's judgment is ongoing. He considered David's case against Nabal in the court of heaven, and judgment was given and carried out. It was in David's favour, despite him being very unspiritual and cranky at the time. "We make the answer now". Judgment day will not be a time when God considers evidence for the first time, weighs it up and delivers a verdict. That considering of evidence is ongoing right now, and the last day of judgment is for our benefit and not His.

David sent and asked Abigail to become his wife-

This may have meant that he inherited Nabal's wealth. But it is more likely that Abigail resigned all that for the outlaw life. Thus Abigail's secret wish came wonderfully true because it was rightly motivated.

1Sa 25:40 When his servants had come to Abigail to Carmel they said, David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife-

It's not clear whether this was a second visit after she had agreed, or whether he sent and took her as his wife anyway. The next verse would imply the latter, although she was ready and willing. David presents here as doing the right thing. Despite Abigail's beauty, he doesn't grab her for himself. Rather he waits for God to give him the beautiful woman in His time and according to His will. Later David fails to retain this lesson, in that he grabs Bathsheba for himself because, again, she is a beautiful woman. God worked through all this strange stuff with Abigail and Nabal. For Nabal was a descendant of Caleb, who had been given Hebron (Josh. 14:13,14). Nabal was a big time landowner. And now, as married to Nabal's wife, that inheritance passed to David; and thus he was declared king in Hebron. All through God graciously working through David's sinful desire to murder Nabal and his family.

1Sa 25:41 She arose, bowed herself with her face to the earth and said, Your handmaid is ready to be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord- She had earlier copied the example of Rebekah (1 Sam. 25:23 = Gen. 24:18,46). And God played along with this, by giving her an opportunity to further copy Rebekah's example by leaving all immediately.

1Sa 25:42 Abigail hurried and got onto a donkey, with five of her maids who followed her, and she went with the messengers of David and became his wife- We get the impression of haste, of walking away from a prosperous life to become second wife to a man who was an outlaw. She was inspired by Rebekah's example (see on :41), who also took her maids and left immediately with Isaac's messengers.

1Sa 25:43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they both became his wives- Heb. 'had taken'. Ahinoam comes first in his list of wives in 2 Sam. 3:2.

1Sa 25:44 Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim- Gallim was in Benjamin, near Saul's home town of Gibeah (Is. 10:30), so we can read this as meaning that Saul was trying to cement his own leadership of his tribe, thinking that he might at least remain leader of Benjamin even if he lost the kingship over all Israel. He repeatedly tried to vainly get around God's clear words to him, as many do today.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 26

1Sa 26:1 The Ziphites came to Saul to Gibeah saying, Isn't David hiding in the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert?-

Saul had his spies everywhere, and David also had spies (:4). This complex game of espionage and subterfuge was so far from the peaceful hills where he had played his harp and drawn close to God as a youth. But those peaceful days are used to prepare us for later, more complex tests of our faith.

The first time David spared Saul's life, the Ziphites again had betrayed David to Saul, and in the same area. His men again wanted to kill Saul, and again David restrains them with the same argument about the Lord's anointed. David takes something belonging to Saul and then calls out to him from a safe distance, and both times Saul enquires "Is this your voice, my son David?" (:17 = 1 Sam. 24:16). These similarities point up the way that God repeats situations to test our responses. I've suggested earlier that David's apparent stellar grace to Saul was in fact nuanced by his transferal of his anger onto Nabal. In that incident, God restrains David from slaying Nabal, by grace. And now David has the opportunity to demonstrate that he's learnt the lessons.

1Sa 26:2 Then Saul went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph-

David in the Psalms records how he hated those who 'rose up' against him, and that includes Absalom. Saul 'rose up' [NEV "went down"] against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29; 26:2), and then evil men 'rose up' against David out of his own family (2 Sam. 12:11 s.w.), especially Absalom who rose up against his father (2 Sam. 18:31,32 s.w.). But David has a tendency to assume that all who rose up against him were

arising against God. It's not always so that our enemy is God's enemy. Relationships and the hand of God in human affairs and relationships is more complex than that. And David in Ps. 139:21,22 goes further, to assume that his hatred of people is justified, because they must, he assumes, hate God because they are against him. Solomon seems to make the same mistake when he alludes to such 'risings up' in Prov. 28:28. We must note that "all in Asia" turned away from Paul personally (2 Tim. 1:15), and yet according to the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Rev. 2,3, there were many faithful individuals amongst them.

1Sa 26:3 Saul encamped by the road on the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had come after him into the wilderness-

A group of 3000 men on the move (:2) would have created a fair dust cloud. But it seems that David "saw" this in that he heard it, and need to confirm Saul's presence there (:4).

1Sa 26:4 David sent out spies and found that Saul had certainly come to that place-
The sending out of spies is associated with taking the land of Canaan; it seems from :5 that David was buoyed up by his marriage to Abigail and the encouragement taken from the Divine judgment upon Nabal. Although he will go "down" again by 1 Sam. 27:1, he seems here very proactive and not on the back foot against Saul.

1Sa 26:5 David set out and came to the place where Saul had encamped. He saw the place where Saul and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his army were lying; Saul lay among the wagons and the people were encamped around him-

As noted on :5, David is not so much on the run from Saul, but seeking him out. After the assurance received in 1 Sam. 25 that God would avenge him against Saul, and with Abigail so strongly encouraging him in this regard, it could be argued [although see later] that David now sets out to demonstrate to Saul that he is not going to avenge himself. I therefore suggest that he intentionally went into Saul's camp to take away Saul's private property but not slay him. We can sense the encouragement of his Godly wife Abigail in this mission. For a large burden of her message to him in 1 Sam. 25 was that he would not be slain by Saul, and if he followed the path of not avenging himself, he would surely become king.

1Sa 26:6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? Abishai said, I will go down with you-

As explained on :5, David can be read [but see later] as proactively seeking to get close to Saul but not slay him, so fired up is he with the idea of not avenging himself and inviting God to act against Saul by his own lack of vengeance. But he still seemed to want some company in this bold mission. It seems Ahimelech turned down the invitation and only David and Abishai went (:7).

The situation here differs from that in 1 Sam. 24 when David previously spared Saul's life. Here, he intentionally goes out to find Saul. David states in :15 "Someone came to destroy the king". The Hebrew, *echad*, means one specific person. Who was that person- Abishai, or David? Surely David. For it was he who proposed 'going down to Saul' and invited another warrior to accompany him. My suggestion is that David went down to Saul with the intention of killing / destroying him. He didn't come to just teach Saul another lesson by stealing his spear. He came to destroy him.

"Go down" can allude to physical descent into the valley, but the idiom is of attacking. The same word is in :10, "descend into battle". "There came a man to destroy the king" (:15) uses the same word as in :7 when David and Abishai "come" to Saul.

So to summarize. David restrained himself from killing Saul in 1 Sam. 24. But he then takes offence at the drunken words of Nabal about him in 1 Sam. 25, and sets off to murder Nabal, his wife, kids and animals. His apparent restraint from killing Saul now appears not so stellar, because he had only transferred that desire to murder onto his anger with Nabal. But he is restrained from doing that by God's grace through Abigail. He again appears to have earned a "well done" by listening to Abigail. But again, this is nuanced. Because he then sets off to murder Saul. And pulls out of it at the very last minute. His sneaking through the guards and 3000 soldiers encamped around Saul would have been foolhardy without God's help. God empowered him to do this, by making the soldiers fall into a deep sleep. He and Abishai come to Saul and find Saul's spear stuck in the ground by Saul's pillow [AV "bolster"]. This was an obvious psychological invitation to simply take the spear and strike Saul's head with it, killing him in one blow. We recall that earlier David had taken Goliath's weapons and struck his head off with them. All with God's strength and empowerment. We conclude that God was showing David that indeed he could slay Saul. David was confirmed in his death wish concerning Saul. But he chose a higher path. And to his huge credit, David pulls out of it at the very last moment, and also avoids the temptation to take up Abishai's offer of doing the job rather than David's own hands. Although again this act of self control and bringing himself under restraint is nuanced- because he seems to transfer his death wish against Saul onto Abner (see on :16). And so oftentimes it is with man. Our finest moments and deeds and words are often in fact nuanced by a lack of totality in their devotion. Indeed all our righteousness is as filthy rags. Although the conscience can be cleansed, in the Lord Jesus. And we marvel that for all this, David was beloved by God and seen by Him as a man after His own heart.

1Sa 26:7 So David and Abishai came to the army by night and Saul lay sleeping among the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the soldiers lay around him-

The cameraman of Divine inspiration is zoomed in close up, so that we can envisage the situation. AV has "within the trench". The idea is that the wagons were arranged in a circle around Saul, giving him maximum human protection, and probably reflecting his paranoia of being slain.

1Sa 26:8 Then Abishai said to David, God has delivered your enemy into your hand today. Now therefore please let me strike him to the ground with one stroke of my spear; I will not strike him a second time-

This whispered conversation was absolutely contrary to the entire spirit of David's mission in visiting Saul (see on :5). David could have reasoned that his hand would not be upon Saul if Abishai slew him. But he realized that we are not to get around God's word. Indeed God had delivered Saul into David's hand, but that didn't mean that David had to kill him. GNB suggests Abishai wanted to slay Saul with his own weapon just as David had done to Goliath: "Now let me plunge his own spear through him and pin him to the ground with just one blow". This kind of out of context allusion to Biblical history was used by Saul too, and is a warning to us.

As David had been restrained from murdering Nabal by Abigail, so now David restrains Abishai. We are to do for others spiritually what God, by grace, has done to us.

1Sa 26:9 David said to Abishai, Don't destroy him, for who can put forth his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be guiltless?-

David's argument against killing Saul was that he didn't want to be guilty of slaying Yahweh's anointed. But he could have personally gotten around this by allowing the eager Abishai to do it. But he was spiritually mature enough to realize that sin can be committed vicariously and we cannot seek to cleverly get around Divine principles.

We are all anointed in that we are in Christ, the anointed (2 Cor. 1:21). The same radical respect which David showed, we should show to each other. David's attitude seems to have influenced Saul's men, for his armour bearer refused to slay Saul (1 Chron. 10:4,5). But David's attitude towards Saul was actually an encouragement to himself. For he too was Yahweh's anointed, and no hand could be lifted against him unless Yahweh allowed it. The same phrase "lift up the hand against" in the context of murder is used of how Saul's guards refused to kill the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:17). For they too were anointed as priests. Yahweh's anointed referred to His priests as well as His kings.

1Sa 26:10 David said, As Yahweh lives, Yahweh will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go into battle and perish-

This indeed happened. It was the fulfillment of 1 Sam. 12:25: "But if you still do wickedly you will be consumed, both you and your king". "Perish" is s.w. "consumed"; David seems aware of Samuel's words and is alluding to them. In the face of so much Divine activity to save them, they would be destroyed if they continued to work against God's efforts to save them. And indeed Saul and Israel were "consumed" in the massacre by the Philistines. It was because despite all God's efforts with them, they had continued to "do wickedly".

1Sa 26:11 Yahweh forbid that I should put forth my hand against Yahweh's anointed; but now please get the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go-
Yahweh had indeed restrained David from killing Nabal and his family in 1 Sam. 25, and now David was reflecting that by restraining Abishai from doing so, and asking Yahweh to continue to forbid or restrain him from murdering Saul.

David was tested by God in the matter of sparing the life of his enemy Saul- and he came through the test with flying colours (1 Sam. 26). But just before that, he had been tested again in the same area in the matter of Nabal- and he initially failed, intent as he was to take the life of his enemy Nabal (1 Sam. 25). Thus a circumstance can repeat over a matter in which we were previously unsuccessful.

1Sa 26:12 So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head and they went away; and no-one saw it or knew about it, neither did anyone awake, for they were all asleep because a deep sleep from Yahweh had fallen on them-

It seems God would have given Saul into David's hand when "a deep sleep from the Lord" fell upon Saul at the very time David intended to kill him. Saul himself realized that the Lord had delivered him into David's hand to kill him (1 Sam. 24:18). God thus confirmed David in his intentions- and yet at the last minute, it seems, David

chose an even higher level; of love and deep respect for this spiritually sick man. The deep sleep from Yahweh recalls that sent upon Adam. Perhaps this was confirming David's plan of his own volition to try to bring Saul to repentance; for the hope was that he would awake to new life created from him.

The cruse or jar of water may have been the jug into which Saul urinated, in obedience to Mosaic commands to keep military encampments ritually pure. For water was typically carried in skins not in an open jar / cruse. The same word is used of the widow's cruse of oil. And the Hebrew for "water" also refers to urine, translated elsewhere "piss" in the AV. Perhaps this was to bring Saul's mind back to how David had earlier chosen not to slay him in the cave whilst Saul was going to the toilet. David took away the spear, the symbol of Saul's kingship, and took it to himself. He invites Saul to send a man to get it back. But surely Saul ought to have responded "No, keep it. I'm not worthy to be king, I've been rejected from the kingship, you're to be the next king, you keep it". But he doesn't. We perceive that David, in love for Saul, was seeking to give him opportunities to repent. And this is how we should act to even our worst enemies.

1Sa 26:13 Then David went over to the other side and stood on the top of the hill far off, a great space being between them-

All this was carefully planned. Saul was at the foot of "the hill of Hachilah" (:3), and this presumably was where David stood.

1Sa 26:14 and David called to the army and to Abner the son of Ner, Don't you answer, Abner? Then Abner answered, Who are you who calls to the king?-

Abner, father of Ner, had a son and a father also called Ner, meaning "light" or "lamp". But darkness had been sent upon him. We get the impression that David was particularly hostile to Abner. Ner was Saul's uncle (1 Sam. 14:50). Abner had been captain of the army at the time of David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17:55); perhaps he was the logical one to have fought Goliath, but he lacked David's faith. He therefore had a particular jealousy complex against David.

1Sa 26:15 David said to Abner, Aren't you a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord, the king? Someone came to destroy the king your lord-

The criticism of Abner seems rather extreme seeing God had made Abner fall asleep; see on :16. But perhaps Abner was guilty because the falling asleep was in confirmation of his own attitude. "Someone", *echad*, is specifically one person; see on :6.

1Sa 26:16 What you have done is not good. As Yahweh lives, you are worthy to die because you have not kept watch over your lord, Yahweh's anointed. Where are the king's spear and the jar of water that was at his head?-

"You are worthy to die" means "You will surely die"; the same phrase in 1 Sam. 30:31; 2 Sam. 12:5. This is a death threat to Abner. We enquire why David maxes out on Abner- who after all had been given a deep sleep by Yahweh so that he was unable to protect Saul. I suggest again that David is transferring his desire to kill Saul onto Abner, just as he had transferred it on to Nabal earlier. It seems David learnt only a little from each of the incidents in the previous chapters, and was still transferring his anger with Saul onto others- rather than forgiving Saul from the heart and meaning what he meant when he spoke of not touching Yahweh's anointed. Abner later goes

over to David's side, and when he is tragically stabbed to death by one of David's own men [Joab], David gives a eulogy in which he presents Abner as truly having top bloke status with him. Abner therefore presents as not a bad man in the end. But here, David is seething with anger against him; we feel that anger seething through these recorded words. But it was illegitimate anger, anger wrongly placed- because David had simply transferred his anger with Saul onto Abner.

David has a clear belief that the man anointed by God is not to be slain. But he himself was God's anointed king. His respect of Saul's anointing was therefore the guarantee that he himself would not be slain, as God's anointed. We could wonder whether David's extreme emphasis upon not killing or harming Yahweh's anointed was because he hoped that this would be a guarantee that he too, as Yahweh's anointed, would not be harmed or slain. We are left to ponder such motives in Biblical characters, because we must likewise ponder our own motives. In 1 Sam. 26, David mocks Abner for not guarding Saul, Yahweh's anointed, and proclaims him worthy of death; but Abner had been struck by a deep sleep from Yahweh so he was innocent really of this. Likewise when the Amalekite comes to David with the news that he had slain Saul in his death throes, David has the man killed because he had killed Yahweh's anointed. This appears extreme. David certainly had no value for human life by behaving like this. So... we ponder whether his extreme position about "Yahweh's anointed" was purely motivated. As suggested above, he may possibly have been thinking that if he displayed respect for Yahweh's anointed, then Yahweh would not allow him to be slain- as he too was Yahweh's anointed. And possibly he was seeking to inculcate in Israel a respect for Yahweh's anointed, in order to safeguard himself [as also Yahweh's anointed] from ever being murdered by his own people.

This approach answers questions which otherwise appear to have no good answer:

- Why did David go down to Saul?
- What is the function of the record of David ranting at Abner rather than at Saul?

Often David calls Saul his master, describing himself as Saul's servant (1 Sam. 17:32,34,36; 20:8; 24:6; 26:16,19; 29:3,4; 30:15). This was no formal "Sincerely your brother and fellow-servant". This was a real conscious putting of himself down, as the Lord Jesus felt he was a worm rather than a man (Ps. 22:6). If only we would concentrate upon our own status and show some true respect for others on account of their being in the ecclesia, having even been anointed spiritually at their baptism (2 Cor. 1:21) as Saul was.

David says that the servants of Saul are "worthy to die" because they fell asleep as a result of "a deep sleep from the Lord" which fell on them, and therefore didn't protect Saul (1 Sam. 26:12,16). Were they really that guilty of death for this? There doesn't appear to be any Biblical command David was quoting. We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

1Sa 26:17 Saul knew David's voice and said, Is that your voice, my son David? David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king-

This was precisely the situation in the previous such incident in 1 Sam. 24:16. The lesson was being repeated. We wonder why Saul queries whether this is really David's voice. Perhaps there was a considerable distance between them; or David's voice was strained by emotion; or Saul so wished this was all a dream and this hadn't really

happened. Again, each of these options has absolute credibility and reflects that this record is true and accurate as to what really happened and was said. It is no cunningly devised fable.

1Sa 26:18 Why does my lord pursue his servant? What have I done? What evil am I guilty of?-

The "why" was a deep rhetorical question, and was still aimed at eliciting repentance in Saul; as was this whole escapade to steal Saul's spear. We marvel at the unceasing desire of God through David for Saul's repentance, even at very late stages. In the type of the Lord Jesus, this looks forward to the Lord's question "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46).

1Sa 26:19 Now therefore, please let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If Yahweh has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering-

David simplistically speaks as if "an offering" can resolve any issue with God; he was to mature through the Bathsheba crisis to understand that God wants broken hearts rather than an offering (Ps. 51:18,19). "Stirred up" is the word used for 'entice', 'persuade' etc., and is used of God stirring up or psychologically stimulating David to number Israel (2 Sam. 24:1). This is how His Spirit works. And we know that His evil Spirit worked upon Saul. But David knows this is not an irresistible influence from God upon those He just decides to destroy; through repentance and sacrifice, things would be different. Hence GNB: "If it is the LORD who has turned you against me, an offering to him will make him change his mind".

But if it is men who have done it-

We get the impression from the record that it was Saul who was creating this false accusation, as part of his paranoid mindset that had jumped from one conspiracy theory to another. It was Saul who was influencing men to think like that. But David had clearly chosen his words carefully for this brief speech. He seeks to give Saul the benefit of the doubt, as grace does (see on 1 Sam. 24:8), and to make it as easy as possible for Saul to repent. He sets us a stellar example for behaviour in interpersonal conflict.

May they be cursed by Yahweh, for they have driven me out so that I can't have a part in Yahweh's inheritance; they have said 'Go and serve other gods!'-

This remains an abiding lesson; for this is the result of driving people away from the visible sanctuaries and meetings of God's people.

David seems to have held the idea that Yahweh could only be worshipped in the land of Israel- hence he blames Saul for driving him out of the land and thus making acceptable worship impossible for him. This was the same misunderstanding as held by the exiles in Babylon and also Jonah; and yet for all that misunderstanding, David was still a man after God's own heart. Saul drove David away from his presence and that of Yahweh, to become a fugitive and vagabond; Saul would not accept any sacrifice from David (1 Sam. 26:19). This has so many connections with the driving out of Cain in Gen. 4:14. In other words, Saul was saying that David was not spiritually fit to be in the land and must therefore be destroyed. So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

David's men represent the followers of the Lord Jesus (cp. Heb. 13:13). David's motley crew were idolaters and bitter men, "them that are set on fire... whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Ps. 57:4). So rough were they that

David says that having to live with them almost destroyed him spiritually. This typology would explain why the body of Christ seems [at times] full of mixed up men and women with hard words and a tendency to idolatry- who eventually will be the rulers in Messiah's Kingdom, after the pattern of David's men.

This is another example of thoughts and attitudes being understood as effectively spoken words. David argues that being driven out of Israel led to worshipping idols, and yet he had taken his parents to Moab. Perhaps they had turned away from Yahweh as a result.

David's reasoning is that if he has sinned and Saul is judging him for it, then the matter could be resolved by Saul saying what the sin was, and then all David needed to do was to offer a sacrifice and the matter should end. David reveals a very shallow transactional view of atonement for sin. Just offer a sacrifice and all must be good. And there should be no further consequence nor judgement. Although his sin with Bathsheba wasn't God's will, God used it to educate David in these areas. He learned that sin may be forgiven but still has consequences. And he learnt God's grace, in that he was brought to realize that there was no sacrifice that could deal with his sin.

This second option was clearly that which David liked to assume was the case, as he insists the first option couldn't be true, in that he has no unforgiven sin that Saul may judge him for. David's position here is like he had when he spared Saul's life before. He says that Saul is just believing slander about him. But he is in this case whitewashing Saul's persecution of him. Saul was not a victim of misinformation. He had been informed by God through Samuel that he was not to be king, and was to be replaced by David. Saul cannot be justified on the basis that he was merely misinformed about David. Likewise at Saul's death, David appears to whitewash him and his behaviour. I suggest David was doing something often observed. The abused whitewash their abuser but then transfer their feelings onto another person, who is often a minor player in the scene. And so David transfers his anger onto Abner. We don't need to read psychology but rather just slowly and carefully read these Bible accounts, as they reveal human psychology to us. And in this case, total forgiveness would have removed the anger and broken the circles.

1Sa 26:20 Now therefore, don't let my blood fall to the earth far from the presence of Yahweh-

See on 1 Sam. 27:1. GNB "Don't let me be killed on foreign soil, away from the LORD". David seems to be saying that Saul's persecution was driving him out of the land of Israel to Gentile lands such as Achish in Gath where he had a strong chance of death. But he was wavering in believing the promise that he would indeed become king, a promise so firmly believed in by those close to him like Jonathan and Abigail. He also, like the exiles, seems to mistakenly think that Yahweh's presence is only in the land of Israel.

For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains-

Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8). This reflects the broken down psychological state of David. He felt himself as good as dead, powerless, tiny and insignificant as a flea. He had a low self image.

Partridges can easily be caught as they tend to gather in groups [coveys] in fields. It was a disproportionate expenditure of effort to go hunting just one of them in mountains. Partridges were hunted by repeatedly making them rise up in flight until they were too exhausted to mount up again- and then they could be captured and killed. This is how David felt, and it leads to his collapse of faith in 1 Sam. 27:1, where he concludes that Saul is going to capture and kill him. The outlaw life had finally exhausted him in every way.

1Sa 26:21 Then Saul said, I have sinned-

The very words of Judas (Mt.27:4). Again, we see clearly David as a type of Christ.

Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes today-

David alludes to Saul's words in Ps. 49:8 "life is costly", s.w. "My soul was precious". David is alluding to this; Saul's human life had been precious or costly to him, but he was unable to redeem Saul eternally. Only God could do that, if Saul by faith accepted God's grace. The death and life of Saul had been precious in David's eyes, and so David's life was precious in Yahweh's eyes (s.w. Ps. 116:15). Again we are taught that God's attitude to our salvation and our life is directly related to our attitude to the life and salvation of others; and this is why we are to perceive the value, the preciousness, of human life and salvation. It is why making others stumble from the path to eternal life is so serious to God.

I have played the fool, and have erred very seriously-

Saul "erred" or 'wandered' out of the way; this is s.w. Ps. 119:10 "let me now wander". David seems to have initially written Ps. 119 in his wilderness years; he is asking to be stopped from going the path of Saul. We recall that Samuel had rebuked Saul as a "fool" when Saul is first told that the kingship had been removed from him and would be given to David (1 Sam. 13:13). Saul understood very clearly what was happening. His personal spiritual salvation was still possible if he had just accepted that he could not be king. But his last words, in his death throes, reflected a concern that he would be dishonoured by the Philistines. Appearance became all important to him, once he had tasted power and kingship.

1Sa 26:22 David answered, Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and get it-

David clearly distrusts Saul and will not even walk over to him to return his spear. He had earlier refused that spear at the time of the Goliath battle, and he does so again now. Forgiveness and grace must be shown even to the likes of Saul, but this is not the same thing as trusting the person again; at least not until they have acted in such a way as to rebuild trust.

"With his spear in his hand" is the image we are repeatedly given of Saul in the records. It was the symbol of his kingship, and he was desperately gripping hold of it rather than giving it up as he should have done. Whether at home, sitting under a tree (1 Sam. 22:6)... he is pictured as madly gripping on to it. He even sleeps with the spear in the ground next to him (1 Sam. 26:7). In this lies the significance of David taking the spear from Saul but then returning it to him. What should Saul's response have been? To tell David to keep the spear and be king, whilst he retired and walked quietly with his God (1 Sam. 26:21,22). And it was that gripping on to power that was his death. If the Amalekite is to be believed, he said that Saul at his last end "was

leaning on his spear" (2 Sam. 1:6), presumably before falling upon his own sword in suicide (1 Sam. 31:4). David by contrast had learnt from his victory over Goliath "that Yahweh can give victory without sword or spear" (1 Sam. 17:47).

1Sa 26:23 Yahweh will reward every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, because Yahweh delivered you into my hand today and I wouldn't put forth my hand against Yahweh's anointed-

This sounds rather self righteous and legalistic, as if David is saying that he has consciously gone up to Saul that night and refused to take his life, in order to get a reward for his righteousness. He comes over as self congratulatory in the extreme. We can also muse as to whether "Yahweh delivered you into my hand" suggests David was given the option of killing Saul; but he chose a higher level.

David's logic here seems to be saying that he only spared Saul so he would be spared, and that nuances his apparent grace to him. To have in the hand means to have power over. And throughout 1 Samuel, when Yahweh delivered enemies into the hand of His people, it meant that the enemies were to be slain (1 Sam. 14:10,12,37; 17:46,27; 23:4,14; 24:10; 28:19; 30:23). David had Saul in his hand. Possibly God gave him the chance to kill Saul. David could have legitimately killed him. The soldiers were made to sleep by God, and Saul's spear [which he had earlier thrown at David] was there right by Saul's head. And Abishai was offering to do the job. David's refusal to kill Saul was therefore highly commendable. David went out to kill him, he could have killed him, God set up the opportunity to do so, but at the last moment David chose a higher path.

1Sa 26:24 As your life was respected this day in my eyes, so let my life be respected in the eyes of Yahweh and let Him deliver me out of all oppression-

David was soon disbelieving this logic in 27:1. Heb. "save me from all distress". David later reflects in Ps. 34:6 that he, the poor lowly man, has indeed been saved from all his distress. But Ps. 34 is titled as having been written after David escaped from Gath the first time, in 1 Sam. 21. It seems David rewrote his Psalms, tweaking them as new experiences occurred which confirmed his earlier deliverances. And so he now makes this edit to Ps. 34 after his deliverance from Saul and his realization that his prayer of 1 Sam. 26:24 "Save me from all distress" had been answered.

As suggested on :23, David appears to have consciously pulled off this feat of sneaking up on Saul as he slept in order that his life should be respected and valued. This could reflect a very low self image and a craving for respect and being valued; his self image seems very low to describe himself as a flea (:20).

1Sa 26:25 Then Saul said to David, May you be blessed, my son David. You will do great things and will surely triumph. So David went on his way, and Saul returned home-

Saul sought to "prevail against him" (Ps. 13:4), but Saul here used the same word in telling David (in a rare moment of reality and humility) that he knew that David would prevail against *him*. Those flash moments of reality and humility which Saul had are to be our warning. The Psalms condemn him as generally proud. We must live life in a spirit of humility, rather than just experiencing a few flash moments of it.

"Triumph" is the word used about David triumphing over Goliath (1 Sam. 17:9). Saul perceived in David's prevailing over / overcoming Goliath a sign that David would ultimately prevail to become king in his place; the "great things" refer to the things of the future kingdom. Saul realized that Samuel had indeed chosen his

successor as king, and it was David; and that kingship was guaranteed by his victory over Goliath. For Saul to seek to kill David when David had overcome even Goliath... was therefore futile. Saul realized this, but obsessively continued in it. Such is the obsessive, blind nature of jealousy.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 27

1Sa 27:1 David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines, then Saul will give up looking for me any more in Israel and I will escape from him-

I suggested on 1 Sam. 26:20 that David was mentally, spiritually and physically exhausted at this time. He has just complained that Saul's persecution was driving him out of Israel into the territories of idol worshippers. And it seems he is making this a self fulfilling prophesy, because his faith now takes a nosedive. It's a classic example of self talk affecting behaviour, in the end. For "David said in his heart" that he would perish by Saul's hand, even though we have just learnt again in 1 Sam. 26 that Saul was in fact placed by God in David's hand. David has stated clearly in the wilderness Psalms that he feels absolutely in God's presence, even as if he is on the lid of the ark, with the cherubic wings overshadowing him- despite not being near the sanctuary. But his faith in this reality has well nigh collapsed in 1 Sam. 26:20 GNB "Don't let me be killed on foreign soil, away from the LORD". He sees Yahweh as only present in Israel, and considers Him absent from Gentile lands. But David's Psalms say the opposite. It can be that we believe and think on a spiritual level one moment, and then in a quite opposite way the next hour or day. Or it can be that at the very same time, we on one level believe and yet on another level, we don't. Yet David was the man after God's own heart. This contrast between David's words in the Psalms and his historical reality isn't necessarily hypocrisy. It is what it is to be human, when man at his best still has righteousnesses which are filthy rags. It may be that David is not being presented as more hypocritical or duplicitous than any other man. It's simply that we have so much information about him that we are enabled to get insight into how a Godly man actually is in practice. And this is a great comfort. For we all are disappointed with our failure to persistently, consistently and totally attain to total faith and spiritual mindedness. Perhaps we have these snapshots into David's psychology as comfort to us.

David has just stated that one day Saul will perish in battle (26:10), so he need not make Saul perish himself. But now his self talk has persuaded him that it is he who shall perish. Again we see how many can on one hand believe and be so spiritual, but on another, be so faithless. Or how whatever peak of faith we reach at one moment will not carry over into the future. Just as Saul's moment of repentance didn't. We live in an eternal now, with no credit, as it were, for any past strengths. Another example: "Nothing better" is literally 'there is no good for me'. But Ps. 119 has David often saying he hopes for "good" according to God's word of promise to him, e.g. "Do good to Your servant, according to Your word"

As noted on 1 Sam. 20:3 ("there is but a step between me and death"); 26:20, when David feels Saul is about to succeed in killing him, we might have wished to see at times more faith in Samuel's prophetic word that David should become king. His faith in that word went up and down, with 1 Sam. 23:17 being a high point in it, and 1 Sam. 27:1 being the low point in it. It is to this time that he alludes in Ps. 119:25: "My

soul is laid low in the dust; revive me according to Your word!". David felt at times that he would surely perish ["in the dust"] at Saul's hand. But he was revived from that depression by his faith in God's prophetic word that he would indeed one day be king and Saul's persecution would pass. David felt that he would one day be slain by Saul, yet in Ps. 13:3 and often in the Psalms he persuades himself, in the course of the same prayer, that in fact God will save him and keep His promise to make him king in Saul's place. Psalm 13 is an example: "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart every day? How long shall my enemy triumph over me? Look, and answer me, Yahweh my God. Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death... But I trust in Your grace. My heart rejoices in Your salvation. I will sing to Yahweh, because He has been good to me". This leads us to think that David was not so much wavering in faith over time, but at one and the same time having both faith and unbelief. Which surely all of us can relate to. This going over to the Philistines to fight for them as a mercenary was a total lack of faith in the word of Yahweh about David which Abner recalls in 2 Sam. 3:18: "Yahweh has said concerning David: 'I will deliver My people Israel from the hands of the Philistines and all its other enemies through My servant David'".

The Hebrew is literally 'he said to his heart'. We see here another of many suggestions that man has as it were two people within him, there's a battle going on between the voice of the flesh and the real heart of David. David's heart was after God's own heart. But at this point, that heart listened to the other voice within him. This is the voice or 'person' Paul speaks of in Romans 7, and what the Bible at times calls 'satan' or 'the devil', the adversary / false accuser. David kept telling himself that Saul would defeat him, and he acted accordingly, and his negative self-talk led him into a faithless situation. Moses likewise said within himself "I am a foreigner in this land" – and his self-talk led to the very public 'word' of naming his son 'Gershom' (Ex. 2:22). Yet it seems that David later perceived his error, and the importance of self-talk. For in the Psalms, he characterizes the wicked in Israel as being distinguished by what they say in their heart, in their self-talk. Take Psalm 10: "He has said in his heart, "I shall not be moved"... he has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see it"... he has said in His heart "You (God) will not require it"" (Ps. 10:6,11,13). Or we could also conclude that at one and the same time as realizing the importance of positive self talk, David also fails in this.

1Sa 27:2 David and the six hundred men who were with him left and went to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath-

I suggest that David was at very low ebb here spiritually. He had taken refuge with Achish in Gath before and nearly perished because of it; for this was the home town of Goliath. Afterwards, God had sent him against the Philistines in 1 Sam. 23 to help him realize that he was not to consider refuge with them again. For his defeat of them at Keilah was intended by God to make David realize he had now burnt his bridges with the Philistines. So now when he again goes there, he is really going against God's education of him and intention for him. And yet by grace he is preserved.

David had 600 soldiers and their families with him- a large entourage of probably a few thousand people. He had apparently run a protection racket involving Nabal, guarding sheep and isolated farmsteads. He was a military force to be reckoned with, as shown by his behaviour whilst with Achish. Saul had 3000 men under his command, David had 600. We pause to enquire whether David was solely a pious shepherd boy who was fleeing from Saul's obsessive persecution. He was a considerable chieftain, with a strong military reputation. And we enquire whether as

time progressed, he was not in some way thinking of taking the throne from Saul by force, whilst sparing Saul's life. And Saul correctly perceived this. Again we wonder at the contrast between this historical David, and the David of Ps. 119 and elsewhere who is waiting patiently in faith for God's word of promise to him to come true. At the same time as having that faith, he was certainly giving the appearance of trying to make it come true in his own strength. This may account for his self talk at this time, that Saul would one day win, and therefore he offered himself to Achish as a mercenary. There is further evidence from 1 Chron. 12 that David was joined by some of Saul's disillusioned warriors, and that David's intention was to use this large force "to make war against Saul": "The following joined David at Ziklag while he was still in hiding from Saul son of Kish; these were the warriors who gave support in battle; they were armed with the bow and could use both right hand and left hand to sling stones or shoot arrows with the bow; they were kinsmen of Saul from Benjamin... Of Manasseh also there fell away some to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle; but they didn't help them; for the lords of the Philistines sent him away after consultation, saying, He will fall away to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads" (1 Chron. 12:1,2,19). This seems to imply that David was fully intending to go with the Philistines to attack and kill Saul, and then to be made some kind of vassal king of Judah on behalf of the Philistines. This was politics at its worst, and a far cry from the David who twice refused to slay Saul and instead wanted to wait for God's word of promise to come true.

1Sa 27:3 David lived with Achish at Gath with his men, each one with his household, and David had with him his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife-

This was a major move by the Philistines, to allow 600 Israelite soldiers (:2) to live with them- under the leadership of David, who had slaughtered so many Philistines. And in addition, their wives and children apparently came with them. They would have formed a significant proportion of Gath's population. It was normal that there would be general opposition to these foreigners coming in to live amongst them; not to mention pressure on resources. See on :5. We get the impression that it was Achish alone who so wanted it. Quite why, we cannot immediately discern. It was clearly of God, to grant David a way of escape from Saul; although it was also not the ideal refuge which God wanted him to take (see on :2). Again we see God confirming us in the way we choose to take, even if it isn't a good path.

1Sa 27:4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath he stopped searching for him-

Saul had a network of spies watching David (1 Sam. 18:20,24; 19:11,19; 23:7,13,25; 24:1; 27:4). In the type of Christ, this looks ahead to Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Jn. 11:57. Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn. 5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8). To the Hebrew thinker, there is an unmistakable similarity between the Hebrew words Shaul and Sheol (grave); it is a matter of pointing. In the same way as Judas personified the Jewish system and the flesh behind it (hence they are both called the devil), Saul too personified what was evil; he was the great enemy, the satan, of David, as the Jews and the flesh were the great satan for Christ. In this we see David as a type of Christ.

That Saul kept hunting David is proof enough that his repentance in 1 Sam. 26 and promise to cease... was but the intense spirituality of a fleeting moment. "Fled" is the same word used of how David had previously fled for fear of Saul to Gath (1 Sam. 21:10). He had been saved from that situation by grace, and would have surely sworn not to make the same mistake again. But we are so slow to learn lessons. Yet still he was a man after God's heart. After going to Achish before, God had told David to smite the Philistines in order to save Keilah. He was trying to get David to burn all bridges with Achish. But David is now trying to rebuild those bridges.

1Sa 27:5 David said to Achish, If I have found favour in your eyes, let me be given a place in one of the cities in the country to live in. Why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?-

I noted on :3 the pressure on resources created by having 600 soldiers and their families living in the same small town. "In the country" would have referred to the territory accepted as Philistine controlled, which Saul would fear to enter lest he be accused of invading the Philistines.

1Sa 27:6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day, therefore Ziklag belongs to the kings of Judah to this day-

Ziklag was presumably near Beersheba (Neh. 11:28). "To this day" shows this section was written or edited before the captivity but after the division of Judah and Israel. Parts of the histories were clearly rewritten for the encouragement of the exiles, but from this and other such verses, we can conclude that not every section was. Ziklag had been passed from Judah to Simeon (Josh. 15:31; 19:5) and then passed to the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:6)- because if we don't want the kingdom, it will be lost to us.

1Sa 27:7 David lived in the country of the Philistines for a full year and four months- LXX "four months", although 1 Sam. 29:3 implies a period longer than that. It was whilst in Ziklag that a significant part of Saul's army defected to David (1 Chron. 12:1-7,20-22), along with some of Saul's own brothers (1 Chron. 12:2). They defected "because of Saul" (1 Chron. 12:1). He was himself personally responsible for these defections. His mental illness and obsession had likely led him to accuse his own army and brothers of being on David's side.

1Sa 27:8 David and his men went and made a raid on the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites; those were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times as far as Shur and Egypt-

"Shur" is literally "the wall", referring to the wall which ran from Pelusium past Migdol to Hero, or perhaps to the line of fortified towns along it, resulting in the name "Mizraim" for Egypt, meaning 'the enclosed / fortified'. Hence LXX "behold, the land was inhabited, (even the land from Gelampsur) by those who come from the fortified cities even to the land of Egypt".

The note that these peoples were the original inhabitants of the land is an allusion to the fact they should have been driven out by Israel earlier. And so David's wrong behaviour was used by God to further His original purpose, reflective of the mixture of motive we find in David.

1Sa 27:9 David attacked the land and saved neither man nor woman alive; he took away the sheep, cattle, donkeys and camels and the clothing, then he returned to Achish-

See on :11. It's recorded that in the ethnic cleansing which David performed, he took the spoil of those settlements for himself (1 Sam. 27:9 AV). Indeed when he destroyed Ziklag, he took away their herds "and said, This is David's spoil" (1 Sam. 30:20). We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood and lack of integrity in hot blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

However it could be argued that he was fulfilling the command given to Saul to totally destroy the Amalekites and leave none remaining. Saul was empowered to smite the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3,7), but he didn't completely do this. As often happens, God then passed on the job to another, in this case David. We can see His hand working in similar ways today. This seems to be the idea of Esther 4:14. If she had not saved her people, then God would have pursued another plan to the same end. What David did here was surely wrong, but we suspect he justified it by arguing that he was fulfilling the command to totally destroy the Amalekites, which Saul had failed to obey and had therefore been rejected from kingship. It's a classic example of mixed motives- doing what was politically expedient and faithless, under the guise of careful obedience to Divine commandment.

1Sa 27:10 When Achish said, Against whom have you made a raid today? David would say, Against the South of Judah, or against the South of the Jerahmeelites, or against the South of the Kenites-

There are Biblical examples of believers telling lies as acts of faith; Rahab and the Hebrew midwives in Egypt are examples. But David's dishonesty here, which required him to slay every living being in the towns he attacked (:11), seems inexcusable. These areas are specifically listed in 1 Sam. 30:29 as being David's friends and supporters.

1Sa 27:11 David saved neither man nor woman alive to bring them to Gath, thinking, They might inform about us, saying, 'David has done this. This was what he did all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines' -

Innocent people were slain by David's sword for the 'political' reason that he had to keep Achish 'in the dark' about what he was really up to. And so in case a 5 year old say something incriminating later, David simply killed the little boy. So often, unthinkable evil things are done from fear, the fear which is not of faith nor love. For love casts out fear. We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

1Sa 27:12 Achish believed David, saying, He has made his people Israel abhor him so much that he will be my servant forever-

This was also surely David's intention. But he could have avoided this by simply trusting that God's prophetic word for him would come true. The way Achish presents as naive is probably how he really was; his military leaders were far more realistic about David. But God used this to enable David to have his intended, faithless way of taking refuge in Gath. And yet God by grace saved David from where it all led, by blocking him from fighting Saul at the time of the battle of Gilboa. For surely there was part of David that wanted to do this, and yet part of him didn't want to- reflected in his ambiguous answers when quizzed on the matter. Those ambiguous answers weren't merely reflective of his desire not to fight Yahweh's anointed, but reflected his own mixed feelings- for part of him now wanted to slay Saul and get the Kingdom for himself by violence rather than faithfully waiting for Yahweh's word to fulfil.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 28

1Sa 28:1 In those days the Philistines gathered their armies together to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, You must certainly go out with me in the army, you and your men-

To go and fight God's people, specifically with Saul, Yahweh's anointed, was exactly against David's previous principles. But because he had lied about fighting and killing Israelites, he was now told to go and do it. He was being taught that boasting about things you haven't done is still counted as if you have done them. And he was now being forced to a position where he has to quit his sinful situation.

1Sa 28:2 David said to Achish, Then you will know what your servant can do- David uses language in a vague way, all part of the great deceit he was showing to Achish as detailed at the end of 1 Sam. 27. That deceit couldn't go on for long; and it was God's grace which brought it to an end.

Achish said to David, Therefore I will make you my bodyguard for life- David had earlier been Saul's bodyguard, now he was for Achish the Philistine. And again, the situation at the court must have been very politically fraught. For David had done so much evil to the Philistines, and it seems David's acceptance depended solely upon Achish having some personal enthusiasm for him. However this could mean that David was offered this position if he went out and fought against his people. However it seems from 1 Sam. 29:2 that David was already the bodyguard of Achish, and it was accepting this office which was used by God to save him as it meant he was at the rear of the army. It was the wrong decision- for he should have honestly stated he wouldn't fight God's people. But despite his failure, God used it by grace to save him from his hopelessly compromised position.

"Bodyguard" is literally 'the keeper of the head'. But David had previously cut off Goliath the Philistine's head and kept it. Achish is presented as naïve, failing to pick up on David's elusive, double meaning statements about his loyalty to "the king" against the king's "enemies" (1 Sam. 28:12 etc.). And thinking that for sure, David has indeed been attacking Judah and now Judah hated him (1 Sam. 27:12), and that David is "an honest man... as an angel of God" (1 Sam. 29:6,9). Achish's military men however present as far smarter, quipping that David again will seek to take off the heads of Philistines (1 Sam. 29:4).

1Sa 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city-

We note how Israel loved Samuel and respected him, although they did the very opposite of what he had taught them. We can have an emotional, sentimental attachment to the things of our religion, whilst having hearts far from God's word in practice.

Saul had put away out of the land those who had familiar spirits and the wizards- Saul apparently had not used a witch before. He clamped down upon something which didn't directly affect him, in an attempt to show zeal for God's law. And this kind of thing goes on in all generations. We recall how the Jews were so zealous for some Mosaic rituals at the very time they crucified the Lord. "Put away" is the same word used for God 'departing' from Saul in :16,21 and earlier. Saul responded to his cutting off for his sins by cutting off others for their sins. It's a psychological classic. Our response to God's judgement should be repentance and release of others in response to our experience of forgiveness. But if we won't experience that, then we

respond by transferring our guilt and sin onto others, and judging them for it. So much judgmentalism is a result of this scenario. Saul's rejection from being king was because of his disobedience, and Samuel had commented that disobedience is as bad as witchcraft. It's as if Saul wished to prove Samuel wrong, by condemning witchcraft- thinking that would somehow remove his condemnation for disobedience. Unlike David, Saul always seeks to deal with the judgment for his own sins by passing it off onto others.

1Sa 28:4 The Philistines gathered together and encamped in Shunem, and Saul gathered all Israel and they encamped in Gilboa-

The mutual gathering together of the two armies on opposite sides of a valley recalls the conflict with Goliath. But now David is on the other side, and Samuel is dead. Finer geographical details are given in 1 Sam. 29:1, where "the spring in Jezreel" is now thought to be the fountain at Ain Jalut, "Goliath's fountain", regarded as the scene of the defeat of Goliath. This would have heightened the connections with that battle, and highlighted the absence of David and Samuel.

1Sa 28:5 When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly-

This had happened before with Goliath, and David had urged the Israelites to not let their hearts be troubled. But now David was on the other side, or so Saul understood. He had a premonition of inevitable judgment to come. Instead of repenting, he just wanted to know in advance whether this was "it" or not. And that desire to know God's word was stronger than his desire to repent. And there is a warning in that to those whose passion for technical "knowledge" of God's word seems greater than their personal spirituality. See on :8.

Saul's fear of an enemy army was prohibited in Dt. 20:1: "When you go out to battle with your enemies, and you see more horses, chariots, and people than you, do not be afraid of them for your God Yahweh, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you". Saul says Yahweh is not with him- "God is departed from me" (:15), but this is because Saul doesn't believe God is "with" him. As has often been observed, If God is not with us, who moved?

1Sa 28:6 When Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh didn't answer him, neither by dreams nor by Urim nor by prophets-

The urim and thummim were two stones associated with the ephod of the high priest, which flashed out binary yes / no answers. But they were apparently with David and Abiathar, not Saul (1 Sam. 22:20; 23:6; 30:7). He may have tried to get other stones to replace them, but they failed to give answers, and he realized again that God's presence was with David and not himself.

"Saul inquired of Yahweh" but had no answer, and therefore he went to a medium. But in God's final analysis of Saul, Yahweh says that He smote Saul because Saul sinned against God's word by not enquiring of God, but of a medium (1 Chron. 10:13,14). But Saul did enquire of God (see 1 Sam. 14:37 s.w. 28:6), but God didn't answer him (note how often in the records it is stated by contrast that David enquired successfully of Yahweh). The point is that although Saul prayed to God and enquired of His word on the surface, in his heart, he did nothing of the sort; and therefore his prayer and enquiry was reckoned never to have happened. And we must ask how

much of our prayer and Bible study is seen by God as being only spoken and read on a surface level. This was exactly the problem of natural Israel. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled (in prayer) upon their beds" (Hos. 7:14). "Though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him" (Hos. 11:7).

In 1 Sam. 14:38 Saul thinks that God's lack of answer by Urim and Thummim is because someone amongst the people has sinned. But Saul's awful hypocrisy was rebuked now at the end of his life. God refused to give Saul an answer from Urim and Thummim because of his sin in not sincerely enquiring of the Lord.

At this very time, God was answering David by urim as to whether he should pursue the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30:7,8). Clearly, Saul's demise and David's rise are being compared and contrasted. But despite that, Saul personally could still have repented and been ultimately saved.

We note how Saul previously had asked / enquired of God and received no answer (1 Sam. 14:18,19,37-42; 23:6-12), whereas David had asked of God, including using the Urim and Thummim, and received answers (1 Sam. 22:15; 23:2-4,9-12; 30:7,8). Samuel explains that the lack of answer is because God is not with Saul and has "departed" from him (:16). Answered prayer and the gift of direction is therefore part of having God with us in life, answered prayer and the receipt of direction is therefore evidence that Yahweh has not departed from us. This is where an active prayer life is so critical to relationship with God, and likewise answered prayer is presented in the NT as evidence that the Lord abides in us and we in Him (Jn. 15:7).

Saul had been rejected from king in 1 Sam. 15:22,23 because he refused to listen to Yahweh's voice, with the comment that he has effectively committed witchcraft: "Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice. To listen is better than the fat of rams. Because rebellion is divination...". Now he is desperate to hear Yahweh's voice- and he commits divination in order to try to hear it. He is simply living out the truth of Samuel's words of rejection, despite trying so hard to deny those words by clinging on to the kingship. Because Saul didn't hear Yahweh's voice when he had it (1 Sam. 15:19), now he cannot hear it at all.

1Sa 28:7 Then Saul said to his servants, Find me a woman who has a familiar spirit so that I can go to inquire of her. His servants said to him, There is a woman who has a familiar spirit at Endor-

"A familiar spirit" is misleading, and many of the modern versions give something like "witch" or [ESV, GNB] "a medium". LXX has "a divining spirit". It doesn't mean she did actually have any such spirit; but that she was considered as having this. Such people were thought to be able to be possessed by the spirit of dead people, and to therefore speak in their name. But the Bible clearly teaches that the "spirit returns to God" (Ps. 146:4; Ecc. 12:7), and that death is unconsciousness. The spirit of dead persons don't enter other people. I would go so far as to say that the record of the witch at Endor, who supposedly had a "familiar spirit", is deconstructing this belief. For Samuel himself appears, and speaks directly to Saul, and not through the "medium". The woman therefore screamed in shock when Samuel actually appeared. He was resurrected, briefly, in order to give God's final message to Saul. The people claiming to have "familiar spirits" lay on the ground and mumbled hard to understand words in a voice seeking to imitate the dead person (Is. 29:4) but Samuel appeared in person and spoke clearly to Saul, directly. We also note that Samuel appeared to Saul standing upright, because Saul bowed before him: "Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and showed respect" (1 Sam. 28:14). This

was quite different to how the mediums lay on the ground and mumbled words into the dust.

Saul went to the medium because he had got no answer from Yahweh. He got no answer because God had already spoken, and he was still not paying attention to that word. His desire was not for a supernatural message from a medium, but that she raise Samuel so that he could get a message from Yahweh via Samuel. He crossed Philistine lines, walking all night many miles, to try to achieve this. His desire for a new word from Yahweh was huge; although clearly his hope was that Samuel could somehow persuade God to rethink, and to see Saul all good before God as he now faced judgment. Just as a believer may vainly hope their pastor will appear next to them at judgment day, and persuade the Lord to accept them. But the desire for a word from Yahweh all too late is a major theme of the pictures we have of rejection by God. We think of Amos 8:12 "They will wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will run back and forth to seek the word of Yahweh, and will not find it". Or Ez. 7:26 "They shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders". Or how the foolish virgins were desperate for the oil of the word when it was too late. The rejected lamented they were getting no word from Yahweh because they had no prophet to declare it [just like Saul without Samuel]: "We see no miraculous signs. There is no longer any prophet" (Ps. 74:9); "her prophets find no vision" (Lam. 2:9). Mic. 3:6,7 appears to allude to Saul's experience on this very dark final night: "Therefore night is over you, with no vision, and it is dark to you, that you may not divine; and the sun will go down on the prophets, and the day will be black over them. The seers shall be disappointed, and the diviners confounded. Yes, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God". To seek God's word when it is too late is therefore a characteristic of those rejected at God's judgment. Saul had had free access to Yahweh's word through Samuel, and had despised it. Those who refuse to respond to God's word now, and leave their Bibles unopened, are in the same spirit. They will desire that word all too late.

En-dor was one of the Canaanite settlements which Israel had failed to conquer. The woman may have been a Gentile, explaining why she didn't recognize Saul despite his being the tallest man in Israel (Josh. 17:11-13). "The name may come from the term enna dureнна, the Hittite term for the gods".

1Sa 28:8 Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothing, and went with two men to the woman by night. He said, Please consult a familiar spirit for me and bring me up the one I name-

Endor was the opposite side of Shunem (:4). Saul would have had to cross enemy lines to get there. Hence his disguise and journey by night. As he was so tall, he was taking a huge risk. But he did so because he was so desperate to hear God's word, but as noted on :5, instead of repenting, he just wanted to know in advance whether this was "it" or not. And that desire to know God's word was stronger than his desire to repent. And there is a warning in that to those whose passion for technical "knowledge" of God's word seems greater than their personal spirituality.

By taking off his royal clothing, Saul was resigning his kingship. But he puts it on again when he goes into battle the next day. He had taken off that royal robe in the cave in order to defecate, and put it back on again. If he had resigned his kingship to David and repented even at this late stage, he would have been saved. What is so tantalizing is that he comes so close to potential salvation even at his miserable end.

"Bring me up" is literally 'conjure up' and is the same word used in 1 Sam. 15:23, "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft", or literally, 'conjuring up'.

1Sa 28:9 The woman said to him, Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who have familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land. Why then have you set a trap for me, to cause me to die?-

Wizards were really amateur psychologists, who weighed up their clients and were very perceptive of their background and needs. She surely knew this was Saul; he was famed as the tallest man in Israel, and had been apparently reigning 40 years (Acts 13:21). Cutting off "out of the land" would mean they had been forced into exile. She had not, perhaps because she repented, or was retained for her services to the house of Saul. She implies she knows who Saul is- because she says he has set a trap for her.

"Set a trap" is the very word used in the law of how the use of witchcraft would be a setting of a trap or snare for the faithful Israelite (Dt. 12:29-13:5). We could infer from this that the woman was acceptant that witchcraft was a snare, and she didn't wish to enter that snare. She was therefore a repentant witch who was being persuaded to return to her wrong behaviour by Saul. She possibly believes that he has the right on Yahweh's behalf to make an exception for her to do this (:10).

1Sa 28:10 Saul swore to her by Yahweh, As Yahweh lives, you will not be punished for this-

Saul appears to take Yahweh's Name in vain rather too often, for he had likewise sworn to Jonathan that he would not try to kill David. But Saul really tacitly admits that he is Saul, for only he had the power to ensure the woman wouldn't be punished for practicing witchcraft. Although by saying this, he was really playing God. For it was according to God's law that witches were to be punished. And yet he here abrogates God's law, in the name of God.

1Sa 28:11 Then the woman said, Whom shall I bring up to you? He said, Bring Samuel up for me-

The Bible doesn't teach any idea of an immortal soul. Death is unconsciousness. Only at the last day judgment will there be the gift of eternal life and eternal death to those responsible to God. We note that both the witch and Saul believed Samuel to be "down" in the grave and not "up" in heaven. The common idea that the souls of the righteous dead go to heaven on death is not supported in the Bible. This fits with the Biblical language of both good and bad being 'gathered to his kin' (Dt. 32:50) and 'sleeping with one's fathers' (1 Kings 11:43; 15:24; 22:50).

1Sa 28:12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice, and said to Saul, Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!-

LXX "When the woman saw Saul". That Samuel was resurrected is effectively stated in 1 Chron. 10:13 LXX: "Saul asked counsel of her that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of her, and Samuel made answer to him". God resurrected Samuel, and the woman screamed in genuine fear when she saw him. God answers a fool according to his folly (Prov. 26:5). Thus God resurrected Samuel when Saul asked the witch to bring him to life (1 Sam. 28). Of course witches have no power to contact the dead; yet God confirmed Saul in his stupidity. If men choose to follow the vain philosophy of the flesh, God will confirm them in their delusions (2 Thess. 2:11). In accord with this, God punishes men with a recompense which is appropriate for the kind of sin they commit (Rom. 1:27). But the woman composes herself and then tells Saul she

knows who he is; but I suggest that she knew this anyway, because Saul was the tallest man in Israel and had been reigning for 40 years at this time, probably all her adult life. He was well known.

"Why have you deceived me?" is word for word what Saul had shouted at his daughter Michal for not letting him murder David in her home (1 Sam. 19:17). And now his words return to him, placed in the mouth of another woman. For by our words we are judged. This was yet another nudge for Saul to repent of his behaviour towards David, and his refusal to accept God's word about the transferral of the kingship to David. Perhaps if he had been willing to do this, even at this late stage, Saul himself may have been saved. Saul is asked many questions, and all of them are rhetorical and actually probing him towards his possible repentance.

It is possible that [as often in Biblical narrative] we have in :12 a summary position, and the following verses explain how this position came about. We could then read :13 as "The king *had* said to her..." etc.

1Sa 28:13 The king said to her, Don't be afraid-

This assurance could only come from Saul as king, waiving his own campaign of condemnation of witches. Only a king could pardon capital offences.

What do you see? The woman said to Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth- She speaks in vague terms. She means that a body is ascending out of the earth, in resurrection; the same word for "coming up" is used of this in :15. She uses the term *elohim*, showing that this term doesn't only refer to God Himself. Perhaps she saw a vision of Angels ascending with Samuel; *elohim* ascending is the term used of the vision of Angels ascending upon Jacob in Gen. 28:12. But she speaks of *elohim* as "an old man" (:14) in the singular. This shows that *elohim* doesn't have to refer to a plurality. This demonstration of grammatical usage surrounding *elohim* is useful in correcting those who mistakenly think that *elohim* in the Old Testament refers to God and Jesus. The Bible doesn't teach the person preexistence of the Lord Jesus. *Elohim* 'ascending' is the term used for the end of a theophany (Gen. 17:22; 35:13; Ps. 47:5; Ez. 9:3; 11:24). Perhaps she saw a kind of theophany, which then gave way to the resurrection of Samuel, who then spoke directly with Saul.

I suggested on :7 that the woman may have been a Canaanite. "The Canaanites considered the dead to be divine in the underworld, and so were called Elohim ("gods")", which would explain why she uses the word about Saul.

I suggested on :12 that :12 and :13 are a summary of how the woman later reacted. In this case, when asked to bring up Samuel, she speaks in vague terms of an old man arising dressed as a prophet. This was and is typical of how mediums work. Their skill is in then speaking in a voice which is very different to the voice they have been using to their client. That voice is muttering and vague, and is meant to be the voice of the recalled dead person. Hence Isaiah mocks mediums for muttering out of the dust with strange noises. The woman was a medium rather than a "witch" as we may now understand a "witch". But the critical thing is that she screamed when she actually saw Samuel, as he was resurrected to speak directly with Saul. And seeing her scream is a pivotal point of the story, proving that indeed Samuel was resurrected, it is introduced in :12 and :13 as a significant aspect of the story, and then the next verses explain how that point came about.

1Sa 28:14 He said to her, What does he look like? She said, An old man is coming up-

LXX "An upright man". The *elohim* who "ascended" (s.w. 'come up') was Samuel. He was a manifestation of God to Saul.

He is wearing a mantle. Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and showed respect-

Wearing the prophetic mantle was typical attire for a prophet. It was that mantle which Saul had torn in 1 Sam. 15, and Samuel had interpreted this as meaning that the kingdom was to be torn away from Saul. As he saw the mantle, he would have remembered this. See on :17, where Samuel uses the word "torn". We note that Saul had removed his kingly clothing in order to deceive, whereas Samuel wears his prophetic clothing. Saul's deceit is thus presented against the truth of God and His word and servant.

1Sa 28:15 Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?-

We note that Samuel feels that Saul and not the witch has brought him up. The relationship is always between Samuel and Saul directly. Samuel had been resurrected because of Saul. Samuel's question is not a reflection of irritation, as if he had been woken up at 3 AM and was cranky with the interruption. He may well have asked the question in a gentle, caring way- for the question is seeking Saul's repentance and salvation. The answer was intended to be 'Because I now desperately seek the word of God which previously I despised'. But Saul doesn't make that answer.

"Disturbed" is literally 'troubled', and Samuel may be suggesting Saul is like Achan, the troubler of Israel, who stole from the spoil of Jericho just as Saul had done from the spoil of the Amalekites- which was the reason for his rejection. But the hint again would be that as Achan repented frankly and confessed his sin in detail, going to his death perhaps in hope of final salvation- so Saul could have done. Throughout the record there are continual nudges of Saul towards repentance, and we marvel at God's saving grace displayed in this way. God gently tried with Saul right up until his death, and He does the same with so many, even if He foreknows their rejection of all His nudges. Even if the nudges are gentle and rarely spelt out in clear direct terms. Even those who appear to be long gone from God will still be receiving these nudges to return. I cannot believe that man in this life can ever get to a point where repentance is impossible. And so Saul for sure had that possibility right to his miserable end on Gilboa.

This was really a rhetorical question. Saul had done so because he was more interested in knowing his immediate fate, than repenting. For he didn't need to see a resurrected Samuel to make him repent. We note that the conversation is directly between Samuel and Saul. The woman didn't act as a medium or intermediary between them, and so this incident is no evidence that witches or mediums have any real power. See on :21.

Saul answered, I am very distressed, for the Philistines make war against me and God has departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you so that you can tell me what I should do-

Saul knew what he should do, and what Samuel would essentially answer- "Repent!". But his fascination with knowing his immediate future stopped him from seeing this. And so Samuel gives him the answer, explaining what would happen if he still didn't repent. The fact God departed from him was a sad reflection of how initially God had been with Saul (1 Sam. 10:7). God can both give and take away His Spirit. In Saul's case it was given by the pure grace of how God calls otherwise unspiritual people. But in response to their rejection of spiritual things, it can be withdrawn from them.

1Sa 28:16 Samuel said, Why do you ask me, since Yahweh has departed from you and has become your adversary?-

LXX "and taken part with thy neighbour?". The reference was to David (:17).

Yahweh can be a satan / adversary to people. But here the idea is that David, the one with whom God was, was now on the opposing side, with the Philistines. As Saul knew. He must have imagined that God was going to slay him at the hand of David, through David being with the Philistines. But that may indeed have been a possibility within the Divine program, but it didn't work out like that. Saul sees Samuel as somehow separate from God; whereas Samuel says there was no point in resurrecting him, since Yahweh had departed from Saul. He could work no special deal for Saul; Saul had to work it out with God directly. That was the unspoken, implicit message.

The question is rhetorical, perhaps asked in a gentle, seeking kind of way rather than in the spirit of 'This serves you right'. It is as to why Saul has come to Samuel when God has departed from him, as Saul himself states. The answer is that Saul is desperate to see Samuel because he believes a face to face meeting will lead to Samuel asking Yahweh to save Saul, as it were for old times' sake in the relationship between Saul and Samuel. Samuel had been Saul's 'go to' man for God, but it was mere religion, using a man as a kind of backdoor to get to God. Rather like desperately trying to get the funeral of an unbeliever performed by a pastor, in the hope this will save the unbeliever. Saul was condemned because he went to the witch rather than to God. Effectively Saul went to the witch in order to have a meeting with Samuel. But God condemned him for this: "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance, and did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore the Lord slew him" (1 Chron. 10:13,14). We could say that Saul had no personal relationship with God because he didn't want one. Instead of trying to desperately achieve a face to face meeting with Samuel, or get another oracle from God, he should have reflected on the words from God he already had and prayed directly to God in repentance even at this late stage, and got himself right with God. But instead he went the way of religion by seeking to meet Samuel.

1Sa 28:17 Yahweh has done to you as He spoke by me. Yahweh has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbour, to David-

The language of "torn" was appropriate to the mantle which Saul had earlier torn, and which Samuel was now wearing, presumably intact now, representing how the kingdom would be given intact to David. The kingdom was only "given" potentially to David, for it took him some years to establish it under his rulership. David is perhaps called Saul's neighbour to remind him that the essence of the covenant was to love one's neighbour as themselves; and Saul had cruelly broken this through his hatred of David.

1Sa 28:18 Because you didn't obey Yahweh-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18, although he hearkened to the voice of the witch, 1 Sam. 28:23). If God's word abides in us, then

our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

And didn't execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, therefore Yahweh has done this to you today-

"Therefore" suggests that the events of "this day", not the next day, had been done in order to confirm the earlier judgement that Saul had been removed from kingship. But as discussed before, this could have been accepted by Saul, and he could still have been finally saved had he humbly accepted it. And now he has the chance to do that but again refuses, clinging on to His spear, the symbol of the kingship, until he impales himself upon it [if we compare the account given by the Amalekite in 2 Sam. 1].

Saul is condemned because he did not execute [literally "do"] Yahweh's wrath with Amalek (1 Sam. 28:18). In 1 Sam. 11:6, Saul's wrath had been Yahweh's wrath, Saul's spirit was Yahweh's Spirit, they both heard the words about Jabesh and the threat of Nahash, and were filled with kindled wrath. When Saul sought to express that against Nahash, God's Spirit was with him. But with Amalek, Saul had fallen out of sync with God's Spirit. And so that Spirit departed from him. His will was no longer that of his heavenly Father. This was the struggle of the Lord, "not My will but Yours", the subjugation of the human spirit and will to that of God.

We wonder why Samuel didn't mention the obvious- that Saul had sinned by going to a witch, and was fulfilling Samuel's earlier words to him, that Saul's rebellion earlier was as bad as the sin of witchcraft, Heb. 'bringing up', the word used in Saul's request to 'bring up' Samuel. Perhaps Samuel, and God, were prepared to overlook this- but the essence of Saul's problem was his refusal to give up the kingship and to permanently repent of his previous weaknesses and failures. And that is the focus of what Samuel has to say, still therefore hoping, we can infer, that Saul would repent. Because Saul didn't repent, his sin of going to a medium is later mentioned against him.

Saul had twice been rejected by God; regarding not waiting for Samuel and being disobedient in 1 Sam. 13:13 ("You have not kept the commandment of Yahweh your God which He commanded you"), and then about Amalek. Perhaps "Because you didn't obey Yahweh" refers to the 1 Sam. 13 situation, and then the Amalek disobedience of 1 Sam. 15 is referenced. Or perhaps "You didn't obey Yahweh" also refers to the 1 Sam. 15 situation; because Saul's disobedience of 1 Sam. 13:13 was forgiven, and he was given another chance, which he then wasted by not obeying the commandments about Amalek. Such was God's desire to save him, and to change His rejection of him.

1Sa 28:19 Yahweh will deliver Israel and you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Yahweh will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines-

LXX "Israel with thee... thy sons with thee", emphasizing how Saul's disobedience was to lead many others to destruction with him. This is the characteristic of sin- that it harms others. That they would "be with me" reinforces the teaching that all men, good and bad, go to the same place at death- the unconsciousness of the grave. The differentiation between them, as taught in the Lord's parable of the sheep and goats, is only finally made at the judgment of the last day. Far from supporting any idea of an immortal soul, this passage actually is designed to deconstruct those wrong ideas.

1Sa 28:20 Then Saul fell immediately his full length on the earth and was terrified because of the words of Samuel. There was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all that day and all that night-

Saul had earlier prostrated himself before Samuel in reverence. Now he again falls to the earth as he ought to have done before. He was passing through a figurative death, as did Daniel of whom the same words are used when he falls before the Angel, terrified and with no strength (Dan. 10:8,16,17). Saul now has the chance to realize that the wages of sin is death- and arise in repentance. Even at this late stage. But he refuses. Lying there, he could have accepted that he was having his judgment ahead of time, just as men are often given such opportunities today. But he died still clinging to his spear, the symbol of his kingship which he refused to let go, and impaled himself upon it.

Saul says nothing. There are clear similarities with what happened to Saul who became Paul, falling down and being speechless (Acts 9:7; 16:14). But Paul responded rightly, unlike king Saul. But the similarity shows that king Saul was being given the chance to respond.

1Sa 28:21 The woman came to Saul-

"Came... And saw..." suggests the woman wasn't present earlier. The meeting was between Saul and Samuel, totally without her mediation. LXX "went in". Again the point is made that the conversation was directly between Samuel and Saul; the woman was not acting as a medium between them. See on :15.

And seeing that he was very troubled she said to him, Look, your handmaid has obeyed you and I have put my life in my hands and have done what you told me- She may intentionally refer to how David put his life in his hands for Saul's sake (1 Sam. 19:5). Perhaps she had repented of her witchcraft and was in fact on David's side.

1Sa 28:22 Now please listen to your handmaid and let me give you some food so that you may eat and have the strength to go on your way-

The contrast is with how Abigail had said these words to David, again in a context of food, and he had had the humility to hear the words of a woman. But Saul was proud to the last.

1Sa 28:23 But he refused and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, urged him, so he listened to them. He got up from the earth and sat on the bed-

Literally, he was obedient to her voice. Whereas he had not been obedient to the voice of Yahweh; see on :18. LXX "sat upon a bench", recalling Eli sitting upon a bench the day when he and his sons died during another Philistine invasion. And they too had been told their ministry would be removed and passed to another (1 Sam. 4:13). From these similarities we see how God's judgments work over the generations according to a similar hallmark; and we are therefore to learn from them.

Saul obeyed the voice of the people and the voice (s.w.) of the sheep and oxen that he covered (1 Sam. 15:24,24). Later he obeys the voice of Jonathan and promises not to kill David (1 Sam. 19:6), and the voice of the witch and of his servants who persuade him against his will to eat (1 Sam. 28:22,23). We have the impression of a man readily persuaded by voices. If he had had a fundamental commitment to obey the voice of Yahweh as he was repeatedly asked, he would not have listened to these

other voices. Nor the voices in his own head. Likewise those without a fundamental commitment to God's word are open to all the other voices around them, and likewise have no moral compass nor ethical direction. The Hebrew for 'to hear' is the same as 'to obey'. Samuel had told Saul he would be made to hear or obey God's word (1 Sam. 9:27 "that I may tell you the message of God" uses the word for to hear / obey, the hint being 'that I may make you hear / be obedient to the message'). But he failed to make use of this because he found the voice of other things more attractive to hearken to.

1Sa 28:24 The woman had a fattened calf in the house. She hurried and killed it, and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread with it-

Hurrying to dress the fatted calf is exactly the language the Lord uses about the celebrations at the repentance of the prodigal son. Perhaps He perceived that even at this very late stage, repentance was potentially possible for Saul, and the woman [perhaps also repentant] wanted him to repent. It was a kind of potential celebration. But the only thing to possibly celebrate was his repentance. But he still refused. We marvel at God's grace, and the hopefulness of His Son. His refusal to eat perhaps corresponds with that of the older brother in the prodigal parable, who "would not go in" (Lk. 15:28) and likewise went out into the night [as did Judas]. To kill the fatted calf was a major sacrifice for the woman. She surely could have offered Saul other food. I suggest she only did it for spiritual reasons. The only other time we read of flour being kneaded in haste with a calf slain was when Abraham and Sarah did this when the Angels came with the message of life out of death (Gen. 18:6,7). It is not impossible that there is allusion to this, and God was saying that His visitation of Saul through Samuel could be responded to by a fellowship meal. The word for "killed" used of the woman killing the calf is that used for ritual slaughter and sacrifice; and the sacrifice was accompanied by unleavened bread, as sacrifices were meant to be (Lev. 2:3-11). In this case, we have a bookend with how the Saul story began, with him being chosen as king at a ritual meal with Samuel. Perhaps this is why Saul refused it initially. But although he ate it for food, it seems all this potential was lost on Saul. Again we ask, What should Saul have done? He could have humbly repented and gone out to meet his death calm in the knowledge of God's ultimate acceptance. Instead he clung on to his spear to the bitter end, the symbol of his kingship, and committed suicide on it.

1Sa 28:25 She brought it before Saul and his servants and they ate. Then they got up, and went away that night-

They departed into the night (LXX), the language of condemnation. We naturally are invited to imagine Saul's feelings as he walked back that night; for he is the picture of all condemned by God after refusing every effort for their repentance. How a man meets his death is all important. Last minute repentance is always possible, as we see from the thief on the cross. A man may be an idolater all his days and repent at the end and be saved (Ezekiel). Saul had to die, just as we do, the wages of sin is death, but he refuses to meet that inevitable death with repentance. David sins no less than Saul [keeping the Amalekite cattle cp. David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah seems to weight the balance of sin level in Saul rather than David's favour]. But David repents when confronted with his sins. Saul has always justified himself, transferred the guilt, said the right words [e.g. when confronted by David in 1 Sam. 24,26] and then carried on regardless.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 29

1Sa 29:1 The Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek, and the Israelites encamped by the spring in Jezreel-

"The spring in Jezreel" is now thought to be the fountain at Ain Jalut, "Goliath's fountain", regarded as the scene of the defeat of Goliath. This would have heightened the connections with that battle, and highlighted the absence of David and Samuel; see on 1 Sam. 28:4, which also presents this battle in the same terms as that with Goliath.

Other battles had been fought on or near the plain of Esdraelon. Here Deborah and Barak defeated the host of Sisera (Jud. 4:15; 5:21). And here was where Gideon's 300 defeated hordes of Midianites. These similarities were to remind Saul that victory against a vastly superior force was totally possible. He had earlier imitated Gideon and now he was invited to really do so. At the same time, David was leaving behind some of his soldiers in preparing to fight the Amalekites, just as Gideon did. Again we see David and Saul in parallel. They were both invited to follow Gideon's example of faith in victory through a minority. Only David responded positively to this.

In 1 Sam. 28 we have seen Saul in a dilemma, and he isn't helped out of it because he is impenitent, fundamentally. Now we have David in a dilemma. And he is saved from it. He and Saul sinned about the same, perhaps David more so. But sin itself isn't the issue. It's man's dealing with it in humility that matters. And so David was preferred over Saul. The king of Israel was called to save Israel from the Philistines (1 Sam. 9:16 "anoint him to be prince over My people Israel, and he will save My people out of the hand of the Philistines"). But it had always been David who had done this- Saul had failed in this regarding Goliath and the liberation of Keilah. Now the Philistines again threatened Israel, and it was the duty of Israel's king to save Israel from the Philistines. Even at this late stage, Saul should have recognized that it was not for him to lead Israel in battle against the Philistines, seeing he had been twice rejected as king, and David was the king God had chosen. What should Saul have done? Desperately beg David to come and be king and lead Israel. But he refused to accept God's word about him right until the end. It was all about him... and not about God's glory and the salvation of His Israel.

The mention of Aphek, not far north of Philistine territory, compares with how in 1 Sam. 28:5, the Philistines are already at Shunem, close to Mount Gilboa where they would fight with Saul. The material in 1 Sam. 29 is backtracking. So when David was dismissed from the Philistine army, they were only at Aphek and had some marching to do before coming to Shunem. So at the point when Saul meets the medium, David is already free from the Philistines and potentially available to Saul. Even at that late point, he could perhaps have resigned the kingship to David and asked for his military help, which may have defeated the Philistines. For the king of Israel was to defeat the Philistines, and by accepting David as that king, Saul may yet have been saved.

"The spring in Jezreel" was likely the "spring of Harod" at which Gideon tested his men (Jud. 7:1). I have noted earlier that Saul had previously imitated Gideon, externally but not in spirit. Possibly the connection with the spring was to desperately seek to remind Saul, even at this late hour, that victory could be given to a far smaller group by God- if they totally trusted in Him as Gideon had. God's patient nudging of Saul towards true faith is amazing to perceive- and it went on right to the end of his life, right to the last day of that life. Just as God works oftentimes with man today.

1Sa 29:2 The lords of the Philistines marched on in units of hundreds and thousands, and David and his men marched in the rear with Achish-

The marching was northwards from Gaza / Gath to the area of Mount Gilboa in the north of the land. Marching in the rear as the vanguard was a place of trust (Is. 52:12). We are left to imagine what desperate plans were going through David's mind. He didn't want to fight his own people, he who had been so careful not to kill Saul. Achish was at the rear, out of danger's way. It appears David was already his personal bodyguard, so David would have been desperately praying that the Philistines would win and he would not be required to fight; or for some Divine intervention to save him. He of course should have done the honest thing and refused to fight. But having failed to do so, he was now in a very compromised situation. It was only by grace that he was saved from it. We have likely experienced such situations ourselves.

1Sa 29:3 Then the lords of the Philistines said, What about these Hebrews?-

This was the grace of Divine intervention. As discussed on :2, David got into it by his own weakness of faith. But God saved him from it now at the last minute by an unforeseen situation. The Philistines refused to have David and his men anywhere near the battle.

Achish said, Isn't this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or rather these years, and I have so far found no fault in him?-

Achish seems to have been the sole supporter of David amongst the Philistines. Quite why he had this strange sympathy for David, even making him his personal bodyguard, is not explained. Clearly God's Spirit was at work giving this man an unusual attitude towards David. His idea was that David had once been Saul's servant but now was hated by him, and therefore David could be counted on as surely being against Saul. Achish failed to understand the love and grace which David had practiced toward Saul.

"Been with me" is AV "since he fell unto me", in the sense of deserting to his side (as in 1 Chron. 12:19). Achish presents as having totally fallen for David's fake narrative.

1Sa 29:4 But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him and said to him, Send the man back to the place you have appointed for him-

Presumably they refer to Ziklag, perhaps not without a hint of resentment and disagreement that Achish personally had appointed this place for David and his men.

He must not go down with us to battle, in case he turns against us during the fighting-

The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the Greek word *diabolos* to translate the Hebrew 'Satan'. Hence Devil and Satan are effectively parallel in meaning. Thus we read in the Septuagint of David being an adversary [Heb. *Satan*, Gk. *diabolos*] in 1 Sam. 29:4 ["turns against us"]; the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. 19:22), Hadad, Rezon and other opponents to Solomon (1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25). We face a simple choice- if we believe that every reference to 'Satan' or 'Devil' refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren't people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that 'Satan' is simply a word meaning 'adversary', and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself- it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word.

How better could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord-

Achish chose to interpret the fallout between Saul and David as meaning that David would be loyal to him and not Saul. But his commanders argued the other way. "This fellow" reflects their deep dislike of David.

Than with the heads of these men?-

They recalled how David had carried the head of Goliath to Saul (1 Sam. 17:57). To carry the heads of a king's enemies was a way to get the king's favour, as in Jud. 7:25; 2 Sam. 4:8; 16:9; 20:21; 2 Kings 10:6-8. Again we see the inspired, historical record has consistency. It would have required a clever editor to insert this theme of beheading to curry a leader's favour throughout the entire Biblical record. But the histories were clearly written at different times; a later hand would not have thought of all these realistic touches to sprinkle so consistently throughout it. The internal harmony of the Bible is to me the greatest indication that it is what it claims to be, the Divinely inspired word of God, evidencing His editing throughout.

1Sa 29:5 Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?' -

"Sang" is present tense "sing". The song about David having slain ten thousands of the Philistines was probably a battle song amongst the Hebrews, encouraging themselves by remembering previous victories against the Philistines. It was bizarre that Achish could be so taken in by David's narrative, but here we have an example of how God's Spirit can work in a man's mind.

If indeed Saul reigned literally 40 years (Acts 13:21), this celebration would have been quite some time previously. But the memory of that great humiliation was still very much alive amongst the rank and file of the Philistines. Achish seems so out of touch with these feelings that we wonder if he was himself actually a Philistine, or some non-Philistine who had taken power.

1Sa 29:6 So Achish called David and said to him, As Yahweh lives-

I have noted several times that the favour of Achish towards David was most unusual, and out of step with the feelings of the Philistine people in Gath, home town of Goliath. Here he swears by Yahweh [and you only swore by your own god in those times], and so we wonder whether he had been converted to David's God; hence his particular grace toward David. But David had lied to him repeatedly in giving the impression he had been attacking the Israelites, when in fact he had been massacring various non Israelite settlements. So in this case, Achish came to the one true God through the witness of one of His followers who was not of integrity before Him. This would then be a parade example of where truth must triumph over personalities and the bad advertisement for God given by some of His most apparently devoted followers. If Achish was in fact a quiet worshipper of Yahweh, this would explain his otherwise inexplicable favour towards David.

You have been upright and your conduct with me in the army has been good in my sight; I have not found evil in you since the day you came to me till this day. But the lords don't approve of you-

This estimation however was based upon David's inveterate lying to him, and David massacring whole settlements lest a single person should survive to tell Achish what was really going on. We wonder how Achish felt afterwards, when he realized how badly he had been deceived; and whether he retained his faith in Yahweh by whom he has just sworn. But "till this day" could be Achish responding to David's double

speak, by likewise hinting that David had previously been "good in my sight" until "this day"- when now, David was not good any longer.

1Sa 29:7 Therefore now return and go in peace; do not displease the lords of the Philistines-

To "return in peace" was a phrase sometimes used of returning from a military conflict in victory (Josh. 10:21; Jud. 8:9; 11:31; 1 Kings 22:28). Perhaps Achish is saying that he knows David wants victory, but he as it were grants this to him. David can be the victor without having to fight.

And so David was saved from a terrible hole which he himself had dug, by Divine grace alone. Just as happened the previous time he fled to Gath. And yet all this happens at a time when David has been incredibly weak in faith by living with the Philistines and murdering so many people to cover his lies to Achish.

1Sa 29:8 David said to Achish, But what have I done? What have you found against your servant all the time I have been with you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?-

This is one of those statements which is left purposefully unclear as to its import, so that we can reflect upon it. There may be no correct answer; it is left for our imagination. David may have been gasping thankfulness to God at the deliverance from his hard situation, and just went along with the appearance he had given of being supportive of the Philistines by making this insincere protest. In this case, this was hardly an example of the "integrity" and "uprightness" which David glorifies in his Psalms, and which he insisted he was full of (Ps. 25:21). Indeed he claims that his integrity is the basis of his acceptance by God (Ps. 26:1).

Or it could be that David evidently wanted to fight against Saul alongside the men of Achish, but planned to turn against them and fight for Saul, sandwiching the Philistines between the Hebrews- as they correctly guessed. This would have been suicidal. For Saul wanted to kill him, and the Philistines also would have tried to kill David as a result of this. He would have had no place to run. But even to the point of political suicide and the serious risking of his own life, David so loved Saul his enemy. This true love leads to and is related to true respect. This kind of respect is sadly lacking in our society, and has rubbed off upon our relationships within families and ecclesias. But whether all of his 600 men were equally convinced to take this huge risk is unclear. We note that David elsewhere often uses the phrase "my lord the king" to refer to Saul. If indeed David intended to turn against the Philistines and support Saul in a pincer operation against them, Saul could have still won the battle of Gilboa. But Saul didn't repent nor accept David as king, even in the last days of his life. Had he done so, the pincer operation David planned would have happened, Saul's life would have been spared, and he could then have proclaimed David as king. And been finally saved. We see how God tries to give men salvation right to the end of their days.

1Sa 29:9 Achish answered David, I know that you have been pleasing to me, as an angel of God, nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He must not go up with us to the battle'-

Achish clearly felt David was God's representative to him, and thereby had come to accept Yahweh as his God (:6). "Been pleasing" or 'blameless' / 'good', is the same word used of how David was more "blameless / good" than Saul and so he had been chosen as king (1 Sam. 15:28). One theme of the narrative here is the replacement of

Saul by David. And yet David was hardly "good" at this time, what with murdering all the Bedouins in their encampments, lying to Achish etc. Perhaps the idea is that just as Achish naively saw David as "good", God imputed righteousness and likewise saw a 'not good' David as "good". On the basis of counting him righteous because of his faith.

1Sa 29:10 Now get up early in the morning with the servants of your lord who have come with you, and depart as soon as it is light-

Achish seems to be saying that David's men were his servants, and is reminding him that he was David's "lord". Perhaps he too was slightly jittery about the whole idea of David's men coming to the battle. But probably by "your lord" he refers to Saul. For this is the context of :4 "How better could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord?". He would then be hitting back at David's ambiguous statement that he is ready to serve "my lord the king" (:8), without defining who that lord was, and having used the phrase often about Saul in the past. So it may well be that Achish presents as a naive ruler who easily changes his mind- for now he seems persuaded by his military commanders. So many kings are presented in the Biblical record like this, as naive and fickle. This can be the result of absolute power and wealth. We may well ask why God allowed this whole scenario, with Achish believing David until the last minute and then changing his mind. Surely it was to bring David to his knees, begging God for a way out of what seemed an impossible situation, just as he had with Achish in Gath in 1 Sam. 21.

1Sa 29:11 So David got up early, he and his men, to depart in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel-

Ziklag was considered to be in the land of the Philistines (:4). There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 30

1Sa 30:1 When David and his men had come to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid on the South and on Ziklag, and had attacked Ziklag and burned it-

These Amalekites were those whose settlements David and his men had been massacring. It was of course providential that David returned when he did, rather than remaining say another week in northern Israel fighting Saul's army. Although he

experienced a tragedy, it is clear from the preceding chapters that all these things were closely orchestrated by God. He actually avoided having to face a huge Amalekite attack on him which he may or may not have fought off. For he only had 600 men, and the 400 Amalekites who escaped from him later were just a tiny minority of their forces. He later won because he attacked them whilst they were drunk and partying. But he may not have fared so well if caught by a surprise attack by much larger forces. So again his weakness was used in God's gracious, providential plan.

1Sa 30:2 and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They didn't kill any, but carried them off and went their way-

This is absolutely surprising, because David and his men had massacred the Amalekite settlements, leaving nobody alive to report to Achish what had happened. All through the record, there is the same hallmark of Divine grace. As often in the Biblical records, the people of God come over as less gracious than their surrounding Gentile neighbours. And yet all this happens at a time when David has been incredibly weak in faith by living with the Philistines and murdering so many people to cover his lies to Achish.

1Sa 30:3 When David and his men came to the city they found it had been burned, and their wives, their sons and their daughters taken captive-

Burning with fire was perhaps a sign of devotion of the town to their gods, just as Israel had burnt Hazer (Josh. 11:13) and Midian (Num. 31:10).

1Sa 30:4 Then David and his men wept aloud until they had no more power to weep-

Heb. 'lifted up their voices and wept'. The phrase occurs around 10 times in the Hebrew Bible, and the context of each usage implies that this was not just mourning for that which had been lost, but mourning in the desperate hope and plea to God that things might change. But they wept until there was no more power to weep; they felt that the loss was permanent and now in fact there could be no remedy. Surveying the smouldering town, with no life anywhere, it would have seemed at first blush that their families had been burnt to death. And it would have been hard, because of the heat and smoke, to ascertain in depth whether there were bodies beneath the burning ruins; but they assumed so. Perhaps it was only at :8 that David learned that there was the possibility of recovering the spoil, implying their families had been taken captives and not burnt. The relevance to the exiles was that captivity and a burnt city [as Jerusalem was burnt] might seem irreversible; but the potential for restoration was there for them as it was for David at this time.

1Sa 30:5 David's two wives were taken captive: Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail who had been the wife of Nabal the Carmelite-

It would have been a far cry for Abigail from the days of living in the prosperous family of Nabal in Carmel. We wonder whether these women were raped, which would have been the usual thing in such circumstances. The taking captivity of the women is stressed three times (:2,3,5) as if this was the hardest loss to cope with.

1Sa 30:6 David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because they were grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters-

Stoning was the punishment for heresy. Their superstitious minds doubtless assumed David had sinned in some way, and they were all suffering the consequence of that sin. His apparent plan to lie to Achish and then turn around and fight for Israel (see on

1 Sam. 29:8) would have been hard to sell to 600 men. And there was likely a disease about the careful policy of lying to Achish about having attacked Hebrew settlements. We note how circumstances repeat in our lives- for later Shimei tried to stone David as he fled from Absalom.

"Grieved" or 'bitter' corresponds with how David's men were those discontented with their lives (1 Sam. 22:2). They were following David for what they could get out of him, rather than from belief in him as Yahweh's choice as king because he had a heart after God. We note their mean attitude towards those who were too weak to continue to the battle, and David's contrasting, generous spirit. David's spirituality in the wilderness years is the more commendable when we realize how little encouragement he had spiritually from others. Hence he encouraged / strengthened himself.

There are strong parallels between David and Saul as Saul's reign comes to an end. Saul is reminded by the resurrected Samuel how he disobeyed God by not destroying the Amalekites, and therefore had been rejected; whereas at the same time, David was pursuing and defeating the Amalekites. At this point, Saul also is in great distress (s.w. 1 Sam. 28:15) but finds no comfort from God whereas David does. And yet all this happens at a time when David has been incredibly weak in faith by living with the Philistines and murdering so many people to cover his lies to Achish.

But David strengthened himself in Yahweh his God-

Just the same phrase is used of how Jonathan had met with David and strengthened himself in Yahweh (1 Sam. 23:16). It happens with us too that the encouragement others give us, we later have to give to ourselves when alone and isolated. With 600 of his own men against him, David literally had to grab hold of himself (Heb.) in Yahweh. And we must all pass through these times when even those on our side turn upon us, and we are left with Yahweh alone. We have to grab hold of ourselves (Heb.)- another of many indications of the two sides to our nature, and how the good must triumph over the evil.

1Sa 30:7 David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, Please bring me here the ephod. Abiathar brought the ephod to David-

We note that they had taken the ephod with them into battle. It was brought to David, because David was going to use it himself as the high priest did, such was his personal relationship with God. He didn't ask Abiathar to get an answer for him, he himself used the urim and thummim stones, and they flashed out answers in response to his prayers.

1Sa 30:8 and David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them? He answered, Pursue, for you will certainly overtake them and recover all-

The urim and thummim in the ephod gave yes / no answers to the various questions posed. I suggested on :4 that this was perhaps the first intimation the men had that their families were alive and not burnt to death. David would surely have seen the similarities between his situation and that of Abraham, who went to Damascus to rescue Lot with his 318 servants, and won an amazing victory. But David failed to follow Abraham as he might have done in this matter; see on :20. One advantage of familiarity with the Biblical record is that we perceive how circumstances repeat; what we pass through has its Biblical precedent in the biographies which were selected by God and recorded there, inspiring us to follow onwards in faith. Truly through patience and comfort of the scriptures we have hope (Rom. 15:4).

1Sa 30:9 So David and the six hundred men who were with him went to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind had stayed-

LXX "the superfluous ones stopped", the 200 weaker ones of :10, who were unnecessary for the victory. This would be a clear connection with Gideon, whose fighting force was also cut down by God next to a river. David had previously been in situations allusive to those featuring Gideon. He would have seen that this was God encouraging him in those similarities, urging him to follow Gideon's faith to the end. According to :21 LXX "he had caused them to remain by the brook of Bosor". See on :21.

1Sa 30:10 But David pursued the Amalekites with four hundred men; two hundred had stayed behind because they were so exhausted that they couldn't go over the brook Besor-

As noted on :9 and :21, this was because David made them remain behind. "Stayed behind" is the usual word translated "stood". It would be wrong to think they collapsed exhausted on the ground. They stood, at least in God's eyes. And perhaps they literally stood guard over the baggage (:24). We see the difference in how David treated his weak ones, and how the Amalekite treated his Egyptian servant who was too weak to continue.

1Sa 30:11 They found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him food and he ate, and they gave him water to drink-

Heb. 'they made him drink water'; here and in :12 the Divine cameraman is zoomed in close up upon this dehydrated man they found lying as good as dead in a field. We see them in :12 giving him exactly two clusters of raisins, and piece, but not all, of a cake of figs. This focus is perhaps to show how God always uses some human mechanism in the way He works, and that mechanism is often man at his weakest.

1Sa 30:12 They gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, he revived, for he had eaten no food nor drunk any water for three days and three nights-

See on :11. They actually saved the life of that dehydrated man, left to die. Three days and nights of effective death and then resurrection, eating "a piece" of food as the Lord ate "a piece" of fish afterwards (Lk. 24:42), all makes him a strange type of the Lord Jesus. This supports the suggestion on :11, that the weakest of men are used by God and shown to have connection with the Lord Jesus.

1Sa 30:13 David asked him, To whom do you belong? Where are you from? He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me because three days ago I fell sick-

Although the Amalekites were taking understandable revenge for David massacring their settlements, they had not killed any of David's people, unlike David. And yet they are presented here as callous and uncaring (see on :16). The man had been left in the field immediately he fell sick rather than being cared for (he had not drunk water for three days, :12). For care for sick servants was a basic part of Middle Eastern culture at the time, and was also enshrined in the spirit of the law of Moses. Perhaps we are given this detail to highlight how amazing was God's grace in moving the Amalekites to not murder a single one of the many women and children they had taken captive.

1Sa 30:14 We made a raid on the South of the Cherethites and on the territory which belongs to Judah and on the South of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire-

This total honesty, admitting to Israelites that he had been part of raids on Judah, with the Cherethites being David's personal bodyguards, compares with the dishonesty of David, who said he had raided these areas when he had not. The contrast is intentional so that we see how even at this time of becoming king, David was so very weak spiritually. "Caleb" refers to Hebron, the town given him for an inheritance (Josh. 21:11,12). The man was his inheritance.

1Sa 30:15 David said to him, Will you lead me down to this raiding party? He said, Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me up into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to them-

To be delivered into the hands of his master Saul had been David's great fear for decades. He was now given an opportunity to reflect the grace he had been shown. And we too are given personal encounters and circumstances in our lives which provide us with opportunities. "Raiding party" is as in Ps. 18:29, "By You I advance against a troop"- surely David's later reflection on this victory. He achieved it by his single handed faith in God, for his men were bitter and depressed and wanted only to kill him, assuming all was lost.

1Sa 30:16 When he had led him down-

There are intended similarities with Moses coming down from the mountain and seeing Israel dancing in their drunken apostasy. That they didn't murder a single Hebrew captive is the more remarkable, seeing here and in :13 the Amalekites are presented in very bad terms.

There they were, spread around over all the ground, eating, drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and out of the land of Judah-

The language of being spread abroad upon the *eretz*, the land / earth, is used of judgment. They had judged themselves by doing this. And yet we note that David and his men had pillaged the Amalekite settlements and taken their spoil for themselves. The spoil the Amalekites had now taken from David's encampment at Ziklag was likely comprised of animals and spoil which had originally been theirs, but David had taken it.

1Sa 30:17 David fought them from twilight to the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled-

We note how 400 Israelites defeated the Amalekites, and yet 400 Amalekites escaped. The similarity in the numbers may have been in order to teach David and his men that they too had only survived by a hairsbreadth. They were to remember in the exhilaration of victory that they had only just escaped with their lives by God's grace in previous deliverances. And this feature is potentially built in to our experiences of success, if we will perceive it. We also see how outnumbered David was- he had 400 men, whereas just a minority of his enemies numbered 400 men. This great victory by David against a much larger force happened at the very same time as Saul was being defeated by the Philistines. Likewise David's consultation of the urim [and getting an answer] was done around the time Saul consulted the urim [and got no answer].

Through all the web of moral issues leading up to why the Amalekites had attacked Ziklag, God brought about an amazing closing scenario of Saul's demise and David's

rise to the throne. God likewise weaves His bigger pictures through all the weak threads of our own poor decisions, sins and failures.

1Sa 30:18 David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives-

There is double emphasis upon the way that "all they had taken" was restored (:19). It was all clearly of God's restorative power, that the Amalekites didn't murder anyone, and all was restored. This would have been comfort to the exiles, that God is able to restore, just as He completely restored the fortunes of Job. "Rescued / recovered" is the same word used of the restoration of the exiles from Babylon (Ez. 34:10,12; Mic. 4:10; Zech. 3:2). See on :19.

1Sa 30:19 There was nothing missing, small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken. David brought back everything-

"Brought back" translates the word usually rendered 'return' in the context of the exiles returning and being restored at the restoration. This amazing restoration, beyond all Judah could ever have imagined possible, was potentially possible through a descendant of David at their time. But so much potential was wasted by their lack of faith and preference to remain in Babylon, as it is for so many today. See on :18.

1Sa 30:20 He took all the flocks and herds, which they drove before the other livestock, and he said, This is David's spoil-

This seems out of step with Abraham's attitude when he rescued Lot, refusing to take any spoil for himself. It's recorded that in the ethnic cleansing which David performed, he took the spoil of those settlements for himself (1 Sam. 27:9). And now when he destroyed Ziklag, he took away their herds "and said, This is David's spoil". We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood and lack of integrity in hot blood (1 Chron. 22:8). However, the idea may be that the spoil was designated "David's spoil" and then it was this which was divided amongst David's friends in Judah. It would have been a huge amount of spoil, because David sends it to so many people in Judah.

1Sa 30:21 David came to the two hundred men who had been so exhausted that they could not follow David, who had been left behind at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and the people who were with him. When David came near them he greeted them-

LXX "he had caused them to remain by the brook of Bosor". This would mean that the decision to leave them was David's and not theirs. He had learned the lesson of Gideon, and knew he didn't need numbers for victory. It was the lesson of his friend Jonathan's victory, that the Lord could save by many or by few (1 Sam. 14:6). We may learn a lesson [and David may have been Jonathan's companion at that time], and then find our grasp of it tested again, decades later.

1Sa 30:22 But all the wicked men and troublemakers among David's followers said-

As will be noted further on :23, the situation here is intended to be analogous to that after Saul delivered Jabesh Gilead. "Wicked men" likewise talked badly of Saul after his victory and clear election by God (1 Sam. 10:27; 11:12).

Because they didn't go with us we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, just each man's wife and children; then he can take them away and depart-

David's attitude is a radical inversion of all this. He not only shared the spoil with the 200 who didn't participate in the battle; he went and distributed the spoil far and wide amongst God's people. In this he looked forward to the Lord Jesus as it were sharing the spoils of His singular victory on the cross. The Lord's words of how He would "divide the spoils" of His victory may be consciously alluding to David's attitude at this point (Lk. 11:22).

1Sa 30:23 David said, You must not do that, my brothers, with what Yahweh has given us-

LXX "Ye shall not do so, after the Lord has delivered the enemy to us". If we realize that the victory is the Lord's and not ours, then all self seeking or taking of personal credit naturally finishes. David is in fact exactly copying the spirit of Saul in 1 Sam. 11:13: "Saul said, No-one is to be put to death today, for today Yahweh has worked deliverance in Israel". David now copies that spirit; and we see his humility in being willing to credit Saul with something good, and even being willing to learn from a man who hated him and later went wrong before God. The men of Jabesh are perhaps other examples of being positive about Saul's earlier life (1 Sam. 31:11). He saw the spoils as what they had been given, by grace, and now what they had fought for.

He has preserved us and delivered the forces that came against us into our hand- David felt preserved by God from Saul and his other enemies (1 Sam. 30:23; 2 Sam. 22:44), because he had preserved or obeyed [s.w.] God's ways (2 Sam. 22:22,24; Ps. 18:21,23); whereas Saul didn't obey / preserve them and was destroyed (1 Sam. 13:13,14; 1 Chron. 10:13). Hence Ps. 145:20: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy".

1Sa 30:24 Who will listen to what you say? The share of the one who goes down to the battle shall be the same as the share of the one who stays with the baggage; they shall share alike-

LXX "for they are not inferior to us". The reference to staying with the baggage corroborates with the word used in :10; the 200 remained 'standing', standing guard, and not slumped on the ground. Again we note the contrast with how David values his weak servants, compared to how the Amalekite discarded his Egyptian servant when he was too weak to continue marching. See on :22. The word for "share" in 1 Sam. 30:24 is that used in Dt. 18:8, where the Levites were to have the same "portions" or "share". David's language choice was setting up his men to see themselves as a new priesthood.

1Sa 30:25 From that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day-

The law of Moses was added to in practical terms as situations arose in Israel's history. It was not seen as static, and this eased the way towards the idea that it could be amended and then abrogated by the Lord's work.

1Sa 30:26 When David came to Ziklag he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, his friends, saying, Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of Yahweh-

Note the intended contrast between friends of David and enemies of Yahweh. David is careful to show that Yahweh's enemies were the Gentile marauders of His people, and not Saul and his supporters. This matches the Lord's dividing up the spoils of His singular victory (Lk. 11:22); see on :20,24.

This action reflects David's faith that he would soon become king; he was paving the way for his return to Judah as king after Saul's death. So he has recovered from his spiritual low point of 1 Sam. 27:1 when he is persuaded that Saul will kill him.

1Sa 30:27 He sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth of the South, Jattir-
Some of these places may have been plundered by the Amalekites, since they had invaded the south of Judah (:14). The Hebrews of Judah would have received news of Saul's defeat and murder at the same time as they received news of David's victory and evidence of it in the presents sent to them. The timing was clearly Divine; for David was thereby established as the logical next king of Judah. "Bethel" here is the small settlement near Ziklag (Josh. 15:30; 19:4; 1 Chron. 4:30), not the well known Bethel in the tribe of Benjamin.

1Sa 30:28 Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa-
This is not the Aroer on the river Arnon, but some smaller settlement in southern Israel. "Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite" were amongst David's mighty men (1 Chron. 11:44). Perhaps David hid in the area whilst on the run from Saul, and these two men went off with him. Eshtemoa was a priestly city; it would seem the priests were largely supportive of David when on the run from Saul, perhaps due to Samuel's influence (Josh. 15:50; 21:14). Siphmoth was the home town of Zabdi, who had charge of David's wine cellars (1 Chron. 27:27). Those who supported him in his wilderness years, when he seemed a hopeless case, became exalted in his kingdom. And in the type, this is true of we who support the Lord Jesus in this life.

1Sa 30:29 Racal, the cities of the Jerahmeelites, the cities of the Kenites-
The record of these names may be in order to highlight the awful lie David had told Achish in 1 Sam. 27:10, claiming he had turned his hand against his friends and supporters: "When Achish said, Against whom have you made a raid today? David would say, Against the South of Judah, or against the South of the Jerahmeelites, or against the South of the Kenites". Racal is LXX "Carmel".

1Sa 30:30 Hormah, Borashan, Athach-
Hormah ["devoted"] is the Canaanite Zephath ["watchtower"] of Jud. 1:17. The strength of the Canaanites was devoted to Yahweh, and they were supportive of David when on the run from Saul (1 Sam. 30:30).

1Sa 30:31 Hebron and to those in all the places where David himself and his men used to stay-
The record has noted that some areas had betrayed him to Saul (we think of the men of Jabesh and Ziph); or like Nabal, refused to support him when in need. But clearly he had support amongst many in Judah, who had supported him over the years. And he remembered exactly who they were, and sent these presents to them- now sensing that Saul's end was near and he was to become king at least over Judah.

1 SAMUEL CHAPTER 31

1Sa 31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa-

It is really stressed that Saul and Jonathan "fell" on Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:1,8; 2 Sam. 1:10,12,19,25,27), using a Hebrew word which is often associated with spiritual falling. The fact that "the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons" (1 Sam. 31:2) gives the impression of them fleeing from the Philistine soldiers. This sends the mind back to the Law's warning that an apostate Israel would flee before their enemies (Dt. 28:25). Saul and Jonathan are described in terms representative of apostate Israel; see Am. 2:14,15; Micah 1 and 2 and expositions there. But the fall of Israel was due to the fall of Saul (see on 1 Sam. 28:19); instead of being the king who led to victory as Israel had hoped and as God had enabled, he led to shame and defeat.

Earlier the Philistines had 'fallen down slain' after David's victory over Goliath (same words in 1 Sam. 17:52). That victory had now been reversed; for Saul was the antithesis of David. And yet we have noted that David was spiritually weak at this time. All this was by grace alone, God's grace towards David, because He recognized that beneath all David's weakness there was a heart after His own. Fleeing before enemies and falling down before them is the language of Israel's punishment for breaking the covenant. But David deeply laments the falling down slain of Saul and Israel (2 Sam. 1:19,25 "the beauty of Israel is slain... how are the mighty fallen... how are the mighty fallen... O Jonathan, you were slain on your high places"). We enquire whether Jonathan had slipped away from the covenant, seeing he too fell down slain; he is strongly identified with Saul in 1 Chron. 10:6: "So Saul died, and his three sons; and all his family died together". The curious expression 'on your high places' suggests of course the idolatrous high places, as if Jonathan had been as it were sacrificed on the altar of his own preferred 'high place'. Ez. 6:4 sounds so similar, using the same words for 'falling down' and 'slain': "I will cast down [make to fall down] your slain men before your idols". We see here the danger of the Jonathan choice- to reject coming out for David / Jesus, and instead to choose to remain 'in the world' and appear as of the world, whilst speaking up for David / Jesus at times. It could sadly be that like many who have made the Jonathan choice, he was caught up in that world and suffered their judgment. Or it could be that we have here an example of how good men can suffer the results of others' breaking of covenant. Although surely it is far from God to slay the righteous with the wicked, as Abraham argued regarding Lot in Sodom. Whatever, David's lament for those judged for breaking covenant makes him even more a man after God's own heart- for the condemnation of the wicked grieves God deeply, and is never done with any smug self satisfaction or lashing out in punishment.

1Sa 31:2 The Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul-

"Followed hard after" suggests the Philistines chased Saul. Just as he had chased David. We could see this as him reaping some poetic justice. Yet it could be that even in these last hours of his life, God was appealing to Saul to understand what he had done to David, and repent. Saul had chased David up a conical hill- and then the arrival of the Philistines had saved David. Now Saul was chased by the Philistines up a conical hill- to death. Saul was being reminded of this, but not as poetic justice for the sake of it, but as a nudge to repentance. For God doesn't give up with man until his last breath, and it's only over when it's over. Likewise we ponder why Saul's sons were slain first, and then he was hit by an arrow (:3). That isolating him alone, having lost his sons [he would have perceived, although wrongly, that all his sons were slain] and therefore all hope of his kingly dynasty continuing, was perhaps also a desperate appeal for his repentance and acceptance that his "kingdom", his dynasty", was not to

continue. Or again, we ponder the word used for "archer" in :3. It is the word 'to point out', and is the word more commonly used for a "teacher". Samuel says in 1 Sam. 12:23 that he will not cease to "teach [s.w. "archer"] you the good and right way". Perhaps again there is a hint that even at that final stage, God was appealing for Saul to be teachable. So likewise we ponder how after Saul's sons are killed, he appears to be isolated alone with his armourbearer. And the only other mention of Saul's armourbearer is when we read that this was David's role earlier (1 Sam. 16:21). Was not this also a nudge towards thinking of David, and repenting of how he had abused David his armourbearer? We have no insight into the final psychological moments of those who die after falling away from God, but very likely His efforts with them likewise continue to the end of life. These are only hints, because God makes His appeals subtly and not in a way which would railroad man into repentance. For man is free, created free by God, and He ever respects that human freedom He has granted to man. To railroad to repentance is not His style nor His way in this world.

1 Sam. 31:2; 1 Chron. 10:2 read "Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua", whereas 1 Sam. 14:49 has "Jonathan, Ishvi and Malchishua". "Ishvi" may be another name for Abinadab; or we may note that the word means "and the second...", which would make sense in 1 Sam. 14:49. The genealogies of 1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39 also mention Esh-Baal or Ishbosheth; perhaps his name mentioning the "Baal" compound was the reason for its exclusion. Having such a name reflects upon Saul's lack of total devotion to Yahweh.

1Sa 31:3 The battle went badly against Saul, the archers overtook him and wounded him badly-

This was all such a reversal of fortunes. When the Philistines stopped the Israelites from having metal weapons, they honed their skills as slingers and archers. But now it was Philistine archers who wounded Saul. Tragically, David would use archers to slay Uriah. His words of Ps. 64:7 were being fulfilled: "God shall shoot at them [David's enemies] with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded". But when this happened, David weeps and laments over Saul. The Hebrew for "wounded" may also be rendered "and he was sore afraid" [s.w. "be in anguish", Dt. 2:25] . This is the final end of the rejected. Fear. Alone with none to help.

1Sa 31:4 Then Saul said to his armour bearer, Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through and abuse me!-

We see again the record present the demise of Saul and the rise of David. For David had earlier cut off the foreskins of 200 Philistines whom he has slain; "For Saul devised to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 18:25). But Saul now faces abuse [of his circumcision?] by the uncircumcised and will himself fall by their hand.

"Lest they mock / abuse me" were to be the very words of Zedekiah (Jer. 38:19). The message for the exiles was that their leadership had indeed acted and been judged as Saul, but there was hope for restoration in a revived David figure.

But his armour bearer would not, for he was respectful. Therefore Saul took his sword and fell on it-

This man, although close to Saul, had been influenced by the spirit of David who would not lift up his hand against Yahweh's anointed. He may well have been near Saul on the two occasions David had come close to him and had chosen not to slay him. We learn from this that there may be people who think rightly in positions we would not imagine. "Respectful" is literally "he feared", and David uses the word in 2

Sam. 1:10 in asking why the Amalekite did not "fear" to slay Saul as Saul requested. David appears aware of the faithfulness of Saul's armour bearer.

Saul was Yahweh's anointed, but he slew Yahweh's anointed- by killing himself. This was what he had attempted to do to David; and he ended up doing it to himself. And so is revealed a profound principle- that what we would wish to do to others, we ultimately do to ourselves. If we refuse to forgive them, we remain unforgiven. If we judge / condemn them and in our minds exclude them from God's Kingdom, we do the same to ourselves. If we wish our most difficult enemies salvation- we shall be saved. If we hate them and thereby kill them, as the Lord teaches- we hate and slay ourselves.

1Sa 31:5 When his armour bearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell on his sword and died with him-

Fair attention is given to this man. As noted on :4, he was like Jonathan and many, in that his loyalties were divided. He was personally loyal to Saul, feeling that Saul's death was his death; and yet also loyal to the spirit of David, in that he would not slay Yahweh's anointed, and respected him as that right up to Saul's hopeless end. We may well meet him in God's Kingdom.

1Sa 31:6 So Saul died, and his three sons and his armour bearer and all his men, that same day together-

To all die on the same day was tragic; and recalls the deaths of Eli and his sons at the hands of the Philistines. They died in fulfilment of prophecies that they must be replaced by a faithful priest, of whom Samuel was a potential fulfilment. The situation with the deaths of Saul and his sons was so similar. We see the same Divine hand at work.

"Many of the people" (2 Sam. 1:4) is no contradiction with 1 Sam. 31:6, where "all his men" refers to Saul's immediate body-guard..

1Sa 31:7 When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled, and the Philistines came and lived in them-

We enquire who is in view when we read that "When all the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that they fled... they fled [also]" (1 Chron. 10:7). The reference to Saul being 'overtaken' in :3 and 1 Chron. 10:3 suggests it was Saul and his men who fled. This caused the men of Israel in the valley to flee; and then 1 Sam. 31:7 adds that the men of Israel "on the other side of the valley" [a separate group] fled, when they say that the "men of Israel" in the valley had fled. It was a collapse mentality, led by the fleeing of Saul. David in 2 Sam. 1 presents Saul as gallantly fighting to the end, but he was surely imputing goodness to Saul. True to a man who disobeyed the covenant, he fled before his enemies, according to the curse of the covenant. And this led his men to progressively flee.

The valley of Jezreel is in view; it was the most fertile part of Israel. The translation may be better "on the side of the valley". The forsaken cities appear to apply only to that valley in 1 Chron. 10:7. "Beyond the Jordan" may mean 'on the river banks'. There is little archaeological evidence that the Philistines possessed the territory east of Jordan for very long. Soon after this, Abner proclaimed Ishbosheth as king at Mahanaim, about twenty miles east of the Jordan (2 Sam. 2:8). So these gains of the

Philistines were short-lived, and they lacked the numbers of population to really settle all this territory. But the impression is given of a total Philistine victory in the north of Israel.

'Forsaken cities' is a term often used in the prophets of how Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were forsaken during the Babylonian invasion. The 1 Samuel record was surely written or edited as comfort to the exiles- that under David their prince, a glorious restoration was possible.

1Sa 31:8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa-

The fact this was done the next day suggests the battle continued into the late evening, with Saul fighting literally to the end.

1Sa 31:9 They cut off his head, stripped off his armour and sent into the land of the Philistines all around to carry the news to the house of their idols and to the people-

This may well have been to allude to what David had done to Goliath many years before, placing his armour in the tabernacle; the sting of which remained with them. But the record mocks how they had to take the news to their idols; unlike Yahweh who sees and knows all things, and even before they happen.

We note they stripped his armour. His crown and bracelet was taken by the Amalekite looter whom we learn of in 2 Sam. 1. The man came to spoil the slain bodies, and finding the crown and bracelet, took them to David, hoping for a reward.

If Saul was stripped, it means his royal robe was stripped off him. He had done this before when he was in the cave, and when he went to the medium. He should have stripped off those robes and given them to David, accepting God's word to him that this must happen. But he refused, and so it was done to him in his final condemnation. We either accept our condemnation now, or we will experience it at judgment day.

The death of Saul was 'published' (AV) by the Philistines. But David uses the word in saying "Publish it not" (2 Sam. 1:20). Perhaps he means that Israel were not to speak of this tragedy; hence he kills the Amalekite who 'published' the news to him (2 Sam. 4:10 s.w.).

1Sa 31:10 They put his armour in the house of Ashtaroath and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan-

1 Chron. 10:10 says that they fastened the head of Saul in Dagon's temple. 1 Chron. 10:12 adds the detail that the bodies of his sons were likewise fastened to the wall. Herodotus writes of a great temple to Venus in Ashkelon. Clearly the Philistines had in memory how David had brought the head of Goliath to Jerusalem. They were seeking to as it were undo David's work and victory.

1Sa 31:11 When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul-

They had been saved by Saul in 1 Sam. 11, maybe 40 years before (Acts 13:21). They had total loyalty to Saul even now at the end, when surely it was clear that David was the king of God's choice and Saul had sinned and failed. Perhaps they set a good example of appreciating the good a man once did or taught, even if in later life he turned away from God. As explained on 1 Sam. 30:23, this was how David treated Saul.

1Sa 31:12 all the valiant men arose and travelled all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan, and they went to Jabesh and burnt them there-

Cremation was not common amongst the Jews, but perhaps they did this lest his body be abused further, seeing that they were under Philistine domination. But the bones were buried (:13) so only the rest of the bodies were burnt. Or we can read "Burnt for them there", the burning referring to incense rather than the bodies.

1Sa 31:13 They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days-

We recall how it was beneath a tamarisk tree that Saul had ordered the massacre of the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:6). Now it is his bones which are beneath such a tree.