

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: 2

Samuel

2 Samuel

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 1

2 Samuel 1:1

It happened after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites-

Saul was empowered to smite or slaughter the Amalakites (1 Sam. 15:3,7 s.w.), 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.

And David had stayed two days in Ziklag-

Ziklag was about 90 miles from Gilboa where Saul had been slain (cp. 1 Sam. 27:6). A fast messenger would have taken two or three days to cover that distance with the news. The record has every 'ring of truth' to it in the details. It is this internal, circumstantial evidence which is to me the greatest proof that the Bible is indeed God's inspired word.

2 Samuel 1:2

it happened on the third day, that behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul- LXX "From the people of Saul". We wonder whether the man was in fact as he claimed, an Amalekite who had been with Saul. For David had just been fighting the Amalekites (:1), and was near their territory. I wonder if in fact he was a local man who had heard or even guessed the news and had come with his own agendas. The record of Saul's death in 1 Sam. 31 contradicts the story of the Amalekite. But the Biblical record at times describes things as they appear to be. The NT language of demons is another example. However the fact the man had Saul's crown and bracelets (:10) would suggest that he was one of the wandering types who hung around battlefields eager for the spoil.

The three days journey from Gilboa to Ziklag has been noted on :1, but we note that David had travelled with the Philistines almost to Gilboa (1 Sam. 29:1), and had then been sent back to Ziklag, and it had taken them three days to get there (1 Sam. 30:1). The record has every circumstantial evidence of being true.

With his clothes torn and dust upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and showed respect-

Literally, he made obeisance, the word being used specifically for worshipping God. He was showing that he accepted David as the new king. We note that all arguments that "Jesus received worship, therefore Jesus is God" are flawed in that the words for Divine worship are also sometimes used about the worship of men; and this is a parade example.

The language here is that of 1 Sam. 4:12, where a Benjamite has the same tokens of mourning when bringing the news of the disastrous defeat at Aphek. I noted above that the man came "from the people of Saul" (LXX). Perhaps he was an Amalekite associated with Saul. See on :4.

2 Samuel 1:3

David said to him, Where do you come from? He said to him, I have escaped out of the camp of Israel-

This suggests the Amalekite was on Israel's side, and I have suggested on :2,4 that he was effectively a Benjamite from Saul's tribe and close to Saul.

2 Samuel 1:4

David said to him, How did it go? Please tell me. He answered, The people have fled from the battle, and many of the people also have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also-

"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. The report of the bad news here is exactly that of 1 Sam. 4:16, where a Benjamite reports a defeat in the same order: "The rout, the slaughter among the people, the death of the leaders, are mentioned in an ascending climax". This corroborates the suggestion on :2 that this Amalekite was in league with Saul quite closely.

2 Samuel 1:5

David said to the young man who told him, How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?-

David is skeptical of the man from the start, but accepts what he says at face value and judges him accordingly.

2 Samuel 1:6

The young man who told him said, As I happened by chance on Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul was leaning on his spear; and behold, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him-

'Happening by chance' contradicts his story that he had escaped out of the camp or army of Israel (:3). But David doesn't challenge this obvious contradiction, but rather judges the man according to his own words and claimed positions. Leaning upon his spear meant suicide; the contradiction was that Saul was utterly alone, and hadn't managed to kill himself by leaning upon his spear. There is no way chariots would have driven up mount Gilboa, which is a large conical hill surrounded by flat plains. It's impossible to think this man as it were stumbled across the scene on Gilboa by chance as he went about his business.

"With his spear in his hand" is the image we are repeatedly given of Saul in the records. "Leaning" is the word for trusting. 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). We have the picture of Saul with his last strength desperately clinging on to the symbol of the kingship. If he reigned 40 years he was now in his 60s or 70. To cling on to it was so pointless anyway. There is no necessary contradiction with him gripping onto his spear here, and committing suicide by falling upon a sword.

2 Samuel 1:7

When he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Here I am' -
This contradicts the account of Saul's death in 1 Sam. 31, and is a typical example of how a liar will fabricate details to try to make their story look first hand and credible.

2 Samuel 1:8

He said to me, 'Who are you?'. I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite' -
Here we have another internal contradiction within the man's story. If Saul wished to die not at the hands of the uncircumcised, why then would he agree to being slain by an uncircumcised Amalekite.

2 Samuel 1:9

He said to me, 'Please stand beside me, and kill me; for anguish has taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me' -
The man was perhaps aware of how David had spared Saul's life because he believed it was wrong to slay Yahweh's anointed. And so the man creates the story that Saul had all but killed himself by leaning on his own spear (:6), and the Amalekite had just helped him by putting him out of the agony of a bungled suicide. The story lacks credibility. "Anguish" is LXX "terrible darkness". This is the terrible darkness of condemnation which Jude speaks of.

2 Samuel 1:10

So I stood beside him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he had fallen. I took the crown that was on his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord -

As noted on :9, the man is trying to say that Saul was going to die anyway after having fallen upon his own spear in suicide (:6). In this case, there was no need to kill him, because Saul was going to die anyway in due course. The man's story is self contradictory. But David

doesn't raise any of the obvious contradictions; like the Lord Jesus dealing with untruths told Him, he takes the words at face value and reasons with the man according to his own words. And this is a pattern for us, not to be so obsessed with "truth" that we demonstrate the contradictions in the words of others, but rather taking them at face value and drawing the conclusions from those words. In this case, despite all the contradictions, the man was saying that he had slain Yahweh's anointed, and that was the grounds of condemnation in David's eyes.

2 Samuel 1:11

Then David took hold on his clothes, and tore them; and likewise all the men who were with him-

David accepted that the man's story was true insofar as Saul was dead, with the crown and bracelets being evidence of that.

2 Samuel 1:12

They mourned, wept and fasted until evening, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of Yahweh, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword-

We enquire why David weeps so sincerely for Saul. I don't believe it was mere theatricism, nor purely politically motivated by a desire to get the house of Saul onside with him in his new kingdom. There was something evidently genuine about his grief.

Ps. 35:14 is David's comment about his grief for Saul both during Saul's life and also at his death: "I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother. I bowed down mourning, as one who mourns his mother". This is one verse which to me is a cameo of the extent of the victory which David won against the mind of the flesh, against our massive tendency to repay sin with sin, bitterness with bitterness, anger with anger. If we take nothing else away from this, please focus your mind on this, and keep the memory: Here David protests his love for the one who was persecuting him (Ps. 35:12) and is reflecting upon his attitude to Saul's death. "As one who mourns for his mother". This is surely one of the most powerful figures that could be employed. Picture a young man of say 24, in a dark blue suit, kneeling down at the graveside of his mother, surrounded by friends and relatives, bowing down heavily in his grief. Or picture a man of 34, 44, 54, hair greying and receding now, bowing himself down heavily. Or even 64, 74, alone in his grief, bowing down heavily to the green turf, muttering words about mum. Perhaps some of us haven't yet experienced this; many have. If you haven't, just imagine it. Surely it brings a lump to your throat. Now it was with this intensity of grief that David mourned the death or sickness of his persecutor. This is a wondrous reflection of his devotion, his true love, his triumph over bitterness and anger, over all the human actions that had been directed against him. The heavy bowing down of the Lord Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem, the city that hated and rejected him, whose leaders slew him, whose people screamed for his blood. David wept for Saul as if he was his friend or brother. Who was David's friend and brother? Surely Jonathan his brother-in-law. But he wept for Saul, David says, as he wept for Jonathan. This is testified to historically by David's lament of 2 Sam. 1. And still David sought out the house of Saul, "that I may shew the kindness of God" unto them (2 Sam. 9:3). It was the experience of Divine kindness that motivated David. As he hoped for fellowship at the King's table in the future, so David delighted in inviting his former enemies to partake of his table, now *he* was king (2 Sam. 9:7,11,13). And if we hope to share the Lord's table in the Kingdom, we must share it with our weaker brethren now. I see in all this such a triumph for David, that a man should reflect the love of God to such an extent, to love in the face of such hatred, to not just love those who loved him.

The choice of a man mourning his mother, rather than a man his son, his father or his sister, was intentional. A man mourns for his mother because of the deep bond he feels now severed, and from feelings of guilt over ingratitude to her, lack of appreciation for her. And this was how David genuinely felt for Saul, despite all Saul's evil against him.

The deep sorrow of the Lord Jesus for Judas and all those who turn away is surely typified here. Right at the bitter end, the Lord still referred to him as His friend (Mt. 26:50), even though a few hours before He had been speaking of how the faithful few were His friends, and how He would give His life for His friends (Jn. 15:13-15). Throughout His ministry, the Lord had spoken of the faithful as His friends (Lk. 14:20; 11:8; 12:4). This was the spirit of the Lord Jesus in His time of dying, this is what enabled Him to go through the mock trial, the intense degradation, the bitter pain of rejection, without bitterness and the sin of unholy anger. To be like David to Saul, like Paul to Corinth, like Christ to the Jews, like God to us, really is possible. If that's how we can live, we will truly be in the new life.

We must however compare this great love of David for Saul with the many bitter words of imprecation he says about him in his Psalms. See on :23. Perhaps one reason for David's sadness was that he realized that his overhasty prayers had in a way been answered. We really must be careful what we pray for, in case we receive it. Many human relationships include an element of love and hate [hence women remain in physically abusive relationships with men who protest "love" for them], and here David's love finally triumphs over the hate.

2 Samuel 1:13

David said to the young man who told him, Where are you from? He answered, I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite-

LXX "The son of an Amalekite sojourner". The man has already stated he is an Amalekite (:8), so the intention of David's question was not in order to elicit this information. Rather is David implying that it was even more wrong for an uncircumcised Gentile to slay Yahweh's anointed king of Israel.

We have here a typical response to grief. Having believed the man's news, David goes into the first stage of grief, crying and weeping. Then the anger comes- and he takes it out on the messenger and kills him. Of course he could justify it by reasoning that Saul had earlier been told to kill all the Amalekites. But the cult of respect for the "anointed" had been started by David himself; there was no Divine command that one who killed Yahweh's anointed must be slain. At least David should have asked the man if he knew Saul had been anointed by Yahweh. But David convicts the man of a supposed crime that he may or may not have been even aware he was committing. There is no attempt to save, just a desire to transfer blame and a blood lust. So although the man was lying on some points and clearly wanted a reward for his news, David's behaviour was again hot blooded and disrespectful for human life. David's lament over Abner is similar to this over Saul, and the intention of that was to prove "Innocent am I, and my kingship" (2 Sam. 3:28). We wonder whether David's lament over Saul was likewise partly politically motivated, to stress that he had not slain Saul nor had anything to do with it, and therefore the Benjamites should unite with Judah under his kingship. The murder of the Amalekite messenger would have supported that narrative. Rarely does David's motivation appear totally pure. Just as his first recorded words were an enquiry about the reward offered, and then a comment about the triumph of God over the uncircumcised. So here with his lament and with the slaying of the Amalekite. And yet God looked at the positive in him. It's not that David was unusually hypocritical; I suggest rather it is that we have an unusually deep insight into his human character. But what is found there is actually typical of us all- a mixture of motives, with the good finally outweighing the bad, or the good seen by God over the bad.

He had just been fighting and totally massacring Amalekites and had killed many of them just days before, so he was psychologically liable to want to kill any other Amalekite he ran into. He failed to investigate further, and killed the man for having said he killed Saul- when in fact we know from 1 Sam. 31 that he hadn't killed Saul, and Saul had committed suicide. We note that David himself had only recently lied to Achish about his willingness to go and fight Saul and to kill Israelites- even though he hadn't actually done so. He had said that he had committed murder of Israelites when he hadn't- and now he slays a man who says he slew Saul when he hadn't. And yet David's words "Your own mouth has testified against you" (:16) are quoted by the Lord regarding how He will judge and condemn men at the last day (Lk. 19:22). Like His Father, the Lord picked out the good from David and focused upon it, and imputed righteousness to the rest.

2 Samuel 1:14

David said to him, How were you not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy Yahweh's anointed?-

We tend to be particularly judgmental in cases where we ourselves overcame a temptation. David could have used his hand to slay Saul and his own men urged him to do so, and would've done so; but David resisted (the same term for putting forth a hand upon the anointed is used in 1 Sam. 24:6,10; 26:9,11,23). And now he condemns to death a man who had done what he very nearly did, and what his own men wanted to do. And so the strongest condemnation for smokers comes from ex-smokers, and so forth. We need to be aware of this feature of human nature.

2 Samuel 1:15

David called one of the young men and said, Go near, and fall on him. He struck him, so that he died-

David had just slain the Amalekites with extreme brutality, slaying even their children so that none would be left alive to tell others that David's men had slaughtered them. David perhaps felt justified in this by Ex. 17:16, but I consider this was not David at his best. David still had that blood lust in him at this time. His slaying of this Amalekite could have been to demonstrate that he really was in lamentation for Saul's death and was truly sad, and believed that any who slew Yahweh's anointed must die the death. But his motives were surely mixed. He wanted to make a political statement to the house of Saul; and he also had blood lust in him from the recent fight with the Amalekites (:1). Not for nothing was he precluded from building the temple because God considered he had shed too much blood.

It seems to me that this was an over the top reaction, and yet again betrays a lack of value and meaning attached to the human person. There was no attempt to convert the frightened young man to grace, to the God of Israel. The summary slaying of Rechab and Baanah has some similarities (2 Sam. 4:12). We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

2 Samuel 1:16

David said to him, Your blood be on your head; for your mouth has testified against you saying, 'I have slain Yahweh's anointed'-

As noted above, the man's story had various points of obvious internal contradiction within it. But David doesn't dwell upon these, although he may imply he considers the man is lying about the details, but rather judges the man according to his words and intentions. This looks forward to how the Lord Jesus will judge according to our words (Lk. 19:22 alludes here), by which men shall be condemned (Mt. 12:37). The need to respect Yahweh's anointed however continues to our day, for we too are anointed, in that we are "in Christ", the anointed one, and anointed (2 Cor. 1:21). This deep respect for all others "in Christ" should impart to

relationships "in Christ" an altogether unique quality, a love so unusual that it is enough to convert the world (Jn. 17).

2 Samuel 1:17

David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son-
David is careful to unite Saul and Jonathan together; as noted on :12, he mourned "as though it [Saul] had been my friend or my brother" [Jonathan].

2 Samuel 1:18

(and he commanded them to teach the children of Judah the song of the bow-
Saul was slain by a bow, and this was to be memorialized in the title. Similarly Ex. 3:1-22 is called "The Bush" in Mk. 12:26. Or the reference may be to Jonathan's fondness for archery (1 Sam. 20:20), and his gift of his own bow to David (1 Sam. 18:4). David and Saul had a highly complex relationship, pointing forward to the complexity of relationship between Christ and Israel. Consider the way that Jewry initially accepted John's Gospel of Messiah, how soon after the resurrection thousands of the priests who had rejected Christ then accepted him, and how even a few hours before the crucifixion the people shouted out for Jesus of Nazareth to be their Messiah-king. These are some of many hints that there was a complex acceptance-rejection relationship between Israel and Christ. Saul and David likewise had a mutual love and respect for each other. After all Saul had done to David, David's grief at his death in 2 Sam. 1 is deep indeed. David taught all Israel to regularly sing that song of grief for Saul, and his zeal to demonstrate his forgiveness to the house of Saul is outstanding. Saul's sons and family were also involved in the anti-David campaign.

Behold, it is written in the book of Jashar)-
Literally "the upright", showing how David imputed righteousness to Saul as an upright one. But this book has significantly not been preserved and was not Divinely inspired; because Saul is not ultimately in the book of God's upright ones.

2 Samuel 1:19

Your glory, Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!-
LXX "Set up a pillar, O Israel, for the slain that died upon thy high places". Or the Hebrew for "glory" is that for "gazelle" and may refer to the swiftness of Jonathan. If the LXX is followed, we see David unafraid to break the spirit of the Mosaic law in Lev. 26:1; just as David at times acted as a Levitical priest when he wasn't one. The reference to "high places" suggests idolatry, and there is the implication in the Psalms written against Saul that he was finally an idolater. The place of his death was therefore appropriate.

2 Samuel 1:20

Don't tell it in Gath. Don't publish it in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph-
But all these things did of course happen (1 Sam. 31:9). We must read this as David's bitter regret that it happened.

2 Samuel 1:21

You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain on you, neither fields of offerings-
LXX "Fields of firstfruits".

For there the shield of the mighty was shamefully cast away, The shield of Saul was not anointed with oil-
Shields were anointed with oil before going into battle (Is. 21:5). The idea may be that Saul's shield didn't save him, he perished as if he had not anointed it with oil; but the implication is

that his anointing as king of Israel hadn't saved him. He had been rejected, in favour of David.

2 Samuel 1:22

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, Jonathan's bow didn't turn back. Saul's sword didn't return empty-

Jonathan and Saul's "bow... and sword" were used by them in the fateful battle on Gilboa. Does this mean that Jonathan was trusting in his human strength again? Psalm 44, which sounds very much like David's meditation on Israel's defeat on Gilboa, includes the comment: "I (David) will not trust in my *bow*, neither shall my *sword* save me" (Ps. 44:6). Or does it mean that although Jonathan gave David / Jesus his human strength, his bow (1 Sam. 18:4), but David gave it back to him, for him to use on his own initiative?

It is possible to Biblically reconstruct the battle of Gilboa, and thus to enter into the pathos of the whole scene yet more fully. Saul and Jonathan did not retreat / turn back, when the rest of Israel did (1 Sam. 31:1). Saul and his sons held their ground, slaying many Philistines. But then Jonathan was wounded by an arrow (the Hebrew word translated "slain" in 2 Sam. 1:19,22,25 means to pierce to death; crucifixion language), as was Saul. Yet they kept on fighting, until they were surrounded on all sides; they died "in the *midst* of the battle" (2 Sam. 1:25); they "perished" (2 Sam. 1:27), a Hebrew word also translated 'to have no way to flee'. They tried to flee, eventually throwing down their shields so that they could run faster (2 Sam. 1:21). Eventually Jonathan and his brothers, the cream of Israel, lay slain on Gilboa, and Saul then fell on his sword.

2 Samuel 1:23

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives- LXX "Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and the beautiful". Or, "loving and kindly". Saul had been anything but this, but it is part of love to impute righteousness to a person, to see them positively after their death; and this is why God's love leads to His imputation of righteousness to us, as Rom. 1-8 explains. The sense of this verse in the Hebrew is that "Neither in their lives nor in their death were they divided". But they were deeply divided in their lives. We see here David wishing by all means to impute righteousness to both Saul and Jonathan, even though he had suffered so terribly from Saul. We see here the measure of David. Despite his Psalms of imprecation against Saul, when Saul dies, he shows that in his heart he truly loved Saul and forgave him to the point of imputing righteousness to him. We must remember that when a man rails against another. The words are indeed sinful, for we shall be judged according to our words. But human nature is so contradictory that within there may also be a core love for the person being abused in hot blood. Thankfully God judges righteously, factoring in all the invisible things of the heart which man cannot; we cannot ultimately judge, and this inability is the reason why we must not judge.

In their death they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions-

We could read this as a lament by David- Jonathan ought to have quit the court of Saul and come out to David in the wilderness. But he didn't, and so he died along with his father and was not promoted to second in command in the Kingdom of David, as he and David had earlier agreed. And David laments the unity between Jonathan and Saul.

There clearly were many divisions between Saul and Jonathan in their lives; we think of Saul's upbraiding of Jonathan in 1 Sam. 20:30: "O son of a perverse wayward woman! Don't I know you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and the shame of your mother's nakedness?". The claim they were undivided may be somewhat more than poeticism and seeing the good in the deceased; quite possibly Jonathan did veer towards Saul as opposed to

David, and suffered for it. David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is extremely positive, after the spirit of the way in which Christ looks upon his dead saints (cp. God's positive comments on many of the kings after their death). Yet we know that Saul's death was in recompense for his dire apostasy. In that punishment, David observed, he and Jonathan "were not divided". This may suggest that in some sense Jonathan was too closely linked with his father, and was therefore implicated in his punishment. It can be shown that not all Saul's sons died on Gilboa; therefore there was special point to the fact that Jonathan died with his father in that way. David's command that there should be no dew or rain upon the mountains (2 Sam. 1:21) was to be picked up years later by Elijah, when he made the same imprecation against an apostate Israel (1 Kings 17:1).

Consider the following:

- The description of Jonathan as the son of Saul occurs a massive 23 times; the connection between them is certainly highlighted.
- Jonathan had Gideon as his personal hero. Yet there is ample evidence that Saul too saw Gideon in this light. Does this suggest that in his more spiritual days, Saul successfully imparted his spiritual enthusiasm for Gideon to his son in Sunday school lessons?
- Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam. 9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house.
- Jonathan was commander of the army (1 Sam. 13:2). When he gave "the robe that was upon him" to David (1 Sam. 18:4), he was effectively making David the commander (cp. 2 Chron. 18:9,29). Thus when "Saul set (David) over the men of war" (1 Sam. 18:5), he was tacitly going along with Jonathan's wish, even though by this time he had already heard the women praising David more than himself, and his bitter jealousy against David had already begun (1 Sam. 18:6). This little point simply shows the external unity of action between Saul and Jonathan.

This closeness in Jonathan's relationship with Saul shows the emotional tangle which Jonathan was in on account of his relationship with David. If we truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we are honest enough to come to terms with the pull of our own natures, we will be going through exactly the same. Our Lord 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.

2 Samuel 1:24

You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet delicately, who put ornaments of gold on your clothing-

It was those daughters of Israel who had praised David more than they had Saul, and this had been the trigger for Saul's jealousy complex against David. Samuel had warned that Saul would make the daughters of Israel suffer, making them his slavegirls. But here again, David imputes righteousness to Saul, a sign of love. And that is the same outcome of the love of God for us in Christ. Our natural desire to speak no evil of the dead, to speak only good of them [*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*] and to remember them positively reflects how God looks at His dead children. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of all His saints".

2 Samuel 1:25

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places-

See on :22 for a reconstruction of the battle. I suggested on :23 that Jonathan died not at his spiritually best. The reference to *his* high places could imply that he died at the high places where he performed idolatry. We note the elements of idolatry in the names of his children.

2 Samuel 1:26

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women-

"The love of Christ, that passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19) is clearly prefigured in David's feelings for Jonathan and the love of David for Jonathan. Despite many passionate relationships with women, experiencing the depth of human closeness more than many, David could sob: Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women". The Hebrew for "wonderful" has a root meaning 'separate'. This love of Jonathan was separate from all other love David had known. In this we see perhaps the first Old Testament foretaste of *agape* love, love beyond the *phileo* and *eros*. Emotionally and spiritually, Jonathan and David went way ahead of their time. David speaks of Jonathan's love in terms of male: female love. He describes him as "the beauty of Israel", "very pleasant hast thou been unto me"; and grammatically, "your love to me..." (2 Sam. 1:26) implies that the lover was female. These two brethren had a spiritual love for each other which totally transcended the gender division. In like manner, our Lord said that male believers could be His sister and mother. We are dealing with high things here. Yet the heights of the David: Jonathan relationship are set down here to challenge us to at least try to touch the sky, however briefly. And when David later wrote of how good and "pleasant" it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133), he surely had the pleasantness of his relationship with Jonathan in mind, and wished it to be shared by all his brethren.

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 (1 Sam. 18:1-6, see notes there). Possibly David alludes to this when he laments that Jonathan's love for him surpassed the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26).

2 Samuel 1:27

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!-

"The mighty"- see on 1 Sam. 14:45. David had refused those same "weapons of war" in his victory over Goliath, and he may imply that now Israel were to learn the lesson- and trust in Yahweh rather than weapons. Indeed "the mighty" is the term used for Goliath in 1 Sam. 17:51. It's as if David sees this defeat as a reversal of his victory over Goliath. Although "the weapons of war" were Jonathan and Saul, in the immediate context.

We note how David's victory song recorded in 2 Sam. 22 has many allusions to his lament over Saul in 2 Sam. 1. Saul is lamented as having cast away his bow and shield, he lost "the battle" and turned back from his foes and was chased by them, until he and Israel perished on "their high places". 2 Sam. 22 has David glorying in how he won victory on "the high places" with his bow and shield being blessed by God so that he never turned back from his foes and instead chased them until he had won the battle. He sees himself as succeeding in the ways Saul had failed.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 2

2Sa 2:1 It happened after this, that David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? Yahweh said to him, Go up. David said, Where shall I go up? He said, To Hebron-

David had been waiting to become king for very many years, if indeed Saul reigned 40 years

(Acts 13:21). To the credit of his humility, he didn't immediately gleefully seize power. He asks God whether he should, and where in Israel he should make his base, presumably by using the urim and thummim in the breastplate which was then in his possession. He was then living in Ziklag, which was in Philistine territory and not then considered a city of Judah. We again get the impression that David's ascent of the throne was completely at God's behest, he did not at all grasp it, and as a result of his humbly accepting God's guidance. This contrasts with the declaration of Ishbosheth as king. His Psalms are full of requests to be guided, for God to teach him the way he should go in accordance with His word- and as discussed often on Ps. 119, I suggest that word is specifically the word of promise that he would be the king of all Israel. David inherited a situation where Israel had just been defeated by the Philistines, and there was apparently strong support for Saul's dynasty to continue amongst his tribe Benjamin and the northern tribes. Benjamites had been favoured by Saul and they didn't want to lose that. And David had vowed not to kill the descendants of Saul and Jonathan. Yet there were some amongst them who resisted his kingship and would use violence against him in this... Only by waiting on God's providential hand could this be resolved and he is to be commended for waiting some years for the hand of providence to remove Abner, Ishbosheth and then leave the only other contender against him to be the invalid Mephibosheth, who as a cripple was unable to lead the nation.

God's choice of Hebron is significant. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all left the land [as David did in a way by going to the Philistines] but all were led back by God to live at Hebron (Gen. 13:18; 35:27). Hebron was God's intended capital for David, but he fell in love with Jerusalem and then claims God has done so. God went along with David's choice, just as He allowed Israel to have a king and for a physical temple to be built.

2Sa 2:2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite-

This notice seems to pave the way for the note in 2 Sam. 3:2-5, that David took at least six other wives in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. We could get the impression that David's spiritual life was in some areas in steady decline from the time he slew Goliath in his youth. And yet he died in faith.

The style of :2,3 is precisely that of the description of David, his wives and his men and their families going to Gath in faithless fear of Saul (1 Sam. 27:3). Perhaps the similarity in the records is to demonstrate how David's ascent to the throne was by grace. There are also many similarities with Jacob returning to his land after an exile, with his two wives. The Jacob-David parallels encourage us in seeing David as far from purely motivated, and being capable of living by grace and faith whilst also trusting in his own schemings.

2Sa 2:3 David brought up his men who were with him, every man with his household. They lived in the cities of Hebron-

Six hundred men with their families would have been a major group of people, too large to just settle in the existing city of Hebron itself. It has been estimated that the population of all Israel at the time was only 300,000 at the most, which meant that the 3,000 or so with David would have been the equivalent of a significant town.

We note these cities were "the places where David himself and his men used to stay / roam" (1 Sam. 30:31). The land of his wandering became his permanent abode; and there is some sense of that in the promise of the Kingdom to us. Just as there was for Abraham. And we wonder at Joshua being buried in the border of his inheritance, as if the idea was that he would rise again to inherit it. And we ask how it will be if the people of our suburb or village were to know that we shall eternally inherit that land...

2Sa 2:4 The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah- It was known that Samuel had anointed David king, nearly 40 years before (Acts 13:21). This was therefore an act of showing that they were in step with God's clear intentions for David, and we at times likewise have to make such demonstrations of being in step with the path God is clearly revealing.

They told David saying, The men of Jabesh Gilead were those who buried Saul- It could well be that they told him this in disgust or warning, expecting David to take some sanctions against them. But David does the very opposite, and blesses his enemies. For a major theme of these chapters is his enthusiasm to show every grace possible to the supporters and house of Saul, although they were his enemies.

2Sa 2:5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead and said to them, Blessed are you by Yahweh, that you have shown this kindness to your lord, even to Saul, and have buried him-

The people of Jabesh knew there was a civil war going on between the supporters of Saul and those of David. They had consciously buried Saul as a statement of respect, which surely implied loyalty to the house of Saul. For who you officially buried was a major statement in those times. And they receive a message of blessing from David. This was an expression of grace by David which was unheard of in the hard world of those days.

2Sa 2:6 Now may Yahweh show grace and truth to you. I also will reward you for this kindness, because you have done this thing-

David sees himself as showing this grace in tandem with Yahweh. "Grace and truth" often refers to the covenant promises, and David wishes them to receive every blessing of the covenant, and on the basis of that covenant accept him as king. He is giving a spiritual dimension to the kingdom he wished to create, based around a common share in the covenant. And that indeed is the only true basis for unity. David however suggests in :7 that the "reward" he offers them is to come under his kingship. 'Reward' or 'doing' kindness / good is exactly the term David's wife Abigail had used of what God would do to David on Saul's death (1 Sam. 25:30 s.w.). David was influenced by his wife's perceptive words. And as he realizes he had been shown such grace by being made king, he wished to reflect that grace to others, even his political enemies; a principle for us to live by.

2Sa 2:7 Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant-

"Valiant" definitely refers to soldiers; it could be that David was inviting the men of Jabesh to join his army. This would have seemed a politically dangerous move, to invite his enemies to infiltrate his own military. But he acted according to his persuasion of grace and his desire to honour what he had promised to both Saul and Jonathan; and finally he was blessed for it.

For Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them-

Jabesh was in Gilead not in Judah, but on the basis of grace, David invites these people to as it were become Jews, and come under his rulership. The Lord Jesus, whom David looked forward to, operates likewise. But David's grace was not pure; it had an agenda. He hoped the men of Jabesh would join him, "be valiant" by joining his army, and hold the land of Gilead against the Philistines. But instead Gilead became the base for Ishbosheth, so his grace at this time wasn't as it were successful.

2Sa 2:8 Now Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's army, had taken Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim-

This was about twenty miles east of Jordan, and hardly the most central place from which to try to rule Israel. We get the impression that Abner was using Ishbosheth for his own ends. Mahanaim means "two camps". It was a nudge at Abner's conscience, that by trying to continue Saul's dynasty, he was effectively dividing Israel into two camps. And he appears to genuinely repent of this when he considers becoming king and starts to move towards it.

2Sa 2:9 and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin and over all Israel-

From Mahanaim, east of Jordan, Ishbosheth could not reign in practice "over all Israel", so we conclude that this was what Abner proclaimed him as, even if it had little meaning in practice.

2Sa 2:10 Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David-

If Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21), Ishbosheth was born at the start of his reign. His name is elsewhere Ish Baal, but here that has been played upon, making a word meaning literally 'man of shame'. This would suggest that Saul was a Baal worshipper at the start of his reign. He had never met Samuel nor attended his sacrifices to Yahweh. It had been God's intention to turn around the heart of this secular Israelite to Himself, through the gift of His Spirit making him "another man" and giving him "another heart". He was clearly not chosen because of any spirituality, but in the hope he would become a parade example of God's transforming grace.

2Sa 2:11 The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months-

Sometimes the Biblical record is vague, other times exact. This reflects how God is not seeking to cover His back against critics. He is of an altogether higher nature than that. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). And 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty".

2Sa 2:12 Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon-

Gibeon was exactly half way between Hebron, David's capital, and Mahanaim, the capital of Abner and his puppet Ishbosheth. It's about 26 miles from Gibeon to both the capitals. That Abner "went out" towards the territory of Judah (Gibeon is only six miles from Jerusalem) shows that he felt strong enough to try to engage David's side in conflict.

2Sa 2:13 Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool-

The 'going out' as in :12 was to battle. The pool of Gibeon has been located, and it is in a valley. The two armies would have seen each other from the opposite sides of the valley, hence the suggestion to fight at the pool in the valley. Gibeon had a sanctuary of Yahweh, for it was here that Yahweh appeared to Solomon. Gibeon was where some kind of more permanent tabernacle was (1 Chron. 21:29; 2 Chron. 1:3). There was a "great stone" there,

possibly an altar (2 Sam. 20:8). Possibly the pool or [Heb. 'fountain'] was for sanctification, a kind of laver before that altar. Perhaps the idea was that this battle was in God's presence and He would give victory to His side. But He is never present in this kind of division between His people.

2Sa 2:14 Abner said to Joab, Please let the young men arise and play before us! Joab said, Let them arise!-

We get the impression from this that Abner really didn't want to see bloodshed within Israel as a result of the civil war he was now initiating; he therefore suggested that as with the battle against Goliath, the issue was resolved by a symbolic number of young men fighting each other in full view of both armies. See on :21.

2Sa 2:15 Then they arose and went over by number: twelve for Benjamin, and for Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David-

The choice of twelve could suggest that both sides saw themselves as the true Israel, and that all Israel, all 12 tribes, should be subservient to them. Abner's 12 men were chosen for their loyalty to their tribe; whereas David's 12 men were simply his servants, their loyalty was to him and not to any tribe. They are therefore described as his servants, rather than men of Judah. See on :17.

David isn't mentioned here at the duel, nor in the battle that ensues. He remains at Hebron and Joab goes there after the battle to inform David what happened. I suspect this was because he knew that human force and conflict was not the way to become the promised king of all Israel. He kept out of it because he trusted in the fulfilment of God's word of promise at His time in His way. The duel involved seizing the head or *rosh* of the other. David knew he was set to be the head or *rosh* but this would not happen by human strength. He believed the words of Hannah, that by strength shall no man prevail. We recall how the heads of David's opponents were all removed by God's hand: Goliath (1 Sam. 17), Saul (1 Sam. 31) and Ishbosheth (2 Sam. 4).

2Sa 2:16 They each caught his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together-

This is proof for all time that conflict between brethren is only ever a lose-lose situation. 'Falling down together' is the language of Divine judgment (Is. 31:3; Jer. 6:21; 46:12). The conflict between brethren was not blessed by God and was His way of judging them all.

Therefore that place was called Helkath Hazzurim, which is in Gibeon-
"The field of the sharp knives".

2Sa 2:17 The battle was very severe that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David-

As noted on :15, Abner's men are described in terms of their loyalty to their tribal grouping; whereas David's soldiers were simply his servants, their loyalty was to him and not to any tribe. They are therefore described as his servants, rather than men of Judah. And this is the effect which personal loyalty to the Lord Jesus should have upon us. All human labels fade beneath that reality. See on :31.

2Sa 2:18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai and Asahel: and Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle-

This family were from Bethlehem (:32), and would have known David well, as it was but a small village. We can imagine Asahel playing with David as a child. They would soon have

been aware that David had been anointed in Bethlehem, and were supportive of him for almost a lifetime.

2Sa 2:19 Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he didn't turn to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner-

We get the impression that Asahel was enraged and obsessed in slaying Abner.

2Sa 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, Is it you, Asahel? He answered, It is I-
The question was because he didn't want to slay Asahel. As noted on :21, Abner is presented as wanting to minimize bloodshed in that he didn't want to kill Asahel.

2Sa 2:21 Abner said to him, Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and grab one of the young men, and take his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following him-

This was an invitation to a duel, with armour; presumably they were running past young men with armour and not running unobserved by others. But Asahel didn't want a fair fight, he wanted to use his advantage of speed to somehow kill Abner by a blow to his back. Abner comes over as far more ethical in the conflict. He didn't want the bloodshed of civil war and instead suggested a duel to resolve it (:14), and he now does the same to Asahel.

2Sa 2:22 Abner said again to Asahel, Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab your brother?-

Again, Abner really doesn't want to kill Asahel. He is warning him, effectively, that he can just stop dead in his tracks and let Asahel run into his spear he is holding, with its point facing towards Asahel. The manner of death was really Asahel running into his own death rather than Abner consciously slaying him. Abner knows that Joab will then want to revenge Asahel's blood, and the city of refuge system was clearly not operative. And it seems Abner and Joab knew each other, and Abner wanted to forge a new relationship, face to face, with Joab; for this is how 'seeing the face' is used in 2 Sam. 3:13. Abner accepted defeat, and wanted to now move on in relationship. But Asahel was obsessed with settling some old scores.

2Sa 2:23 However he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner with the back end of the spear struck him in the body, so that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place. It happened, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still-

Abner has just warned Asahel in :22 that he can just stop dead in his tracks and let Asahel run into his spear he is holding, with its point facing towards Asahel. This was how close Asahel was to Abner, and was about to strike him to death with a blow to the back. The manner of death was really Asahel running into his own death rather than Abner consciously slaying him. He "refused to turn aside", implying his death was largely his own fault.

We note that Asahel "pursued" Abner and then after Asahel was killed, all the people "stood still", Heb. "stopped". This is repeated in :28. The people pursued but then "stopped". We get the impression that those who were stopped in their tracks by the wallowing body of Asahel, a young man in his prime now in his death throes, were like the people as a whole. There was a desire to stop on all sides. This is seen in many wars and human divisions. The path of peace and unity is what man subconsciously wants. Just as eternity has been set in our hearts. Man has a sense intuitively and subconsciously of what is right and it is the call of the Gospel to actuate that. We note the parallels between the two sides in :29,32- the leaders and their men both marched all night until they came to their home base. Man is in parallel with his warring brother. Unity seeks what is common- and membership of Israel, the people of

God, is the obvious reason to end all conflict within the body of Christ. "Aren't we all brethren in the same body?" ought to end every division.

Asahel was struck "under the fifth rib" (AV, "in the body" NEV); so was Abner (2 Sam. 3:27 AV) and so was Ishbosheth (2 Sam. 4:6 AV). These murders, of which David had no responsibility, are all clearly connected. The connection is that the possible contenders for the throne [Abner and Ishbosheth] were all killed in a similar way. It was by God's overarching providence, rather than David's use of force and human strength. And the murder of Asahel by Abner was likewise of God, in that it marked Abner out for a revenge killing by Joab. Somehow impossible situations work out, by doing as David did and biding our time and reigning in our desire to use our human strength... and trusting in the fulfilment of His words of promise.

2Sa 2:24 But Joab and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they had come to the hill of Ammah, that lies before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon-

The detail given is very detailed. There must have been some significance in it which is not apparent to us today; a reminder that the Biblical record was primarily written for its first audience and not for us. This means that there will be parts of it which appear hard to understand, or of less relevance to us than to the primary audience. Ammah and Giah mean "aqueduct" and "spring", perhaps leading us back to how all this started in :13-17 where the two sides began fighting at a pool.

2Sa 2:25 The children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner and became one band, and stood on the top of a hill-

This could have been an invitation to come and fight them. They were prepared to make one last stand on the hill top. I suggest Abner did this because he sensed Joab would not take up the challenge, and it corroborates the impression we have that he wanted the least bloodshed as possible. By offering to make a last stand, and fight to the death with no way of escape [as they were on a hilltop], he was really forcing Joab to either accept peace or more bloodshed.

2Sa 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour forever? Don't you know that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, before you ask the people to return from following their brothers?-

Again, Abner comes over as urging as little bloodshed as possible, and reminds Joab that they are brothers. "Return" is the word usually used for repentance. Although Abner had initiated the conflict, he seems genuinely regretful of the bloodshed it had caused.

2Sa 2:27 Joab said, As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then in the morning the people would have gone away, rather than each following after his brother-

Joab agrees that brother fighting brother is wrong. He agrees, but seems to want to save face by saying that he would have called an end to the bloodshed the next morning. Again, to save face, he may also be implying that if they had continued fighting, he would have slain all Abner's men by the next morning. Both sides agree that they are brethren and that fighting brethren is wrong (:26 "return from following their brothers" = :27 "each following after his brother"). Joab swears by God that he too was about to call a halt to the battle. We see here how unity is a question of both sides being honest about their deepest heart commitment to the same higher Divine principles. It is rarely achieved amongst God's people, but by the end of 2 Sam. 3 we have a rare example of where it seems genuine unity was achieved.

2Sa 2:28 So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more-

That is, at that time (cp. 2 Sam. 3:1). In reading the Bible we must be aware that Semitic writing presents things as they are true at the immediate time, rather than in terms of what is true globally or in the future.

2Sa 2:29 Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah; and they passed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and came to Mahanaim-

Abner and his men walked all night along the Jordan valley, northwards towards Mahanaim; because they obviously distrusted the peace deal with Joab, and feared he would again attack them. All the way through, Abner is presented as having more integrity than Joab, leading up to the tragedy of Joab murdering Abner by dishonest means.

We note that much later, David fled to Mahanaim from Absalom's rebellion. It was seen as a pro-David place. Yet at this point it was the base for Abner and the pro-Saul, anti-David faction. So it does seem that David's extended grace towards Saul and his supporters did win them over to him.

2Sa 2:30 Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel-

We note the continued reference to David's soldiers as his personal servants, rather than "men of Judah"; see on :17,31.

2Sa 2:31 But the servants of David had struck of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty men died-

Again we note the contrast between "Benjamin", who were loyal to their tribe, and "the servants of David", who did not consider tribal labels as important as being servants of their king. See on :15,17. The 360 men may be a general figure, as it was the number of days in a Hebrew year.

2Sa 2:32 They took up Asahel, and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was in Bethlehem-

Zeruiah was a woman; the father is not named. She is mentioned so often that we assume she had a large part to play in forming the rather unpleasant characters of her sons.

Joab and his men went all night, and the day broke on them at Hebron-

The two sides are presented as both marching all night back to their respective capitals. They were brethren, living in parallel lives, but fighting each other. And this is true of all the divisions amongst God's people.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 3

2Sa 3:1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: and David grew stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker-

The inspired commentator presents the civil war as it was, a feud between two families, who came from opposite sides of Jerusalem, only about 20 km. from each other. As discussed on chapter 2, David was waiting for God's word to come through for him and was not using his own strength. Yet he was made stronger and stronger, in contrast to how Abner makes himself strong, in his own strength, for the Saulides (:6).

2Sa 3:2 To David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess-

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. Thus He 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.

"Amnon" means 'faithful' and we might have expected him to be David's logical successor. But one great theme of David's personal life was his disappointment in his children and wives.

2Sa 3:3 his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite-

We would rather have expected Chileab as the son of David's most spiritual wife to be his successor. But 'restrained by his father' might mean that David initially thought so too, and was so restrictive of Chileab that he didn't work out that way at all.

The third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur- Solomon wished to imitate his father David in every sense; his own real personality only really came out in the Ecclesiastes years, when he took to drink, materialism, women and idolatry. It took the influence of his parents many years to wear off. David had weaknesses for horses (2 Sam. 8:4) and many wives; and Solomon followed in these steps too. Note that David had six sons in seven years by six different women, including Gentiles (1 Chron. 3:3). For Geshur was one of the tribes the Israelites ought to have driven out of the land (Josh. 13:13), and Talmai was sufficiently against David to provide refuge for Absalom (2 Sam. 13:37). "Geshur" means "joining" and such a joining in marriage to these people is another example of David's unwisdom with women.

And in addition to these, David had children by "the concubines" (1 Chron. 3:9). Doubtless Solomon reasoned, albeit deep within his psyche, that such behaviour was legitimate because David his father had done it. David seems to have over interpreted the promises made to him about Solomon and the temple, and assumed that his interpretation was certainly correct. And Solomon did exactly the same. The weaknesses of the parents all too easily are repeated by the children to an even greater extent.

This marriage with a Gentile was contrary to the spirit of the law (Ex. 34:16; Dt. 7:3; Josh. 23:12). It wasn't blessed, as his rebel son Absalom later took refuge in Geshur. The marriage was surely for political reasons, wanting an ally in the area of Ishbosheth's capital. For Talmai's kingdom was right next to Mahanaim (2 Sam. 15:8; Dt. 3:14). David had attacked, murdered and pillaged the people of Geshur (1 Sam. 27:8,9: "David and his men went and made a raid on the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites... David attacked the land and saved neither man nor woman alive; he took away the sheep, cattle, donkeys and

camels and the clothing"). As with his living in Gath and serving Achish, we see how facile and shallow are human political alliances.

2Sa 3:4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital-

The contrast of this section seems to be intentional with the note in 2 Sam. 2:2, that David arrived in Hebron from Ziklag with only two wives. We could get the impression that David's spiritual life was in some areas in steady decline from the time he slew Goliath in his youth. And yet he died in faith.

2Sa 3:5 the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron-

The birth of six sons, although these were not all his sons, is perhaps presented as a point of continuity with faithful Hannah who also had six sons, the firstborn of which had been David's mentor Samuel. Critics have raised the complaint that Eglah means "cow" and is an unusual Hebrew name for a king's wife. We wonder if this is a name that David gave her after a failed marriage or rejecting her as his wife. It's possible it is a name he gave Michal, who is otherwise unmentioned here. Although David's polygamy was less than ideal, his having children by his wives is contrasted favorably in this section with Abner's sleeping with one of Saul's concubines.

2Sa 3:6 It happened that while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner made himself strong on behalf of the house of Saul-

The idea may be that Abner exalted himself to be the effective leader of the house of Saul, with a view to becoming their leader in place of Ishbosheth. He was after all Saul's cousin. But the narrative continues to show that having recognized he was losing militarily (:1), he wanted to seek peace with David. And he uses the argument about Rizpah as an excuse.

2Sa 3:7 Now Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?-

This could have been seen as an intentional challenge to Ishbosheth, for sleeping with a king's concubine was an effective statement of having taken the throne. This is what Absalom did to David during his rebellion. Abner was Ishbosheth's uncle and Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 14:50) and was the logical one to be king if Ishbosheth was incompetent. He is presented as sleeping at noon and generally weak, so Abner maybe thought he was doing the right thing for Saul's side by taking over as king. It seems he did indeed plan to take over the throne from Ishbosheth... but he re-thought and decided on loyalty to David, to God's word about David and the unity of Israel. And David accepted that, suspicious as it would've looked.

2Sa 3:8 Then was Abner very angry for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me this day with a fault concerning this woman!-

See on :11. David had made it very clear that he would not slay any of the house of Saul. He had promised this to Saul and Jonathan, and was very careful to show absolute grace to them. But God worked so that despite keeping this oath, God all the same removed from the house of Saul all serious contenders for the throne. So Ishbosheth was not at any real risk of losing his life if Abner handed him over to David. It all seems to me as if Abner was orchestrating this falling out in order to provide himself with a face saving excuse to achieve unity with David, and as it were surrender power on good terms. It is not even clear if he did indeed sleep with Rizpah.

2Sa 3:9 God do so to Abner, and more also, if, as Yahweh has sworn to David, I don't do even so to him-

Abner was aware of the promises to David. I have elsewhere suggested that the essence of the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7 had been made to him at a far earlier stage. See on 1 Sam. 25:28, where Abigail uses the terms of 2 Sam. 7 ["a sure / established house"] well before they are recorded as being given. Abner realizes that God's promises require a man to be in step with them, and in a sense, to be the human channel of their fulfilment. And he is saying that he is willing to be that channel for their fulfilment. Abner consistently comes over, as noted often on 2 Sam. 2, as indeed seeking the throne for himself, but not wanting excessive bloodshed, and realizing that it would be better for all concerned if he resigned any pretensions to power. And here he demonstrates, despite his aggressive exterior, that he appreciates the promises to David and is not going to be like Saul and fight in vain to stop God's word coming true.

It's possible that Abner is referring to the same unrecorded prophetic word mentioned by David's men in 1 Sam. 24:4,5- that David would have the kingdom instead of Saul. We note Abner was with Saul at that time in the wilderness. And yet as with David's men, we wonder whether Abner just imagined this word. Because if he indeed knew it, then why had he been disobedient to it by fighting against David for the kingdom not to be transferred from Saul to David? Of course it could be also that this is all a statement of repentance by Abner- that seeing God had said this, he was now going to be obedient to it. His defeats had made him realize that he was fighting against the fulfilment of God's word.

2Sa 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba-

It was because David's heart was 'turned away' from sin, that God 'turned away' the kingdom from Saul to David (s.w. Ps. 119:37). As noted on :9, Abner realizes this and seeks to now work for and not against God's purpose for Saul. For God had promised to set up / establish the throne of David, and Abner is now effectively repenting of fighting to stop that happening.

2Sa 3:11 He could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him-

I suggest Abner was loud mouthed and crudely spoken (:8), but beneath that rough exterior there was a genuine repentance, and always a desire to avoid excessive bloodshed between brethren, as noted throughout 2 Sam. 2. We too need to see through the surface level appearance of some brethren to their spiritual essence.

2Sa 3:12 Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf saying, Whose is the land? Make your alliance with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you, to bring all Israel around to you-

Although Abner controlled more land of Israel than David, the answer to his question, according to the law of Moses, was: "Yahweh" (Lev. 25:23 etc.). The land was God's. So they should not be fighting over who ruled it. It's similar to how the two sides in the battle of 2 Sam. 2 both realized at least subconsciously that brethren should not be fighting each other. Unity arguments are accepted in the hearts of all members of God's people, but it's a question of recognizing this in humility.

The idea seems to be 'The land is yours'. But he feared the consequences of his surrender, and wants there to be an agreement or alliance granting him personal safety. Saul had slain the priests of Nob because their hand was with David (s.w. 1 Sam. 22:17); perhaps Abner wishes to say that now, he too was with David and disassociated himself from Saul's actions.

He saw that Yahweh's hand was with David in order to make him king over all Israel, and Abner now wanted to be working with that hand, with his hand in God's; and to cease resisting it.

2Sa 3:13 He said, Good; I will make a treaty with you; but one thing I require of you. That is, you shall not see my face, unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face-

We are left, intentionally, wondering what exactly were David's motives here. He may have considered that Saul's daughter's marriage was going to mean that her husband Paltiel was a potential contender for the throne, and he wanted to remove that potential threat by breaking up their marriage. But that would have reflected a lack of faith in the promises that he would surely become king of Israel. Rather I suspect this was done from motives of personal bitterness. He had killed men in order to get Michal as wife, even though he ought to have been given her freely in return for slaying Goliath. That she had married another man was an intolerable insult for any Hebrew man, and it seems in weakness David acted like a secular person rather than a spiritual one.

2Sa 3:14 David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, whom I pledged to be married to me for one hundred foreskins of the Philistines-

David was very astute and this nuances all his apparent grace to Saul's family. And yet the fact he was so sharply astute means that grace, which is so illogical, would have not come naturally to him. The desire to have Saul's daughter again as his wife was surely politically motivated. He was seeking to win over Saul's supporters, so resuming his marriage with Saul's daughter was going to help that. But David paid no attention to the pain he would cause her husband. Again we see his apparent grace to the house of Saul was nuanced by his undoubted political agenda. David may also have been looking for assurance that Abner really did have power in Benjamin and over the other tribes. If he could indeed bring Michal to David in relationship, then he would demonstrate that he had the power to bring all Israel to David. And knowing David's mixed motives, it's not too much to think that he wanted to hurt and punish both Michal and Paltiel. For to know your wife was sleeping with another man would've been hard for David to respond to in grace. David was clearly angry that he hadn't been given Michal as promised when he slew Goliath, and that even when he paid the required dowry and married Michal, Saul had given her to another man when Michal didn't go out to join her husband in the wilderness [cp. Abigail]. Paltiel's obvious love and affection for Michal is set up in contrast with David's heartless treatment of her, and him. We note that Michal loved David in 1 Sam. 18:20 but there is never any reference to David loving Michal. So it seems as David took Michal so Abner took Rizpah, likewise for political reasons. So although in 2 Sam. 2 David faithfully trusts in Yahweh and not his own strength, he now seems to fail and resorts to human tactics. It's typical of human faith that we can't seem to maintain it for long on a high level but always revert, at least temporarily, to the strength of our flesh.

As discussed on :13, it seems David felt bitterly the betrayal. He had actually paid 200 foreskins for her, and anyway Saul should have given her to him for slaying Goliath. Despite having many wives and children, he could not bear the thought that she was married to another man. And so he broke up an apparently loving marriage (:16) for the sake of his own pride and need for control. And he was to do the same with the marriage of Uriah and Bathsheba.

We note in 2 Sam. 3:1-16 David's bad treatment of Michal's husband, who follows his wife with tears in a most unmasculine but genuine response to David taking her from him. Paltiel walks behind her, when a woman in those days was supposed to walk behind a man

[cp. Russian 'zamuzhem', behind a husband, to describe a married woman]. Paltiel was publically shamed; the way Abner abruptly tells him to stop following his wife and go home is as if Abner treats Paltiel as a dog. He did this when he already had at least six wives; the information about his wives and children precedes the narrative about him breaking up Michal and Paltiel's marriage. Although David calls Michal his "wife" [Heb. *isshi*], the record calls Paltiel her husband [Heb. *'ish*]. This failure is then repeated by David when he takes Bathsheba and slays Uriah, breaking up a good marriage even though he had many "sheep". He was wrong in how he treated Paltiel. But his conscience didn't kick in. And so one sin led him to another sin, against Uriah, in essence the same but of far greater magnitude. We reflect how his taking of Abigail in 1 Sam. 25 also involved the displacement of her husband, Nabal- but by the hand of providence. It's as if David intentionally misread this as meaning that he had the right to remove the husbands of women he wanted. The progression is all so psychologically credible. David wanted to test Ishbosheth and Abner's loyalty [as Abner had formerly been Saul's general], and so he asked them to get Michal back to him as his wife. He clearly didn't love Michal; it was all for the sake of politics. We must be aware that sexual rights over a woman, especially the wife of another, were seen as a sign of political dominance and control; David lived in a culture where the politics of power were sexualized. We think of Absalom sleeping with David's wives publically. And we wonder whether his taking of Abigail was similarly motivated. This usage of women rather than loving them is what led him to the failure with Bathsheba. David is recorded as being loved by many people- Jonathan, Michal, Saul's servants, all Israel etc. But he is never recorded as loving anyone himself. Nathan's parable presents David as a man with many animals, representing his women- possibly suggesting this was how he saw his wives.

2Sa 3:15 Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel the son of Laish- "Her husband" reflects God's view that Paltiel and Michal were married. David's argument that Michal was his wife originally wasn't really accepted by God, because He accepts second marriages.

The request was made from Ishbosheth, who was technically the king of Israel, in order to prove David's authority over him. And it could be that Michal and Paltiel had fled from David to Mahanaim. But David's resumed marriage with Michal wasn't blessed; it all seems a very personal and political thing.

Prov. 18:22 LXX may allude to Michal: "He that puts away a good wife, puts away a good thing, and he that keeps an adulteress is foolish and ungodly". This reading would then be a justification of how Solomon's father David had put away his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, who had then married Phaltiel, a relationship Solomon liked to see as adultery. Constantly Solomon uses his knowledge of Divine truths to justify himself and his father, just as God's truth can likewise be abused today.

2Sa 3:16 Her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, Go! Return! And he returned-

Bahurim was about 20 miles from Mahanaim, near Jerusalem. We have the tragic image of the loving husband walking behind her weeping as she is led away from him. This was not only a breach of Mosaic law, but displayed a sad elevation of politics above others' relationships and marriages. It may be significant that her renewed marriage with David wasn't blessed with any children (2 Sam. 6:23). The record elicits our sympathy for Paltiel, and leaves us with the impression that David was heartless and callous when it came to others' relationships.

2Sa 3:17 Abner had communication with the elders of Israel saying, In times past, you

wished for David to be king over you-

The northern tribes had been supportive of David, as all Israel had been after the victory over Goliath. But Abner seems to admit that it was he who had persuaded them otherwise. He is now showing the fruits of repentance by undoing the division he had created.

2Sa 3:18 Now then do it; for Yahweh has spoken of David saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies' -

This was the Divine intention for Saul (1 Sam. 9:16), but Abner recognizes that now it had all been transferred to David. The interests of the nation as a whole, who had recently been defeated by the Philistines at Gilboa, were better served by David than Abner. For David had God's prophetic word on his side, and could bring deliverance. Abner had a number of options open to him; he could have fled to a neighbouring country, or sought some other way of resolving things with David. But he comes over as genuinely repentant, and honestly doing what he can, no matter at what loss of face, to bring Israel completely under David's control. See on :22.

2Sa 3:19 Abner also spoke in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and to the whole house of Benjamin-

As noted on :18, Abner's repentance was genuine. Having persuaded the northern tribes to accept his 'unity with David' plan, he then worked on Benjamin, Saul's own tribe, his own tribesmen. He spoke in their ears, and it "seemed good" to Benjamin as well as the other tribes to accept David as king. There would have been hawks within Benjamin, who were not persuaded; and some of them emerge in later history in rebellion against David. But Abner must be credited with bringing about a remarkably quick agreement that in practice paved the way for David to rule all Israel. And it was only he, as the effective leader and army general, who could have achieved this. "All that seemed good" may be alluded to in the description of another unity process between brethren in Acts 15:25,28.

2Sa 3:20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. David made Abner and the men who were with him a feast-

The feast was surely a sign of acceptance and reconciliation, an idea which is continued in the feast of the Lord's supper which we experience in our days. The twenty men would have been the escort for both Abner and Michal.

2Sa 3:21 Abner said to David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your soul desires. David sent Abner away; and he went in peace-

Abner had already secured the general agreement of the other tribes (:19), and now he wanted them to send representatives to make a covenant with David. This would have been a guarantee of their safety, and finally was achieved in 2 Sam. 5:1. The name "Abner" is stressed many times in :17-21, because this whole unity process depended solely upon him. His assassination was therefore all the more shameful.

2Sa 3:22 Behold, the servants of David and Joab came from an engagement, and brought in a great spoil with them-

"An engagement" is literally "a raid" and connects with how the men who would assassinate Ishbosheth were also "captains of raiders" (2 Sam. 4:2). There is some thread of similarity being drawn by the record between these men and Joab. The point was that they were all used by God in order to one by one remove the contenders for the throne [i.e. Abner and

Ishbosheth]; and so to providentially leave the way open for David to take the throne over all Israel. In this lies the significance of this otherwise irrelevant detail about Joab having just lead a raid.

Abner had rightly argued that God's promise to deliver Israel from the Philistines was to now be fulfilled through David (:18). We presume this victory of Joab had been against the Philistines. We recently read of how David divided the spoil from the fight with the Amalekites amongst Judah in order to demonstrate in hard terms his ability to save them from their neighbours, and we wonder if he did likewise.

But Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace-

Here we have the hand of providence; for if Joab had been in Hebron when Abner was there, he would have surely murdered him and the whole peace process would have been majorly derailed, likely leading to more bitter civil war. We can note from this that unity between brethren is God's will and He will work, within the confines provided by human freewill, to enable it.

2Sa 3:23 When Joab and all the army who was with him had come, they told Joab saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he is gone in peace- The "they" were presumably those who like Joab considered that David was again being naïve towards the house of Saul, and should have murdered Abner instead of making peace with him. Constantly we see David's belief in grace and unity leading him to do things which harder minded individuals found more than annoying; they reacted against it in the harshest of terms. Three times we read that David sent Abner away in "peace" (:21,22,23). This strong emphasis suggests the "peace" was of forgiveness. Abner had repented and David had forgiven him. But this kind of grace was unheard of for the likes of Joab and society of those days. In their eyes, treason against a king was a capital offence, and grace didn't come into it.

2Sa 3:24 Then Joab came to the king and said, What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, and he is quite gone?-

The implication is that David should have murdered him, and not let him go away in peace, with a guarantee of safe passage. We see the internal harmony of the record in that Joab's reaction here to Abner's being sent away in peace is in spirit so similar to his frustration with David over the death of Absalom (2 Sam. 19:6). We note the internal consistency in the record of Joab's character; another reason to believe these records are absolutely credible and inspired by God. See on 2 Sam. 20:10.

2Sa 3:25 You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you, and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you do-

Throughout the preceding verses, I have sought to demonstrate Abner's sincere repentance and genuine desire for unity under David. But Joab speaks as if he knows for sure that Abner is fake, and that David knows this too. Hatred of brethren leads to conspiracy theories about them being entertained, in the face of all evidence to the contrary. And then those theories become perceived as not only absolute fact in the mind of those who have nursed them, but they reflect their positions on to others, claiming that others in their hearts know them to be true. These ancient histories speak directly to the situations we encounter in relationships today.

2Sa 3:26 When Joab had come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David didn't know it-

Joab's desire to personally murder Abner was premeditated, and he bears complete

responsibility for it. He would have been given life in prison for this kind of behaviour today. But he was not demoted or disciplined much by David, because David himself, whilst strongly disagreeing with Joab's actions, failed to perceive the value of human life as he ought to have done. This is cited as a reason why he couldn't build the temple. And because of this, Joab went on to commit another such murder in 2 Sam. 20:10.

2Sa 3:27 When Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him quietly, and struck him there in the body, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother-

The language of striking in the body recalls how Abner had struck Joab's brother Asahel in the body (see note on 2 Sam. 2:23), although as noted there, Abner did not wish to do this. The manner of death was really Asahel running into his own death at the spear point, despite Abner warning him about it, rather than Abner consciously slaying him. Joab is therefore presented as far less ethical than Abner. As Asahel had intended to kill Abner by a blow to his back as he fled from him, so his brother Joab slew Abner from behind. And Joab didn't learn from this; he does the same to Amasa (2 Sam. 20:10). See on 2 Sam. 4:6.

We surely have here the excuse Joab gave ["for the blood of Asahel"]. Abner had done all he could that Asahel not die and probably only intended to wound him with the blunt end of his spear. Joab's clear concern was that Abner would replace him as general and second in command. Joab's later murder of Amasa was from similar fears.

The other contenders for the throne all died "in the midst" of somewhere- Saul "in the midst of the battle" (2 Sam. 1:25), Abner killed in the midst of the gate, and Ishbosheth killed in the midst of his house (2 Sam. 4:6). The idea is that there was some common Divine hand in the removal of these men, all by His providence rather than David's own strength.

2Sa 3:28 Afterwards, when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before Yahweh forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner-

I have sought to demonstrate so far that Abner consistently comes over as indeed having sought the throne for himself, but not wanting excessive bloodshed, and finally repenting. He realized that it would be better for all concerned if he resigned any pretensions to power. He demonstrates, despite his aggressive exterior, that he appreciates the promises to David and is not going to be like Saul and fight in vain to stop God's word coming true. I therefore consider David's grief for his murder as not at all theatrical, but genuine. And all Israel also realized this.

2Sa 3:29 Let it fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house. Let there not fail from the house of Joab one who has an issue, or who is a leper, or who leans on a staff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread-

This was a stinging curse for one who had been so loyal to David, effectively wishing his exclusion from God's people (Lev. 13:46). And it was an age when curses were believed to have real power. But we note that David doesn't dissociate from Joab; he remains in power throughout David's life. And this lack of real discipline means that he does the same to Amasa (2 Sam. 20:10). Disciplining others wasn't David's strong point, and he paid for it. Like all of us, he was a mixture of softness and hardness.

2Sa 3:30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle-

This was indeed the motivation, but additionally I suggest that Joab wanted to be seen as the king maker, and disliked the way that Abner was going to go down as the architect of Israel's unity because of his own repentance, humility and resignation of his own aspirations to

power. "In the battle" is perhaps added to show that any attempt by Joab to appeal to the laws of avenging blood was totally inappropriate and out of context.

2Sa 3:31 David said to Joab, and to all the people who were with him, Tear your clothes, and clothe yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. King David followed the bier-
The fact David had to tell Joab to do this shows that Joab was not the least bit repentant.

2Sa 3:32 They buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept-
This continues the frequent theme of David and his people being at one, sharing the same feelings. It looks ahead to the unity of the Lord Jesus with His people (see on 2 Sam. 5:1).

2Sa 3:33 The king lamented for Abner and said, Should Abner have died as a fool dies?-
We have here a lament song, composed and sung by David the musician, as he did over Saul and Jonathan. He sees Abner as a "fool" in that he had failed to perceive just how bad was Joab. Although Joab might have appealed to the laws about revenging slain blood, David clearly considered that they did not apply. For effectively, Abner had slain Asahel against his will and in self defence against a man literally aiming to stab him in the back. We could also translate "Should Abner die as Nabal died?". He insists Abner is not the type who had to be slain by Divine stroke.

2Sa 3:34 Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put into fetters. As a man falls before the children of iniquity, so you fell. All the people wept again over him-
His hands were free to fight and his feet free to run away; so he was killed by deceit.

The sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai [who was also party to the murder, :30] are called not sons of Zeruiah but sons of iniquity. It is the phrase used for the Gentiles outside of covenant with God (2 Sam. 7:10); another hint that David had been given many of those promises before the time when Nathan is recorded as presenting them to him. See on 1 Sam. 25:28. David laments that Abner was deceived into his death, assuming others had the same desire for peace which he had. He had been free to fight or run, but did not because he was deceived. Or David may mean that Abner had done nothing to deserve even prison; because David had forgiven him, and Abner had genuinely repented.

2Sa 3:35 All the people came to cause David to eat bread while it was yet day. David swore saying, God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or anything else, until the sun goes down-

David strangely binds himself under the same curse as Saul had enforced upon the people in 1 Sam. 14:24. We wonder why this was. Perhaps it was simply that he truly loved Saul, and had him in mind at this time of hatred against the house of Saul; and so subconsciously he alludes to the words of Saul, although out of context. This again adds veracity to the record; this is typical of language usage at times like this.

2Sa 3:36 All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; as whatever the king did pleased all the people-

This means that the people also were persuaded that Abner was genuine in his repentance, and had been honestly trying to do his best to undo the division his power seeking had caused. Otherwise they would not have agreed with David.

2Sa 3:37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to kill Abner the son of Ner-

In days of limited communication and the inevitable miscommunications this resulted in, it was quite an achievement to persuade all Israel that Abner's murder had not been orchestrated by David. The depth of David's convictions about Abner's sincerity was so great that somehow it spread throughout the land.

Politically, the murder of Abner was a stroke of good fortune for David. Saul's son was weak, and now the only other leader of the opposition had been murdered. Had David proactively tried to kill Abner, the followers of Saul would not have naturally come under his control. And then an internal feud, apparently about money or wealth, leads to Ishbosheth the Saulide "king" being murdered by his own men (2 Sam. 4). This chain of events set David up to be king over all Israel. But David waited on God to fulfil the promise that he would be king of all Israel, even if it took seven years after Saul's death. Despite David's political astuteness, his trust in God's word is indeed admiral. With Abner's death and Israel's acceptance that David had no part in it, David was now the natural king of all Israel. David's attitude contrasts with that of Absalom and the others who later tried to grasp the Kingdom from David. David waited in trusting faith for the Kingdom and he received it, in good measure. The others tried to grasp it in their own strength and by their own device; and failed. Likewise the promise to David that his dynasty would continue to reign (2 Sam. 7) was given to him by grace and in love, and David accepted it in total humility. The very opposite to the grasping spirit of those who later tried to take his throne. David is likewise to be commended for not just grabbing Abigail from Nabal, but waiting for Nabal to die by God's hand. This highlights his later failure with Bathsheba.

2Sa 3:38 The king said to his servants, Don't you know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?-

"Prince" suggests that David may well have considered elevating Abner to some position of senior rulership in the united kingdom. As captain of Saul's army, it may have been David's intention to replace Joab [who was captain of David's army] with Abner. This would have been another reason why Joab wanted to murder him. But the man's greatness was in his humility and desire for unity, built around the fruits of his very genuine repentance and hatred of bloodshed between brethren.

2Sa 3:39 I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me. May Yahweh reward the evildoer according to his wickedness-

This was the language and exact situation David had experienced when on the run from Saul. He was anointed king, but weak, and he had to leave Yahweh to reward Saul for his wickedness. But he now transfers all those feelings about Saul onto Joab. This was how strongly David viewed the hatred of Joab for Abner. "Weak" translates a word meaning humble or tender and which therefore has connections with Messianic prophecies- the same word is in Zech. 9:9, "Your king comes, meek...". David could be implying here that he is the Messianic king- the meek and "anointed king". Whereas the sons of Zeruiah didn't fit that description because they were not humble. They were "hard" just as Nabal had been "hard" (1 Sam. 25:3) but as noted on :33, they wrongly treated Abner as Nabal. When they were in fact the Nabal who deserved judgment.

Or we can read this as David saying that now Joab had made it so much harder to achieve unity in Israel. How now could they all be coaxed under David's kingship, seeing David's man and nephew Joab had just killed Saul's cousin Abner? We are indeed weaker without all our brethren.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 4

2Sa 4:1 When Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands became feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled-

I suggest on :7 that this fear was because they assumed David had killed Abner, and now would be coming to kill Ishbosheth and all his household. They totally failed to perceive David's huge grace towards the house of Saul, even though they surely knew about it. Their fears of possible human judgment were stronger than their faith in grace, and that is the theme of this chapter; and it is such a typically human failure. The language here echoes that of Saul when told of his inevitable death the night before he dies (1 Sam. 28:21). They perceive that God's word about David will come inevitably true.

2Sa 4:2 Saul's son had two men who were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin (for Beeroth also is reckoned to Benjamin-

The point is being made that although these men may not have been ethnic Benjamites, they were counted as Benjamites, and thus there arose the shame of Ishbosheth being slain by men of his own tribe. We note that one of David's mighty men was a Beerothite (2 Sam. 23:37). One wonders whether although David claims non involvement in Ishbosheth's murder, these men from Beeroth were in fact acting in David's interests. They play a similar role to the Amalekite servant who claims to have slain Saul, and in any case brought Saul's crown to David. In all these incidents [the death of Abner too], David protests his genuine non-involvement. But clearly these things played into his hand politically. We are left to conclude that his trust in the prophetic word, that he would be king of [all] Israel, was repaid by God providentially arranging all the politics. David is to be commended for not getting involved in the politics. And church politics today can never be a game played by those who think this will enable them to do God's work.

"Captains of bands" is literally "captains of raiders". Joab had just returned from a "raid" when he slew Abner (2 Sam. 3:22). There is some thread of similarity being drawn by the record between these men and Joab. The point was that they were all used by God in order to one by one remove the contenders for the throne [i.e. Abner and Ishbosheth]; and so to providentially leave the way open for David to take the throne over all Israel.

2Sa 4:3 and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and have lived as foreigners there until this day)- Beeroth was one of the Gibeonite cities which made peace with Joshua (Josh. 9:17) and was then included within Benjamin (Josh. 18:25). But they had been persecuted by Saul (2 Sam. 21:1,2). The murderers of Ishbosheth were therefore counted as Benjamites, but they would have had an abiding bitterness toward Saul. Their murder of Ishbosheth was therefore from mixed motives, one of which may have simply been revenge. And this would fit the context of 2 Sam. 3, where Abner was murdered by Joab from the same wrong motive. The impression is given of the destruction caused when men refuse to reign in their desire for revenge.

Gittaim is the plural of Gath, and reflects Philistine influence in that area (1 Sam. 31:7). Again we see internal corroboration within the records, so detailed and constant that the entire history simply cannot be a forgery of men, but the inspired word of God.

2Sa 4:4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the news came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel; and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame-

We wonder why this is mentioned at this point, as the narrative is about the murder of

Ishbosheth. Perhaps the idea is that now that Ishbosheth is to be killed, the only other potential king in Saul's line was a 12 year old boy who was a cripple, who had suffered that fate as an indirect result of the defeat of Saul due to his apostasy. In the hand of providence, all credible alternatives to David as king had now been removed, although not by his hand.

The explanation of Mephibosheth's lameness is given in 2 Sam. 4:4 as being that "his nurse took him up, and fled: and it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame". But as with the language of demon possession in the New Testament, we may have here an example of where an as then undiagnosed illness is blamed upon something that is mythical, or an imagined narrative. For there are reasons to think that Mephibosheth's lameness would have been a case of what we now know as poliomyelitis. To cause a five year old to have such spinal damage that both his legs were useless would require dropping the child from a great height. Casual dropping of a child of five years old is unlikely to cause this damage. And polio is often contracted by children around five years old.

His name was Mephibosheth-

Merib-baal (1 Chron. 8:34; 9:40). It could mean 'the shame of Baal', but there is evidence that Saul's daughter Michal had an idol and it is likely that even Jonathan was not free of idolatry. Idolatry has always been a besetting weakness amongst even the best of God's people.

2Sa 4:5 The sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, as he took his rest at noon-

This might imply that he was physically weak, perhaps handicapped as was Mephibosheth (:4). As noted on :4, the impression is given that there were now no credible alternatives to David as king, although this was not by his hand.

2Sa 4:6 They came there into the middle of the house, as if they would have fetched wheat; and they struck him in the body: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped-

This striking in the body connects with what Abner did to Asahel, and what Joab did to Abner (2 Sam. 2:23; 3:27). We see the connection too with how Joab killed Abner in the middle of the gates of Hebron, between the outer and inner gates (2 Sam. 3:27). Although all these actions were the freewill choices of men, there was clearly a higher hand working through them all, in the same style. The apparent repetition of :5 is avoided by the LXX, which blames their entrance on a sleeping servant woman, as if Ishbosheth's power was so weak that his only guard was a sleeping woman: "And behold the portress of the house was cleaning wheat, and she slumbered and slept; and the brothers Rechab and Baanah came unobserved into the house. Now Ish-bosheth was sleeping on the bed in his chamber: and they smote him". In this case the negligence of the servant girl in :4, resulting in Mephibosheth being unable to be king and continue Saul's dynasty, matches with the negligence of another servant girl leading to Ishbosheth's death. There are a number of such parallels, all showing that the resistance to David's rule was removed by the same higher Divine hand, rather than his own use of force.

"In the body" is Heb. "under the fifth rib"; see on 2 Sam. 2:23.

2Sa 4:7 Now when they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him, and killed him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and went by the way of the Arabah all night-

They did this presumably because they didn't believe or understand the huge grace which David was eager to show towards the house of Saul. They assumed Abner had been slain by David, and that he was now going to slay Ishbosheth. And so they thought they could protect their own heads by doing this for David, thinking they would ingratiate themselves to him.

And this is the reason for so many murders and acts of unkindness; a mistaken belief in the likely actions of others.

"Bed" is the same word as bier in 2 Sam. 3:31. The parallel deaths of these men reflects the hand of Providence, God's higher hand bringing about David's kingship over all Israel by removing all other contenders.

2Sa 4:8 They brought the head of Ishbosheth to David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold, the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy-

The Philistines in 1 Sam. 29:4 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.

Who sought your life!-

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). 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.

Yahweh has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed-

They wrongly assumed that they could do Yahweh's work of vengeance, whereas the whole theme of David's thinking was that it is not for man to avenge.

2Sa 4:9 David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, As Yahweh lives, who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity-

Compare Gen. 48:16 with 2 Sam. 4:9. What Jacob only learnt at the *end* of his life, David learnt and applied during his life. And we should likewise not be experiential learners, but learn instead from Jacob. David stresses that Yahweh had redeemed him, and he had not needed to take vengeance himself. He repeats this in 1 Kings 1:29; he was deeply aware of Yahweh's redemption of him by grace right to his last days.

David makes a similar oath in 1 Kings 1:29. He means that seeing he was under God's protection, he had no need to commit such murder and assassination in order to redeem his own soul. And yet David lied and murdered during his time in Gath. As in the Psalms, he is far too quick to proclaim his total innocence. Not even the Bathsheba confession seems to have totally healed him of that tendency.

2Sa 4:10 when someone told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead', thinking to have brought good news, I took hold of him, and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news- Surely the murderers knew of David's great grace toward Saul. The point is that their fears of

possible judgment for them were greater than their belief in the abundant evidence of David's grace. And this remains a tragic feature of many people to this day.

2Sa 4:11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house on his bed-

Saul and his family were hardly righteous, except Jonathan. But David imputes righteousness to them, by grace; and this was later to be his experience from God after his seen concerning Bathsheba.

Shall I not now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?-

David alludes to himself as the avenger of blood, as if he was the close relative of Ishbosheth, so closely did he feel towards Saul's family (Num. 35:33; Dt. 19:13,19). Again we marvel at his love and grace. But presenting himself as one with Saul's family was at the same time a political move, to win them over to him. We note that David slays men who killed a righteous man, Ishbosheth. But he doesn't kill Joab for killing Abner, whom he also considers a righteous man. Clearly he was not acting on pure principle, but with at least some political agenda.

2Sa 4:12 David commanded his young men, and they killed them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron-

It seems to me that David's killing of the Amalekite in 2 Sam. 1:15 was an over the top reaction, and yet again betrays a lack of value and meaning attached to the human person. There was no attempt to convert the frightened young man to grace, to the God of Israel. The summary slaying of Rechab and Baanah has some similarities. We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

The way he buries Ishbosheth where he was then living is proof enough of his further desire to publically identify with the house of Saul. It was not mere theatricism, nor politically savvy behaviour; but a reflection of his genuine grace and love for them.

Yet always David's motives are mixed- genuine grace, but mixed with political agenda and expediency. As we noted concerning the analogous death of the Amalekite servant who claimed to kill Saul, David's murder of these men seems uncalled for. They were on his side or at least not against him, but he seems to feel the need to make a point to all Israel- that he was innocent of the murder of Ishbosheth. And so he murders others to make that point. This seems to reflect a lack of value of the human person, made as he is in God's image.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 5

2Sa 5:1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David to Hebron-

This was to enter the covenant which Abner had persuaded them to make (see on 2 Sam. 3:21). We noted earlier that God had told David to go up to Hebron and it seems that is where God intended David to be king from. But it was David who preferred Jerusalem and possibly transferred that desire onto God.

And spoke saying, Behold, we are your bone and your flesh-

Eph. 5:30 makes the amazing statement that even now, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones". In a very detailed study of this language, Henricus Renckens concluded: "In Israel, in order to say that someone was a blood relation, one said: "He is my flesh and my bones" (Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9:2; cp. Gen. 37:27; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13 ff.; Is. 58:7)". This is how close we are to the Lord Jesus- blood relatives. This language could in no way be justified if Jesus were God Himself in person.

2Sa 5:2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. Yahweh said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of My people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel'-

The mutuality between God and David is often brought out. Yahweh was his shepherd (Ps. 23:1), and he was to shepherd Israel). All Israel recognized that David had always been Israel's saviour, and Saul generally had failed to experience the Divine potential for him to be this. The people may possibly be alluding to Gen. 49:10 "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs. To him will the obedience of the peoples be". And so the people gathered to David, the king chosen from Judah, the shepherd who had a staff. Although for them it now seemed so logical that a shepherd man from Judah should be their king, God's choice of Saul of Benjamin shows that He sees His purpose as capable of multiple different paths of outworking. This is why the interpretation of prophecy can never be conducted dogmatically, because there are various possible outcomes- depending upon human freewill response.

2Sa 5:3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Yahweh; and they anointed David king over Israel-
This is the covenant which Abner had engineered in 2 Sam. 3:21, aimed at providing total amnesty and assurance to all those who had once supported Saul. David had already been anointed by Samuel, but this was stating that all Israel approved of that and wanted to work with God's plan rather than against it. It was a covenant of amnesty and forgiveness, the past was to be the past. And this looks forward to the situation when the Lord is finally enthroned king at His return.

2Sa 5:4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years-
If Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21), this creates various chronological problems. Solomon, David and Saul are all stated to have reigned 40 years, and it may be a non literal number. Paul's argument in Acts 13:21 seems to be seeking to draw a parallel between Israel's 40 years in the desert and Saul's reign. Numbers are simply not used in Semitic literature in the literalistic way that they are in the writings of other cultures. To this day an Arab may describe a hot day as being 100 degrees C, when it is not that literally. But the Arab is not lying nor deceiving; it's a case of using numbers within a different context of language usage. Beginning his reign at 30 may be intended to recall how the Levites began serving at 30 (Num. 4:3), because David was set up to be the priest-king who would replace the high priesthood according to Hannah's song. And at times he clearly did act like this, although his failures meant that the potential was reapplied and reframed to fulfilment in the Lord Jesus.

2Sa 5:5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah-
Hebron was a priestly city and Jerusalem the kingly city, so maybe this is intended to present David as a king-priest, beginning his kingship at the same age as the priests began their service (:4). But I have suggested that Yahweh's command in 2 Sam. 2 was for David to be king in Hebron, but he chose Jerusalem [partly in Judah, partly in Benjamin] for political purposes and God went along with that.

2Sa 5:6 The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David saying, Unless you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in here; thinking, David can't come in here-

A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one

who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society. The lame, blind etc. were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the holy city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Lord purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God's service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn't work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here again is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can't do the works, but depend upon grace.

Defining the Jebusites as "the inhabitants of the land" may be another mark left by the inspired editing of these records for the exiles. Such explanatory notes would have been unnecessary for the primary readership. The encouragement to them was that restoration of Israel's fortunes was indeed possible, under a new David.

"Thinking, David can't come in here" continues a theme in the Samuel records- that human thoughts are so significant to God. This is what they thought, and therefore from the abundance of their hearts, their mouths spoke.

2Sa 5:7 Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David-

As often in the Hebrew Bible, we have a summary statement and then an explanation of how it came about. The contrast is with how Saul's tribe of Benjamin had failed to drive out the Jebusites (Jud. 1:21). Jerusalem was originally in Benjamin, but David's capture of the city made it "the city of David" and therefore in Judah. We see here how different potential futures could have worked out. If Benjamin had taken and inherited their possession and Saul had 'worked out' as he could have done, then Jerusalem would have been in Benjamin. We see here how God's plans are flexible, reflective of His great respect of human freewill and initiative. The "city of David" was not a city, it is defined here as a stronghold, and elsewhere the term is used specifically of the burial places of the Davidic kings. It was a hill southeast of Jerusalem. In the wilderness Psalms, David so often talks of Yahweh as his stronghold, his fortified tower. And we think of 2 Sam. 22:1-3: "David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: and he said, Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, even mine; God, my rock, in Him I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge. My saviour, You save me". But once he settles in Jerusalem, we repeatedly read of the city / stronghold of David, the area he built a fortification around, the "milo". Again we see his spiritual decline once he settled down and we must beware of this. He himself and his fortified home fortress was his own stronghold rather than Yahweh.

It can be inferred that the Jebusites surrendered when the blind and lame were so cruelly slain. There is no mention of any battle; and Araunah the Jebusite is living and owning part of the future temple mount nearby at the time of 2 Sam. 24.

2Sa 5:8 David said on that day, Whoever strikes the Jebusites, let him get up to the watercourse, and strike the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul. Therefore they say, The blind and the lame can't come into the house-

See on :6. The Hebrew is difficult but seems to allude to how the Jebusites mocked the Hebrews, thinking that their high elevation was such that the blind and lame could repel any attackers. If David was indeed Jonathan's armourbearer in 1 Sam. 14, he would have seen how God had punished the pride of the Philistines when they thought likewise. For Jonathan had shinned up an almost vertical cliff, with the Philistines mocking him- and slew them. This inspired David with the possibility that someone of similar faith and bravery could climb

up the sewer line into Zion and do the same. Jonathan's example, from some decades earlier, inspired faith in this later situation. And so will all Godly examples. The fact it was Joab who rose up to this example (see 1 Chron.) means that he must surely have had some faith as well as bravery, despite his rather unspiritual ways.

But the Hebrew of David's words here read like a kind of song, which could be translated:

Whosoever smites the Jebusite,
let him hurl down the precipice
both the lame and the blind,
hated of David's soul.

We sense here a bitterness and lack of respect of the human person, which maybe resulted in his not being allowed to build the temple later. To murder the handicapped was unethical, but David's bitterness and desire for power led him to command it. Hence LXX "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusite, let him slay with the sword both the lame and the blind who hate David's soul".

There are echoes of Saul's offer at the time of the fight with Goliath. Chronicles records: "Whosoever smites the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain". And thus Joab was restored to being chief of the army.

We note that the exclusion of blind and lame in Lev. 21:18-20 only applied to "the seed of Aaron" not being able to officiate with sacrifices. And lame and blind sacrifices weren't to be offered (Dt. 15:21). But this is being twisted by David's extremism and anger issues into a general prohibition of lame and blind people coming into sacred space. The Jebusites were making typical pre-battle taunts- and David falls deeply for it. The words lodged in him and he got furiously angry. But Lev. 21:21,22 was clear that disabled priests were allowed to eat the holy things although not to offer them: "he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. He *shall* eat the food of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy". That holy food was to be eaten in the holy place, beside the altar (Lev. 6:16,26; 7:6; 10:12,13; 24:9- all very different from the attitudes of other religions at the time which stigmatized disability and wouldn't have allowed any disabled priests). So David was quite wrong to demand that no disabled person come into the temple. The Lord healed the blind and lame and allowed them to enter the temple, as if undoing this whole law and principle (Mt. 21:14 "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them"). Jacob was lame but Yahweh is so often stated to be his God. There is no grace in David's position, nor in those who upheld it. The reason is given that the lame and blind were hated of David's soul. Hardly a great basis morally. And yet, as ever, David's feelings are nuanced- because he shows huge grace to the lame Mephibosheth and has him live within his house and eat at his table (2 Sam. 9:13). We all have these contradictory feelings and positions, where anger struggles against grace. We think of his expressed hatred for Saul in the Psalms, and yet his love and grace to him in practice. This is not the same as hypocrisy, it is what it is to be a spiritually flawed human. And the promise of the new covenant is that specifically the blind and lame are those who will come to Zion: "I will bring them in from the northland, gather them from the ends of the earth—the blind and the lame among them, those with child together with those in labour—in a vast throng they shall return here" (Jer. 31:7). Indeed the law of Moses taught respect for the disabled- the deaf were not to be reviled, and no stumbling hazard placed where blind people were (Lev. 19:14), because "I am Yahweh". David's attitude is completely opposite to this; he is presented as plain wrong right from the get go of his establishment in Zion. But soon after he receives the amazing grace of the promises of 2 Sam. 7. Rather like directly after Abraham and Isaac are weak in faith regarding their wives- they receive the promises and material blessings.

2Sa 5:9 David lived in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. David built around from Millo and inward-

Jerusalem was particularly loved by David. He thereby moved the city into Judah's possession from Benjamin's; see on :7. Chronicles adds: "And Joab repaired the rest of the city".

2Sa 5:10 David grew greater and greater; for Yahweh, the God of Armies, was with him-

This is the same phrase as used in David's protestation of humility in Ps. 131:1: "Nor do I concern myself with great matters, or things too wonderful for me". 'To go' ["concern myself"] with 'great things' is the phrase used of David here in 2 Sam. 5:10; he "went on [s.w. "concern myself"] and grew great" [s.w. "with great matters"]. So the idea of Ps. 131:1 may be that David didn't pay attention to these things so as not to become proud. And yet this humility was mixed with the bitterness noted on :8. We are all strange mixtures of spiritual strength and weakness.

2Sa 5:11 Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, carpenters and masons; and they built David a house-

The way Solomon also used him, or probably another Hiram, for the same trees reflects again how Solomon sought to live out his father. But he had no real spirituality, and over time he revealed that he had no personal faith, turning away to idols in his old age and coming to the nihilism of Ecclesiastes.

Psalm 30 was written at the dedication of a house by David, and we assume it was this house. But that Psalm reveals David had been very ill. He seems not to have had robust health although he was physically strong and lived a long life. There is ample evidence for a breakdown of his health after the sin with Bathsheba.

2Sa 5:12 David perceived that Yahweh had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake-

He realized that the promises of Samuel so long ago had finally come true, despite all the times when it had seemed they could not come true (see on 1 Sam. 27:1). But this sense of fulfilment led him to take yet more wives (:13), which is surely to be read negatively in spiritual terms. Yet he realized that his establishment was located in a wider context than just for himself; it was for the sake of His people Israel.

2Sa 5:13 David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron; and there were more sons and daughters born to David-

See on :12. This is hard to read in a positive light spiritually; for Israel's king was not to multiply wives (Dt. 17:17). He seemed to feel the need to prove himself established by having more wives and children, but this was itself a failure to appreciate that Yahweh had established him (:12). He did perceive this, but only on one level. David in Ps. 119 says that he studied God's law day and night. But he like us can miss the totally obvious and filter out the direct personal relevance. David was acting as monarchs did- having children by women from his chosen capital city, to establish his dynasty and establish himself as king there. Yet by doing this, David is breaking Divine principle by marrying multiple wives, for the sake of his political agenda rather than love marriage. And if the women were from Jerusalem, they were likely Gentiles / Jebusites as Jerusalem had not been in Israel's hands in recent times.

This is all the backdrop to God's statement to David in 2 Sam. 7 that He is going to establish David's dynasty eternally. Kings typically built a temple to their patron god and David also wanted to do this. But Yahweh wants none of that. He doesn't turn away from

David over his human efforts to establish himself, but rather by grace He gives David amazing promises to show that *He* will establish David and his dynasty and kingdom ("Yahweh Himself will establish your house / family", 2 Sam. 7:11; "I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations", Ps. 89:4.). And it will be God's Kingdom, not simply David's. We too face many temptations to legitimate and establish ourselves, to prove ourselves in society, especially with regard to family life and inheritances. People give their whole lives to establishing a 'successful' family, to own property, to prove yourself and show you have done something 'permanent' as you passed briefly through this world. Men name their lands and homes after themselves. But it is God who legitimates man, and He does so eternally and not through visible achievement in this life. Be it owning a property, or as in David's case, having wives and children from Jerusalem. Yahweh stresses *He* will make David's name great- not David nor any man making their own name great (2 Sam. 7:9). Man in his youth wants to legitimate himself by leaving the parental home, having his own property and family, carving out his own career and life path. And in later life, he seeks to create a family brand, and leave an inheritance to his well set up children. David was the same and he tried to do so on a large scale, involving being less than moral in his actions. The promises to him about God's legitimization of him and establishment of his "house" addressed all of this- he was to understand that God would legitimate him and establish him, not his own strength and wit. And like the promises to Abraham, which include the same things, they were given to David unconditionally without conditions nor any comment as to his worthiness to receive them. They came to him from out of left field. If his seed failed, the seed would be punished but the covenant would not be broken- love, *chesed*, the love and bond of the covenant, would not be withdrawn: "When / if he commits iniquity, I will punish him with the rod of humans, with floggings inflicted by people. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you" (2 Sam. 7:14-16). Likewise Ps. 89:31-34: "If they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges; but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips". The love would "never" [2 Sam. 7], not ever, be removed- and therefore the covenant was for ever eternal: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). This is indeed amazing grace; an eternal unconditional commitment to David and his seed. David's seed were going to be a non negotiable part of God's purpose for ever. All this was way more than establishing David's family in the short term, as David had spent so much effort to do. We who all struggle to legitimate ourselves in this world are likewise hugely challenged by the same covenant grace. The language of the Davidic covenant mirrors by contrast the situation with Saul- who was given the covenant but it and the Spirit were withdrawn from him. Saul's sins led to the end of covenant relationship, but David's sins didn't. David realizes on one level that Yahweh alone by grace has established his kingdom (:12)- just as do those who pay lip service to God's grace and establishment of them. And yet at the very same time, he goes helter skelter to establish his kingdom in his own strength.

2Sa 5:14 These are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon-

These were the sons of Bathsheba. We note that they had a son called Nathan, perhaps in respect of the prophet of that name who had rebuked David for his sin with Bathsheba. And it was through him that the Lord Jesus was descended back to David (Lk. 3:31). Birth "in Jerusalem" was seen as legitimizing a great man in his home city; we think of the similar

comment in 2 Sam. 21:22 "These four were born to the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David".

The account of bringing the ark to Zion is prefaced by this record of David's sons who were born in Jerusalem. But we read nothing further about them. This could all be read as part of David's attempt to establish his own dynasty in Zion, which God responded to in 2 Sam. 7 by saying that He would establish David's Kingdom in His own way, through David's seed, the Lord Jesus. Ps. 87:5 expresses David's misunderstanding that physical birth in Zion meant Yahweh's establishment: "Yes, of Zion it will be said, This one and that one was born in her; the Most High Himself will establish her". Likewise in Ps. 132:17 David puts words in God's mouth: "There [in Zion / Jerusalem] will I make the horn of David to bud". But the budding of David's horn was fulfilled by God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the great "son of David", rather than in David having many sons in Jerusalem. The promises of Divine establishment of David's dynasty through the Lord Jesus were therefore a corrective to David's thinking about establishing his dynasty in his own strength.

2Sa 5:15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia-

We know nothing of these sons, nor indeed of most of David's children. This would indicate perhaps that David was not a very good spiritual father to his children. And that, as noted above, his attempts at self-legitimization in Jerusalem were not at all spiritually blessed.

2Sa 5:16 Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet-

The lists in 1 Chron. 3:5-8; 14:4-7 also mention two more sons, Eliphalet or Elpalet and Nogah. Perhaps they are omitted here because they died in infancy, and that the second Eliphalet was named after his dead brother.

2Sa 5:17 When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the stronghold- They must have felt bitterly betrayed by David. He had lived with them in Ziklag and Gath for some time and claimed he was on their side against Judah. His lack of integrity would have deeply riled them, and was a poor advertisement for the God of Israel.

The stronghold in view may have been the cave of Adullam (2 Sam. 23:13,14), where God had previously delivered David from Saul. Perhaps he went there to pray. It was at this time that he wished to drink of the water from the well in Bethlehem, and his men broke risked their lives to get it for him. We see the extent of their dominance, in that they had overrun Bethlehem, David's home village, and placed a garrison in it (2 Sam. 23:14).

2Sa 5:18 Now the Philistines had come and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim-

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 Jonathan's early adventure of faith. This would be understandable if he had been Jonathan's armourbearer in that incident. Situations repeat in our lives; what we learn in youth becomes tested later on in life.

They perhaps chose the valley of the giants as the battleground because they still recalled his victory over Goliath, and wanted to reverse it.

2Sa 5:19 David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand? Yahweh said to David, Go up; for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into your hand-

This recalls how he asked Yahweh when Saul died whether he should go into Judah, and to which city there. A man of lesser humility and closeness to God would have just gone ahead with assumptions he was right. His questions also recall the questions he asked [and answers

received] about the situation in Keilah (1 Sam. 23:11,12). He retained this desire for guidance, and showed he had learned from his previous experiences. "Teach me Your way" was definitely David's credo and reflects humility. For so often we read of David asking for guidance (1 Sam. 23:2; 2 Sam. 2:1).

2Sa 5:20 David came to Baal Perazim, and David struck them there; and he said, Yahweh has broken my enemies before me, like the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim-

Perhaps there was a literal flash flood sent by God. This means the place of breaches. What happened has been explained as follows: "It was the rocky height on the north of the valley of Rephaim. David must, therefore, have stolen round the army of the Philistines, creeping, probably by night, up to this ridge of Ben-Hinnom, and thence at the dawn of day have rushed down upon the camp. And his onset was sudden and irresistible, like the rush of the waters of some mountain lake when, swollen with rains, it bursts through the opposing dam, and carries hasty destruction to everything that lies in its way". This means that just like the second attack, David circled around and came at the Philistines from behind (:23). But this is exactly how a dog attacks. David in his low moments had felt himself as a desert dog (1 Sam. 17:44 LXX; 24:14). When we are weak, then we are strong. Perhaps God played along with David's low feelings by saying that if he indeed felt as a dog, then He would use him to achieve victory as a dog does. This is not to justify David's view of himself, but to show rather how God interacts with man in a mutual way.

2Sa 5:21 They left their images there; and David and his men took them away-

They should have destroyed them, according to the law of Moses which David professed such love for in Ps. 119. Perhaps they justified it by saying they were doing to the Philistines as they had done to the ark; for the Philistines took the ark as a sign they had triumphed over Israel's God. But Yahweh clearly punished them for that, and David's men might have boasted that the Philistine gods didn't do that to them. Such is the quasi spiritual reasoning of our flesh. 1 Chron. 14:12 however explains that finally, they were burnt.

2Sa 5:22 The Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim-
This was soon afterwards, implying David's men hadn't slain that many of the Philistines.

2Sa 5:23 When David inquired of Yahweh, He said, You shall not go up. Circle around behind them, and attack them opposite the mulberry trees-

The Father and Son are constantly seeking to lead us in "newness of life". David didn't get victory by the mulberry trees the same way each time (2 Sam. 5:23,24). God changed the method. But as noted on :20, David was still to circle around and attack from behind, like a dog. "Mulberry" is Hebrew *baca*, and could refer to the valley of Baca, or weeping, of Ps. 84:6. Hence RV "valley of weeping". Perhaps David was in depression at this time, and was being comforted that his weeping was to be his strength. For God loves to use the weak to achieve His victories.

2Sa 5:24 It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall stir yourself up-

This sound was the marching of the Angels. They are called Yahweh's hosts or armies, and the idea was that David's army was a reflection on earth of the heavenly armies above him. This was necessary to teach that Israel were not winning these victories in their own strength, but by following the Angelic hosts above them.

"Stir up" is Heb. 'follow after'. The idea of 'following after' a man is a Hebrew figure for men following their leader / general into battle. There are many examples: Josh. 3:3; Jud. 3:28; 4:14; 6:34,35; 9:4,49; 1 Sam. 17:13,14; 30:21; 2 Sam. 5:24 etc. In those early days, a general wasn't a smart guy with a degree who directed the battlefield from his laptop; he was the one who went over the top first with his men behind him, knowing full well he was the one whom his enemies would go for above all others. It was his bravery which inspired the followers to go after him, and which, over the battles and wars, solidified their trust in him and willingness to give their lives behind him. And this figure of speech was well understood by the Lord when He bid us follow Him. Around Him were false prophets and rabbinic teachers, asking young men to follow them, adopt their interpretations of Torah, study the traditions, and get hyped up enough to take weapons in their hands and go forth to fight the infidel. The Lord was fully aware of this, and He frames His calling of men in the same terms. Indeed, when He speaks of leaving all and following after Him (Lk. 14:33), He surely had in mind the well known story of Mattathias, who began the Maccabean revolt by saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the Law and supports the covenant *follow after me*... and they *left their possessions behind* in the town" (1 Macc. 2:27).

For then Yahweh has gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines- 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.

2Sa 5:25 David did so, as Yahweh commanded him, and struck the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gezer-

"Geba" is Gibeon (1 Chron. 14:16), which is directly on the road from the valley of Rephaim to Gaza. The continual consistency of the geographical references in the record is yet another reflection of the utter credibility of it as Divinely inspired. Any group of human writers would have made mistakes in this area, given the lack of detailed maps and geographical knowledge.

The significance of Gibeon [Geba] is that David had avoided having any part in the duel there between his men and the men of Saul. But he does fight there against Yahweh's enemies and wins. In the very place where divided brethren slew each other, David slays the Philistines. We note that Gibeon was in Benjamin, who had initially been on Saul's side during the civil war and against David. Whilst Gibeon was in their hands at the time of the duel, it seems it fell into Philistine hands soon afterwards- for David now drives the Philistines out of Gibeon. This is the fruit of divided brethren- the world comes in.

We wonder why there was this victory over the Philistines inserted into David's experience here. He has established himself as king, and will build his own house and desire to build God a house in the next chapter. One reason may be that God is preparing David to receive the promises and covenant of 2 Sam. 7 which includes victory over enemies (2 Sam. 7:11 "I will cause you to rest from all your enemies"). God works progressively with His people, teaching them by experience [in this case, a carefully Divinely controlled victory over enemies] what He then tells them in words. For we are in the end empirical learners, and God knows this.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 6

2Sa 6:1 David again gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand- "Thousand" may refer to families or squadrons. They were "chosen" or 'shown as tested / approved'. It was a reunion gathering of all those who had been faithful to David over the years. This was a huge number of people to gather together, given the problem of providing food and lodging for them. This was why battles were fought swiftly in those days, for the men were needed on their farms, and the supply of food was difficult to arrange over longer periods. So this huge effort reflects the importance David attached to bringing up the ark.

This figure of 30,000 contrasts intentionally with how 30,000 Israelites had been slain at the beginning of the Samuel story (1 Sam. 4:10), and the ark had been lost. Now 30,000 come to witness the return of the ark, to Zion.

2Sa 6:2 David arose, and went with all the people who were with him, from Baale Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name, even the name of Yahweh of Armies who sits above the cherubim-

Baalath, or Kirjath-Baal, "the city of Baal" was the old Canaanite name of Kirjath-jearim (Josh. 15:9,60). David's bringing up / going up / ascending of the ark (2 Sam. 6:2) recalls how the ark did not go up into Canaan in Num. 14:44 (s.w.); for the land was not to be given to Israel. But when the time came, the ark was brought up into Canaan (Josh. 4:16,18 s.w.). And so now, the land was being given to them again. David felt as if he was as Joshua reconquering Canaan in fulfilment of the promises. This may explain why Paul in Acts 13:21 parallels the 40 years wandering of Israel with the 40 year reign of Saul; and he may speak of Saul reigning 40 years because of this, even if it was not literally true. It creates big chronological problems if we read that 40 year reign of Saul literally. Solomon imitated David's bringing up of the ark to Zion in 1 Kings 8:1,4. He lived out his father's faith and devotion, but only on an external level. He in due course was to turn away from Yahweh to idols, and descend into the nihilism of Ecclesiastes.

I have discussed on 1 Sam. 4:3 how there was always a tendency to use the ark as a talisman; and God was against that. The religious eclipsed the spiritual as regards the ark, several times in Israel's history. And I suggest David was not immune to this. He brings the ark to Zion without any Divine command to do so and without consultation with Him [David earlier asks God for guidance about his decisions in 2 Sam. 5, but not in the context of the ark]; and there was the disaster with Uzzah the first time he attempted it. This is to be compared to Israel's defeat when they took the ark with them into battle against the Philistines in the time of Eli. David 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. 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. 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, 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. The Chronicles record hints at political reasons for David's wanting the ark when we read David saying "let us lead the ark of our God back to us" (1 Chron. 13:3). David wanted it firmly under his control and his motive for bringing the ark to Zion was clearly to centralize religious as well as political power in his chosen capital city.

2Sa 6:3 They set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart-

There were very specific laws about the transportation of the ark. It was to be carried on poles on the shoulders of not just Levites but specifically the sons of Kohath (Num. 4:15); and Abinadab's family were not the right people to carry it. David claims in Ps. 119 to have studied God's law all the day whilst on the run from Saul, reciting it to himself. Perhaps he forgot these details. But I suggest because he came to see that God wanted the spirit and not letter of the law to be followed, he came to totally place himself above Divine law. We face the same temptation. And it was this which led David into his sin with Bathsheba. Shaving off bits and pieces of God's laws and principles, on the basis that we are above His law, leads to the final catastrophe of David's sin with Bathsheba. Instead of following God's laws about the transportation of the ark, it seems David instead followed the pattern of the Philistines, who also transported the captured ark on a cart (s.w. 1 Sam. 6:10,11). And considered that having built a new cart, never used before, he was in his own way showing respect to it. He was influenced by others' behaviour and treatment of the ark rather than God's word; he failed to learn from history. David here reflects his religious approach to the ark rather than a spiritual one. During the wilderness years, he felt that he was as it were dwelling on the mercy seat, between the cherubim, covered by the blood of atonement. But he has slipped down from that spiritual peak, now hankering for the physical ark, sliding back from the spiritual to the merely religious. In Saul's time, the ark was not enquired of ("let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul", 1 Chron. 13:3). Ps. 132:6 likewise hints at its obscurity: "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood" (Baale-Judah, the woods of Judah). David is now looking to be religious, when he had been driven to personal spirituality by his exclusion from formal religion whilst on the run from Saul.

2Sa 6:4 They brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was in the hill, with the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark-

Uzzah walked at the side, whilst Ahio went before the oxen to guide them. The Divine cameraman is zoomed in close upon the scene.

2Sa 6:5 David and all the house of Israel played before Yahweh with all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps, stringed instruments, tambourines, castanets and cymbals-

The actual fact of making music and praise to God doesn't necessarily mean our acceptability before Him; the very experience of music and its effect can lead us to think that our participation means our acceptability before God. But all this praise was made whilst God was extremely angry with them for how they were treating the ark.

Many of the brief Psalms exhorting all kinds of music to be used in praising Yahweh were probably composed at this time. This description is very similar to those of how holy objects / idols were brought on beds by the state treasurer to Sargon II of Assyria. Offerings

and music were made in front of the objects in order to placate and please the god thought to be in the object. But of course the ark was not a god in itself; David and his people have veered towards the religious rather than the spiritual. Just as most kings once established built a temple to their patron deity, and David also wants to do this to Yahweh. Perhaps the huge punishment on Uzzah reflected God's anger at the religious dominating the spiritual, as if the ark as a box was being worshipped rather than Him. The scene is also similar to that of Assurbanipal's return of Marduk's statue from Assur to Babylon: "Just as Assurbanipal's army participated in the return of Marduk to his new sanctuary, so David's army participated in the return of the ark of Yahweh. Just as Marduk's journey was accompanied by music and rejoicing, so was the ark's. Moreover, just as the Assyrians offered sacrifices every double mile from the quay of Assur to the quay of Babylon, so David offered an ox and a fatling after every six steps" (Miller & Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel*, JHNES (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977)).

The death of Uzzah is one of a number of incidents studied throughout the Biblical record which remind us that sin is serious and a felt offence by God, and provokes His wrath and the necessary death penalty. Whilst otherwise He appears to tolerate sin, this doesn't mean that every sin isn't felt by Him. His feelings are those of Hosea regarding Gomer's continued unfaithfulness.

2Sa 6:6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon-
1 Chron. 13:9 has "the threshing floor of Chidon" and 2 Sam. 6:6 has "of Nacon". I suggest Nacon was the name of the owner, and Chidon was the location. A threshing floor has associations with Divine judgment, and this is what happened.

Uzzah reached for the ark of God and took hold of it-

We wonder if Paul has this in mind when he praises the Lord Jesus for not trying to grasp hold of equality with God (Phil. 2:6). In this case, Uzzah is being accused of playing God by what he did. And yet this appears to be a very harsh reading of motives into a quite simple and natural, well meaning reaction. But this is the point; we cannot judge or know human motivations or thoughts. Who knows what was really in Uzzah's mind. For all we know he was cussing the ark as it wobbled on the cart. He did what was instinctive to do- but doing what is naturally instinctive can lead to Divine condemnation. Here we see for all time that human action is not OK just because it seems and feels right, instinctive, obvious and logical to the human mind at the time. Only God knows, and we should respect His judgment and our own inability to judge. The other possible issue which arises from this is that we are to accept that there are huge implications to our apparently harmless, surface level sins. Only God can judge them. But He does extrapolate the implications of human thoughts and actions. The whole incident is a test of our humility before God, a test David initially failed.

For the cattle stumbled-

"Stumbled" is s.w. "threw down" (2 Kings 9:33; Ps. 141:6). It seems the ark itself was thrown down onto the ground, despite Uzzah trying to stop it.

2Sa 6:7 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God-

See on :6. Yahweh had likewise struck down (s.w.) those who had earlier failed to respect the ark (1 Sam. 5:6,9; 6:19). And they had imitated the transport of the ark upon a new cart. The failure of man to learn from Biblical history is one of the greatest tragedies. We may consider this incident as parallel with the sin of Adam and Eve in Eden, whereby an apparently small failure lead to huge consequences. But these incidents are placed in Biblical history to help us humble ourselves before God, and not to fall into the assumption that God is not serious about His principles. Yahweh's anger being kindled is a phrase used multiple times about His

anger with Israel for breaking the covenant. The sin of Uzzah personified all that was wrong with Israel. They had assumed that they could serve Yahweh on their terms and not His, and that this was just a mere surface level failure which He should overlook. All this is so challenging for us, who are tempted to think in just the same way.

Samuel appears to have slept next to the ark, and in 1 Sam. 5:1 the Philistines manhandled it on a long journey of 60 km. 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.

Uzzah was a son or grandson of Abinadab (:3), in whose house the ark had been kept for some years (perhaps from 1 Sam. 7:1, where the ark is taken to the house of Abinadab, to 2 Sam. 6:3, where the ark is taken from Abinadab's house). Perhaps he felt he knew the ark well and had probably touched it before. But he was slain for the sin of familiarity with God leading to contempt. Perhaps he cursed the ark box as it fell. Or perhaps "he reached out his hand to the ark" [Heb.] or as in 1 Chron. 13:10 "he put his hand to the ark" was in fact part of a prearranged plan to grab the ark and make a sanctuary for it there at the threshing floor. Clearly there was far more going on than a simple breaking of Divine law.

2Sa 6:8 David was displeased, because Yahweh had broken forth on Uzzah; and he called that place Perez Uzzah, to this day-

David was "displeased" with God because He had slain a man who was trying to assist David's pet project of bringing the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:8,9). Do we not again see the anger and irrational emotion of David flaring up? For the Hebrew for "displeased" really means "anger", and is the same word used of Yahweh's anger in :7. God was fiercely angry, and David was likewise fiercely angry with God for being angry. Whilst on one level this is a terrible example of human pride, David's response could be argued to reflect a closeness with God which enabled him to feel like this. The exiles were warned that all who are "incensed" against God must be humbled and ashamed before the ark could, as it were, come to Zion and Israel be restored (s.w. Is. 41:11; 45:24). The exiles, who were also angry with God for His anger with them, were to go through the humbling process David went through over the next three months.

However we could read this another way. David was angry, but he was afraid of Yahweh (:9). Possibly his anger was therefore with himself.

We note David's surprise at judgment for touching the ark, as with the men of Bethshemesh earlier when they opened the ark. Perhaps this was because the ark had been regularly touched earlier. For example, surely they manhandled the ark onto the wagon without incident; and how did Obededom handle it without being struck down? And now, it seemed, God was suddenly deciding to apply an applicable law which usually He seemed to disregard. David presents as the child who is shocked and hurt when for once, he isn't allowed to get away with regularly breaking a requirement or law. The law in Num. 4:15-20 was clear; the Kohathites were to deal with the ark and even they must handle it properly "that they may live, and not die, when they approach to the most holy things". The Chronicles record labours how the second attempt to bring the ark to Zion 'worked' because David was careful to follow the Mosaic precepts about handling the ark. And this perhaps is the point: All sin merits death and Divine wrath, but only occasionally is this truth revealed by God in practice. His grace operates in shielding man from His wrath, but this doesn't mean His wrath and sense of sin and infringement of His holiness isn't there. God's feelings about sin were reflected in Hosea's raging anger against Gomer, mellowed by his amazing love and grace for her. Or it could be that Uzzah cursed the ark as it fell, or had some hidden heart position about it which led to God's wrath. And the lesson in that case would be that the innermost

private thoughts of man are seen and judged by God and provoke His wrath as well as His pleasure.

2Sa 6:9 David was afraid of Yahweh that day; and he said, How can the ark of Yahweh come to me?-

There is a similarity, surely intentional, with the situation in 1 Sam. 6:20: "The men of Beth Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God?". These were now David's feelings when Uzzah was slain for also not being respectful to the ark. 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.

"How can I bring the ark to *me*?" surely reflects poor motivation. David wanted the ark to come to himself. He has no concept of going up to Yahweh at the ark. It was starting to get all about him. He clearly saw the ark as something he personally could possess ("to *me*... to *us*") and which centralized political power in him.

2Sa 6:10 So David would not move the ark of Yahweh to be with him in the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite-

This was a huge showdown, for David had assembled a huge number of people to this ceremony; see on :1. And now he was revealed as a man who had not paid due attention to the requirements of the God whom he had invited all Israel to come to worship. It was very humbling for him. We note he "carried it aside", having it carried on poles as the law required and not on a cart.

2Sa 6:11 The ark of Yahweh remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months: and Yahweh blessed Obed-Edom, and all his house-

As it took David some months to realize his sin with Bathsheba, so here it took David three months to humble himself before God, and to perceive that His blessing is related to obedience and respect of Him, and not assuming we can serve Him on our terms and ride roughshod over His principles. David and his house had also been promised blessings, but he was being taught that these blessings were related to obedience and respect of God. And the fact a Philistine from Gath, perhaps an Edomite, indeed an Edomite servant [for so his name means] received these blessings... was to teach him that his pedigree counted for nothing compared to humble respect of Israel's God.

The care of the ark was given over to the Levites. But Obed-Edom wasn't a Levite nor was he a Hebrew, he was a Philistine or Edomite servant from Gath. And he was blessed for caring for the ark. This contrasts sharply with the striking of Uzzah. It serves to point up the fact that Uzzah was not necessarily slain because he wasn't a Levite, nor specifically one of the sons of Kohath who were to carry the ark. That breach of Divine law wasn't the issue; likewise David acts as a priest with an ephod when he too wasn't a Levite. Rather it was a matter of the heart and attitude, which is a persistent theme in the record. For David and Saul sinned in parallel ways, but David's heart attitude was different. 1 Chron. 15:18,24 lists Obededom amongst the Levites who were porters and "doorkeepers for the ark". But he wasn't a Levite. Just as David wasn't. But they could act as Levites because of their attitude of heart.

2Sa 6:12 It was told king David saying, Yahweh has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that pertains to him, because of the ark of God. David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with joy-

True joy can only come from repentance and humbling ourselves before God. A prouder man would have just given up with this apparently over sensitive, hard to please God of Israel. But Yahweh is not really like that; but He rightly requires our humility to Him and His principles. It was the Edomite servant, Obed Edom, who taught David this. The record in 1 Chron.

15:11-15 stresses that this second time, David pays more attention to the Mosaic commands about the ark ["because you didn't carry it at first, Yahweh our God broke out against us, because we didn't seek Him according to the ordinance. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of Yahweh, the God of Israel. The children of the Levites bore the ark of God with its poles on their shoulders, as Moses commanded according to the word of Yahweh"]. He insists afterwards that only the right Levites minister with the ark. And yet in 2 Sam. 8:18 he appoints his own sons as priests, when they weren't Levites ["David's sons were chief priests", RV]! David's self proclaimed love of Yahweh's law was nuanced by his own political agenda.

2Sa 6:13 It was so, that when those who bore the ark of Yahweh had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf-

David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex. 22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. David had just been severely humiliated and punished for assuming he could put aside the letter of God's law regarding the transport of the ark. That David should now act as a Levite when he was not one, again following the spirit and not the letter of the law, would therefore not have been done by him quickly. It would have required sustained reflection on the situation. His actions should therefore never be taken as a quick justification for disregarding Divine laws and principles. For in the context of what had happened three months previously, he would have considered this matter very seriously.

If sacrifices were offered every six paces from the house of Obed Edom to Zion, the road to Zion would have been a stream of sacrificial blood, looking ahead to the way to Golgotha. I suggest on :17 that these were sin offerings. It demonstrated the deep sense of sin and need for atonement which David felt. It was this true repentance which was the basis for his ecstatic joy. LXX "And seven choruses accompanied him, bearing the ark, and a calf and lambs as a sacrifice". One explanation of why "every six paces" is that there are six resting places of the ark in the Samuel record: Shiloh, Eben Ezer, Beth Shemesh, Kiriath Jearim, the house of Obed Edom, and now Zion. David perhaps saw the seventh rest for the ark, like the seventh day of creation, as being in the temple he envisaged building for it. In Ps. 132 he invites the ark and Yahweh to enter into the place of their rest in Zion. But he fails to perceive that in fact Yahweh's rest is in the Messianic kingdom, not David's immediate kingdom; the ark would come to nothing, Jerusalem would fall and Zion would be ploughed. The crown would be removed... until "He come whose right it is", the Lord Jesus.

Bulls and oxen were usually sacrificed as burnt and peace offerings (Lev. 1:4-6; 4:10; 9:4,18). And he made these two offerings when the ark arrived (:17,18). But usually they are preceded by the sin offering. Sin is dealt with, then the burnt offering of promised dedication to God, and then celebrating peace with God. But David makes no sin offering. He clearly felt he had nothing to repent of nor to be forgiven of; he considered Yahweh's striking of Uzzah to be wrong and that he had done no real wrong himself. Although the second time he does obey the required laws about handling the ark [the Chronicles record stresses this], he clearly has no real sense of failure. For all his spiritual insight, he still felt he was above

God's law, despite his much proclaimed familiarity with it and love of it [see Ps. 119]. And this sets him up for his failure with Bathsheba. And so it is for all of us who realize we are saved without God's law and by grace, and who see to the essence and spirit of the law rather than the letter. This can lead us to the same failures as David through presumption, assumption and over familiarity with a holy God.

2Sa 6:14 David danced before Yahweh with all his might-

I suggested on :13 that the massive number of sacrifices personally offered by David reflected his sense of repentance and need for atonement for his sin three months previously. It was this which was the basis for his ecstatic joy at his forgiveness. Although note the comments on :13 that the reverse situation might be the case. "Might" is very similar to the Hebrew word for "Uzzah" who was slain for irreverence towards the ark. But David with his 'Uzzah' danced before Yahweh clothed as a priest when he wasn't a priest. Perhaps the purpose of the word play is to teach us that it was Uzzah's internal attitude that was wrong. David too infringed Yahweh's law but his 'Uzzah' was different because of the state of his heart, and he was saved and accepted. The Hebrew words for dancing with all the might are similar to the title of Ps. 88, *mahaloth leannoth*, which seems to actually apply to Ps. 87, which would then reflect David's feelings at the time of bringing the ark to Zion.

And David was clothed in a linen ephod-

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps. 43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter, he airily waived the Mosaic law concerning blood guiltiness (consider the implications of 2 Sam. 14:4-11), and the need to stone rapists (2 Sam. 13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam. 13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron. 26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to have agreed. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led him to commit the sin of presumption in his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

2Sa 6:15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Yahweh with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet-

David is portrayed as in religious ecstasy before the God whom three months before he had been furiously angry with (see on :8). This indeed reflects the almost bi-polar nature of David. But it also shows the power of true repentance and seeking to put things right with God (see on :13), and the joy of good conscience resulting from that.

We can too easily be blinded by the fact David was acting as a king-priest and was thereby a type of the Lord Jesus. The fact is, by presenting himself as a king-priest, David was cementing both religious and political power in himself and in his chosen capital city. Just as many other kings did at the time. And he was bringing the ark to a tent he had pitched for it in his own back garden [Solomon brought the ark from the city or personal citadel of David to the temple]. When the ark had not been enquired of in Saul's time (1 Chron. 13:3) and he had to "find" it (Ps. 132). The visible symbols of religion suddenly became significant for him. On the other hand, on a spiritual level, he had become so in tune with the spirit of the law of Moses that he could break it by acting as priest, when others were condemned for doing so. The difference was that his heart was right with God. And yet beyond any doubt, his motives were mixed and he had other, political, human agendas.

2Sa 6:16 It was so, as the ark of Yahweh came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window and saw king David leaping and dancing before Yahweh; and she despised him in her heart-

As Goliath despised David (1 Sam. 17:42), so did Michal. The same word is used (2 Sam. 6:16). God reads the heart and what He finds there is so significant to Him. That woman's silent thoughts have been recorded for millennia in the record, and they are still in God's memory. We have a parade example here of the huge significance God attaches to our thoughts. Despising others for their spirituality is especially abhorrent to Him. We recall that Michal had an idol in her home soon after her marriage to David, and we wonder if it was Yahweh whom she also despised. And all this made her no better than Goliath.

Michal's complaint about David's parading his nakedness and possibly his genitals was valid. But as ever in the David record, it is all a matter of the heart. She despised him in her heart, whereas at this time it was in David's heart to make a temple for Yahweh. Although inappropriate, his heart was on better things: "It was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said to David my father, 'Inasmuch as it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you have done well, for it was in your heart'" (1 Kings 8:17,18). Ps. 132 speaks of how he had vowed to not sleep until he had found a home for the ark and brought it to Zion.

2Sa 6:17 They brought in the ark of Yahweh, and set it in its place, in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh-

The usual pattern for the offerings was sin offering, burnt offering [dedication to God on the basis of being reconciled from sin] and then peace offerings, celebrating the resultant peace with God. I suggested on :13 that the mass of animals sacrificed on the road to Zion were sin offerings. Although it could also be that he omitted offering the sin offering, hence there is no mention of it, because he was not deeply convicted of any personal wrongdoing over bringing the ark to Zion the first time.

The reference is not to the tabernacle tent, which was at Gibeon at this time. David pitched a tent in the back yard garden of his own house in Zion. And there he placed the ark. Whatever his spiritual motives, he was clearly concentrating both religious and political power in his own hands and in his own house.

2Sa 6:18 When David had made an end of offering the burnt offering and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of Armies-

As noted and discussed on :14, this was again David acting as high priest, blessing the people in Yahweh's Name.

2Sa 6:19 He distributed to all the people, even throughout the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to each one a portion of bread, dates and raisins. So all the people departed each one to his house-

We see here an ancient anticipation of the bread and wine [raisins] of the breaking of bread meeting. That meeting is essentially a peace offering, a celebration of the peace with God achieved through the Lord's sin offering, our promise of dedication to Him in the burnt offering, and then the celebration of the resultant peace with God. See on :17.

There are various Psalms which probably had their origin in the bringing of the ark to Zion. The calls in many Psalms for shouting and joyful singing "before Yahweh" were all probably originally used at this time. Psalm 24 clearly speaks of the ark being brought to Zion after David's establishment as Israel's king. But he really labours the point that the great triumphant king is not him, but Yahweh enthroned between the cherubim: "Open wide the gates, open the ancient doors, and the great king will come in. Who is this great king? He is the LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, victorious in battle. Fling wide the gates, open the ancient doors, and the great king will come in. Who is this great king? The triumphant LORD— he is the great king" (Ps. 24:7-10 GNB).

Psalm 68 is another psalm about the bringing of the ark to Zion and again David makes the point that Yahweh is the true king of Israel, not him: "O God, Your march of triumph is seen by all, the procession of God, my king, into His sanctuary. The singers are in front, the musicians are behind, in between are the young women beating the tambourines" (Ps. 68:24,25). Ps. 68:12 LXX has David, which means 'beloved', claiming Yahweh as his king: "The king of the forces of the beloved, of the beloved".

We note from Ps. 68:27 that David carefully puts Benjamin, Saul's tribe, first in the procession and his own tribe afterwards: " First comes Benjamin, the smallest tribe, then the leaders of Judah with their group". David is to be commended for his spirituality at this time, but political motives were always lurking there. And David now sees God as actually present over the ark, hankering for the visible and thus localizing God: "How awesome is God as He comes from His sanctuary—the God of Israel! He gives strength and power to his people. Praise God!" (Ps. 68:35). And David is seeking to force God to get on board with his own dream for Zion. Zion means dry hill, and so David announces that God will change that: "O God, thou wilt grant to thine inheritance a gracious rain; for it was weary, but thou didst refresh it" (Ps. 68:9 LXX).

Israel's mixture of Yahweh worship with Baal worship is demonstrated by the reference to their being "lovers of raisin cakes" (Hos. 3:1). According to 2 Sam. 6:19, these cakes appear to have been part of the legitimate worship of Yahweh- and yet in Song 2:5 they are referred to as an aphrodisiac. There was a heady mix of Yahweh worship with participation in the sexual rituals of the Baal cult. It was this mixture which was so abhorrent to God- and time and again, in essence, we likewise mix flesh and spirit.

2Sa 6:20 Then David returned to bless his household-

David is to be commended for not simply blessing Israel, but turning his attention privately to his own private household, and wanting to hold a private ceremony with them. But it was this

which elicited the angry retort of Michal, whom I suggested on :16 may still have been an idolater and despised not only David but also Yahweh.

Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious the king of Israel was today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!-

See on 1 Sam. 31:6. Perhaps she really loved her second husband Phaltiel as he loved her, and was bitter that David had broken up their marriage for political reasons. She disliked the way that David had put aside his royal robes to dance naked. She felt he ought to have always retained his royal dignity rather than apparently resign it before Yahweh as king. This would be why David responds that he is indeed the chosen king (:21). "Uncovered" does mean literally to make naked. We note the careful legislation about not revealing nakedness before Yahweh (s.w. Ex. 20:26). But David disobeyed the letter of this law to keep the spirit of it; and he did it at a time when three months before, he and Israel had been strongly punished for breaking the letter of the Divine law. His "uncovered" presence before Yahweh (2 Sam. 6:21) was not therefore done in the heat of the moment, but he would have carefully thought this through before doing it.

There is ample evidence that kings in victory processions or enthronement carnivals did literally expose their private parts, as a sign that they intended their dynasty to continue. David is on one hand spiritually motivated, but on another, he is trying to establish his dynasty exactly as kings did in those days. Michal's accusation is specific- that David had exposed himself to other women, like an erotic dancer, to 'get himself glory'. David doesn't deny the allegation. Instead he justifies himself by saying it was all before Yahweh and he was very humble in his own eyes. Although Michal's accusation was apparently true, the record ends with Michal being barren. Again we are left to reflect on David's behaviour, intention and motivation. He acted as other kings did to establish their dynasty and flaunt their own power. But the Psalms relevant to the ark coming to Zion reflect David's humility and deep sense that it was Yahweh who was the true king to be glorified. We can only conclude that again we have a snapshot into a mind divided between flesh and Spirit. And in the final analysis, God accepted the presence of the Spirit in David and saved him.

Saul had removed his royal robes and finally had them removed when he died. And thus had the kingship removed from him. David was aware of all the dramas involving Saul's kingly robe and perhaps is showing that he gladly would resign the kingship in order to simply serve God. And Michal despised such humility.

2Sa 6:21 David said to Michal, It was in the eyes of Yahweh, who chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me prince over the people of Yahweh, over Israel- See on :20. Here is a good example of "before" meaning 'before' in importance rather than time. David tells his wife: "The Lord chose me *before* your father [Saul]". Actually, in terms of *time*, God chose Saul well before He chose David. But God chose David *above* Saul in terms of importance and honour. This helps us understand the Lord Jesus being "before" Abraham, in importance not in time (Jn. 8:58).

Michal was worried about what David looked like in the eyes of the young women; but David was totally focused upon his being in the eyes of Yahweh. Worry about what others think of us and all concerns about image evaporate before this sense- that we are in the eyes of Yahweh.

Therefore will I celebrate in the eyes of Yahweh-

When David danced "before / in the eyes of the Lord", his wife mocked him, because he had embarrassed himself "before / in the eyes of Israel". David's response is that he had done this

“in my *own* eyes” (2 Sam. 6:20-22). This play on the phrase “before / in the eyes of” is significant. David is highly perceptive here. He’s saying that if this is how he feels in his *own* eyes, then this is how he is before the eyes of God, and therefore this is how he will be before the eyes of Israel and the general public. David is saying: ‘Who I am, my real self, is the one God sees, and I’m not going to hide it from the world; let them see me how I see myself and how God sees me’. In this incident, there was no gap between the ‘real self’ of David and the image he projected to the world. There was complete congruence between how he felt about himself, how God saw him, and how the watching world saw him. And this incident ought to be programmatic for our entire lives.

2Sa 6:22 I will be yet more vile than this, and will be base in my own eyes. But of the handmaids of whom you have spoken, they shall honour me-

See on :21. This was true on one level, but it was a cruel thing for a husband to say to his middle aged wife; for it was to the effect that 'the attractive young women will think I'm wonderful and will give me the honour and respect a man craves from his woman, which you my wife don't give me'. Again we sense a harsher and quite unpleasant side in David, despite his softness and amazing grace. Such contradictions are sadly within us all.

David may mean that his servants would respect him for his humility, whereas Michal despised him for his humility. But we wonder whether this isn't David being proud of his humility...

2Sa 6:23 Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death-

God had prophesied that David's dynasty would last, and Saul's would die out. If Michal and David had had children together, then both dynasties would have arguably continued. Her punishment was therefore an appropriate way of ending Saul's dynasty. Again we see how God works through human sin and the judgment of it, and even through David's rather unreasonable attitude to her, for His greater purpose.

This may not have been judgment solely upon Michal. Once King, David decides to get back his ex-wife Michal, who was by now married to Phaltiel, who evidently loved her. Yet David takes her from Phaltiel, and we have the tragic image of the loving husband walking behind her weeping as she is led away from him (2 Sam. 3:15,16). This was not only a breach of Mosaic law, but displayed a sad elevation of politics above others' relationships and marriages. It may be significant that her renewed marriage with David wasn't blessed with any children (2 Sam. 6:23).

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).

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 the triangle of Jacob, Laban and Rachel is reflected in that of 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.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 7

2Sa 7:1 It happened, when the king lived in his house, and Yahweh had given him rest from all his enemies all around-

All his adult life, David had hardly slept more than a few nights in the same place. And he had always been surrounded by enemies who gave him no rest. Now finally he was living a stable life in his own house, with rest from his enemies. Instead of slumping into the mire of mediocrity in his spirituality, as many would have done, he reflects that he apparently has more than God, as it were. He has a nice house, whilst God's house was a tent. This desire to use a stable existence in God's service is a stellar example to God's children of all ages.

The account here may not be chronological, because we read of more wars in 2 Sam. 8. I suggest this is included after the account of bringing the ark to Zion in order to continue the theme of David's work for the ark. Or 2 Sam. 8 may be a summary of how David had been given rest. But to be 'given rest' is the language of inheritance of the Kingdom (Heb. 4:1-11); the idea may be that a Messianic Kingdom could have been established at this point, had David accepted it. But instead, he laboured to build a physical temple rather than allowing God to effect this.

David had lived a wandering life, but now was settled down- permanently, as he imagined. And he wants the same for God. This is a fascinating psychological insight- that man tends to assume that God is like him, creating God in man's image, rather than accepting that God created man in His image. And God's response here is effectively trying to tell David that the wandering life is actually, in essence, how He intends it for His people. And that is how He is, not tied down to one place nor tradition, but ever on the move. And man's tendency is to strive towards stability and static being- but this isn't the way of God's Spirit. God rebukes David for his desire to settle God down to one time and place, to one form and tradition; just as Uriah does indirectly, when he reminds David that God's ark dwells in tents, and so do His true people, in comparison to David's settled down life in Jerusalem with all the moral declension that went with it (2 Sam. 11:11).

It seems on one hand David wanted to make God into His own image, by reasoning that because he was settled and secure in one place, so now should God be. David appears to allude to but misinterpret Dt. 12:9-11: "For you have not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that Yahweh your God is giving you. But you will cross the Jordan and live in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you to inherit, He will give you rest from all your enemies around, and you will live in safety. Then to the place that Yahweh your God will choose to make His name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices". But David misinterprets this as meaning that there will be one place which Yahweh would choose geographically to make His permanent home base. God replies that He has always kept on the move, never choosing any geographical spot before, and thus He would prefer to continue. Yet David and Solomon simply forge ahead with the idea of a temple in Zion and David even retrojects his own choosing of Zion onto God, as witnessed in several of his Psalms which put this idea in God's mouth. In any case, 2 Sam. 8 goes on to describe more war, as does 2 Sam. 10. David and Israel are not in fact at rest at all. David is jumping ahead in his assumptions, because building a temple has become an obsession with him- he was likely on the autism spectrum. And yet we note that later in his life, during Absalom's rebellion, he was again separated from the ark and the sanctuary; and again he writes Psalms, or edits previous wilderness Psalms, which glorify his experience of Yahweh's presence without the ark or sanctuary.

2Sa 7:2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains-

Yahweh was seen as enthroned upon the ark, dwelling between the cherubim, and so David wanted to bring the ark to his back yard, "Zion", his citadel, and now build a house for it as he had built for himself. But Yahweh corrects this, or tries to. He doesn't dwell in a fixed physical location. He accepts David's desire to have his throne as the throne of Yahweh, even though David is acting politically on one hand, wanting to concentrate both religious and political power in himself as a person and in his physical location. God looks to David's better side of motivations, and says that indeed David's throne shall be His throne, but that shall work out through His purpose in His Son. David accepts that with grace, but goes on trying to 'establish / prepare' his own throne in a temple / physical house and location. And God graciously goes along with this by 'dwelling' in Solomon's temple.

Any disparity between our own life situation and that of the things of God... ought to concern us. David didn't stop living in a house and instead live in a tent. Instead he did what he could to ensure that his abundance was not kept to himself. His motives were admirable throughout, and God saw that, but God was to use David's desires to teach that He doesn't need works, but just wants to share the abundance of His grace with others.

The reference to "curtains" doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle (Ex. 26:1). Although the tabernacle was at Gibeon and the ark in Zion, David had apparently made another tabernacle for the ark in Zion. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Many of the commands within the "law of Moses" were clearly only intended for the wilderness generation, indeed they could only have been obeyed by them then; and David wondered whether the entire commands about the tabernacle were in that category. He was open to the idea of God moving on in His purpose and desires for men. Those today who claim that Mosaic legislation is eternally binding need to give this due weight. It's not just that the Mosaic law was abrogated by the Lord's death; but the whole nature of that law was that it was never intended to all be literally applied to every subsequent generation. And that meant that it was the spirit of it which was to be discerned and followed.

2Sa 7:3 Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for Yahweh is with you- Nathan wrongly assumed that Yahweh would naturally agree to David's proposition to move on from the Mosaic idea of a tabernacle. David didn't actually state what he intended to do (:2), but Nathan assumes he knows David's intentions, and assumes he knows God will agree. Such assumptions are typical of human beings, and further adds psychological verisimilitude to the record. Nathan of course should have had the humility to first ask of God rather than assuming he knows God's will. The assumption we know God's will is a common problem amongst God's people; effectively we are elevating our gut feeling to the level of God's word.

2Sa 7:4 It happened the same night, that the word of Yahweh came to Nathan saying- David's plan to build a great house was met with the word of the Lord coming unto him "the same night", telling him not to do this. There seems to be some allusion to this by the Lord Jesus when He spoke of the rich fool who wanted to build a greater barn being told the Lord's word "that same night". It could be that the Lord Jesus saw something material and very human in David's desire to build a house for the Lord. See on :7.

2Sa 7:5 Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says Yahweh, Shall you build Me a house for Me to dwell in?'

Perhaps there was a pause after this statement. The emphasis was upon the words "you" and "Me". David had not given due thought to the magnitude and inappropriacy of what was in his mind; that he as a mere man could build a house for Yahweh to live in. He had failed to perceive the greatness of his God. Any idea of confining God within four walls was bizarre. The Chronicles record is clearer: "You shall not build Me a house". The way David insisted upon doing so reflects a refusal to accept, in the long term, the huge grace offered to him here. We see the typical human tendency to want to do works for God, and to be justified thereby- rather than to accept *His* work for us.

2Sa 7:6 For I have not lived in a house since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have moved around in a tent and in a tabernacle-

Although this may primarily refer to the Angel, the point is that the God of the cosmos had intensely manifested Himself in the ark and the tabernacle / tent which enclosed it. This of itself revealed His humility. The idea is "I have walked continually"; like David up until this point (see on :1), He had been a wanderer. David had now ceased his years of wandering (:1), and was assuming that God was like himself, preferring a stable and sedentary life. But this assumption that God is like us at this moment and point of our lives is incorrect, and David later criticizes it (Ps. 50:21). He is who He is, and not a god made in our image, as we are at this moment; rather are we made in His image, and not the other way around. It is for us to hear His voice in His word and accept Him as He is, rather than assuming He will think how we do at this point in our development. David earlier had appreciated the idea of God being a wanderer when he was a wanderer, as his wilderness Psalms indicate. But now he was settled, he assumed that this was how God would like to be.

2Sa 7:7 In all places in which I have walked with all the children of Israel, did I say a word to any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to be shepherd of My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'''-

The mention of "tribes" may be a rebuke of David for wanting to concentrate religious power in his tribe by building a temple and locating the ark in his territory. God had been careful not to do this in the past but had kept the tabernacle moving around.

David desired to build God a physical house. 2 Sam. 7:7-11 records God's response in clear enough language: God did not want a physical house because

1. It was not really possible for man to build God a house ("Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" is surely rhetorical)

2. God had never asked Israel to build Him such a house before; indeed, it had been His expressed will that He should dwell among Israel in the temporary form of the tabernacle. God wanted a temporary abode to point forward to the fact that the reality was in Christ; thus the Law of Moses had features built into it which were intrinsically temporal, to point men forward to the stability and finality of Messiah. By building a permanent temple, Solomon reflects his lack of focus on the Messiah to come.

3. He would only have a permanent physical house when His people were permanently settled, never to be moved again (2 Sam. 7:10), i.e. in the Kingdom. Yet Solomon perceived that his kingdom was in fact the final Kingdom of God. David made this mistake, in assuming in Ps. 72 that Solomon's Kingdom would undoubtedly be the Messianic one...and Solomon repeated the error, yet to a more tragic extent.

4. God plays on the confusion between 'house' in the sense of household, and 'house' in the sense of a physical building. He says: '*You* want to build *me* a physical house. But *I* am going to build *you* a *household* which will be my Kingdom'. The implication is that David's desire for a physical house was altogether too human, and that there is an opposition between what man thinks he can physically do for God, and the fact that God wishes to do things for men. Yet Solomon went ahead with his works rather than grappling with the reality of sheer grace. He so wanted to *do* something. He betrays this when he writes in Ecc. 9:7: "God now accepteth thy works". The Hebrew translated "accepteth" means literally to satisfy a debt, and is elsewhere translated 'to reconcile self'. He saw works as reconciling man's debt to God, rather than perceiving that grace is paramount. He keeps on about David his father; and yet there was a crucial difference. David perceived the need for grace as the basis of man's reconciliation with God; whereas Solomon thought it was works. David wrote that God wants

a broken heart and not thousands of sacrifices; yet Solomon offered the thousands of sacrifices, but didn't have the contrite heart of his father.

5. To desire a physical house for God is to overlook the promised Messiah- that was surely the implication of the promise of the Lord Jesus following right on from the statement that a physical house was not required. Is. 57:15 and Is. 66:2 explain why this is- because God does not live in what man builds, but will fully dwell in one man to whom He will look, one who would have a humble spirit towards Him. And this man was of course the Lord Jesus. Solomon's obsession with the temple therefore reflected his deeper problem- of not being focused upon the Christ to come.

So it ought to be clear from all this that God's response to the request to build a temple was negative; He did not want a physical temple. None of the four reasons for this listed above were just temporary considerations; they were reasons which were valid for all time. There can be no doubt that God's response here is at the basis of Is. 66:1,2: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" . God is saying that it simply isn't possible to build Him a house; instead, He seeks to dwell in the hearts of men. Yet Solomon wasn't interested in the personal spiritual mindedness which enables this to happen. This is the same spirit as God's response to David: 'You can't build me a physical house, I will build my own household of believers'.

These words of Is. 66 are twice quoted in the New Testament. "God that made the world and all things therein, *seeing that* He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands... as though He needed any thing" (Acts 17:24,25). The reason for God not dwelling in temples is that He is Lord of heaven and earth. This reason does not change with time; He was Lord of heaven and earth at David's time just as much as He is now.

2Sa 7:8 Now therefore you shall tell My servant David this, 'Thus says Yahweh of Armies, I took you from the sheep pen, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people, over Israel-

"Sheep pen" translates the word usually rendered "habitation". The idea is that Yahweh had taken David from his home and made him a wanderer in the desert, just as He had done to Israel in Egypt. This was to bring David and Israel to identify with Yahweh as their God seeing He too was ever mobile and had no geographical home. And David in his new stability was forgetting this and seeking to make God into his own current image.

David was asked to reflect that his wandering around as a shepherd as a child and teenager had been to prepare him for leading Israel. But leading a people likewise involves an element of mobility, and God as the ultimate leader of Israel was likewise moving on and never static. Hebrew shepherds usually lead their sheep, but here David is described as being moved from following sheep, to going ahead as a leader. Here we have an example of where language and imagery is used in a way we might consider opportunistic; but this is the nature of Semitic writing and reasoning. A failure to appreciate the Hebrew nature of the Bible has led to so many misinterpretations of it.

2Sa 7:9 I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you-

David's continual wandering up until the point of :1 had always been with God's presence "with you wherever". This connects with God's own statement that He Himself had "walked continually" (:6). Those years had been in order to get David to appreciate God's own constant journeying. This is to be a feature of every believer's life. Even if we live and die in the house we were born in and never move 20 km. from our home village, life with God is a

constant journey. And all within us will seek to turn it into the stability of mere religion, as David was seeking to do.

The next chapter details yet more victories over enemies, as if this showed David that the covenant was really in operation for him.

God encourages David to see himself as representative of Israel by saying this; they are words replete with reference to Israel in the wilderness and their establishment in the land. As David so loved his people and was their representative, for all they did to him, so with the Lord Jesus and His people. When God asked David "choose thee one of" three possible judgments, each of them involved the whole nation- e.g. "Shall seven years of famine come unto thee" (singular). David was their representative even in their time of failure.

I will make you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are in the earth- This is now developed by God into saying that He will make David a house / family. That family was to bear David's great name, but the "great name", the greatest in the earth [reading "great ones" as an intensive plural for a singular great name] was that of Yahweh. And this Name was to be carried by David's house and particularly by the Messianic seed who was now to be promised. AV "I have made thee a great name" would refer to how God was to do this through David's military victories (2 Sam. 8:13), indicating that 2 Sam. 7 is actually referring to events after 2 Sam. 8 and is not in chronological sequence.

2Sa 7:10 I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as at the first-

This can be translated "I will establish a place for My people Israel, and I will plant him, then he will dwell beneath it and will not tremble any more". The same Hebrew is found in Ez.

17:23 "every bird will dwell

beneath it". The allusion is to David's previous perception [as reflected in his wilderness Psalms] that the faithful dwell under the shadow of the cherubic wings, as it were on the mercy seat, covered by the blood of atonement (Ps 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 73:8). David had been so eager to bring the physical ark to Zion and now to build a house / temple for it. But Yahweh's response is that He will bring all Israel to live permanently in His presence over the ark. And for ever. This is a picture of man's final salvation, through the promised Son of David, the Lord Jesus; and herein lies the significance of the promise of "presence" in the Comforter passages. The gift of the Spirit in the heart obviates all arks and temples. The presence of the physical ark or temple were irrelevant to this promise, and quite unnecessary. And that is perhaps why the ark vanishes out of the Biblical history without a trace or even a goodbye. These things were foreseen in Ex. 15:17 "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, the place, Yahweh, which You have made for yourself to dwell in; the sanctuary, Lord, which Your hands have established". "The place" where Israel were to dwell was where Yahweh dwells. And in essence, that place is the human heart. It is not over an ark, in a temple, nor even in a geographical area. But David has slipped back to the religious rather than the spiritual. For in Ps. 132:5 we read of his desire to bring the literal ark to physical Zion, and thus to find "a place for Yahweh, a dwelling-place for the God of Jacob". The promises to David are correcting him, pointing out that Yahweh will find a "place" for Himself and His people, and that "place" ultimately is within the human heart, enabled and mediated by the Spirit of His Son. David bought "the place" from Ornan: "Give me the [sacred] place of the threshing floor so that I may build an altar to Yahweh on it... David gave Ornan 600 shekels of silver for the place" (1 Chron. 21:22,25). Whilst God was willing to place His Name and presence in Zion, the accent of the promises to David is that essentially God will seek out and find a place to dwell with His people. And later scripture explains that this will be through His Spirit in His Son.

As the promise stands in the standard translations, it never came true. Israel never dwelt securely for long, and were always soon afflicted by the children of wickedness.

This connects with how David had planted the ark in its "place" in Zion (2 Sam. 6:17). God is saying that His grace is such that He will do exceeding far above what we ever ask or think to do for Him. He would plant and place Israel in an eternal Kingdom, just as David had planted and placed the ark in Zion. As David personally had been given rest from his enemies (:1), so would Israel be granted rest.

These words would have been comforting to the exiles; ultimately they would not be afflicted as they had been by the Babylonians, and would return to their land permanently (2 Sam. 7:10 s.w. for "afflict" in Zech. 10:2; Zeph. 3:19; Lam. 3:33; 5:11). The word used in 1 Chron. 17:9, 'to waste', is also used of the Babylonian wasting of Judah (Lam. 3:4).

2Sa 7:11 and as from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. I will cause you to rest from all your enemies-

The constant affliction Israel experienced at the time of the judges was because of their sins; they had no rest from their enemies because of their continual unfaithfulness to Yahweh. These promises are therefore tantamount to saying that God would somehow permanently establish His people, in a way not conditional upon their faithfulness because He would somehow make them faithful. This is the language of the new covenant offered to the exiles, and is achieved today through the work of the Holy Spirit keeping us from falling from the covenant. The "blessing" promised to Abraham is therefore interpreted in Acts 3:25,26 as the power of God turning away His people's hearts from sin. And the same is implied in these promises to David. I will note on :15 that God likewise promised to remain faithful to David's seed even if he sinned. This is grace upon grace.

The promises to David included the prospect of being given rest from his enemies (2 Sam. 7:11). We note however that in 2 Sam. 10-12 we will read of David's war with Ammon. He didn't have rest from his enemies. As with the promise that immediately follows, that he would have an eternal house / family, this was to be realized after David's death, in the time of his Messianic Son. The war with Ammon would have been intended by God to nudge David to realize that the promises were not about here and now. But he tries hard to make them about him; and the curse on him for the sin with Bathsheba was that enemies would arise from his own house, and the rest of his life was lived in anything but "rest" from enemies. In the bigger picture, this was to remind him that the promises to him were most definitely not being fulfilled in this life. He was intended to focus instead upon the future rest of God's Kingdom, at a point when his Messianic Son was set up / resurrected along with himself.

Moreover Yahweh tells you that Yahweh will make you a house-

To what was God referring to when He told David that David's son would build him a house? Firstly, we must bear in mind that in hundreds of places, the Hebrew word for "house" means 'household'. The eternal house promised to David is paralleled with the Kingdom; and a Kingdom is comprised of people. This is what is in view, not the building of any literal temple at the Lord's return. The Kingdom is the house of Jacob (Lk. 1:33). That the house of David is the Kingdom is evident from 2 Sam. 7:13,16; 1 Chron. 17:14 (cp. Lk. 11:17). The Kingdom was taken from the house of Saul and given to the house of David (2 Sam. 3:10), but later the Kingdom was taken from the house of David because of Solomon's apostasy (1 Kings 14:8). This is proof enough that at best the promises to David had only a tiny fulfilment in Solomon's Kingdom.

The New Testament is very insistent that the true temple of God is the body of Christian believers (1 Cor. 9:13; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 3:12; 11:1,2; 1 Tim.3:15). This string of passages is quite some emphasis. Yet Christ was the temple; he spoke of the

temple of his body (Jn. 2:19-21; Rev. 21:22). For this reason, the Gospels seem to stress the connection between Christ and the temple (Mk. 11:11,15,16,27; 12:35; 13:1,3; 14:49; Lk. 2:46; 21:38). Christ's body was the temple of God. By being in Christ, we too are the temple (1 Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21), *our* body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19). Yet Solomon was not Christ centered; he didn't want to see this connection. And we too can have an over-physical view of the Kingdom, centered around a literal temple in Jerusalem etc., rather than perceiving that the Kingdom / reign of God is, in its essence, over the hearts of men and women like us. The future political Kingdom will be the concrete articulation of the essence of the Kingdom principles which are now being lived out in the hearts of the people who are under the Lord's present kingship.

In the person of Jesus, the essence of the Kingdom came nigh to men (Mt. 10:7; 11:4; 12:28)- and this was why one of His titles is "the Kingdom". The Kingdom of God is about joy, peace and righteousness more than the physicalities of eating and drinking. In this sense the Kingdom was "among" first century Israel. The Kingdom of God is not merely a carrot held out to us for good behaviour. It is a reality right now, in so far as God truly becomes our king. Even in the Old Testament, the word "temple" does not normally refer to the physical temple outside the records of Solomon's building of the temple. It is often stated that the house David's seed was to build would be for the Name of Yahweh. His Name refers to His mental attributes. A physical house is inappropriate to express these.

If the house refers to a household of righteous believers, all becomes plain. This explains why 2 Sam. 7:13,26 parallels God's eternal name with the eternal house and Kingdom which was promised to David. Building a house was a common Hebrew idiom for developing a household (Ruth 4:11; Dt. 25:9). God's promise to David about building him an eternal household was anticipated in His words to Eli: "I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind (i.e. David, 1 Sam. 13:14): and I will build him a *sure house*", in contrast to God's destruction of Eli's household (1 Sam. 2:35). 1 Kings 11:38 clinches the idea that this refers to David: "I will be with thee, and build thee a *sure house* as I built for David". In passing, note that these words to Solomon remind him that God will build *him* a house, in opposition to the way in which Solomon so frequently speaks about building God a house.

2Sa 7:12 When your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers-

There is a strong sense that God has determined a number of "days" for our mortal life (Ps. 23:6; 2 Sam. 7:12), and David like all of us wished to know how many those days were for him, in order that he might live an appropriately humble life in response to realizing his frailty (Ps. 39:4). But that predetermined number of days can be cut short (Ps. 102:4,23,24) or extended (1 Kings 3:14; Prov. 9:11). Hezekiah would be the parade example of this; his days were cut short (Is. 38:10), and then lengthened in response to prayer (2 Kings 20:6). God is open to dialogue, His timetable in our personal lives is flexible according to our prayers; and He is also responsive to human behaviour. Like Job we should perceive our life as "my days" (he uses this term multiple times), so that we might use each of them for Him.

I will set up your seed after you, who shall proceed out of your body- "Set up" has a similar meaning to "establish". It is tempting to note that the Hebrew word is often translated "arise", and to wonder if there is here a hint that this seed will experience a bodily resurrection. The possible fulfilment in David's family was precluded by his sin with Bathsheba and the resultant effects upon his "house"; the same word for "set up" is in 2 Sam. 12:11 of how God would "raise / set up evil out of your own house". His house "was not so with God", as he concluded at the end of his life; and so he with us look for a fulfilment in his Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus, and the house of people being built up / established in Him.

The promise to David concerning Christ precludes his physical existence at the time the promise was made: "I *will* set up your descendant [singular] *after* you, which *shall* proceed out of your body... I *will be* his father, and he *shall be* my son" (2 Sam. 7:12,14). Notice the future tense used here. Seeing that God *would be* Christ's Father, it is impossible that the Son of God could have already existed at that point in time when the promise was made. That this seed "*shall proceed out of your body*" shows that he was to be a literal, physical descendant of David. "The Lord has sworn in truth unto David... Of the fruit of your body will I set upon your throne" (Ps. 132:11). Solomon was the primary fulfilment of the promise, but as he was already physically in existence at the time of this promise (2 Sam. 5:14), the main fulfilment of this promise about David having a physical descendant who would be God's son, must refer to Christ (Lk. 1:31-33).

The Hebrew for "body" here is usually translated womb / belly [AV "bowels"]. David is likened to the female and Yahweh to the male. This is incredibly intimate language to use. This was how close Yahweh felt to David, despite David being such a mix of flesh and Spirit. The promise came true in that Yahweh Himself made Mary [a descendant of David] literally pregnant, and the offspring was therefore His only begotten Son.

And I will establish his kingdom-

"Prepared" or "established" is a major theme in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). Solomon's contenders for the throne were all stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents in Proverbs between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

2Sa 7:13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever-

Ultimately, as shown above, this refers to the building up of the house of believers to be the throne of the seed's eternal kingdom. The Lord Jesus will reign upon us, "whose house are we" (Heb. 3:6); we are His throne, the basis of His Kingdom. And that house and throne are being built up now, although it will only be more materially and physically articulated at His second coming and the establishment of His literal Kingdom upon earth. This process of building up is achieved by the colossal work of the Lord Jesus through His Spirit, calling, converting and transforming His people to be His house. This is how the New Testament alludes to these ideas of building and establishing (Acts 20:32; Rom 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:10). Ps. 89:4 says that this building up of the throne goes on in "all generations". The idea is that the house and throne of the seed is built up from people of all generations. The light never went out for God's Truth and true people. In every generation there were some. This has big implications for those who consider that a very specific theology, especially one based upon 19th century revelations of truth, is required for salvation and membership of God's people.

The fact is that God *did* dwell, temporarily, in Solomon's temple. His glory entered it, and later left it in Ezekiel's time. This is the classic example of the way in which God will go along with men in their mistaken enthusiasm, working with them, even though this is

contrary to His preferred way of doing things. A similar example is found in the way God forbade Israel to have a human king, because to do so would be a denial of His superiority and of their covenant relationship with Him. And yet Israel had a king. God did not turn a blind eye to this. Instead He worked through this system of human kingship. Or take marriage out of the faith. This is clearly contrary to God's ideal wishes. And yet in some cases He is prepared to work through this, in order to being about His purpose. There is even the possible suggestion in Acts 15:10 that God was 'tempted' to re-instate the law of Moses, or parts of it, in the first century, seeing that this was what so many of the early Christians desired to keep. That God is so eager to work with us should in itself be a great encouragement. Yet we must not come to presume upon God's patience, assuming that He will go along with us.

In any case, 2 Chron. 7:12 says that God accepted the temple only as a place of sacrifice, i.e. a glorified altar (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17,18). And yet- God didn't really want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5). "Now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever" (2 Chron. 7:16) is a conditional promise, followed by five verses of conditions concerning Solomon's spirituality which he overlooked. Like Solomon, we too can fix upon promises without considering their conditionality. There is good reason to think that communally and individually we are increasingly shutting our eyes to the possibility of our spiritual failure and disaster. God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9). Note, too, that Solomon had the idea that if sinful Israel prayed towards the temple, they would somehow be forgiven because of this. God's response was that if they sought *Him* wherever they were and repented, then He would hear them- the temple was not to be seen as the instrument or mediatrix of forgiveness which Solomon envisaged. Likewise, Solomon's implication that prayer offered in the temple would be especially acceptable was not upheld by God's reply to him about this (2 Chron. 6:24-26 cp. God's response in 2 Chron. 7:12,13).

David's desire to build a physical house is responded to by God, in that His Son would build a house for His Name. His Name is His characteristics. The Lord Jesus is building a house of persons who reflect the characteristics of the Yahweh Name (Ex. 34:4-6). This is achieved through His Spirit working in human hearts and not any physical building. For in what physical sense can a Name dwell in a physical house? The presence of Yahweh over the ark is to be realized in human hearts where the Spirit dwells, as per the promise of the Comforter. And as David experienced in the wilderness.

God's promise to eternally establish David's "house" and Kingdom were because of His Son, who would also be David's son. There are many inscriptions from Babylon and Assyria that reference the belief of the new king that his house and kingdom would last eternally. Thus Nabopolassar stated his belief that his god Marduk would make his house and dynasty last eternally. David clearly had the same hope. But God is correcting and adjusting his vision, in explaining that indeed this would happen- but through the Messiah and not through building any temple to Him. Ps. 110:2-4 connects the eternal rule from Zion with this seed being a king-priest who would reign forever: "Yahweh will send forth the rod of your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies!... Yahweh has sworn, and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek". The promise to David is here interpreted as being fulfilled in the Son of David reigning eternally as a king-priest from Zion. This was not predicated upon any temple there. Nor is the fulfilment seen in terms of an unbroken line of Davidic kings "forever".

The eternal nature of the Kingdom and dynasty of David was to be through the eternity of his great son and seed, Messiah. Is. 9:7 is clear about this interpretation: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even

For ever". Jer. 33:15-17 is likewise clear that the eternal dimension of David's promised seed and kingdom is realized only through the Lord Jesus, the branch from David: "I will cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up to David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name by which it shall be called: Yahweh our righteousness. For thus says Yahweh: David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel". Jer. 23:5,6 says the same: "I will raise up for David a righteous Branch... and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness'". The various complaints that Yahweh had failed to keep the covenant to David (e.g. Ps. 89) are all therefore a misunderstanding of the covenant as meaning there would be an unbroken line of kings from David. Even if that was a possibility in God's mind, His intention was that the eternity of David's "throne" would be through the eternal rulership of the Messianic son of David. Indeed David and his seed would be so closely identified that Ez. 37:24,25 could prophesy "David my servant will be their prince for ever". But like David and Solomon, people wanted to see the fulfilment in their times and in visible literal physical terms.

But David's thanksgiving for the promises to him seems to focus on how his house or dynasty would be preserved eternally, and it seems he misunderstood this as meaning there would be an unbroken line of kings from him. But that isn't what is promised. As many today, David chose to misunderstand God's word because of his own desire for things to be as he ideally imagined they would and could be. Yet on another hand, David did understand the promises as God intended, i.e. as concerning the singular seed, Messiah. For Peter tells us (Act 2:30) concerning David "that being a prophet, and Knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ".

Verse 13 promises that the throne and kingdom of the seed would be established forever. Verse 16 promises that thereby David's throne and kingdom would be established forever. The eternity of the promise was therefore to be realised in the seed, not in an eternal line of royal descendants. David appears to misunderstand these things when he says that these promises meant that God had established Israel as His eternal people (:24). But God was to later disown them and tell them "You are not My people". Those in the seed would alone be the eternal people. Solomon likewise too quickly assumed that he was that eternal promised seed (1 Kings 2:24) as did David (1 Kings 2:45). And David reverts from the promises by seeking to establish / prepare (s.w.) for a physical temple (1 Chron. 22:3,5,14; 28:2; 29:2,3,16,19) and 'preparing' a place for the temple at Araunah's threshing floor (2 Chron. 3:1). All this reflects a refusal to accept the promise that Yahweh was preparing his Kingdom.

David three times used the word for "established" in bringing the ark to the place had prepared / established for it (1 Chron. 15:1,3,12). God's response is that He will establish David's kingdom and "house".

2Sa 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men-

This clearly applies to the Lord Jesus, born of a woman in the direct line of David and yet with God as His Father. But the words are quoted also about all believers in 2 Cor. 6:18: "And I will be to you as a father, and you will be to me as sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty". Every man and woman in the seed becomes as the Lord Jesus. The unconditional promises are in that sense made to us. The context of the 2 Cor. 6 quotation is of being holy and acting appropriately as the temple / house of God: "What agreement is there between the

temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16). To be "in Christ" means we are to consciously try to act as Him, so that we may be that eternal house promised to David by God. This explains why "I will be his father, and he shall be My son" is reflected in the terms of the new covenant: "I will be their God and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33).

It seems that if the Lord had sinned God's love would not have been withdrawn from Him and after punishment He would still have reigned eternally in some form. He would have been punished as a man is punished by a father ["rod of men... stripes of the children of men"], although Son of God (Prov. 23:13). In this case, our salvation would have been disabled. But a loving Father God would not have rejected His beloved Son on the basis of a 'One strike and you're out' attitude. Knowing this would've made it so easy for the Lord to have given in, knowing His own eternity was ultimately assured. His endurance against sin to the end was therefore motivated by His love for us and desire for our salvation through His perfect sacrifice. This argument is powerful, and disproves the theology that the Lord's sacrifice was for His own eternal salvation as well as for ours.

Often the promises about the seed in the singular (the Lord Jesus) are applied to us in the plural (e.g. 2 Sam. 7:14 cp. Ps. 89:30-35). Those seminal promises to Abraham hinged around what would be realized *in*, not "by", his seed. All that is true of the Lord Jesus is now true of us, in that we are in Him. Baptism is not an initiation into a church. It isn't something which just *seems* the right thing to do. And even if because of our environment and conscience, it was easier to get baptized than not- *now* this mustn't be the case. We really are *in* Christ, we are born again; now we exist, spiritually! And moreover, we have risen with Him, His resurrection life, His life and living that will eternally be, is now manifest in us, and will be articulated physically at the resurrection.

There are connections between the promises to David about Jesus, and the later commentary upon them in Psalm 89 and Isaiah 53, with reference to the crucifixion.

2 Sam. 7 If he [Jesus] commit iniquity = Psalm 89 If his children [us] forsake my law
= Isaiah 53 The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all

2 Sam. 7 I will chasten *him* with the rod of men = Ps. 89 Then will I visit *their* transgression with the rod = Is. 53 For the transgression of *my people* was *he* stricken

2 Sam. 7 And with the stripes of the children of men = Ps. 89 And *their* iniquity with stripes = Is. 53 With *his* stripes *we* are healed.

The point of all this is to show how our sins were somehow carried by the Lord Jesus, to the extent that He suffered for them. But *how* was this actually achieved? It is one thing to say it, but we must put meaning into the words. I suggest it was in that the Lord so identified with us, His heart so bled for us, that He *felt* a sinner even though He of course never sinned. The final cry "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" clearly refers back to all the many passages which speak of God forsaking the wicked, but never forsaking the righteous. The Lord, it seems to me, *felt* a sinner, although He was not one, and thus entered into this sense of crisis and fear He had sinned. He *so* identified with us. In the bearing of His cross, we likewise must identify with others, with their needs and with the desperation of their human condition... and this is what will convert them, as the Lord's identification with *us* saved *us*.

It is unthinkable that God has any possibility of sinning. The seed of David promised in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 was definitely Christ. Verse 14 speaks of Christ's possibility of sinning: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him". Christ was chastened with the rod of men "and with the stripes of the children of men", i.e. Israel (Is. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24; Mic. 5:1), in His death on the cross. But punishment with rod and stripes was to be given if Messiah sinned (2 Sam. 7:14). Yet Christ received this punishment; because God counted Him as if He were a sinner. His sharing in our condemnation was no harmless piece of theology. He really did feel, deep inside Him, that He was a sinner, forsaken by God. Instead of lifting up His face to Heaven,

with the freedom of sinlessness, He fell on His face before the Father in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:39), bearing the guilt of human sin.

"Chasten" is the word used by Solomon when he speaks of the need to accept "reproof" in Prov. 15:12: "A scoffer doesn't love to be reproved; he will not go to the wise". David had spoken of the house of Saul as scoffing at him (s.w. Ps. 119:51). And the line of David had been chosen to replace Saul because he had refused Samuel's reproof. David had accepted reproof and was open to it, notably from Nathan the prophet (Ps. 38:1; 141:5); and so again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father. But Solomon was only to remain the prophetic son of David if he accepted reproof (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:14); and he didn't. He refused to personalize his own wisdom, as we can.

2 Sam. 7:14 had warned the son of David that if he sinned, he would be punished "with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men". I take this as meaning that he would be punished like ordinary men are punished- and the implication could be that Solomon would have a tendency to think that he was more than human, somehow above the possibility of failing and being punished as an ordinary man, because he might think that he was somehow 'God', or at least, that what happens to all humanity would somehow not happen to him. This tendency to assume that we are somehow different to the rest of humanity, that we can sin in a certain way but they can't, that somehow for us it will all be OK... is as alive in us as it was in Solomon.

The promise to David himself is unconditional. Subsequent kings could be punished for their disobedience, but God would not remove His grace (:15). The dynasty of David wouldn't be rejected as that of Saul was (:15). This was to come true through the "Son of David" reigning eternally on David's throne- not a literal chair or seat, but reigning as David, literally in Zion / Jerusalem. After 400 years or so, David's dynasty was overturned and the crown removed- "until he come whose right it is", the Son of David, the Lord Jesus. This is how the eternal promise was to be fulfilled. But David hankered to interpret it as meaning that a line of kings from his body would literally be eternal. His warning to Solomon implies this misunderstanding: "Then the Lord will fulfill the promise that He made concerning me: If your descendants are scrupulous in their conduct, and walk before Me faithfully, with all their heart and soul, your line on the throne of Israel shall never end!" (1 Kings 2:4). David here makes the unconditional conditional. He balked at the grace of the covenant and returned to salvation by works, just as so many do. God explained to Solomon that if indeed he was obedient, then he could be the Messianic king and this become the fulfilment of these words about eternal kingship. He failed, but the Lord Jesus didn't: "As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked before Me, wholeheartedly and with uprightness, doing all that I have commanded you [and] keeping My laws and My rules, then I will establish your throne of kingship over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, 'Your line on the throne of Israel shall never end'" (1 Kings 9:4,5). Whenever the Davidic covenant is quote or interpreted as conditional, it is in the context of a king having the conditional, potential possibility to become the eternal king through perfect obedience. But they all failed- until the Lord Jesus. This is why some of the kings felt upset that the covenant had as it were been broken with them: "Yet You have rejected, spurned, and become enraged at Your anointed. You have repudiated the covenant with Your servant; You have dragged his dignity in the dust. You have breached all his defenses, shattered his strongholds" (Ps. 89:39-41). The covenant itself was not broken because it was intended to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. But for those who felt it was to be fulfilled in them, it appeared broken. Even after David's ruling dynasty had come to an end with the Babylonian exile, God was insistent that despite that, the covenant to David would not be broken. He had in view how it would be fulfilled through the Lord Jesus and those in Him: "If you could break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that day and night should not come at their proper time, only then could My

covenant with My servant David be broken – so that he would not have a descendant reigning upon his throne... Like the host of heaven which cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea which cannot be measured, so will I multiply the offspring of My servant David, and of the Levites who minister to Me" (Jer. 33:20-22). In this way, Jacob's words also come true: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet; so that tribute shall come to him and the homage of peoples be his" (Gen. 49:10). This doesn't refer to an unbroken line of kings from Judah; it means that one from Judah, i.e. the Lord Jesus, would reign eternally.

2Sa 7:15 but My loving kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you-

It was God's Spirit which departed from Saul and came upon David. Yet that Spirit is here called God's grace or loving kindness, and the New Testament makes the same connection between the grace / gift of God and the Holy Spirit. The formation of the seed, both collectively and individually in the Lord Jesus, was through the work of the Spirit. And that Spirit would abide fully and eternally upon the Lord Jesus (Jn. 3:34).

The clear message here is that God would as it were almost force through His promised program with David's seed. Even if the special seed sinned, he would be chastened, but God's gracious mercy would not depart from him (:14). This connects with the observation on :11 that God would as it were make Israel obedient, He would give them the blessings of obedience [not wandering any longer but being established], simply because that is what He was promising. These are the "sure mercies of David" available to all who will 'come to Him' (Is. 55:3). These things lead us to respect the Lord's achievement all the more, as the seed of David; if in fact He would personally have been accepted by God even if He had failed in some point. His perfection and endurance therefore achieved what Paul calls "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3). The Greek implies there were qualities of salvation attainable; and the Lord obtained for us the highest possible level. And how can we neglect that...

2Sa 7:16 Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you-

The translations tend to add "in your presence", implying David's resurrection to behold it. But the grammar is indeterminate. It could as well mean in God's presence, and this is how David interprets it in Ps. 61:7. The parallel in 1 Chron. 17:14 says "I will confirm him in My house". We assume God said both these things, and thus paralleled "Your house... My house". David's house / kingdom was to be eternal because it was to become God's house / Kingdom; the promised Son of David was also to be Son of God.

Solomon came to overlook the conditionality of the promises because his father had done the same. David on his deathbed speaks of how "God has given one to sit on my throne this day, my eyes even seeing it" (1 Kings 1:48). He forgot how those promises more essentially spoke of his house "for a great while to come", and how only after "you shall sleep with your fathers" would David see "your house and your kingdom established for ever *before you*" (2 Sam. 7:12,16), thus implying David's resurrection. He lost this focus in his enthusiasm for Solomon, and it seems that Solomon followed suite. David focused upon some words of God but out of context. Just as we call can.

Your throne shall be established forever'-

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.

I suggested on :13 that this establishment of the throne was a process of building up and establishing God's people over the generations, coming to full term in the establishment of the Lord Jesus on David's revived throne in Jerusalem at His second coming. Ps. 89:4 says that this building up of the throne goes on in "all generations". The idea is that the house and throne of the seed is built up from people of all generations. The light never went out for God's Truth and true people.

"Established" is literally "shall be made sure". This is alluded to in Is. 55:3, "the sure mercies of David". The sure mercies of David are offered to all men (Is. 55:2,3). We too can have this eternal assurance of a sure, established Kingdom. If we are in the seed, the Son of David.

The promise that David's eternal kingdom would be "before you" meant in his presence (:16). He would be resurrected to see this eternal reign of his seed upon his throne. But on thanking God for this, David changes this to thanks that it would be established for ever "before You" (:29). He didn't grasp the implications for himself because he preferred to interpret God's words according to his own preconceived narrative of wanting his descendants to be kings in an eternal unbroken line of succession. This didn't happen neither was it God's offer here. Those who later lamented the end of the Davidic line of kings likewise failed to listen carefully to what God was saying here. Likewise in :24 David wrongly reads the promise that his house would be eternal as meaning that Israel as a nation would continue or 'be established 'for ever. This is David's take on the promise to eternally "establish" his house, kingdom and throne in :12,13,16. But Israel didn't continue eternally, for this promise of eternity was for David's house which would be the house of his Divine seed, "which house are we", Paul says to the Hebrew Christians, ethnic Jews, if we hold fast in Christ. David makes the same mistake in Ps. 102:28 "The children of Your servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before You" (likewise God's words are reported this way in Ps. 89:4). The eternal establishment was to be before or in the presence of a resurrected David, and it was the Kingdom of his singular seed which would be established. No unbroken line of descendants was promised, but because this was what David was hoping and fantasizing about, he interpreted God's promise like that. And again, David likes to think that Zion, his personal citadel, would be established for ever ("The Highest Himself shall establish her", Ps. 87:5). But Zion was ploughed as a field, and many of Jeremiah's lamentations and consternation about this would've been unnecessary had David and others listened to God's promises and not conflated them with their own fantasies about an eternal Zion, temple and blood line of Davidic kings. The temple and kingdom of David will only be established eternally at Christ's return "in the last days" (s.w. Is. 2:2; 16:5; 9:6 s.w. "to order it... For ever"). The only alternative seems to be that if this was God's intention, then He changed it because of their behaviour. But this would contradict the unconditional nature of the promises to David about his seed. For the assurance was that even human failure by the seed would not stop the seed eternally reigning at some point.

2Sa 7:17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David-

Nathan faithfully relayed the vision he received in these words to David. This is in contrast to how he had over hastily assumed to know God's word and will in the matter the day before.

2Sa 7:18 Then David the king went in and sat before Yahweh; and he said, Who am I, Lord Yahweh-

The promises to David are described as the mercy of God (Is. 55:3; Ps. 89:33,34). God having a son is the sign of His love for us, and this must elicit a response in us. David himself marvelled that such mercy had been shown to him: "Who am I... and what is my house... You know Your servant" (2 Sam. 7:18-20). And yet in the very next chapters, we read of how David made a renewed attempt to show mercy to the house of Saul. Mephibosheth says that he is "thy servant... what is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such... as I am?" (2 Sam. 9:8 AV). Mephibosheth is using the very words which David used to God; David is showing mercy to Mephibosheth in the very way in which the promises of God to him were the "mercies" shown to David. Appreciating that the promises concern us personally, and that they reveal such loving grace from the Father, can only lead to a similar response in showing love and grace through entering into the lives and destinies of others.

And what is my house, that You have brought me thus far?-

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant" (Gen. 32:10) was spoken by Jacob on that night of destiny, in recognition of how he was morally unworthy to receive the promises which God had given him (see context). David picked this up in 2 Sam. 7:18, where he comments on his unworthiness to receive the promises to him, which were an extension of those Jacob received.

2Sa 7:19 This was yet a small thing in Your eyes, Lord Yahweh; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come; this is not the way of men, Lord Yahweh!-

Such is the wonder of God's promise to us that we really have no excuse to sin. Every sin is in a sense a denial of His promises. God told David that he had no excuse for what he did with Uriah and Bathsheba, because he had given him so much, "and if that had been too little, I would have added unto you..." (2 Sam. 12:8). "Too little" sends the mind back to 2 Sam. 7:19, where the promises to David are described as a "little thing"; the promises were so wonderful that David should not have allowed himself to fall into such sin. And us likewise.

2Sa 7:20 What more can David say to You?-

In view of all God had said to David, he had nothing to say to God, and the implication is that he would now not say to God his plans of building a house for God. His later desire and insistence upon doing so would suggest he lost this intensity of understanding and awareness.

For You know Your servant, Lord Yahweh-

See on :18. David is expressing what we often do to God; that we cannot express our gratitude enough in words or praise, we can only ask God to know us, and know how we feel.

2Sa 7:21 For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have worked all this greatness, to make Your servant know it-

David spoke of how God's word and "own heart" are parallel (2 Sam. 7:21); God's mind / spirit is expressed in His word, although David may here more understand the "word" as referring to God's purpose (as in Jn. 1:1) rather than the scriptures. David was sure the promises would come true; he speaks in the past tense of how God had worked already these great things.

2Sa 7:22 Therefore You are great-

LXX continues from :21: "that he may magnify You". The purpose of God's expression of grace through the promises is so that we who receive them might magnify Him. The Psalms

which praise Yahweh's greatness were therefore manifestations of this sense of gratitude for the promises (Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 48:1).

Yahweh God. For there is none like You, neither is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears-

What characterizes Yahweh as the one and only God is His grace, which David has just experienced poured out. Divine grace is the defining feature of the one true faith; no other god, idol or religious system comes close to it.

2Sa 7:23 What one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem to Himself for a people, and to make Himself a name, and to do great things for You, and awesome things for Your land, before Your people, whom You redeemed to yourself out of Egypt, from the nations and their gods?-

Israel had been redeemed from the gods of Egypt. Yet they took those gods with them through the Red Sea, and carried the tabernacle of Moloch and Remphan through the wilderness along with that of Yahweh (Acts 7:43). The LXX here brings out this point: "so that thou shouldest cast out nations and their tabernacles from the presence of thy people, whom thou didst redeem for thyself out of Egypt". That Israel carried these tabernacles and gods with them suggests that this was a redemption refused. And David, having experienced the grace which can only come from Yahweh, is resolved to only serve Him and root out all such idolatry.

2Sa 7:24 You established for Yourself Your people Israel to be a people to You for ever; and You, Yahweh, became their God-

God had promised to establish David's seed, God's true people, as His throne and people for ever. David recognizes that what had been promised to him had already been offered to Israel; although as noted on :23, they had refused this through their idolatry and failure to be God's exclusive kingdom / people, rejecting Him as their God. It was similar to God's thought of rejecting His people and working instead through Moses and his seed. God had been persuaded against that, but now David perceives that God is going to work not through Israel as a whole but through him and his seed. The allusion is to Dt. 32:6 where Israel act as the most foolish nation in rejecting the God who established them as a nation.

2Sa 7:25 Now, Yahweh God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house, confirm it for ever, and do as You have spoken-

David seems to feel the need to show his agreement with God's plan (also in :29). This may be because he perceived the similarity with Moses, who was also offered to have God working not with Israel but with him and his seed. And Moses hadn't agreed. But David agrees.

2Sa 7:26 Let Your name be magnified for ever, saying, 'Yahweh of Armies is God over Israel; and the house of Your servant David shall be established before You'-

David invites the faithful to join him in praising God for His plan of salvation revealed in these promises; and the Psalms which magnify Yahweh's Name are therefore motivated by these promises.

2Sa 7:27 For You, Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant saying, 'I will build you a house'. Therefore Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer to You-

The idea of the Hebrew is that David speaks of being bold in his prayer of praise for the

promises made to him ("Therefore hath thy servant been bold to pray this prayer", RVmg.). Yet Heb. 4:16 encourages *us* to be bold in prayer. He was our pattern in prayer.

Literally, "found his heart". To find the heart maybe means that he found his true self, he was in touch with his very heart, and he knew that truly he believed these things and was thankful for the grace expressed, beyond words.

2Sa 7:28 Now, O Lord Yahweh, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant-

The idea is "You are the one and only God". The context is Israel's idolatry, and how God is now working through David and his seed as His Kingdom, rather than through an Israel who rejected Him as the only true God.

2Sa 7:29 Now therefore let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue for ever before You; for You, Lord Yahweh, have spoken it. Let the house of Your servant be blessed for ever with Your blessing-

David describes the promises as "blessing" (2 Sam. 7:28,29), a word normally used in the context of forgiveness. So David was aware of the grossness of sin, of the need for self-examination, to ensure that his technical breaches of the Law of Moses were truly a reflection of his friendship with God rather than an indication of spiritual weakness. For David's house to become God's eternal Kingdom would require their blessing with forgiveness in order to be immortalized.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 8

2Sa 8:1 After this it happened that David struck the Philistines and subdued them: and David took the bridle of the mother city out of the hand of the Philistines-

"After this" may not be strictly chronological, because 2 Sam. 7:1 was at a time when David had rest from his enemies. 2 Sam. 7 is included where it is to continue the theme of the ark and Zion which began in 2 Sam. 6. The promised king of Israel would save Israel from the Philistines and their other enemies; Saul had failed in this, but David succeeded as the truly intended king. LXX implies that until this time, Israel were still paying tribute to the Philistines: "David took the tribute from out of the hand of the Philistines".

But the parallel 1 Chron. 18:1 says that "David took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines". Gath would be the 'mother-city', and the word translated "towns" literally means daughters. We note that David had earlier lived in Gath under the protection of Achish and had lied to the people how many Israelites he had slain in his apparent hatred of Saul. They would have considered him a hypocrite. David had on two occasions gone to Gath for refuge from Saul and 'made up' with them, promising them his loyalty. Each time he had been lying through his teeth. And yet he proclaims his utter integrity and truthfulness so often in his psalms. Although he had a heart after God's, refusal to accept his sinfulness was a major feature of his character. This is one outcome of having endured false accusation. His stellar sin with Bathsheba was perhaps used by God in the bigger picture to help with correct this, and yet such psalms continue at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

The victory over Gath was not very long lasting because in Solomon's time there was an independent king there (1 Kings 2:39). The conquest of Edom (:14) was after a great defeat and only by God's grace, as explained in Psalm 60. And Edom was soon back independent of David. Psalm 60 speaks of this campaign- there was a great defeat of Israel because they had broken the covenant, and then a victory once they turned to God pleading His [mercy and] truth as their battle banner, i.e. the covenant. The extent of the initial defeat may be hinted at

in 1 Kings 11:15,16: "When David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the army was gone up to bury the slain, and had struck every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom)". This seems to say that Joab went to bury the slain of Israel, and at that slain in a great defeat, and at that time he remained six months subduing the Edomites with the victory which Psalm 60 later celebrates. Much of Psalm 60 is repeated in Psalm 108 as a victory song. Likewise in Psalm 44. The war with Edom clearly had a far larger dimension than the simple note in 2 Samuel 8 that David defeated Edom. He did, but after a stunning defeat, and an amazing victory by God's grace alone, for which David gave ample thanks in at least three Psalms, 44,60 and 108.

But that is all rather overlooked here; the record is giving an impression of positive victory everywhere for David. In all these conquests of David there was a hollowness to them, for all the subdued nations very quickly broke free from Israelite rule. And the victory over Syria was hardly permanent because the history of the subsequent kings is full of multiple wars with Syria. We get the impression that David is seeking to set himself up as his own promised son with a Messianic kingdom, but it was all so hollow and temporary. He made himself a name rather than believing God would make His Name great in a living temple of people. On one level, David's conquests can just be read as a type of Christ's future Kingdom. But I suggest in reality he was making a hollow attempt to have that kingdom now with himself as king. But that perhaps was on the level of deep inner psychology and he still had a heart for God.

2Sa 8:2 He struck Moab, and measured them with the line, making them to lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive. The Moabites became servants to David, and brought tribute-

David made the captives lay down in three lines. He arbitrarily chose one line to keep alive, and killed the other two lines. This can't be justified as some careful obedience to some Mosaic law. It reads like something out of the Holocaust, an arbitrary slaying of some in order to exercise the whim of one's own power. No wonder David was barred from building the temple because of his attitude to bloodshed. Yet those words are possibly David's reported speech to Solomon; he refused to accept God's reasons for not wanting a temple, and goes ahead with the plan, imagining in his own mind that his blood shedding was the reason. And he repeated that narrative until he believed it, and thought it was indeed God's narrative. But he did clearly have a conscience about his needless blood shedding, and this would have been an example of him doing so. And this was the worse because his parents had been given refuge there (1 Sam. 22:3,4) ; again we get the sense of David using people with no conscience. And his ancestor Ruth was a Moabitess who had come to dwell under the protective shadow of the wings of Israel's God. We wonder whether despite having received the promises about his Messianic son in 2 Sam. 7, David somehow wanted to be the center of them. And so he smites Moab because this is what the Messiah is prophesied as doing in Num. 24:17: "A star will come out of Jacob, a scepter will rise out of Israel, and shall strike through the corners of Moab". In this case he would be rather like Nebuchadnezzar, who initially humbly accepts the dream of Dan. 2 with himself as the head of gold who is to be replaced by others. But then in Dan. 3 he builds an entire statue of gold, as if wanting himself to be the permanent center of God's purpose. Perhaps the incident of 2 Sam. 23:20 occurred at this time of 2 Sam. 8:2.

Likewise when Rabbah is captured, David proudly puts the crown of the king on his head, grabs their spoil for himself (not following Abraham's example), "and he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of

the children of Ammon” (2 Sam. 12:31). Now all that is torture. Today it would be classified as a war crime. It’s one thing to obey Divine commands about slaying enemies; it’s another to willfully torture them, Auschwitz-style. These incidents reveal David at his worst. And again- did he really have to ensure that every male in Edom was murdered (1 Kings 11:15,16)- was that really necessary? What about the mums, wives, sisters left weeping, and the fatherless daughters, left to grow up in the dysfunction of a leaderless Middle Eastern home? Those men were all somebody’s sons, brothers, fathers, grandfathers. Was David really obeying some Divine command here, or was this the dictate of his own anger and dysfunctional bloodlust? We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8). We think likewise of his breaking up of Michal’s marriage and the weeping husband walking behind her, and his genocide of the villages around Gath lest anyone tell the Philistines that in fact David was not attacking villages in Judah as he had falsely claimed.

2Sa 8:3 David struck also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah-

Hadadezer = 'helped by Hadad', the sun god. 2 Chron. 8 shows how Solomon sought to replicate what his father David did here. It describes the actions of Solomon in the very language which is used earlier about David.

2 Chron. 8:3 “Solomon went to Hamath Zobah” = 2 Sam. 8:3 “David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob king of Zobah”; 2 Chron. 8:3 “and prevailed” = same word 1 Sam. 17:30; 2 Chron. 8:8 Those “whom the children of Israel consumed not, did Solomon make to pay tribute” = 2 Sam. 8:6 “David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts”; 2 Chron. 8:14 “He appointed according to the ordinance of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges... for so had David commanded” = 1 Chron. 24:1; 2 Chron. 9:15,16 = 2 Sam.8:7 “David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem”.

1 Kings 11:4,6 clearly states God's opinion that Solomon was not like David: "his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father... (he) went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father". This double stress, bearing in mind inspiration's economic use of words, is really making a point. Yet the records of Solomon seem to be framed to show that externally, Solomon was indeed following David; he was obsessed with living out parental expectation, and perhaps the expectation of his society, rather than forging his own relationship with God.

As he went to recover his dominion at the River- Grammatically, the subject of the sentence is Hadadezer, and the reference is to the battle of 2 Sam. 10:15-19. Again we see that the records are not chronologically but thematically arranged.

2Sa 8:4 David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen and twenty thousand footmen: and David hamstrung all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for one hundred chariots-

See on :3. Notice how both David and Solomon dealt with the matter of chariots and horses. Solomon’s weakness for horses was perhaps traceable to David’s. Solomon unashamedly amassed horses and chariots, in direct disobedience to Divine command (Dt. 17:16). When David his father had captured 1000 chariots and horses, he hamstrung 900 of them and retained 100 of them (2 Sam. 8:4). He had a conscience about the matter, but thought that 90% obedience wasn’t bad. And the hamstrung horses were likely used for agricultural work and especially for breeding- breeding yet more chariot horses. David’s 90% obedience lead to his son’s 100% disobedience in this matter of chariot horses.

Solomon wished to imitate his father David in every sense; his own real personality only really came out in the Ecclesiastes years, when he took to drink, materialism, women and idolatry. It took the influence of his parents many years to wear off. David had weaknesses for horses (2 Sam. 8:4) and many wives; and Solomon followed in these steps too. Note that David had six sons in seven years by six different women, including Gentiles (1 Chron. 3:3). And in addition to these, David had children by "the concubines" (1 Chron. 3:9). Doubtless Solomon reasoned, albeit deep within his psyche, that such behaviour was legitimate because David his father had done it. David seems to have over interpreted the promises made to him about Solomon and the temple, and assumed that his interpretation was certainly correct. And Solomon did exactly the same. The weaknesses of the parents all too easily are repeated by the children to an even greater extent.

There are apparently different numbers given in 2 Sam. 8:4; 10:18 and 1 Chron. 19:18. I see no real problem here once we appreciate that the Hebrew word "thousand" used when giving numbers like this rarely means 1,000 as a number. It is also translated regiment, brigade, family, squadron etc. And to Israelites looking at the Syrian army, it could be described in various ways. There many regiments, families, groups, squadrons, but these subdivisions of an ancient army are all called a "thousand". Depending how one looks at the army and its subdivisions. A modern army would be subdivided into two to four corps, a corps has at least two divisions or legions, a division has two four brigades or regiments, a brigade has two or more regiments, a regiment has two or more battalions, a battalion has a number of companies, a company has a number of platoons, a platoon has a number of squads or fire teams. The problem is that the Hebrew Bible uses the same word for all such military subdivisions, and it is translated "thousand" in many Bibles. Hence the apparently contradictory numbers.

2Sa 8:5 When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck of the Syrians twenty two thousand men-

Again we must note that "thousand" refers to regiments / families and is not necessarily to be taken as literally 1,000.

2Sa 8:6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought tribute. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went-

This was short-lived, because Solomon's adversary Rezon established himself at Damascus (1 Kings 11:23-25).

2Sa 8:7 David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem-

"Hadad" was the god of the sun, "Hadadezer" had not been 'helped by Hadad' as his name means, and so David brought these golden imitations of the sun to Yahweh's temple. It is perhaps questionable whether David should have brought idols into Jerusalem; we note that later Judah worshipped sun gods. David's actions here were not blessed, for the LXX adds "And Susakim [i.e. Shishak] king of Egypt took them, when he went up to Jerusalem in the days of Roboam the son of Solomon". Likewise 1 Kings 14:26 LXX mentions that David took golden spears from Hadadezer: "And the golden spears which David took from the hand of the servants of Adraazar king of Soba and carried to Jerusalem, he took them all". These would not have been used as real spears, but were part of the worship of the golden sun which was the main religion in Syria at the time. He would have been better destroying them, rather than bringing idol paraphernalia into Jerusalem. For it later contributed towards the freedom Judah felt to worship sun gods.

Verse 11 suggests that these were dedicated to the future temple. But Song 4:4 speaks of "David's tower... whereon a thousand shields hang". So what David dedicated to the temple ended up being used for "David's tower". The king of Israel was not to multiply silver and gold "to himself" (Dt. 17:17), and David presumably got around that by arguing that he was dedicating this wealth to some future project for Yahweh. But in fact he ended up keeping the gold for himself, for his very own tower, and so in fact his apparent dedication of his wealth to God was once again a case of very mixed motives. And of course this can be so relevant to us all- seeking wealth under the self persuasion that this some day will be 'for the Lord's work' when in fact it effectively is for ourselves.

2Sa 8:8 From Betah-

LXX Tebah, a son of Nahor the Syrian (Gen. 22:24).

And from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass-
As discussed on :7, these were likely brass [better, 'copper'] idols or idol paraphernalia which he would have been better destroying. LXX adds "Therewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the lavers, and all the vessels", confirming what is stated in 1 Chron. 18:8, "wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the layers, and all the vessels". So right after the grace of God in declining David's offer of building a temple, David gets right on with planning for it and amassing materials for it. The wonder of pure grace in Messiah, the future Christ, soon wore off- as it does for so many, and they too revert to legalism and salvation by works and wanting to see it all in this life.

2Sa 8:9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had struck all the army of Hadadezer-
Hamath came under tribute to David (:10), and Solomon, ever seeking to re-live the work of his father David, made a point of building forts there (1 Kings 4:24; 2 Chron. 8:4). But this external imitation of the faith and works of his father wasn't the same as real spirituality; and this is a warning to all those raised as believers. For when he finally individuated as his own man, Solomon had no faith in Yahweh and turned to idols.

2Sa 8:10 then Toi sent Joram his son to king David, to greet him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and struck him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass-

These vessels were devoted to God's service by David and then Solomon dedicated them to the temple (1 Kings 7:51). The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from Egypt and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

2Sa 8:11 King David also dedicated these to Yahweh, with the silver and gold that he dedicated of all the nations which he subdued-

See on :10. David "subdued" the nations, using the word often used of the command to subdue the nations of Canaan (Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). He is presented as a second Joshua, subduing the land as it ought to have been subdued, and therefore becoming what Adam ought to have been in Eden (Gen. 1:28 s.w.). This is another indication that the garden of Eden was effectively the *eretz* or land promised to Abraham.

Dt. 17:17 warns Israel's king not to multiply gold and silver "to himself". On one hand, we could argue that David obeyed this by dedicating his multiplied gold and silver to Yahweh's work. But on the other hand, this gold and silver was dedicated to David's own

obsession- that his son Solomon should use it to build a magnificent temple. When Yahweh had said he didn't want this. So again it would seem David's motives were mixed.

As discussed on :8, the LXX for :8 specifically says that the dedicated materials were used for building the temple. So again we see an element of poor thinking in David at this time. He has just been told not to build a physical temple, and to quietly trust that Yahweh will build him an eternal "house" through the work of the Messianic Son of David. But he immediately sets about gathering materials for the physical house which he had been told not to build.

2Sa 8:12 of Syria, Moab, the children of Ammon, the Philistines and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah-

There is no record of David fighting Amalek again, so the spoil in view may be that taken in 1 Sam. 30:16.

2Sa 8:13 David made himself a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians in the Valley of Salt, even eighteen thousand men-

This demonstrates that a "name" in Hebrew thought is not just a lexical item. David made his name; it involves personal history, character, reputation etc. These are all what the Yahweh Name is all about. This is the reference of 2 Sam. 7:9, indicating that 2 Sam. 7 is actually referring to events after 2 Sam. 8 and is not in chronological sequence. Chronicles has "And Abishai the son of Zeruiah smote Edom in the valley of salt, (to the number of) eighteen thousand men". Perhaps Edom and Syria were confederate; or we should read with LXX, which had "Edom" here rather than "the Syrians". We note that :14 goes on to talk about Edom.

Or we can read this comment that David made himself a name as a criticism of him for not accepting the promises of 2 Sam. 7. Yahweh would make David and Israel a name (2 Sam. 7:23), and that name was to be part of Yahweh's Name; Yahweh would make a house of people where that Name would dwell. But David relapses to the physical, visible and religious rather than the spiritual, as seen in his continued efforts to establish / prepare a physical house for God. Rather than accepting Yahweh was going to establish / prepare that house in spiritual terms through Messiah, as a house of persons manifesting His Name. In contrast, David makes himself a name rather than being devoted to manifesting Yahweh's Name. This may well be reflected in the style of the narrative- for the word "David" occurs 21 times in the 18 verses of 2 Samuel 8. It was all about his name. The same phrase is used of the Babel builders who said "let us make us a name" (Gen. 11:4). Soon after that we read that in contrast, Yahweh would make Abraham's name great (Gen. 12:2 s.w.).

2Sa 8:14 He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went-

This is framed in such terms as to show that Esau / Edom was indeed now subject to Jacob as predicted in (Gen. 27:37-40), and Balaam's prophecy (Num. 24:17,18).

See on :1.

2Sa 8:15 David reigned over all Israel; and David executed justice and righteousness to all his people-

David was motivated in doing this by realizing that this is how Yahweh reigns (Ps. 33:5), and that by doing so he would help live out the spirit of the promises to him, that his throne would be eternally established; for that throne was all about justice and righteousness (Ps. 89:14).

And so David's throne or way of rulership becomes the basis for how his seed, the Lord Jesus, eternally reigns (Is. 9:7; 32:1; Jer. 23:5,6).

2Sa 8:16 Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder-

The men who had been faithful to David during his long wilderness years, when he seemed a lost cause with Saul certain to win against him (1 Sam. 27:1), were the very ones who were the rulers in his kingdom. Despite the very evident weaknesses of men like Joab. And in the type this looks ahead to we who shall be king-priests in the Lord's eternal kingdom (Rev. 5:10), having been loyal to Him and His cause in these apparently hopeless wilderness years.

2Sa 8:17 and Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were priests; and Seraiah was scribe-

We notice that no high priest is nominated. David effectively acted as the high priest; see on :18. The "scribe" or historian was a senior advisor in the Hebrew court (2 Sam. 8:17; 2 Kings 18:18,37; 2 Chron. 34:8) because of the huge value attached to history in the Hebrew mind, and as reflected in the Bible being largely history. Advice on how to act was to be based upon historical, or as we would now say, "Biblical", precedent.

The question of there being two High Priests is probably because Zadok served at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39) and Abiathar at Jerusalem. This again suggests that David was playing fast and loose with Divine law. He wanted to cement religious and political power in his own backyard, quite literally, in his citadel at Zion. So he brought the ark there, made tents for it and appointed a High Priest for it. But the actual tabernacle remained at Gibeon. This assumption that he could act as he wanted with God's law sets the scene for his failure with Bathsheba.

2Sa 8:18 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers-

David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (:17; 2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. As ever, David presents as mixed in his motives. On one hand, he loved God's law and understood the spirit of it to the point that he could break it technically. Although the Uzzah incident was to reign him in about this. However on the other hand, he was doing what monarchs did at the time- concentrating both religious and political power in his own hands. This is also shown by his taking the ark to his own back yard in his citadel of Zion, rather than to the tabernacle in Gibeon, and seeking to build a temple for it there- on his own property. His setting up his sons as priests [Heb. kohen] likewise- and we note that nothing more is ever heard about this, because clearly they were spiritual failures. This contributes to the overall impression of this chapter- that David's apparent achievements were hollow. This is not to say he had no spirituality, for we see him showing grace to Mephibosheth, but after he was given the amazing promises, we see nothing but a downward spiral in his life overall.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 9

2Sa 9:1 David said, Is there yet any who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?-

These words may have been said in David's heart, or perhaps as a nationwide announcement. David sought to show all grace to the house of Saul, in response to the grace he had received from God. And he didn't let the opportunities to show grace just meet him along life's way, but rather proactively sought them out. And this is a pattern to us. The fulfilment of God's promises is His showing kindness to us (s.w. Gen. 24:12,14); to show kindness is to respond to grace or something done for us (s.w. Gen. 40:14 "remember me when it will be well with you, and please show kindness to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh"; Josh. 2:12 "since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's house"; Jud. 1:24; 8:35; Ruth 1:8; 2 Sam. 10:2). Nothing good had been done to David by the house of Saul; but God had done David so much good. And he reflected that by showing grace to those who had not shown it to him. See on 2 Sam. 10:1. Indeed 2 Sam. 3:1 specifically states that there had been "long war between the house of Saul and the house of David". But David wanted to show grace to that "house of Saul"; that "house" which God had condemned as guilty of blood shedding: "Saul, and his bloody house" (2 Sam. 21:1). And that "house" had been destroyed by God's judgment: "Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together" (1 Chron. 10:6). But to the bloody, the condemned, the enemy... David wants to show God's grace. We will read likewise in 2 Sam. 10:2 of David's desire to show grace to the Ammonites who likewise were under Divine condemnation. David's response to grace is perhaps reported here as a kind of foil to the upcoming record of the shameful behaviour with Bathsheba and Uriah in 2 Sam. 11.

2Sa 9:2 There was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, Are you Ziba? He said, Your servant is he-

As noted on :1, this is an example of proactively seeking out opportunities to show grace. David was apparently unaware of Jonathan's lame son (:3) or else he would have shown this grace earlier. Perhaps Ziba and Mephibosheth didn't quite believe David could show so much grace to the house of Saul after what they had done to him. We take from this the principle that it is always hard to believe real grace. On the other hand, it is a fair question as to why only now David was seeking to show such grace. And seeing he had undertaken to his best friend Jonathan to be faithful to Jonathan's family, we wonder whether it really could be the case that David was ignorant of Mephibosheth's existence. He was five when Jonathan died and David became king, and now Mephibosheth is old enough to have had a child himself. So we wonder why David hadn't shown any interest in Mephibosheth for at least 10 years. And thus begins our suspicion that David's apparently amazing grace was in fact not as amazing as it seems. God's grace is pure, and our response to it should be to show pure grace. But our grace is often compromised and far less than pure.

Ziba had been "a servant" of the house of Saul; but he now presents himself as David's servant [LXX "I am your servant"]; and again in :11. But David and the record repeatedly stress that Saul was still his "master" and he was therefore in his heart a servant of Saul (:9,10). Later, at the time of Absalom's rebellion, Ziba would turn against David and seek to get the kingdom back into the hands of the house of Saul. So David is correct to be cynical of Ziba. David's awareness of the current of support for a revived Saulide kingdom means that his grace to Mephibosheth may have not been so pure, but also politically motivated- see discussion on :13.

2Sa 9:3 The king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him? Ziba said to the king, Jonathan has yet a son, who is lame of his feet- See on Ps. 35:14. David wept for Saul as if he was his friend or brother (Ps. 35:14). Who was David's friend and brother? Surely Jonathan his brother-in-law. But he wept for Saul, David says, as he wept for Jonathan. This is testified to historically by David's lament of 2 Sam. 1. And still David sought out the house of Saul, "that I may shew the kindness of God" unto them. It was the experience of Divine kindness that motivated David.

The allusion is to Jonathan's request that David "show the kindness [*hesed*, grace] of Yahweh" to him even after his death (1 Sam. 20:14). But David goes beyond the letter of the law, the strict terms of his agreement with Jonathan, to enquire if he could show God's kindness to any of the whole family of Saul. David's mercy to the "house" of his enemy reflects God's promised grace to David's "house" in 2 Sam. 7, just as we likewise should reflect our personal experience of God's grace to others. The same phrase is used by David of Saul when he says that Saul had not remembered to "show mercy / kindness" (Ps. 109:16). But all the same David shows grace to him. So David's response to God showing him grace was to show grace to those who didn't show grace. Our response should be likewise. In 2 Sam. 22:51 David reflects that in those promises, Yahweh "showed mercy / kindness to David and to his seed for ever more". The same phrase for 'showing kindness' is found also in 2 Sam. 10:2, where it seems David again wanted to just reflect God's grace / kindness to others even outside the family of Saul. But we ponder whether David is remembering how the men of Jabesh 'showed kindness' to Saul and therefore were shown kindness by Yahweh (2 Sam. 2:5,6). We ponder whether David was motivated by wanting blessing in a transactional sense if he showed such kindness to Saul's house. Sadly Solomon considered that God had only 'shown kindness / grace' to David because he had been obedient to God's laws (1 Kings 3:6). By saying this Solomon showed his complete lack of understanding that grace is grace, undeserved, and not given as a reward for works.

We reflect on how "the blind and the lame" were "hated of David's soul" in 2 Sam. 5:6 and it seems he had them thrown down the water shute of Zion once the stronghold was captured. I noted there that this was inappropriate anger and blood lust by David, so perhaps here we have some kind of repentance. Or we can simply look at it as David, true to all men, having an inconsistency in approach. He could be very angry against the lame and then very gracious towards one of them.

The explanation of Mephibosheth's lameness is given in 2 Sam. 4:4 as being that "his nurse took him up, and fled: and it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame". But as with the language of demon possession in the New Testament, we may have here an example of where an as then undiagnosed illness is blamed upon something that is mythical, or an imagined narrative. For there are reasons to think that Mephibosheth's lameness would have been a case of what we now know as poliomyelitis. To cause a five year old to have such spinal damage that both his legs were useless would require dropping the child from a great height. Casual dropping of a child of five years old is unlikely to cause this damage. And polio is often contracted by children around five years old.

Be that as it may, lameness was typically seen as a punishment for sin, and so David's grace to the man reflects his own desire to show grace to a sinner. He indeed showed "the kindness of God" to him.

2Sa 9:4 The king said to him, Where is he? Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar-

"Lo Debar" is literally 'place of no pasture'; we can assume it was therefore an impoverished area. Machir supported David at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 17:27) and so it

could be that David's amazing grace paid off, and former supporters of his enemies came around to his side.

2Sa 9:5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar-

It could be that David personally did this, hence LXX "David went, and took him out of the house of Machir". He was so eager to personally do the hard work of showing grace.

2Sa 9:6 Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David-

"Mephibosheth" is apparently a name which would have arisen from changing his original name, Meribbaal 'man of Baal' (1 Chron. 8:34), to something which means 'the dispeller of shame'. i.e. Baal. The suffix 'baal' could suggest that even Jonathan was closer to idolatry than we would like, and at least he didn't use the 'Yah' suffix in the name of his children. But Mephibosheth had perhaps repented of this, renouncing Baal as shameful, and yet still struggled to believe in the extent of Yahweh's grace to him through David.

And fell on his face, and showed respect. David said, Mephibosheth. He answered, Behold, your servant!-

The record gives us the tragic picture of a fearful (:7) lame man now fallen flat on his face before the powerful king David. And David shows him every grace. Falling on the face is usually associated with begging for mercy. Mephibosheth assumed he had been summoned in order to be executed but instead found an amazing grace. He represents us all, who sit at the Lord's table. "Behold your servant" suggests something in the spirit of "Behold the man...". 'Look at me, useless and hopeless as I am. Maybe just have pity on me rather than slay me'.

2Sa 9:7 David said to him, Don't be afraid; for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your father. You shall eat bread at my table continually-

David is offering to give Mephibosheth land that belonged to Saul, his grandfather, in honour of the covenant David had made with Jonathan. He is using law not as a leash or chain, but as a springboard to greater grace, as Boaz did with the laws about allowing gleaners and raising up seed to a dead brother.

The Lord surely had this incident in mind when He seems to apply this situation to each of us, no better than Mephibosheth: "That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Lk. 22:30). Mephibosheth's fear reflects the difficulty we all have in accepting grace. Indeed faith in the gospel is effectively a climbing of this mountain, to believe in grace. See on 2 Sam. 1:23; Ps. 35:14. As he hoped for fellowship at the Messianic King's table in the future, so David delighted in inviting his former enemies to partake of his table, now *he* was king (2 Sam. 9:7,11,13). And if we hope to share the Lord's table in the Kingdom, we must share it with our weaker brethren now. I see in all this such a triumph for David, that a man should reflect the love of God to such an extent, to love in the face of such hatred, to not just love those who loved him. The deep sorrow of the Lord Jesus for Judas and all those who turn away is surely typified here. Right at the bitter end, the Lord still referred to him as his friend (Mt. 26:50), even though a few hours before he had been speaking of how the faithful few were his friends, and how he would give his life for his friends (Jn. 15:13-15).

2Sa 9:8 He bowed down, and said, What is your servant, that you should look on such a dead dog as I am?-

This was how David had felt about himself (1 Sam. 17:17 LXX; 24:14 cp. 2 Sam. 9:8; 16:9). As he, the dead dog, had been shown grace, so he was determined to show it to other dead

dogs. And this is how we should feel towards apparently hopeless cases; for there but for God's grace went I. The image of a dog is that of loyalty; but Mephibosheth felt his loyalty was useless, yet still he was willing to offer it.

The promises to David are described as the mercy of God (Is. 55:3; Ps. 89:33,34). God having a son is the sign of His love for us, and this must elicit a response in us. David himself marvelled that such mercy had been shown to him: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house... You know Your servant" (2 Sam. 7:18-20). And yet in the very next chapters, we read of how David made a renewed attempt to show mercy to the house of Saul.

Mephibosheth says that he is "Your servant... what is your servant, that you should look upon such... as I am?" (2 Sam. 9:8). Mephibosheth is using the very words which David used to God; David is showing mercy to Mephibosheth in the very way in which the promises of God to him were the "mercies" shown to David. Appreciating that the promises concern us personally, and that they reveal such loving grace from the Father, can only lead to a similar response in showing love and grace through entering into the lives and destinies of others.

2Sa 9:9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, All that pertained to Saul and to all his house have I given to your master's son-

It's not clear whether the "master" of Ziba refers to Jonathan, or whether his master was Mephibosheth and Ziba being told that the inheritance is going to go to Mephibosheth's son Mica (:12). We get the impression that Ziba had abused Mephibosheth's handicap and somehow manipulated to get the land of Saul and Jonathan given to him and his family as an inheritance. It is impressive that David had apparently not taken over Saul's land for himself, as most victors would have done. Perhaps he recognized the Mosaic principle that inheritance should not move between the tribes. David could also have argued that seeing Saul's sons were dead, his inheritance passed to his daughter Michal and thus to David as she was his wife (Num. 27:8); and in any case there is the comment that all Saul's house had been given to David by God (2 Sam. 12:8). But David was willing to give this back to Mephibosheth. This is all definitely a "plus" for David.

2Sa 9:10 You shall till the land for him, you, and your sons, and your servants; and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have bread to eat: but Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants-

The LXX brings out the contradiction: "Thou shalt bring in bread to the son of thy lord, and he shall eat bread: and Mephibosheth the son of thy lord shall eat bread continually at my table". Ziba was to bring all the bread from the lands of Saul to Mephibosheth, but David was going to give Mephibosheth "bread" from his own table. Here we get suspicious that all this apparent grace was to make Mephibosheth a kind of "prisoner of the court". The "bread" from Saul's lands was not to be given for the economic benefit of anyone apart from Mephibosheth; but it was to be brought to him to Jerusalem and thus effectively come under David's control. See the discussion on David's motives on :13. We likewise note that soon we will be reading of someone else getting food from David's table and being urged to eat it- Uriah, to whom David sent food from his own table (2 Sam. 11:8) and who ate and drank with David at his table ("David had called him, he ate and drink before him" 2 Sam. 11:13). Again we are invited to ponder the sincerity of David's invitation to men to eat at his table. For the only other person given this honour [Uriah] was not given it sincerely.

David had done likewise to Saul's daughter Michal; he took her from her second husband and kept her in his court but apparently didn't kill her. But she was under his control. He does the same later with Absalom, bringing him to Jerusalem but for some time refusing to meet him. Solomon does the same to Shimei, possibly following David's advice. He told Shimei:

"Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and don't go out anywhere from there. For on the day you go out, and pass over the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall surely die" (1 Kings 2:36,37). Shimei was effectively a prisoner of the court. Possibly there was something similar going on here in 2 Sam. 9 in the control of Mephibosheth Saul's grandson, the Saulide heir to the throne.

There could be here the implication that Ziba had used Saul's land for his own enrichment, and not always given Mephibosheth enough to eat. Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam. 9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house, even though he strongly disagreed with Saul. There was no fear of guilt by association with Bible characters, but rather a standing up for Godly principle in whatever situation they were in.

The invitation to eat at David's table is emphasized (:7,11,13). Likewise after Solomon's ascension, there was judgment and reward; in the form of being able to eat at his table (1 Kings 2:7 "show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those who eat at your table" cp. 2 Sam. 9: 7,10; 19:28). After Christ's return, the reward is to break bread with Him (Lk. 14:15; 22:30). Breaking bread with Him now is a sign of joyful fellowship with Him in anticipation of that; it shouldn't therefore be a scary, worrying experience.

2Sa 9:11 Then Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your shall servant do. So Mephibosheth ate at the king's table, like one of the king's sons-

This eating at table with David is stressed three times (:7,11,13). Whom you shared your table with was significant; and the handicapped were often kept out of public view. David's grace is shown by how he opened his table to the otherwise hopeless and obscure. The Lord Jesus did the same, and so should we.

2Sa 9:12 Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica-

See on :9 for the significance of this mention. Mephibosheth was quite young- he had been five when David became king (2 Sam. 4:4). David was taking a risk by showing such grace to Saul's direct descendants; for living in the palace, the thought of restoring Saul's kingdom would have been suggested to their minds. The chances of this happening would've been far less if David left them living in poverty and obscurity far from Jerusalem. But grace does indeed take such risks.

All that lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth-

The idea is perhaps that Ziba had abused Mephibosheth's handicap, and had become wealthy as a result; for he had many sons and servants (:10). But now that is all changed around, in the spirit of grace. Now the crippled Mephibosheth is made the master and Ziba and his family become Mephibosheth's servants.

2Sa 9:13 So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem; for he ate continually at the king's table. He was lame in both his feet-

It was common in those days for the handicapped to be isolated from society and not placed in public view. But grace inverted all of that. The lameness of Mephibosheth is emphasized, and juxtaposed against the fact he ate always at David's table, as if they were family. His eating at David's table is five times recorded: 2 Sam. 9:7,10,11,13; 19:28. On one hand this was indeed David's grace. But quite possibly he feared the Saul faction still wanting to have a Saulide king. And so he brought the next king in Saul's line to live under his control and

observation in Jerusalem, right in his own house. Making an enemy a "prisoner at court" was a known way of dealing with potential opposition. See the discussion on :10 on David's controlling the agricultural output of Saul's lands by using Mephibosheth as a proxy, and the notes on :2 about Ziba's support for the house of Saul. As ever, we are left to ponder whether David's motives in showing grace were pure, just as we must ponder our own motives for grace and apparent generosity. Or it could be argued that David showed total grace to Mephibosheth, but the providentially arranged result of it was that he ended up having the potential Saulide king under his thumb and constant observation in Jerusalem, rather than far from him in obscure Lodebar in northern Israel.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 10

2Sa 10:1 It happened after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place-

"After this" can signal a change of subject rather than being chronologically significant. The same phrase is used in 2 Sam. 8:1, although the preceding chapter refers to events after and not before that time.

2Sa 10:2 David said, I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me. So David sent by his servants to comfort him concerning his father. David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon-

This continues the theme discussed on 2 Sam. 9:1, where the same phrase is used. David was proactively seeking to show grace to all and sundry. It was as if he was looking for an excuse to show grace by saying that Nahash king of the Ammonites had been kind to David; for Saul and David had had conflict with them (2 Sam. 8:12). But he fails to maintain that intensity; for when his grace is now abused, he reacts very harshly. Whereas when he abused God's grace, e.g. over Bathsheba, God was gentle with him. We note that he likewise shows grace to Shimei, and then finally asks Solomon to ensure that Shimei is slain. It is one thing to show grace or forgiveness in a moment, but to maintain that position long term, or when it is abused and rejected, is far harder. But that is what imitating God's grace is all about it.

Or it could be that Nahash was bitter after Saul's defeat of him, and had been supportive of David on the basis that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'.

2Sa 10:3 But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, Do you think that David honours your father, in that he has sent comforters to you? Hasn't David sent his servants to you to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?-

Perhaps they were aware of the Mosaic command not to seek the peace of Moab nor Ammon (Dt. 23:6). David's desire to show grace therefore overrode Mosaic legal commands. And yet the princes were not without reason, given how David had just abused the Moabites in 2 Sam. 8:1-3, and David would treat the Ammonites with similar brutality in 2 Sam. 12; and how Saul had slain the king of Ammon in 1 Sam. 11:1. We note how repeatedly deceptive David had been to the people of Gath. There was no reason to believe he was showing pure grace. His previous apparently amazing grace to Mephibosheth we saw was not in fact so amazing neither was it pure. One wonders, given the back story to David and Israel's relationship with Ammon, whether the sending of comforters was not in fact to provoke a spying accusation and start a war.

Again, as with Mephibosheth's struggle to believe David's grace, these men couldn't believe David's grace, just as struggle to believe that of the Lord Jesus. Their logic is presented here as being exactly that of Joab in his angry, suspicious interpretation of Abner's

visit to David (2 Sam. 3:24,25). Joab was wrong in his interpretation, and so were these princes. It is quite a theme of the historical records that kings are badly advised by their courtiers. We think also of Rehoboam's advisers. Perhaps this is to highlight how the only true interpretation of events and advice for action comes from God and not men.

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.

2Sa 10:4 So Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away-

Having a beard was then seen as a sign of being a free man; to have a half shaved beard was a sign of servanthood. Doing this was a direct provocation and effective declaration of war, claiming the Hebrews were their servants. Garments cut to the buttocks meant they were prisoners of war who had been released, as in Is. 20:4 "the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt... with buttocks uncovered".

We see in all this history how fickle are men. We saw it in Samuel's record of David's relationship with Gath and the Philistines, with both sides willing to live and work together despite having betrayed each other's trust and having sought to murder each other. Here too we reflect how later in 2 Sam. 17:27 "It happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon" came to support and assist him. Hanun's brother Shobi was to come onto David's side. Or perhaps he always was with David, and possibly Hanun himself was at this point overridden by his princes (:3), just as the princes of the Philistines earlier overrode the position of Achish regarding David. We wonder whether David's later refusal to go to the war against Ammon, just delegating the job to Joab, was perhaps because he realized this was a political issue and had no heart for the fight. Absalom chased David up to the Jabbok river, the border with the Ammonites, suggesting David fled there for refuge (2 Sam. 17:26). We note how later Zedekiah was allied with the Ammonites (Jer. 27), and Solomon married an Ammonitess; for 2 Chron. 12:13 says that the mother of Rehoboam was Naamah the Ammonitess.

The books of Samuel also show how people, especially kings, are led into terrible situations by listening to their advisors. Hanun is an example. David by contrast repeatedly refuses to do what his men urge him to [in killing Saul or Shimei] and listens to good advice [from Abigail and Samuel]. But the other kings are presented as taking bad advice.

2Sa 10:5 When they told it to David, he sent to meet them; for the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return-

We note David's ability to be very sensitive to the situation of others. And yet the same man shed blood abundantly, took no care for the feelings of Michal and Paltiel when he split their marriage up, let alone cared for Uriah... And yet this is the strange mixture of spirituality and unspirituality which we experience in ourselves and in others all the time.

2Sa 10:6 When the children of Ammon saw that they were become odious to David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, twenty thousand footmen, and the king of Maacah with one thousand men, and the men of

Tob with twelve thousand men-

They paid 1000 pieces of silver for the Syrians (1 Chron. 19:6). For "thousand" see on :18. This fearsome confederacy was all part of God's purpose, for the subsequent victories resulted in these smaller kings becoming subservient to David (see on :19). And this is how God uses our worst crises, ultimately towards our blessing. 2 Sam. 23:36 speaks of a Syrian man from Zobah being one of David's loyalest men. Igal would have been a Syrian from Zobah, perhaps one of the soldiers who fought against David (2 Sam. 10:6) and then converted to him. The Gittites who followed David were likewise Philistines from Gath who were once his enemies but converted to his God, and devoted themselves zealously to Him. This is an incredible witness to the power of Yahweh to convert, because such willing defections of individuals to the people and God of their enemies, and being zealously committed to Him, was unheard of in their society.

"Maacah" is LXX "Amalek", and we immediately recall that Yahweh was at war with Amalek from generation to generation.

2Sa 10:7 When David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the army of the mighty men-

We wonder why David didn't go himself, although he does personally lead the army to the even greater battle with the Syrians which this one provoked. Perhaps this is to prepare us for the statement in 2 Sam. 11:1 that David's remaining in Jerusalem led to his sin with Bathsheba. And we wonder whether that relationship had not already started at this time, with Uriah away at the front so much.

2Sa 10:8 The children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entrance of the gate: and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob, and the men of Tob and Maacah, were by themselves in the field-

"By themselves" could mean that they had planned to combine with the Ammonite forces at Medeba (1 Chron. 19:7), about 20 miles from Rabbah of the Ammonites. It seems Joab marched at top speed to engage with them before the Ammonites and Syrians met up with each other as one large force. The Ammonites assembled their battle lines at the entrance to Rabbah, but it seems they didn't engage with the Israelites. They were waiting for the Syrians to arrive and combine their forces. When Joab makes the Syrians flee, the Ammonites fled back into their city gate.

2Sa 10:9 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians-

He saw the Syrians as a greater strength than the Ammonites. He placed himself between the two armies before they had time to join up with each other. This meant the Israelites would be sandwiched between them. It was a daring but dangerous move, which could easily have led to the annihilation of the entire Israelite army.

2Sa 10:10 The rest of the people he committed into the hand of Abishai his brother; and he put them in array against the children of Ammon-

That Joab took the most dangerous part of the engagement speaks much of his bravery. But as we will note on :12, bravery and passing mention of God are not the same as faith and true wisdom.

2Sa 10:11 He said-

The idea is, that he planned or thought. The Bible continually stresses that the thought is the word spoken. And the essence of Biblical spirituality is upon the heart, the thinking.

If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the children of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you-

This is playing on the name "Hadadezer" (:16), which means 'Helped ['ezer] by Hadad', the sun god. We might have preferred to see Joab alluding to Yahweh being their help; but instead he thinks of help in terms of human strength.

2Sa 10:12 Be courageous, and let us be strong for our people, and for the cities of our God; and Yahweh do that which seems good to Him-

As explained on :9, this was a very daring maneuver by Joab. We wonder whether he had real faith in Yahweh, or whether his words here express fatalism rather than faith. There is a significant difference, and often what appears to be faith can be mere fatalism. There is so much ambiguity in these records, especially in the upcoming account of David and Bathsheba; and I suggest that is intentional, to provoke our reflection and attempt to enter into these histories.

2Sa 10:13 So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him-

So often the Israelite victories were humanly speaking achieved by surprise attack from an unexpected angle, using unexpected and unusual tactics. It could be that this was due to Divine guidance, telling them to do what was unusual and against secular wisdom. For this is always God's path to victory, thereby demonstrating that victory and success are of His grace rather than human strength.

2Sa 10:14 When the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians had fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered into the city. Then Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem-

We get the impression that Abishai didn't attack the Ammonites; the Syrians fled when Joab attacked them, and the Ammonites withdrew into Rabbah when they saw that. This is all providing context for the Bathsheba incident. 2 Sam. 11:1 speaks of the time when kings go forth to war, so we can conclude that "the city" here is Rabbah, and Joab didn't try to take Rabbah because it was Winter and conditions weren't good for a siege. He returned to Jerusalem to winter and go forth in the spring to attack Rabbah.

2Sa 10:15 When the Syrians saw that they were defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together-

They were mercenaries, and the fact they had failed to achieve what Ammon hoped for didn't require them to fight again. They did so, it seems, because of wounded pride. And this again (as noted on :13) is a feature of God's amazing victories. The pride of Gentile armies is brought down by smaller armies of Israelites using unusual, unexpected tactics because they were guided by Yahweh. Always pride is presented as the great weakness of man.

2Sa 10:16 Hadadezer sent, and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the River: and they came to Helam, with Shobach the captain of the army of Hadadezer at their head-

To gather soldiers from beyond the river Euphrates was a huge effort; and now the best general, as they thought, was placed over them. And it all arose from hurt pride and the desire by all means to defeat Israel in vengeance for Joab and his small army putting their army to flight previously, when they had been paid money to defeat Israel.

2Sa 10:17 It was told David; and he gathered all Israel together, and passed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him-

The parallel is drawn between the Syrians coming from the other side of the Euphrates (:16) led by Shobach, and David and his men coming from the other side of the Jordan.

2Sa 10:18 The Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed of the Syrians seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen, and struck Shobach the captain of their army, so that he died there-

There are apparently different numbers given in 2 Sam. 8:4; 10:18 and 1 Chron. 19:18. I see no real problem here once we appreciate that the Hebrew word "thousand" used when giving numbers like this rarely means 1,000 as a number. It is also translated regiment, brigade, family, squadron etc. And to Israelites looking at the Syrian army, it could be described in various ways. There many regiments, families, groups, squadrons, but these subdivisions of an ancient army are all called a "thousand". Depending how one looks at the army and its subdivisions. A modern army would be subdivided into two to four corps, a corps has at least two divisions or legions, a division has two four brigades or regiments, a brigade has two or more regiments, a regiment has two or more battalions, a battalion has a number of companies, a company has a number of platoons, a platoon has a number of squads or fire teams. The problem is that the Hebrew Bible uses the same word for all such military subdivisions, and it is translated "thousand" in many Bibles. Hence the apparently contradictory numbers.

2Sa 10:19 When all the kings who were servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more-

This meant that the smaller kings like Tob, Rehob and Maacah now paid tribute to David rather than to Hadadezer.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 11

2Sa 11:1 It happened, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah-

This is the classic example of the devil finding work for idle hands; in 2 Sam. 10:7 David had already skipped one battle in this campaign. His remaining in Jerusalem was the set up for David's sin with Bathsheba. That he was lying down on his bed in the late afternoon rather than working would exemplify the same thing. He appears to recognize his attitude problem in Ps. 30:6: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be (spiritually) moved". In the lead up to the sin, God had given him victory after victory- leading him to think that he must therefore be spiritually OK because of his many physical blessings (1 Chron. 18:6 RV). His conscience had been blunted. Uriah may have cleverly alluded to this when he comments that the ark was abiding in a *tent*, and therefore he would not go down to his *house* (2 Sam. 11:11). The tension between a tent and a house is surely intended to take David back to his words in 2 Sam. 7:2, where he laments as unacceptable the fact that he lives in a *house* but the ark is in a *tent*. And David was 'tarrying', living in a settled way, in a house in Jerusalem now.

But David stayed at Jerusalem-

Or AV "tarried". This uses a Hebrew word which does not mean to wait, but rather to permanently dwell. It is also translated 'to marry'. The next verse continues "And it came to pass...", indicating that his permanent residence at Jerusalem was connected with his sin. Are we to infer that David remained at Jerusalem because of his relationship with Bathsheba? Even though they had probably got nowhere near consummating it, subconsciously this was

behind David's motive in remaining. The word for "tarried" being the same for 'marriage' could imply that David was still actively married to his other wives who were there in Jerusalem.

David "tarried" or lived (:1) in his "house" (:2), just as he was in 2 Sam. 7 when better thoughts came to him about God's house. Now he was thinking of building up his own house- for human behaviour is multi dimensional, and whilst his behaviour was indeed lustful, he also had some political agenda in the Bathsheba "thing". Saul likewise was "sitting" in his house when an evil spirit came upon him and he wanted to kill David (1 Sam. 19:9 s.w.). Again we see Saul and David parallel in their sins. The difference was that David had a heart for God and was repentant. It wasn't that their amounts of sin differed. It was their attitude to them. When he didn't have a stable house, David had correctly focused upon living or tarrying in Yahweh's house for ever (s.w. Ps. 23:6; 27:4). But having his own stable house led him away from that focus.

This not going out to fight is in contrast to the peoples' expectation that their king was to "go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam 8:19). Indeed, David's masculinity is under question here. When kings went to war, David didn't. And we are to read that he effectively fell in love and was compromised by this, whereas powerful men of the time were supposedly never compromised by their love affairs. David is never recorded as loving anyone, but his evident deep love for Solomon suggests Bathsheba was in fact his favourite woman out of many. Uriah disobeys David's command to go down to his wife and sleep with her- his disobedience to David is categorically stated, and David has lost control of the situation so that he cannot do anything about a disobedient servant. Uriah by contrast presents as the consummate male by being a brave soldier and wanting to fellowship the sufferings of his men rather than taking special privileges.

Possibly David didn't go to the war because he wanted to try to self fulfil the promise about having rest from his enemies. See on 2 Sam. 12:10.

2Sa 11:2 It happened at evening, that David arose from off his bed, and walked on the roof of the king's house-

In the parable, the rich man had his many flocks (i.e. David's wives) with him in the city, of Jerusalem. Walking upon the roof of his house connects with several passages which associate the roof top with a place of idolatry: 2 Kings 23:12; Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5. It may be that David regularly worshipped the idol of Bathsheba in his mind, upon the bed which he had on the house top. David's sin with Bathsheba is therefore not such a momentary slip. Significantly, it was in that very place where Absalom later lay with his wives in retribution for what he had done (2 Sam. 16:22). From this we could infer that David lay with Bathsheba in that same place on the roof top. This is significant insofar as it shows how exactly the thought leads to the action. David's thoughts in that spot were translated into that very action, in precisely the same physical location. The roof top is also the place of prayer, and in this we see the schizophrenic nature of David's spirituality; he went to pray, and then stood at the edge of the roof in order to view Bathsheba, with his hands on the railing around the roof which surely he would have erected, in obedience to the Law. And he realized that it was evening, and that in accordance with the Law a menstruating woman had to wash and be unclean until the evening. But now, he reasoned, she's clean, and I can sleep with her. He lay with her "for", just because, she was now purified. In this we see the mixing of flesh and spirit which is at the root of most of our failings.

And from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look on-

David rightly perceived that what a man thinks alone on his bed is a litmus indicator of his

essential spirituality, and he condemns Saul for plotting sin on his bed (Ps. 4:4; 36:4; 149:5). And yet the same phrase "on his bed" is used for how David plotted the sin with Bathsheba on his bed (2 Sam. 11:2). David was surely taught by his sin that he had been too quick to condemn others for their wicked thoughts upon their beds. Again we see how in essence Saul and David did the same sins, but David was saved for his heart position and repentance.

Bathsheba was "very beautiful to *look upon*". And David did just that. Our Lord surely had his eye on that passage when he spoke about him that "*looks upon* a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already" (Mt. 5:28). But it is not just in that specific sin that we can share David's experience; James 1:14,15 speaks of the process of temptation and sin, in any matter, as looking lustfully upon a woman, with the inevitable result of actually committing the sin. In this he may be interpreting David's sin as an epitome of all failure. David is our example. Likewise the Lord's list of the 12 evil things that come out of the heart: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, evil thoughts...all seem to describe the completeness of David's sin with Bathsheba. It incorporated all these things, and was not just a one time, lustful failure of the moment.

David and Bathsheba knew each other well, and would have developed a close spiritual relationship. Having only known Uriah, both as a father and husband (2 Sam. 12:3), Bathsheba would have been strongly attracted to David, yearning for a relationship with someone other than Uriah. David would have been an alternative father figure to her, and also the same age as her husband Uriah. He would have become her physical and spiritual hero. David must have allowed his feelings for her to grow, until the sight of her quiet obedience to the Law, artlessly exposing her beauty against the setting sun, was just too much. With her husband far away, kidding himself there was a spiritual motive, David shrugged off the voice of conscience. What happened to David's family was related to David's sin. The obsessive love of Amnon for Tamar may have similarities with David's for Bathsheba (2 Sam. 13:2).

David viewed Bathsheba from the roof (2 Sam. 11:2), and this was matched by the roof on which Absalom slept with David's wife, and the way the watchman sees the two messengers running with news of Absalom's death (2 Sam. 18:24), and it was on a roof that David lamented his son (2 Sam. 18:33). Uriah is killed by a man from a height above him, thus equating David with the enemy soldier who slew his faithful man, rather than with his men.

We note throughout the similarities with Ahab's coveting of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21. David likewise was in the king's house when he covets that which belongs to his neighbour (2 Sam. 11:2). He tries to get Bathsheba by offering Uriah a "present" - "there followed him a present from the king" (2 Sam. 11:8). Uriah's "I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11) matches Naboth's refusal. David summons Uriah and makes him eat and drink, just as it seems there was some kind of feast when Naboth was set on high amongst the people. David's plan to set up Uriah's death so he could take what was personally Uriah's [his wife] matches the plan of Ahab to get Naboth executed. The report sent to Jezebel that Naboth had died (:14) is recorded in the same manner as the report to David that Uriah had died (2 Sam. 11:18,24). Ahab takes possession of that which is Naboth's, just as David takes Bathsheba- and then they are both rebuked by a prophet, and both genuinely repent, although the resulting Divine judgment involved the suffering of their sons and family going forward. The similarities are intentional. We see here that the process of sin is as it were standard- whether in the slip of a righteous man [David], or yet another sin in the long catalogue of sins in a sinner like Ahab. God works to some kind of template with man, but it is also so that man passes through the same broad process of temptation and failure.

We note in 2 Sam. 3:1-16 David's bad treatment of Michal's husband, who follows his wife with tears in a most unmasculine but genuine response to David taking her from him.

Paltiel walks behind her, when a woman in those days was supposed to walk behind a man [cp. Russian 'zamuzhem', behind a husband, to describe a married woman]. Paltiel was publically shamed; the way Abner abruptly tells him to stop following his wife and go home is as if Abner treats Paltiel as a dog. He did this when he already had at least six wives; the information about his wives and children precedes the narrative about him breaking up Michal and Paltiel's marriage. Although David calls Michal his "wife" [Heb. *isshi*], the record calls Paltiel her husband [Heb. *ish*]. This failure is then repeated by David when he takes Bathsheba and slays Uriah, breaking up a good marriage even though he had many "sheep". He was wrong in how he treated Paltiel. But his conscience didn't kick in. And so one sin led him to another sin, against Uriah, in essence the same but of far greater magnitude. We reflect how his taking of Abigail in 1 Sam. 25 also involved the displacement of her husband, Nabal- but by the hand of providence. It's as if David intentionally misread this as meaning that he had the right to remove the husbands of women he wanted. The progression is all so psychologically credible. David wanted to test Ishbosheth and Abner's loyalty [as Abner had formerly been Saul's general], and so he asked them to get Michal back to him as his wife. He clearly didn't love Michal; it was all for the sake of politics. We must be aware that sexual rights over a woman, especially the wife of another, were seen as a sign of political dominance and control; David lived in a culture where the politics of power were sexualized. We think of Absalom sleeping with David's wives publically. And we wonder whether his taking of Abigail was similarly motivated. This usage of women rather than loving them is what led him to the failure with Bathsheba. David is recorded as being loved by many people- Jonathan, Michal, Saul's servants, all Israel etc. But he is never recorded as loving anyone himself. Nathan's parable presents David as a man with many animals, representing his women- possibly suggesting this was how he saw his wives.

However we have to note that David saw Bathsheba close up enough to perceive her beauty. Her house was very close to David's. She was clearly well known to him. And again the issue is raised as to why she would bathe in the open air knowing she was in full view of David's roof where he was wont to rest and walk. The close proximity of Uriah's house to David's betrays the favoured relationship he once enjoyed with David. Five times we read of him 'going down to his house' (:8-13) as if David's house was higher but Uriah's was adjacent. As discussed on :4, this washing may not have been at all related to her period. We wonder about the parallel with Ruth [David's ancestor] in Ruth 3:3, who washes herself, does herself up pretty, and goes to lay with Boaz and thereby manipulate him [quite possibly having sex with him]. We reflect too how David washes himself before having sex with Bathsheba the second time (2 Sam. 12:20,24).

2Sa 11:3 David sent and inquired after the woman-

There can be no doubt that David knew exactly who Bathsheba was. His enquiring after her may therefore have been to summon her to his private audience, with all that this implied in the context of a monarch. We think of Saul asking about who David was- when David already lived at his court as court musician. The question 'Whose son / daughter is this?' was meant as a way of laying claim to the person as yours. And in this we have another parallel between David and Saul. The question, with regard to taking a woman, is that of Boaz regarding Ruth when he enquires 'Who is this?' (Ruth 2:8). The exclamation of the messenger "Is not this Bathsheba...the wife of Uriah?" was therefore tantamount to saying 'Surely you aren't going to? She's the wife of your faithful friend Uriah'. When experiencing temptation, the flesh can become extraordinarily blind to reason. The next verse continues: " And David sent (other) messengers, and took her...and he lay with her; *for* she was purified from her uncleanness" . This may imply that David set up an irrelevant spiritual pre-condition for himself: 'If she's unclean, then I must take that as a sign, and not sleep with her, because that would be against the Law'. The Law often stipulated that having washed, the person would be

"Unclean until even". David had seen her washing "in an eveningtide" . By the time she came in to him, the sun would have set; she would have been fully purified from her uncleanness. It was *because* of this that David lay with her; he must have reasoned 'Now that she's clean, even the Law says that I'm allowed to sleep with her! That's a sign from God'. As with us, his spiritual judgment did not completely depart in this crisis of temptation; but it became seriously warped to the point that it was no use. It is significant , in the light of this, that the statement that "David... *enquired* after the woman" uses a Hebrew word which is often used about enquiring of God; as if David asked God whether it was right to go ahead or not.

One said, Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?- "One said" can be translated "he said to himself,". Of course David knew who she was. In his self talk he accepted who she was and cold heartedly went ahead with his lust and possibly other, political agenda. Because she was very well connected politically within David's network of power, just as were some of his other wives. In this case we note that David firstly identifies Bathsheba as daughter of her father, before being Uriah's wife. Eliam and his father Ahithophel may have been the family David wanted to get in with. For although it was a sin of lust, it seems to me there were also political motivations for both David and Bathsheba. All the same, David rode over red lights of warning into disastrous sin.

Or perhaps some anonymous servant tries to stop David in his tracks, as if to say "You surely can't do this to the wife of your faithful servant who lives in the house next door!". 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. 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. Eliam, son of David's adviser and familiar friend Ahithophel, was one of David's mighty men just as Uriah was (2 Sam. 23:34). David was Bathsheba's hero figure, and she and David knew each other well. Likewise when Saul enquires about who David is after his victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17:56), 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.

The Samuel scroll from the Judean Desert (4Q51, formerly known as 4QSam) adds the detail: "Joab's armour-bearer". The LXX follows this. In this case, David's usage of Joab to slay Uriah, his own armour bearer, was dragging yet someone else into sin and breaking up yet another relationship.

2Sa 11:4 David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in to him, and he lay with her- It takes two, and Bathsheba's compliance seems to be recognized by David when he prays: "Against You, You only have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4). There is no hint in the psalms of David's regret for having sinned against an innocent Bathsheba. *Her* child had to die; the retribution did not just come upon David. The incident is referred to as "the matter of *Uriah*" (1 Kings 15:5); her name does not figure in those sinned against. "She came in unto him, and he lay with her" (2 Sam. 11:4) is an odd way of putting it; it reverses the usual Biblical reference to intercourse as a man coming in to the woman. The reason for this inversion seems to be to balance the blame. Robert Alter notes that in the Hebrew Bible "When the verb "come to" or "come into" has a masculine subject and "into" is followed by a feminine object, it designates a first act of sexual intercourse. One wonders whether the writer is boldly toying with this double meaning, intimating an element of active participation by Bathsheba in David's sexual summons". Bathsheba offers no resistance nor attempt to persuade David against his intentions, in contrast with Tamar when she faced rape in 2 Sam. 13:12,13: "She answered him, No, my brother, do not force me! For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Don't you do this folly. I, to where would I carry my shame? And as for you, you will be as one of

the fools in Israel". "He lay with her" rather than 'he came in to her' could also suggest that the sex act was not at all forced [hardly "power rape"] but consensual.

We note that the same words are used for David 'sending' and 'taking' his ex wife Michal from her second husband, Paltiel (2 Sam. 3:14,15). This was a cruel thing to do as Paltiel so loved her; and David kept her as a ward of court for political reasons, apparently not sleeping with her. Nathan specifically condemned David for "*taking* the wife of Uriah". There was no repentance from David about this and it led to his greater sin at this time. His crude, crass hatred of the blind and lame in 2 Sam. 5 was tacitly repented of in his grace to the lame Mephibosheth in 2 Sam. 9. But there had been no such hint of repentance about his actions towards Michal. And so if sin isn't repented of, it leads to greater failure. We also wonder however if his sending and taking Bathsheba didn't also likewise have a political motive, possibly to remove Uriah as a potential threat to his throne.

And there seems an evident similarity between the way the sin occurred within the city, and the way Dt. 22:24 says that in cases of adultery both parties were to be stoned if the sin occurred within a city and the woman didn't cry out. Bathsheba doesn't seem to have cried out- and so she bears equal blame, it would seem. This makes Bathsheba more of a sinner than a saint. This said, Nathan's parable describes David as killing the sweet lamb (Bathsheba); if she was partly guilty for the actual act, this may suggest a killing of her spirituality by David, at least temporarily. And so we are left with the question of interpretation- Bathsheba: saint or sinner? The record leaves it intentionally open ended, to provoke our reflection upon the text. We learn from Nathan's parable that Uriah was older than her and more of a father figure than a husband. There is no mention of her having had children. It could be that she was trapped in a fruitless relationship with Uriah, a Gentile, and felt she had no chance to make it as a woman in Israel. Her public naked bathing within David's line of vision certainly raises questions- because married women are portrayed in scripture as looking out from behind windows or lattices and such washing would not usually be done in the open air, in a place in full view of the neighbour's roof. So we can never discount the possibility that she was more than complicit in the matter. And this fits with another theme in this whole story- that there is so much ambiguity. Why didn't David go out to war? Why was Bathsheba bathing outside, and in David's line of vision? Why didn't Uriah sleep with his wife? Was Bathsheba purified from her period, or does the text say she purified herself after she had sex with David? Was Bathsheba raped or was she looking for this outcome to become queen? Why the strange expression "she came in to him"? Was this a simple sin of male lust or were there other, political, reasons why David wanted to marry yet another powerful, well connected woman [like Michal, Abigail, Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, and Ahinoam]? And so many other open questions. Summed up in the comment that "the thing" David did displeased Yahweh. But the exact components of "the thing" aren't listed. Surely the record is written to provoke our reflection. David clearly bears the blame. But the ambiguities surrounding Bathsheba suggest to me that whilst her blame was far less than his, she was also not completely the innocent victim, especially if she had not had children by Uriah and was more of a daughter to him than a wife, as suggested by Nathan's parable. The ambiguities are intentional, I suggest, because human motivation and actions are so impossibly complex to analyze.

For she was purified from her uncleanness; and she returned to her house- Bathsheba's washing of herself which exposed her nakedness would have been in obedience to the Law. David "lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness" adds weight to this. However, the Law didn't actually state that the woman must wash herself after menstrual uncleanness; but the man who touched her must. So it could be that she had gone beyond the Law in washing herself; such was her spiritual perception, which was a factor in David's attraction to her. The law in Lev. 18:19,20 taught that there could only be sex after a

woman was cleansed from menstrual uncleanness, and goes straight on to warn about sleeping with your neighbour's wife- as if speaking directly to David: "You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness. You shall not lie carnally with your neighbour's wife".

David confessed that he had sinned against God (Ps. 51:4), using the very language of faithful Joseph who refused ongoing temptation with these words (Gen. 39:9). Could this not imply that Bathsheba wife of Uriah was similar to Potiphar's wife?

However it's possible to translate: "He lay with her; she purified herself from her uncleanness and returned to her house". This gives no impression of rape but rather of a calm interaction between the two. She doesn't return to her home and wash, she does it at David's home. We again note the interplay between spirituality and sexuality, and the strange relationship between flesh and Spirit. In this case we note she was obedient to the law in washing after intercourse (Lev. 15:18). Possibly David alludes to this when in the penitential Psalms he begs to be washed clean by God; he reflected that washing after this act of sex had not cleansed his heart. This alternative translation avoids the problem that the legislation about women ending their periods in Lev. 15 doesn't actually state that she must wash in water at the end of her period. Throughout Lev. 15 it is commanded no less than 12 times that after certain bodily emissions a person must bathe in water after their uncleanness. But this is specifically absent when talking about a woman who has come to the end of menstruation. Women were commanded to wash in water after sex, not at the end of their period cycle. I am inclined to conclude that there is [again] a purposeful ambiguity in the text here. Was Bathsheba's washing after her period, going beyond the letter of the law in this case; or after her sex with David? The ambiguity is to provoke us to exercise herself as to whether or to what degree Bathsheba was guilty of anything in this encounter. And the exercise helps us in our own self examinations.

2Sa 11:5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am with child-

It is possible to infer that for all their spiritual closeness, David and Bathsheba experienced a falling out of love immediately after the incident- as with many cases of adultery and fornication. In contrast to their previous close contact, she had to *send* to tell him that she was pregnant. In addition, before David's repentance he appears to have suffered with some kind of serious disease soon after it: "My loins are filled with a loathsome (venereal?) disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh" (Ps.38:7). It is even possible that David became impotent as a result of this; for we get the impression that from this point onwards he took no other wives, and even the fail safe cure for hypothermia didn't seem to mean much to David (1 Kings 1:1-4). Therefore "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore" (Ps. 38:11) must refer to some kind of venereal disease. The Hebrew word translated "lovers" definitely refers to carnal love rather than that of friendship. It may be that an intensive plural is being used here- in which case it means 'my one great lover', i.e. Bathsheba. We have commented earlier how Amnon's obsessive love for Tamar was an echo of David's relationship with Bathsheba. There may be a parallel in the way in which afterwards, "Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he loved her" (2 Sam. 13:15). All this would have been yet another aspect of the emotional trauma which David went through at this time; to fall out of love with the woman for which he had almost thrown away his eternal salvation. And in addition to this, all Israel would have got to know about what had happened- with a fair degree of exaggeration thrown in, we can be sure.

Bathsheba was liable to execution for adultery. So she informs David from various motives, not least to save her own life. Again we have an example of ambiguity in the record, an invitation to reflection... upon with what spirit she informed David of her pregnancy.

2Sa 11:6 David sent to Joab, Send me Uriah the Hittite. Joab sent Uriah to David-

The record stresses how much David and Bathsheba relied on sending messages through the servants (2 Sam. 11: 3,4,5,6,19,23,27)- and remember that Bathsheba probably couldn't read, necessitating verbal communication. The palace servants would have gossiped and chatted about little else. When Uriah "slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord" after an evening with them in the bar, there can be no doubt that he came to know the score. He must have guessed the contents of the message which he took back to Joab; and when the command came for him to go on a suicide mission against Rabbah, he went in conscious loyalty to a master whose every intrigue he knew perfectly. This would explain why he refused to go and sleep with Bathsheba; he knew what David was up to. And David would have known that Uriah almost certainly knew what had happened.

David goes to such lengths to try to cover up Bathsheba's pregnancy by him. This rather factors against the idea that David wanted Bathsheba as his wife and that he had political reasons for taking her, as he did in his taking of previous women. There was definitely an element of lust involved and hot headed action. But again we note the ambiguity of it all; for the evidence that Bathsheba somehow wanted the encounter cannot easily be pushed aside. Why the lack of communication between Uriah and Bathsheba during his return to Jerusalem? Uriah had a "gift" from David in his hand but he apparently never goes a very short distance to his own house. He just kips on the floor in the guardhouse at David's place. Why? Was he somehow angry with Bathsheba? If all was well in the relationship, it would be normal to visit and comfort her and at least ask her the truth of all the gossip. If indeed she had clearly been raped, would he not have wanted to comfort his beloved wife? Was he not angry with her too? Because of... ?

2Sa 11:7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked of him how Joab did, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered-

For an individual soldier to have been recalled from the front for a personal interview with David was highly unusual. And on the way back, Uriah surely suspected what had happened or would happen, more or less. David's apparent interest in the war and his troops is presented here as so hypocritical.

2Sa 11:8 David said to Uriah, Go down to your house, and wash your feet-

Their houses were next to each other, perhaps "go down" referred to a path between the two properties. "Feet" are used as a euphemism; the idea clearly was "And have sex with your wife" (Is. 6:2; Ez. 16:25).

Uriah departed out of the king's house, and a gift from the king was sent after him-

It was now clear to Uriah what had happened. David was trying to buy his silence, and to get him to sleep with his wife so that it would appear any resulting child would be his and not David's.

2Sa 11:9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and didn't go down to his house-

Uriah realized clearly what had happened, and was angry. He would rather sleep with the servants than sleep with his wife. He didn't go to see his wife because he was apparently angry with her too- suggesting he suspected she was a willing party to the affair. The servants would have been aware of what had happened; see on :6. And that evening as he purposefully slept with them and they chatted as men do, he would have been confirmed in his guesses. The "gift" sent after him (:8) would have been still in his hand as he slept the night with the servants. They all knew what had happened.

2Sa 11:10 When they had told David, saying, Uriah didn't go down to his house, David said to Uriah, Haven't you come from a journey? Why didn't you go down to your house?-

The degree to which David acted in a coolly thought out way is brought out by a few hints in 2 Sam. 11:10-12. His comment to Uriah surely implied 'You've been away a long time- and you don't want to have sex with your wife? Well, you must have been unfaithful then, like most of you soldier boys'. Remember that this was David talking to a man who had risked his life for him during the wilderness years. How sin totally ruins loving fellowship! See on :12.

2Sa 11:11 Uriah said to David, The ark, Israel, and Judah, are staying in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go into my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing!-

See on 2 Sam. 7:1. It could be argued that soldiers on duty had to be sexually abstinent, as any personal emission of semen made them unclean (Dt. 23:10) and we note David's claim that his warriors had not touched women in 1 Sam. 21:5. So although not at the battle front, Uriah felt he was still on duty and therefore would not lie with his wife. Uriah lets David know that he knows what's going on; for he uses no euphemisms nor indirect hints, but states plainly he will not be sleeping with his wife. He was clearly very angry with David.

Uriah doesn't swear as Yahweh lives, as is commonly found in the Bible, but by David's own life. Perhaps he felt that Yahweh was no authority to David 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.

We can discern in Ps. 132:3 an allusion to the words of David's faithful friend Uriah whom he effectively murdered: "Surely I will not come under the roof of my house, nor go up into my bed...". He refused to go up to his bed nor come under the roof of his own house because he preferred identity with God's suffering people, His "house". If indeed Ps. 132 was written later, then David later remembered these words, and alludes to them when he thinks of arranging the building of the temple. The words of Uriah haunted him, and he commendably vows to follow his noble example. In this we see David's humility and repentance.

But there is another take on the connection with Ps. 132. We note that Uriah mentions that the ark, along with David's troops, is in a tent and not in a house, and so Uriah will not go down to his house. Uriah will not sleep in his house whilst the ark of God isn't in a house; he is alluding to David's similar oath which David hadn't kept. For this is clearly to be connected with David's vow that "I will not enter my house or get into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids' until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the mighty one of Jacob" (Ps. 132:3-5). The ark was still in a tent; and David was in his house, he had got into his bed- whilst the ark was still in a tent. Uriah's mention of the ark surely alludes to this situation. This is Uriah criticizing David and asserting his own greater fidelity to Divine things. We note too his point blank refusal to be obedient to David's command to go down to his house.

So David's sin gives the lie to his apparent passion for the ark. God had responded to his "vow" by telling David that God didn't want this. Instead, God would build him an eternal family through his Messianic Son, and he would [by implication] be resurrected to witness this. But instead of rejoicing in that, instead David was just involving himself in opportunistic sex and thus showing no regard for the great promises made about his family. For David was hardly paying any attention to his family and seed by casually sleeping with another man's

wife and getting her pregnant. In this we see the progression of theme in 2 Samuel. David's refusal to accept God's grace in the covenant made with him led him to still want to build a temple, and this lack of focus upon the grace to be shown to his own "house" or family led him to the sin with Bathsheba.

2Sa 11:12 David said to Uriah, Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart. So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day, and the next day-

"Depart" uses a word translated 'to put away' in Mal. 2:16. divorce was only possible for adultery. The implication was 'Tomorrow you can divorce her and there'll be no problem- and I bet you've been unfaithful yourself while away on duty!'. The man after God's own heart had truly fallen from Heaven to earth- knowing what he was doing.

2Sa 11:13 When David had called him, he ate and drink before him; and he made him drunk. At evening, he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but didn't go down to his house-

That David could see into the back yard of Bathsheba's house shows that they were almost next door neighbours in Jerusalem. Nathan's parable emphasized this: "There were two men (David and Nathan) in one city (Jerusalem)" (2 Sam. 12:1). That Uriah "didn't go down to his house" after meeting David in Jerusalem could imply that it was just at the end of David's back garden. Even when drunk, he retained his deep inner sense of purpose. To be made drunk is also a figure for being extremely angry (Is. 63:6). Those who make others drunk are cursed in Hab. 2:15.

2Sa 11:14 It happened in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah-

Was David literate? Probably not. We think of how Jeremiah in Jer. 36:1,4 is told to "take yourself a scroll and write" but in fact he calls Baruch to write it. David may well have learned to write in order to produce his Psalms, but now he puts that skill to an evil use. Or maybe he got someone else to write it, which again meant that the story would have continued to seep out to the public. To give Uriah the letter would suggest Uriah travelled alone. He surely guessed what it said. He could have destroyed it, but just as he refused to lay with his wife, so he goes along with David's evil plan. He preferred to die than lose his integrity. We likewise wonder whether Joab was literate, and in this case, why did David write a letter? Presumably to avoid giving the message to a messenger who would travel with Uriah back to the battle front. Again we see David's maximum efforts to keep the "thing" secret, when in fact, everyone knew- including Uriah himself.

2Sa 11:15 He wrote in the letter saying, Send Uriah to the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck, and die-

As noted on :18, David wrote a letter in order to avoid giving a message to a servant to deliver verbally. But literacy levels in ancient Israel were very low, especially for village boys like David and Joab, both from Bethlehem rather than anywhere bigger. David's attempt to cover what he had done would have probably required Joab to get someone to read the letter to him anyway. All attempts to cover the sin led to it becoming ever more well known.

2Sa 11:16 It happened, when Joab kept watch on the city, that he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew that valiant men were-

Joab's part in all this should not be overlooked. He had argued back against David over Abner and had himself gone and killed him, and he would later remonstrate with David over Absalom. He could likewise have refused to be a part in all this. It was likely his spiritual

jealousy of David which led him to be such an eager participant in the scheme, wanting to bring David down spiritually to his own level. We see here the same articulations of human nature which are in our own lives.

2Sa 11:17 The men of the city went out, and fought with Joab. Some of the people fell, even of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also-

David was therefore guilty of more than one murder in all this, and as a soldier himself ought to have known how wrong it was. True soldiers never abandon their wounded, let alone betray their own side to death. David's actions were going to infuriate just about everybody in Israel.

2Sa 11:18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war-

"The things concerning the war" appears to be a technical term for a standard military report (:19). It was apparently delivered verbally rather than in writing, so David's letter to Joab was a vain attempt to not risk telling a messenger what to say verbally. But it is doubtful whether Joab could read well, and so Joab was in any case unlikely to have been the only person to know David's command about Uriah.

2Sa 11:19 and he commanded the messenger saying, When you have finished telling all the things concerning the war to the king-

This continues the theme noted on :6, that the extensive use of messengers and exposing them to the intrigues was sure to mean that what had happened would become well known. Hence the significance of Uriah refusing to go to his home but sleeping and hanging out with the servants. The more men seek to cover sin themselves, the more it is made apparent. That is the lesson for us all. David appears desperate and foolish in trying to cover his sin by getting Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba and then getting Uriah killed, even requiring other men to be killed in order to make Uriah's death appear nothing specific. And yet the record stresses how many messengers were involved in the whole "thing". All attempts to cover sin will ultimately come to nothing in that the day of judgment will reveal all "the secrets of men" to all. David clearly has the belief that what he has done is secret when in fact it obviously isn't; and that is the mentality of all sinners. And that is exactly God's point in 2 Sam. 12:12 "For you did it [so David thought] secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel".

2Sa 11:20 it shall be that, if the king's wrath arise, and he asks you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Didn't you know that they would shoot from the wall?'

David was known for how his emotions flared up. Despite his undoubted physique stamina, David was a broken man, even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam. 24:14 with 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps.75:10 and the whole of Ps.101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam.11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom.

We note how there are three accounts of the engagement in which Uriah was killed. The actual account; Joab's account of it which he told the messenger to tell David; and then what the messenger actually tells David. We see how covering sin leads to dishonesty and catches up so many others in the web of dishonesty. The transparent life before God involves humility and the associated immediate confession and repentance, and thus avoids all this. And all this lying stands in hard contrast to the David of the Psalms, who so loves to protest

his integrity and honesty compared to others. One function of the sin with Bathsheba was to lead David to self knowledge and recognition that he failed to rightly perceive his own sinfulness.

2Sa 11:21 who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Didn't a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall? ' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also '-

Joab warned the messenger to quickly explain to David why the soldiers approached so near the wall of Rabbah, *because* he knew that David would *immediately* quote an example from the history of Israel, to prove that such an approach was unwise. David's familiarity with the spiritual records of Israel's history was therefore well known, and it presumably did not depart from him during the nine months. Psalm 38 speaks of how the guilt of his sin weighed so heavily upon him (Ps. 38:4 NIV), whereas Ps. 32:5 describes how the guilt of sin has now been lifted from him- implying that he wrote Ps. 38 some time after the sin, but before repenting properly. The point is, he didn't crash completely, he didn't turn away from God in totality- he was still writing Psalms at the time!

The fact Joab told the servant to say this is proof enough that he too knew what had happened. It is to his shame that he went along with the evil plan. It was almost as if he wanted it to happen, remembering how David had said Joab was "too hard for me", the spiritual man. And Joab almost wants David's planned sin to happen so he can get equal with David. For in all this David was indeed being "hard" himself, very hard.

2Sa 11:22 So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for-

The obedience of David's servants is emphasized. His sin was therefore the worse because he abused loyalty. No wonder he lost so much loyalty because of what he did.

2Sa 11:23 The messenger said to David, The men prevailed against us, and came out to us into the field, and we were on them even to the entrance of the gate-

David uses the same word when he reflects that his sins had "prevailed against me" (Ps. 65:3), showing that finally he did finely appreciate the nature and many dimensions of his sin. For Israel to flee before their enemies who were stronger [s.w. "prevailed"] than them is the language of the curse for breaking the covenant. And this was what David had done and was leading Israel into. His spiritual perception was totally subdued beneath his desire to cover his sins in the eyes of men, although the record continually shows that the more he tried to, the more evident his sins became.

2Sa 11:24 The shooters shot at your servants from off the wall; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also-

The servant also knew all that was going on. So he doesn't wait (as advised) for David to rant about the loss of men near the city wall, he tells David immediately that Uriah was dead. He knew that was the bottom line David wanted to know. We note that in this evil plan, other men died along with Uriah, perhaps to give the murder some semblance of bad luck.

The scene in 2 Sam. 18:33 is of David sitting between the gates and going up over the gate to get news of Absalom and weeping there for his death. It was from a wall above a gate that the archers shot from and killed Uriah (2 Sam. 11:23,24).

We note that Uriah was killed by archers; David's son Absalom was also killed by three arrows fired into his chest (2 Sam. 18:14). This was to help David see the pain he had caused to Uriah's loved ones. Saul too was hit by archers before he ended his own life. It could be

that Joab was resented the murder of his armour bearer Uriah [according to LXX and Josephus], and so he in turn murdered David's son Absalom with arrows.

2Sa 11:25 Then David said to the messenger, Thus you shall tell Joab, 'Don't let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Make your battle stronger against the city, and overthrow it'. Encourage him-

"Let not this thing displease you" were David's words to Joab. But those very Hebrew words are used again in :27: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord". It displeased God spiritually; and it is therefore reasonable to think that David was saying to Joab 'Now don't think that there's anything really spiritually wrong with what I've done'. Doubtless David tried even harder to persuade himself of this than he did Joab.

2Sa 11:26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband-

The record leaves us invited to imagine how sincere was her lamentation. Was it a mere formality, as :27 suggests, or from the heart? If from the heart, she would likely have been angry with David and hardly the wife he wished for. The record doesn't make any mention of Bathsheba's mourning being anything personal; compare it with Jacob's mourning for Joseph, which mentions how Jacob refused to be comforted by anyone. Or Paltiel's mourning at the loss of Michal.

2Sa 11:27 When the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son-

The record is purposefully vague about her feelings. We are left to speculate.

But the thing that David had done displeased Yahweh-

God's apparent silence doesn't mean that judgment won't come. David himself perceives this in Ps. 50:21, either having learned from his experience, or having only taught the theory in that Psalm, which he now was to personalize. The phrase used here is only found in 1 Sam. 8:6 about the displeasure concerning "the thing" of Israel wanting a king. The entire sentence is copied word for word in Hebrew. We are left to wonder what the parallels were between these apparently quite different sins. The point is that although human failure may be markedly different (wanting a human king as opposed to arranging murder and adultery), the essence was the same. There was an assumption by both David and the people that they could act as they wished, despite knowing God's revealed will. They despised His word and acted according to their immediate desires, justifying themselves. And here we see the worrying similarities with our own sins, in essence. Perhaps the connection with God's displeasure about the "thing" of wanting a human king was because David was effectively rejecting God's kingship. He wanted to be king and have his kingdom in the here and now, rather than believe the promises about his Messianic son having his true and eternal kingdom.

We note how the word "Yahweh" hasn't occurred in the narrative until now, reflecting how God was far from David's thoughts in all this. What David did was evil [Heb.] in His sight; whereas David had declared to Joab that this "thing" was not to be "evil" in Joab's eyes (:25). The chapter opens with David 'seeing' Bathsheba [:2] and concludes with a comment as to how Yahweh 'saw' things.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 12

2Sa 12:1 Yahweh sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, There were two men in one city-

God's sending of Nathan matches David's frenetic sending of messages in an attempt to cover his sin. We enquire why God waited until the child was born to challenge David. I suggest He does give grace periods of silence from Him, during which time we are to repent without further painful nudging. And we must ask Him whether we are in such a period, in some aspect of our lives...

That David could see into the back yard of Bathsheba's house shows that they were almost next door neighbours in Jerusalem. Nathan's parable emphasized this: "There were two men (David and Nathan) in one city (Jerusalem)". That Uriah "went not down to his house" after meeting David in Jerusalem could imply that it was just at the end of David's back garden (2 Sam. 11:13 etc.).

The one rich, and the other poor-

Reflection on the record enables us to enter a little into the nature and tragedy of David's sorrow; remembering always that David is our example. His love for Abigail, with marriage to her so wondrously arranged, would have been cruelly mocked by his falling for Bathsheba. His abuse of Uriah's loyalty (when almost certainly Uriah knew exactly what David was playing at) would have created a sadness that can only be described as ineffable. David in his early years described himself as a "poor man", indicating his humility; yet the very same word is used by Nathan in the parable about Uriah, as if to bring home to David that he had slain a man who had the humble loyalty which he had had in those early, spiritually formative years (1 Sam. 18:23 cp. 2 Sam. 12:1,3,4).

Nathan had likened Uriah to a "poor man" abused by David. But David later asks God to eternally condemn those who persecuted the "poor" (see on Ps. 109:9,16). And it seems Ps. 109 was used by David not only about his persecution at the time of Saul, but also of his sufferings at the time of Absalom's rebellion, after the time of his sin. So it seems David didn't maintain his sense of humility before Nathan.

2Sa 12:2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds-

Presumably the idea is that David had many wives and concubines. He had no sexual need for Bathsheba. To take her was selfishness and narcissism in the extreme. And yet he was the man after God's own heart, the only man to be told in mid life that his salvation was assured [2 Sam. 7].

2Sa 12:3 but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and raised. It grew up together with him, and with his children. It ate of his own food, drank of his own cup, lay in his bosom, and was to him like a daughter-

David himself had once been a poor man (1 Sam. 18:23), his family only had a "few sheep" (1 Sam. 17:28). So his abuse of the poor man with only one sheep now he was rich... was therefore the more culpable.

David and Uriah knew each other very well; they had spent David's long wilderness years together. All that time, Bathsheba had been brought up by Uriah (2 Sam. 12:3). She was the daughter of Eliam, who had been another of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 11:3; 23:34). Presumably he had been killed and Uriah adopted her, bringing her up from babyhood, mothering her by feeding her from his bowl and letting her sleep in his bosom. This may imply that his own wife died early, and that he brought her and his own children up alone, and then married her when she was older. A very special spiritual and emotional bond must have been forged between those who stuck with David as a down and out, and who later on shared in the glory of his kingdom. That Uriah had such easy access to David would have been unthinkable for an ordinary soldier whom David hardly knew. Nathan criticizes David for having "no pity" on Uriah, implying that David well knew the relationship between Uriah

and Bathsheba. Moreover, David would have been a larger than life figure for his followers, and Bathsheba would have grown up with this image of David as the saving hero.

1 Chron. 3:5 could imply that she had no other children before those she had by David. This means that she may have been barren until that point; her conception was certainly brought about by God. Was it that they would both have been aware of the unlikelihood of her bearing children, and therefore perhaps more inclined to take a chance? Or was the problem Uriah's side and David was seeking again [wrongly] to build up his own house through Bathsheba? But the cruelty of David is stressed- Bathsheba "lay in [Uriah's] bosom" as a lamb, but then David "lay with her". To lay in the bosom clearly means intimacy, and God says that David's wives had been given into his bosom. He enjoyed intimacy with them- and so he had no need to take Bathsheba. He was not a man lacking in intimate relationships. David in the parable is wealthy, and Uriah poor. Yet Uriah had a house next to the king and was his close associate, and his wife was the well connected granddaughter of Ahithophel, David's chief advisor and "familiar friend". His poverty, therefore, was in terms of relationships. All he had was Bathsheba. And that was what was so wrong with David's theft of Bathsheba from him. This is the focus of the condemnation- not so much the sin of sensuality and sex outside of marriage, but more the theft from Uriah. We note however that Uriah had the far younger Bathsheba "lay" with him as a cute lamb; whereas David "lay" with her as a woman. There may possibly be a hint here of why she was apparently not resistant to David's advances and may even have encouraged them by bathing in his line of vision. Even if the connection with 'laying with' is deemed over interpretation, it would seem to me that indeed Bathsheba and Uriah likely had this issue in their relationship.

2 Sam. 11:13 has used the same three verbs eat, drink and lie with respect to Uriah doing so.

2Sa 12:4 A traveller came to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man who had come to him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man who had come to him-

The parable described David's lust as a "traveller" which came to him, implying that this was not his usual frame of mind (and does the 'traveller' needing sustenance of Lk. 11:6 also refer to our sinful tendencies?). The rich man is presented as mean. He has only an appearance of hospitality and generosity towards his guest, for he will not give of his own animals, but takes the poor man's lamb. Whilst David was not typically like this, his behaviour in this matter was indeed callous and mean, beneath a veneer of respectability.

The rich man "spared to take" his own animal from his own flocks; just as Saul spared flocks and herds (1 Sam. 15:9,15 s.w.). Again we see how David and Saul are paralleled in their sins. But David was saved because of his heart attitude.

The rich man "took" the poor man's lamb because he assumed that there was effectively no chance of a law suit, the law would not be applied to him; and even if it were, he could easily pay the penalty. This reflects David's attitude to God's law, and his failure in respecting God's law earlier when bringing the ark to Zion had led to the death of Uzzah. He was to be brought to understand that God's law cannot just be waived by man, and man cannot pay the penalty. And we all have that same sense at times, that Divine law and principle doesn't apply to me or can be somehow gotten around. The idea that all men, president or peasant, are 'equal before the law' is a relatively new concept for human societies. It has been engrained in human thought for most of human history that leaders are somehow above the law. We note how the parable focuses upon David's callousness and selfishness, his disregard for others, rather than the sin of unbridled lust and sensuality of itself. The focalization is on the lack of pity rather than sensuality, quick sex or whatever else. It was the pain caused to Uriah whilst he was alive, during that journey back to the battle front and in whatever time he spent alive

there, which was the focus of the parable. For after his death he had no sense of loss regarding anything. It was in this that David's lack of pity was so wrong; and out of all the aspects of David's failure, it was this lack of pity which God focused on most. And David correctly realized that in his interpretation of the parable. He was intended to come to just that point of identifying 'lack of pity', and the parable worked perfectly. Lack of pity or empathy is therefore of huge moment to God. And He and His Son show it hugely. God has pity on us the work of His hands. And it was the Lord's being moved with compassion / pity that led Him to the cross. Whilst we may not commit murder nor adultery, lack of compassion to the weaker than us... is an everyday struggle. And God sees it so seriously. We have to love the way the Lord loved the rich youth who told Him that He had been obedient to God since his "youth". The contradiction is obvious, but the Lord was moved with pity and love for him. Whereas we are irritated by what we perceive as hypocrisy, unreality, pride and laziness.

But the lust of David is presented as a traveller visiting- as if this was an unusual occurrence and not David's way of thought and living. We also note the element of unreality in the story. Rich men didn't usually give food to beggars nor did they entertain wayfaring men of the road in their homes, let alone kill a lamb for them. We note the travelling man comes alone, with no entourage, suggesting he is a low class travelling man. "The more prestigious the guest the more precious the animal" slain. Yet here is the unreality in the parable. The rich man slays a lamb for the poor visitor; possibly the hint is that the traveller is a Gentile, suggesting a parallel with Uriah who was a Hittite. He is very generous and kind to him. But not at his own cost. The father only slew an animal when his lost son came home. This rich man was generous to the poor. But he stole the poor man's lamb in order to be generous. Here we see a clever depiction of David's complex and divided character. He was generous, he had a good heart- but also callousness in order to achieve that, or, callousness and narcissism at one and the same time as being large hearted. The traveller enters the rich man's house- and David's house is a big theme here. God had promised to establish David's house but he was trying to establish it himself. And part of his attraction to having a child by Bathsheba was related to that. But he had allowed lust, the traveller, into his house, and so evil arose from within the house.

There is further grace revealed in the parable- in that adultery and consequent murder are not really in the same league at all as stealing a lamb from a poor man to feed a guest. It's not that God hereby somehow writes down the force of David's sins. Rather we see His gentleness with sinners and desire to always find a way forward in relationship with them.

Another line of interpretation is that the traveller who "comes" to David represents Bathsheba with the news she is pregnant. The traveller 'comes' to David, the rich man, just as Bathsheba came to him and slept with him. David responds to this by slaying the lamb, who would then represent Uriah. The lamb ate, drank and lay [in the bosom], and these are the very words used of Uriah in 1 Sam. 11:11 "How can I go home and eat, and drink, and lay with my wife?". Those three Hebrew words occur together only in these two places. This path of interpretation however has some issues; the poor man is then Bathsheba as Uriah's wife, and the traveller is Bathsheba as David's pregnant lover. runs in

2Sa 12:5 David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As Yahweh lives, the man who has done this is worthy to die!-

As noted on :6, this demand for the death penalty was far beyond what the law required for the theft of an animal. David's outrage shows that he was not without moral conscience. But morality can be applied in one part of a man's life but not in others; to one person but not another; to sinners but not to himself. David speaks as God in Eden: "... shall surely die" (AV). This was his problem; he was playing God.

The law required four fold restitution of stolen sheep (Ex. 22:1) but David demands a harsher punishment, of death. He was guilty of death but was spared by grace. Thus God's grace is powerfully contrasted with David's lack of grace. As seen often in the Psalms, his conscience was keenly aware of others' sins but not of his own. He did pay four fold restoration in that four of his sons died: his first child by Bathsheba, Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah. In the bigger picture, this was to help him see that his focus on building up his own immediate house or family was wrong. Instead he should have just trusted in the promise that his house would be built up through his future Messianic son. This is why the evil of his judgment was to arise from his own house (:11). In 1 Sam. 26:16 David had likewise demanded the death penalty for not keeping Saul, even though a sleep from Yahweh had made it impossible to do so. And the slaughter of more Philistines than necessary to pay his dowry. He who had been so eager to slay men is now saved from his own judicial death by pure grace. Freud demonstrated that exaggerated responses to moral questions concerning others is a reflection of the person defending themselves, against their own self recognition. David's exaggerated response, demanding the death penalty as well as restoration, is therefore psychologically credible for a man refusing to face himself. We see this clearly in many who obsess about some cases of morality and justice... but it is potentially true for us all.

2Sa 12:6 He shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity!-

Ex. 22:1 stipulated that stolen lambs should be restored fourfold. The fourfold judgment could be seen as coming upon David in the deaths of Bathsheba's child, then Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah. But David is so used to living beyond the letter of the law, that he assumes he can get this person also put to death. But that was not stipulated in the law. In many ways David had rightly seen beyond the letter of the law, to the spirit of it. This he could act at times as High Priest. But this led him where it can lead us too- to an attitude that he was personally beyond Divine principles. And this led him to the sins related to Bathsheba.

LXX has seven fold. This could refer to the two periods of seven years of judgment which the rest of the book give us: 2 Sam 13-14: 2 years (13:23) +3 (13:38) +2 (14:28) then 2 Sam 15:1 - 21: 14: 4 years (15:7) +3 (21:1).

Another possible interpretation is that David understands it as a parable and not as an actual legal case. But David perhaps considers Joab as the one guilty of Uriah's death, and uses it as an opportunity to get Joab condemned to death.

2Sa 12:7 Nathan said to David, You are the man-

It is difficult to read Rom. 2:1 without seeing an allusion to David's condemnation of the man who killed his neighbour's only sheep: "You are inexcusable, O man, *whoever you are* that judges: for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself". Surely Paul is saying that David's massive self-deception and hypocrisy over Bathsheba can all too easily be replicated in our experience.

This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul-

David ought to have been moved by God's grace to him historically, to be sexually self controlled. And there we have an abiding principle.

2Sa 12:8 I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom-

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; 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: "You son of the perverse rebellious woman... you have chosen the son of Jesse to... the confusion of your mother's nakedness" (1 Sam. 20:30). This hints at least two things: firstly, Saul had a bad relationship with his wife; and secondly, he suspected some kind of unfaithfulness in her, perhaps only on a mental level. David had 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.

God had given David the harem of Saul, despite the prohibition of polygamy for Israel's king (Dt. 17:17). Kings of the time all had harems and aimed to produce the maximum number of sons to keep their dynasty going. But God's intention was to work through just one later King, His begotten Son. But by allowing and giving David a harem, God had made a concession to David's sexual needs and his desire for a visible large kingly family. But He has given the amazing promise that David's "house" would be eternal through His Messianic seed. But God had also given David a considerable "house" in this life. But He takes away David's harem as punishment through Absalom. This was to make David focus on the promises about his true "house" through his greater Son.

And gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that would have been too little- Such is the wonder of God's promise to us that we really have no excuse to sin. He knows our levels and knew that David was not as it were forced inevitably to sin with Bathsheba. Every sin is in a sense a denial of His promises. God told David that he had no excuse for what he did with Uriah and Bathsheba, because he had given him so much, "and if that had been too little, I would have added unto you..." (2 Sam. 12:8). "Too little" sends the mind back to 2 Sam. 7:19, where the promises to David are described as a "little thing"; the promises were so wonderful that David should not have allowed himself to fall into such sin. And us likewise. But David was still focused upon building up his "house" in this life rather than trusting and rejoicing that this would be eternally done for him. And so his harem and finally his "house" were taken from him, tacitly recognized by him in his rueful comment that "my house is not so with God"- to focus him on the future and eternal house being built for him. And our own houses, physical and family wise, may not come to much in this life- for exactly the same reason.

I would have added to you many more such things- When David sinned with Bathsheba, God didn't read him the act about adultery, lust, murder. He reminded David instead how He had delivered David by grace from his enemies, and how He had by grace given him many wives- when this was hardly God's ideal standard. God made concessions to David's weakness- and even gave him the wives of Saul. Seeing David was married to Saul's daughter, this was actually contrary to the spirit of God's own law. But God had showed David great grace in this. And it was *exactly this* which God reminded David of- it was this amazing grace against which David had sinned (2 Sam. 12:7,8). And perhaps David appreciated this when he commented: "I have sinned against the Lord", rather than saying 'Yes, I've broken commandments'. This is the awfulness of sin- any sin. That we who have known such grace could so ignore it and act like we never knew.

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. Thus He 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. See on 1 Sam. 18:20; 20:30.

2Sa 12:9 Why have you despised the word of Yahweh, to do that which is evil in His sight?- Saul also rejected God's word (1 Sam. 15:26); we have here another example of how Saul and David committed the same sins but David has a heart for God and was repentant. Both men say they had sinned (:13; 1 Sam. 15:30). But David's heart was in those words whereas Saul's wasn't.

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. When Samuel told Eli of the prophetic vision which he had received, Eli commented: "It is the Lord" (1 Sam. 3:18). 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 fact that he is condemned for having "despised the commandment of the Lord" in David's sin with Bathsheba indicates that He knew all along what God's will really was. The fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: "The soul that doeth ought presumptuously...because he hath despised the word of the Lord... that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David's emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion. In his prosperity he had said "I shall never be moved" and he was determined that he couldn't be (Ps. 30:6). Hearing those words from Nathan must have struck real fear into David- he was being incriminated for the supreme sin of presumption, for which there was no provision of sacrifice or repentance. It is a mark of his faith and knowledge of God as the God of love, that He is willing to go on to confess his sin, in the hope of forgiveness. "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16) was spoken by David more concerning this sin of presumption for which there was no sacrifice prescribed, rather than about the actual sin of adultery. However, we must not get the impression that David was a hard, callous man. Everything we know about him points to him be a big hearted, warm softie. David's sin with Bathsheba was in that sense out of character. Yet such is the stranglehold of sin that even he was forced to act with such uncharacteristic callousness and indifference to both God and man in order to try to cover his sin.

You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon- God saw David as if *he* had killed Uriah with *his* sword; even though David's command to Joab to retire from Uriah and let the Ammonites kill him was carefully calculated not to break the letter of the law.

2Sa 12:10 Now therefore the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife'-

The judgments for David's sin reflect on the nature of his sin in this "matter of Uriah". The dramas that would unfold in his family revolved around callous, conscience less murder, reckless passion and unbridled lust. Despite being a man after God's own heart, David had these elements strongly within him and gave way to them. The judgment was against David's house, the sword would not depart from it (:10). Again the point is being made that he had been wrong to focus upon his own house rather than trusting God's promise to make a great and eternal house from his later Messianic son, after his death and not before it. The promises to David included the prospect of being given rest from his enemies (2 Sam. 7:11). We note however that in 2 Sam. 10-12 we will read of David's war with Ammon. He didn't have rest from his enemies. Possibly David didn't go to the war because he wanted to try to self fulfil the promise about having rest from his enemies. As with the promise that immediately follows, that he would have an eternal house / family, this was to be realized after David's death, in the time of his Messianic Son. The war with Ammon would have been intended by God to nudge David to realize that the promises were not about here and now. But he tries hard to make them about him; and the curse on him for the sin with Bathsheba was that enemies would arise from his own house, and the rest of his life was lived in anything but "rest" from enemies. In the bigger picture, this was to remind him that the promises to him were most definitely not being fulfilled in this life. He was intended to focus instead upon the future rest of God's Kingdom, at a point when his Messianic Son was set up / resurrected along with himself.

Ps. 69:33 had a historical basis in David appreciating that although he had despised God in his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (s.w. 2 Sam. 12:10), God by grace had not despised him: "Yahweh doesn't despise His people". Just as the actual murder of Uriah involved the death of other soldiers, so the bloodshed within David's family was going to be his fault.

It should be noted that the sin of adultery is not highlighted in Nathan's rebuke of David, but rather that David had "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife". This is twice emphasized in 12:9,10. This is not to say that the sin of weakness, of the moment, was irrelevant in God's sight. But the emphasis on how he had taken Bathsheba as his wife hints that this had been his long term intention, further suggesting that his sin with her was the end result of much prior meditation. This further illuminates the way in which David speaks of his sin with Bathsheba as if it comprised a whole multitude of other sins: "I acknowledged my sin (singular) unto thee... I said, I will confess my transgressions (plural)" (Ps. 32:5 cp. 38:3,4,18). Ps. 25:7 also occurs in a Bathsheba context: "Remember not the sins of my youth..."; as if facing up to his sin with Bathsheba made David face up to sins of years ago, possibly also in a sexual context. Indeed, David went so far down this road of self-examination that the sin with Bathsheba made him realize that it was probably associated with many others which he did not even realize: "Who can understand his own errors? cleanse (s.w. Ps. 51:1,2 re. the Bathsheba affair) thou me from secret faults" (Ps. 19:12). If our own self-examination and repentance is after the pattern of David's, we will appreciate how that each of our sins is associated with so many others. We will be aware how that each spiritual event in our life makes us either weaker or stronger in facing the next one, how that each temptation is intertwined with others, so that in reality we do not commit (say) three or four sins per day. We are constantly failing and winning, and therefore we live in God's mercy; we do not just experience it for the few seconds in which we pray to Him for forgiveness to be granted. David's sin with Bathsheba is a process we each go through in one way or another.

Not believing in God and not believing in His word of the Gospel are paralleled in 1 Jn. 5:10. God is His word. The word "is" God in that God is so identified with His word. David parallels trusting in God and trusting in His word (Ps. 56:3,4). He learnt this, perhaps, through the experience of his sin with Bathsheba. For in that matter, 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.

2Sa 12:11 This is what Yahweh says: 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house-

David in the Psalms records how he hated those who 'rose up' against him, and that includes Absalom. 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. So we have here yet more evidence that David's repentance and acceptance of his punishment was not of an abiding nature. Yet still God accepted 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 I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this sun-

Uriah had been David's neighbour. David's neighbour Absalom was to sleep with his wives; perhaps at this time Absalom also had a house next to David's. David was described as Saul's "neighbour"; Saul had abused his neighbour David, and now David was acting no better than Saul. He was only treated differently because his repentance was more genuine. "I will take away... and give... to your neighbour" is the language of how God had removed the kingdom from Saul and given it to David. However, it is David's harem which is to be taken from him. Quite possibly David had still not retained enough faith in the promises to him about his Messianic seed. Instead he was seeking to build up a large multitudinous "house" by having many wives; and quite possibly his taking of Bathsheba was partly motivated by that desire. In an attempt to refocus David upon the multitudinous seed being through Messiah, in the future and not now in David's lifetime, David's harem was taken away from him and apart from Solomon, his many children apparently came to nothing and the rest of the family were stained with shame by their actions.

In wrath, God remembers mercy. And we see that in His judgments upon David. They were mixed with so much grace- forgiving David rather than enforcing the death penalty; accepting David's marriage with Bathsheba, and blessing the marriage with Solomon; straight away giving victory against the Ammonites, when David 'deserved' to lose at that point. Even in the judgments through the rebellions of Absalom, Sheba etc., God remembered mercy- for He saved David out of those judgments.

2Sa 12:12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun'-

"Under the sun" is Solomon's favourite phrase in Ecclesiastes, as he describes what he

considers as the fallen position of himself, his kingdom, and humanity generally. The only other Biblical usage of the phrase outside of Ecclesiastes is in 2 Sam. 12:12, where the consequences of David's sin with Solomon's mother were to be worked out openly and publically "under the sun". It could be that despite trying to whitewash David and his sin in Proverbs, Solomon at the end of his life feels he is for ever living with the consequence of that sin of his parents; and thus he blames everything he sees as wrong with his life upon that. This would be a typical thing for a man to do, in psychological terms. And I have noted throughout Proverbs how often Solomon is having a dig at Absalom and others who played their part in the outworking of the consequences of the sin.

David appears desperate and foolish in trying to cover his sin by getting Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba and then getting Uriah killed, even requiring other men to be killed in order to make Uriah's death appear nothing specific. And yet the record stresses how many messengers were involved in the whole "thing". All attempts to cover sin will ultimately come to nothing in that the day of judgment will reveal all "the secrets of men" to all. David clearly has the belief that what he has done is secret when in fact it obviously isn't; and that is the mentality of all sinners. And that is exactly God's point in 2 Sam. 12:12 "For you did it [so David thought] secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel".

In Ps. 10, David had bitterly criticized the wicked who think they can sin 'secretly' and get away with it; "his eyes are secretly set... he says in his heart, God has forgotten. He hides His face. He will never see it" (Ps. 10:6,11). And yet knowing that theory, he himself acts like that. Rather like Jonah's awareness of Ps. 139, that he can never flee God's presence, even at the bottom of the ocean or at the end of the Gentile world. And yet Jonah tried to. We too, as all men, have this tendency to apprehend on an intellectual level, but divorce this knowledge from our felt reality.

As noted on 2 Sam. 11:27, what David was displeasing in Yahweh's eyes, and His judgments here make that clear. But He speaks of "My servant David... who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My eyes" (1 Kings 14:8). This surely must mean that David lived "to" do what was right in God's eyes, towards that, despite all this massive maze of wrong thinking within him. Yahweh saw the essential direction of his heart, despite David's callous behaviour and sharp oscillations of emotion, angry with his sons and then soporily emotional over them...

2Sa 12:13 David said to Nathan, I have sinned against Yahweh-

It is amazing how sudden David's proper repentance seems to have come. There is no reason to be unduly afraid of a sudden, emotional confession of sin, prompted by a certain circumstance, as David's was by Nathan's parable. Psalm 51 may well have been prayed but moments after Nathan finished his parable. And Psalm 32, describing the joy of David's repentance, would have followed soon after. "Purge *me*... and I shall be clean... create in me a clean heart" (Ps. 51:7,10) shows that David understood the 'me' which needed cleansing as being his own mind. This was clearly a result of the great level of self-examination which brought forth his real repentance. "Against thee, thee *only* have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4) was a conclusion wrung out of so much reflection about what he had done; as is his recognition that his "sin" had involved many "transgressions" (Ps. 51:3).

There are an interesting set of allusions to David's sin with Bathsheba in Micah 7, almost leading us to wonder whether Micah too had a *femme fatale* in his life- whom he speaks of in Mic. 7:10 as "she that is mine enemy... shame shall cover her". He says that "I have sinned against the Lord" (Mic. 7:9), using the very same words as David does in 2 Sam. 12:13; and he marvels how God 'passes by' transgression (Mic. 7:18), using the very same Hebrew word as is found in 2 Sam. 12:13 to describe how God "put away" David's sin. And there are many references throughout Micah 7 to David's Psalms of penitence. Could it be that David's sin

and repentance served as a personal inspiration to Micah, as well as being held up as the inspiration to all God's people to repent and experience the sure mercies which David did?

A New Testament allusion to David's penitence may be found in 2 Cor. 7:7-11: "Ye were made sorry... ye sorrowed to repentance... ye were made sorry after a *Godly* manner (cp. "every one that is *Godly*...", Ps. 32:6)... for *Godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation... ye sorrowed after a *Godly* sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation (cp. David's in 2 Sam. 12:5)... what zeal... your mourning, your fervent mind" . Allusion after allusion to David is being piled up here. The eight references to their "sorrow" in four verses is surely a signpost back to David's intense sorrow for his sin with Bathsheba: "My sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3)...my sorrow is continually before me... I will be sorry for my sin...many sorrows shall be to the wicked" who, unlike David, refused to repent (Ps. 38:17,18; 32:10). This association between sin and sorrow is a common one (Job 9:28; 1 Tim. 6:10; Ex. 4:31; Is. 35:10. The last two references show how Israel's sorrowing in Egypt was on account of their sinfulness). We must pause to ask whether our consciousness of sin leads us to a like sorrowing, whether our repentance features a similar depth of remorse.

It would appear that Paul is likening Corinth to David. They too were guilty of sexual "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness" (2 Cor. 12:21). We have seen that in the same way as David's repentance was made in a "day of salvation", so in 2 Cor. 6:2 Paul told Corinth that they were in a similar position to him; they too had the chance of repentance. Those who had heeded this call earlier had experienced the zeal and clear conscience which David did on his repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11). In this case, Paul would be likening himself to Nathan the prophet. This zeal which was seen in both David and Corinth is a sure sign of clear conscience and a joyful openness with God. Again, we ask how much of our zeal is motivated by this, or is it just a continuation of a level of service which we set ourselves in more spiritual days, which we now struggle to maintain for appearances sake?

The account of Joseph's resistance of adultery is consciously reflected in the account of king David's adultery. And we see this in life- for all life is ultimately structured by God. It's not just that one life reflects another, with similarities and so forth. But one life may be an inverse of another's life, a reflection which is inverse. Because the lessons of history were not learnt. Only by fellowship with each other, engaging with each others' paths rather than mere surface level connection, can we come to discern this. So both Joseph and David are presented as young shepherd boys ["shepherding the flock" of their father is a phrase which occurs only in Gen. 37:2 and 1 Sam. 16:11; 17:34]. They were both sent by their father to enquire of the *shalom* / "peace" of their brothers, and they were both despised by their brothers when they arrived to do so. In both cases, the brothers / Saul didn't want their hand to be upon Joseph / David but tried to make others destroy their victim (Gen. 37:27; 1 Sam. 18:17). They both are "prudent" and chosen to serve a king because of it (Gen. 41:33,39 s.w. 1 Sam. 16:18). It was noted about both of them that Yahweh was with them (Gen. 39:2,3,21-23 cp. 1 Sam. 16:18; 18:12) and they were "wise and discerning" (Gen. 41:33; 1 Sam. 16:18). Both are described as being young men of "beautiful appearance" (s.w. only Gen. 39:6; 1 Sam. 17:42). Both began their ruling at 30 years of age. Both were victims of others deciding it were better to kill them by others' hands (the Ishmaelites, Gen. 37:27, and the Philistines in David's case, 1 Sam. 18:17).

So this sets us up to consider the differences between Joseph and David when it comes to the adultery issue. Just as men may lead parallel lives, so close that clearly the hand of God was in the parallels- but then one fails to decide correctly when faced by temptation, and fails to take the lead from the earlier, or perhaps Biblical, character. But only by getting to know each other, or thinking ourselves into the Biblical characters, can we perceive this. Someone older than you maybe had a very similar life path, but, let's say, at age 40 encountered major

temptation- which they overcame. You as the younger person are to learn from that and decide rightly as they did. Or, if they failed at that point, you are to learn that lesson.

So with David and Bathsheba and Joseph and Potiphar's wife, there was an imbalance of power. She like David could just demand sex. In both cases they were "alone in the house". Bathsheba was very beautiful, just as Joseph is described. Ms. Potiphar asked Joseph to lie with her, just as David asked Bathsheba. Uriah and Joseph are both presented as very faithful to "my lord". Potiphar's wife has Joseph thrown into prison; David has Uriah sent to his death. Likewise Bathsheba's "I am pregnant... by you, David" matches the message of Tamar to Judah- another reflection of a story. Joseph was given his lord's house to rule over, just as David was given his lord Saul's house ("I have given you the house of your lord", 2 Sam. 12:8). But David saw eventually the similarities with Joseph when he finally admits "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13), whereas Joseph refuses to sin against God (Gen. 39:9). And so David is presented as Potiphar's wife. God gave Joseph everything except Potiphar's wife; God gave David everything likewise. The language is so similar. Uriah's "I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11) is Joseph's "How can I do this thing..." (Gen. 39:9).

Nathan said to David, Yahweh also has put away your sin. You will not die- The Spirit changes Ps. 32:1 ("Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven") to "Blessed are *they*" (Rom. 4:7) to make the same point. "Blessed is the man (e.g. David, or any sinner- David is our example) unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2) is alluded to in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ... not imputing (the world's) trespasses unto them". Through being justified, any repentant sinner will then have the characteristics of Christ, in God's sight. In Christ there was no guile (1 Pet. 2:22), as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2). "Blessed is the man... in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev. 14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

There is another connection with Romans in Ps. 51:4, where David recognizes "Against thee...have I sinned...that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest". He recognized that God works through our sinfulness- he is effectively saying 'I sinned so that You might be justified...'. These words are quoted in Rom. 3:4,5 in the context of Paul's exultation that "*our* unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God" - in just the same way as David's did! Because God displays His righteousness every time He justifies a repentant sinner, He is in a sense making Himself yet more righteous. We must see things from God's perspective, from the standpoint of giving glory to God's righteous attributes. If we do this, then we can see through the ugliness of sin, and come to terms with our transgressions the more effectively. And Paul quotes David's sin with Bathsheba as our supreme example in this. We along with all the righteous ought to "shout for joy" that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David's repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). Notice too how Ps. 51:1 "Have mercy on me, O God..." is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David's prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

2Sa 12:14 However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to Yahweh's enemies to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die-

We may enquire how the death of a newborn baby would stop people blaspheming. Perhaps the idea is that somehow David was punished with the death penalty, through his

representative son dying. There should therefore be no complaint about God's justice. But this seems to me to raise a host of other ethical issues. The child did indeed die because of David's sin; one dimension of sin is the effect it has upon others. It could be argued that this extra punishment was because David's sin had caused others to blaspheme. Yahweh's "enemies" were the Gentiles within the land (s.w. Num. 14:42; 32:21; Dt. 1:42; 12:10 and often). They would learn what had happened and mock Yahweh for having such a king over His people. But David's wife Abigail had referred to Saul and his supporters as Yahweh's enemies (1 Sam. 25:26,29). Perhaps the idea is that the remnants of the house of Saul, who were still against David, would blaspheme Yahweh's choice of David over Saul now that Saul had behaved in the same way as Saul in abusing his "neighbour". We learn from this that whatever causes others to stumble from Yahweh is particularly abhorrent to Him.

The moral question naturally occurs: Why should a child die because of a man's sin? Shouldn't the sinner be the one who dies? And so we start to wonder whether in some way David's death penalty was commuted to his son. In this case, the child dies as some kind of sacrificial atonement for David's sin. This is perhaps hinted at in the Hebrew of :13 "Yahweh also has put away your sin". The Hebrew for "put away" can mean to transfer, to commute. Onto the child, as the guilt offering after the pattern of the Lord, also an innocent child. Perhaps this is why David doesn't mourn the death of the child at all, and he is noted for this. His lack of mourning may suggest he is selfishly relieved that the child has died in his place and therefore he will not have to die as judgment for his sin. David eats right after the child dies, whereas mourning involved specifically not eating [we think of the record of Jacob's mourning for Joseph]. This lack of mourning is in sharp contrast to how David strongly mourns for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27), Abner (3:31-39), Amnon (13:31-36), and Absalom (19:1-5). Instead he appears at peace and all back to normal and has sex with Bathsheba again. Verse 20 states he went to his house, ate and drank and lay with his wife Bathsheba. This is an exact echo of what Uriah had said to David- "shall I then come to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife?" (1 Sam. 11:11). It's as if the moment the child dies, David feels somehow that Bathsheba is now totally and freely his wife. That behaviour may reflect his belief that the child's death had somehow dealt with his sin. And in this we are led to the cross; for God's totally innocent son died for our sins. And according to Paul's connections in Romans, we have all in essence done what David did.

2Sa 12:15 Nathan departed to his house. Yahweh struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it was very sick-

We wonder why there was a period of sickness before the child died. It was perhaps for David's benefit, to elicit his repentance, to help him see the extent of the damage he had caused. Or perhaps as noted on :16, this was the gap in which David could pray for a change of the judgment pronounced. But in this case, we have to assume that David's fasting and prayer was not intense enough.

2Sa 12:16 David therefore begged God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night on the earth-

God had clearly stated that the child would die (:15). But David understood that there is a gap between God's statements of judgment, and His fulfilment of them. And in that gap, in which we also stand, there is a window of opportunity for repentance and changing God's intended judgment. Nineveh's judgment was changed because of this as Moses had changed God's judgments pronounced upon Israel. David knew God well enough to believe that such a change was possible. The fact it wasn't could perhaps be because his prayer and repentance wasn't to the extent God required for this abrogation of judgment to happen.

We can note that David's many prayers were all answered, both in the Psalms and in the historical record. We think of his prayers about Saul and his enemies, for mercy on the people during the plague, his prayers about Ahithophel (2 Sam. 15:31; 17:7-14) etc. This is the only one of his many prayers that wasn't answered. This was perhaps as a foil against any impression he may have thereby gotten that God would answer literally any of his prayers. God is not about 'name it and claim it', on a kind of automatic level. For prayer is not some magical incantation, it is about relationship, and every answer from God to man is a statement of His grace. And so even within David's highly positive experience of answered prayer, there had to be this unanswered one.

David had been told the child must die as a result of his sin. But he had repented and he believed God's forgiveness- and that trust in this amazing Divine pardon led him to think that possibly even the consequence of his sin could be removed. So we can understand David's prayer as reflective of the depth of his repentance and belief in his forgiveness. However it could also reflect a refusal to accept the consequence for his sins because in fact his repentance wasn't that deep- and his later words [not least his later Psalms protesting his innocence] and actions do at times suggest that at best, the intensity of his repentance didn't last long. The death of the child, and David's desperate desire it not die and his seven days of intercession, were a corrective to his attitude towards Uriah and the men of Israel whom he had caused to die: "the sword devours one just like another" (1 Sam. 11:25). That may be one explanation as to why the child was sick for seven days and didn't die immediately. He didn't want that one human life to just be taken... and it would have made him reflect upon his attitude to the death of Uriah.

2Sa 12:17 The elders of his house arose beside him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them-

The scene recalls that of Saul, likewise laying prostrate upon the earth the fateful night before his Divine judgment, refusing to eat when encouraged to do so by his servants. David in essence was no better than Saul. But fortunately he had shown Saul the utmost grace, and God showed the same now to David.

2Sa 12:18 It happened on the seventh day, that the child died. The servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he didn't listen to our voice. How will he then harm himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?-

The servants fear that David will as it were shoot the messenger if they tell him bad news. Joab and the messenger who reported Uriah's death were likewise aware that David tended to do this. So the presentation of David's character is consistent. David was characterized by fits of anger and knee jerk reactions of anger, as we see again in his outburst at the story David told him. And yet despite this, he was the man after God's own heart who alone was given the assurance of future salvation whilst still in mid life [2 Sam. 7].

David's depression may even have extended to suicidal tendencies. His servants, who knew him well, feared he would take his own life if Bathsheba's baby died: "How will he then do hurt to himself...?" (2 Sam. 12:18; the same word is used in Num. 20:15 concerning Egypt's 'hurting' of Israel). One gets a sense that David had another such fit of self-hate in his reaction to the news that many in Israel would have to die because of his numbering of the people (even though their punishment was just, seeing they had refused to pay the census money required by the Law). It is quite possible that the Lord knew these tendencies well; was He not tempted to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple, to take the Kingdom immediately, in other words to short cut through this life? Indeed, any man driven to the mental lengths of David and Jesus has known these feelings.

2Sa 12:19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, Is the child dead? They said, He is dead-

These were perhaps the same servants with whom Uriah would have slept and hung out, and perhaps had carried the many messengers associated with the sin. They would have indeed realized that the wages of sin is death, and David's awful sin now led to another death.

2Sa 12:20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his clothing; and he came into the house of Yahweh, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he ate-

See on :13. This may be the reference of Ps. 30:11, a Psalm with clear reference to the Bathsheba incident: "You have turned my mourning into dancing for me. You have removed my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness". David removed his sackcloth when his child died (2 Sam. 12:20-22). It was perhaps at this point that he realized that he had been truly forgiven; hence the strange and much observed paradox of David's relative rejoicing at a time when he was supposed to be mourning for his child's death.

2Sa 12:21 Then his servants said to him, What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child was dead, you rose up and ate bread-

David intentionally doesn't go through the traditional customs associated with mourning for the dead. The traditional mourning period for the dead was seven days; but the child had been sick for seven days before dying. It's as if the striking of the child was now seen by David as the death of the child. This strange change could be attributable simply to David's mood swings. But I suggested on :20 another reason.

2Sa 12:22 He said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows whether Yahweh will not be gracious to me, that the child may live?'

David is explaining that his fasting and weeping during the sickness of the child was for God to change His judgments decreed. It was not the weeping of sorrow.

David entertains the possibility that Yahweh will be gracious or pitiful to him. He has just accepted that he is the man who showed no grace / pity (:6). But he asks God to show grace to him the ungracious. On one hand he thereby showed his grasp of God's grace and his ambition to trust in it. On the other, this could reflect his assumption that God's words of judgment could relatively easily be negated; the word of the Lord could again be despised.

2Sa 12:23 But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me-

David would go to the child in that he too would die. But he had no hope for the child's resurrection. There may even be a hint of anger with God here. David had not succeeded in changing God's stated purpose. He knew that God could bring to the grave and bring up again, as Hannah's song had said. But God had not and apparently would not do this; and "I", David, could not save a child from death nor resurrect it. Only God could, and He chose not to. We note the contrast between David's serenity over the loss of his son here, and his uncontrollable emotion later when Absalom dies. We could well conclude that this reflects a downward movement for David spiritually.

2Sa 12:24 David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her, and lay with her. She bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Yahweh loved him-

We notice the contrast with :15 “the Lord smote the child which Uriah’s wife bore to David”. Now Bathsheba is called David's wife and instead of smiting their child which she "bore", God has a special love for him. Again David lays with Bathsheba as he did the fateful evening on the roof. We see here God's acceptance of second marriage, even if that position was arrived at by very wrong behaviours in the past. And how the story now progresses, expressed in these terms here in :24, rather sinks the idea that this had just been a passing 'power rape' of Bathsheba by David. The victims of rape usually disappear from the rapist's life afterwards, but Bathsheba becomes his favourite wife and her son is David's favourite and chosen to continue the kingly line. Indeed both the Lord's genealogies trace Him back through sons of Bathsheba, Solomon and Nathan. We would probably have traced the Lord's line through a son of David and Abigail, whom he married after rightly waiting for her husband's death. But God goes out of His way to bless David and Bathsheba's marriage; to demonstrate that His forgiveness really does put sin behind us, and His 'play on' really does mean that.

Solomon being the one Yahweh loved led him to abuse that love, because he alludes to this in Prov. 3:12; 15:9. As noted there, he assumes that he is therefore righteous and God's supreme delight, because Yahweh loved him. But he failed to perceive that God's love is by grace, and not a reward for our righteousness.

That David's sin is indeed an epitome of all our sins is proved by the way in which the record of it is framed in the language of the fall. Adam is presented as David. Gen. 2:8,17 = 2 Sam. 12:5; Gen. 2:17 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 6:2 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 12:10; Gen. 3:7 = 2 Sam. 12:11; Gen. 3:8 = 2 Sam. 11:24; 12:12; Gen. 3:21 = 2 Sam. 12:13; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 16:11; Gen. 3:19 = 2 Sam. 16:13. It should also be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7=Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7=Is. 1:18; Ps. 65:2=Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

2Sa 12:25 and He sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he named him Jedidiah, for Yahweh's sake-

The words of Ps. 110:1 are applied by the NT to Jesus, but there is no reason to think that they were not primarily spoke by David with his eye on Solomon, whom he addresses as his Lord, such was his obsession: “The Lord saith unto my Lord...” (RV), and the rest of the Psalm goes on in the language of Ps. 72 to describe David’s hopes for Solomon’s Kingdom. ‘Solomon’ was actually called ‘Jedidiah’ by God through Nathan (2 Sam. 12:25). The ‘beloved of God’ was surely prophetic of God’s beloved Son. When God said “This is my beloved Son”, He was surely saying ‘Now *this* is the Jedidiah, whom I wanted Solomon to typify’. But David calls him Solomon, the man who would bring peace. I suggest that David was so eager to see in Solomon the actual Messiah, that he chose not to use the name which God wanted- which made Solomon a type of a future Son of God / Messiah. And this led to Solomon himself being obsessed with being a Messiah figure and losing sight of the future Messiah.

Jedidiah is a form of the word David, the David or beloved of Yah. We wonder why David gave Solomon another name. Perhaps he was shy of this amazing grace to him, letting him play on, and then this statement that his son would be named 'Yah loves David'. It was an amazing reassurance of Divine love.

2Sa 12:26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city-

How the citadel fell is explained in :27. I suggest that 2 Samuel is thematic rather than chronological. This really picks up from 2 Sam. 10, where Syrian support for Rabbah had been cut off, and Rabbah was besieged by Joab. It is unlikely that the siege could have been maintained for a year or so. I suggest therefore that what we read of here happened some time after the sin with Bathsheba, and before David's repentance. The harsh treatment of the captives and proud taking of the crown David hadn't fought for... is all the kind of behaviour to be associated with a man in bad conscience before God.

This may be alluded to in Prov. 16:32: "One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; one who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city". This may refer to the hot headed anger of Joab and the "sons of Zeruiah", who had opposed Solomon and sought the throne for themselves towards the end of David's life. It was Joab who had taken the citadel of Zion and also the city of Rabbah, but this is dismissed by Solomon as cancelled out, as it were, by his hot headed lack of mental self control.

2Sa 12:27 Joab sent messengers to David and said, I have fought against Rabbah. Yes, I have taken the city of waters-

We see here Joab's strong loyalty to David. "The city of waters" was the settlement on the Jabbok which provided water for the citadel of Rabbah. Once that was taken, it was only a matter of time before Rabbah had to fall, without water. And Joab wanted David to be there to have the glory of entering Rabbah.

2Sa 12:28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city and take it; lest I take the city, and it be called after my name-

Whatever carried the name of a person was seen as his property. If a city was conquered, it bore the name of the conqueror (2 Sam. 12:28) and this is common today, we think of Constantinople, Pavlograd, Petrograd, Peterburg. The names of owners were on their property (Ps. 49:12); and in this context, God's Name is over His people (Dt. 28:10). So to bear God's Name is to recognize His complete ownership and even conquest of us. And yet there's a significant twist to all this in Is. 43:1: "I have called you by your name, because you are mine". It seems like a slip- we expect God to say that He has called us by His Name, because we are His. But no- He wishes us to bear both His Name and our own name, He doesn't wish to subsume us beneath His ownership and manifestation to the point that we are not significant as persons.

2Sa 12:29 David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it and took it-

Soon after the sin with Bathsheba, but before David's repentance (see on :26), David went to join Joab in the battle for Rabbah- perhaps to give an impression of zeal to Bathsheba and the rest of his people. 'If brave Uriah died there, why, I'm not afraid to be with the boys on the front line either'. After the victory, David proudly placed the crown of Rabbah's king on his own head, pillaging the spoil of the city rather than burning it, and then cruelly tortured the Ammonites; "he (David personally) brought out the people... and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes" (2 Chron.20:2,3). How true it is that one sin leads to another. David's own bad conscience with God led him into this fit of bitterness, in which he so needlessly tortured people who at the most only warranted a quick death. One is left to imagine him making a great deal of how he was doing this in vengeance for the death of Uriah. Whenever we detect unreasonable behaviour, pride, materialism or bitterness within

our own lives, we need to ask to what degree this is related to our own lack of good conscience with God.

2Sa 12:30 He took the crown of their king from off his head; and its weight was a talent of gold, and in it were precious stones; and it was set on David's head. He brought out the spoil of the city, exceeding much-

"Their king" is literally "Milcom", the name of their god. Later God's people worshipped this god (Zeph. 1:5; Jer. 49:1); again we see that David set up subsequent generations for failure by doing this. The extent of David's fall at this time may be indicated by the way he crowns himself in 2 Sam. 12:30 with the 70 pound gold crown of the Ammonite state god Milcom. Whilst retaining his allegiance to Yahweh, this personal association with a pagan god seems inappropriate. See on :26.

As explained on Ps. 20:1; 21:1, Psalms 20 and 21 appear to be David's prayers before going into battle against Ammon, and Psalm 21 is his thanksgiving for the victory. The setting of the gold crown upon his head is specifically referenced in Ps. 21:3. This however was straight after his sin with Bathsheba. So David's joy in God's salvation expressed in those Psalms was due to his sense that God had given him this victory by grace when he himself was a sinner. His thanks for giving him eternal life when he put the crown upon him (Ps. 21:4) was therefore in the sense that he believed that despite his sin, he would be eternally saved, and he saw the victory against Ammon as a foretaste of that.

2Sa 12:31 He brought out the people who were therein, and put them under saws, and under iron picks, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and he did so to all the cities of the children of Ammon. David and all the people returned to Jerusalem- See on :26. This harsh torture and judgment of others is of the same nature as his harsh judgment of the person in Nabal's parable, demanding the death sentence for a man whom the law of Moses didn't punish with death for what he did. This is a classic case of transference. David is subconsciously transferring his sin and guilt onto others, and then punishing them heavily. This kind of psychological credibility of the narrative encourages us in our faith that it is indeed the inspired word of God. His behaviour to the Ammonites suggests to me that his much praised repentance was either not very deep, or if it was, it didn't last long.

It's one thing to obey Divine commands about slaying enemies; it's another to willfully torture them, Auschwitz-style. It was the same cruelty he showed in 2 Sam. 8:2. These incidents reveal David at his worst. And again- did he really have to ensure that every male in Edom was murdered (1 Kings 11:15,16)- was that really necessary? What about the mums, wives, sisters left weeping, and the fatherless daughters, left to grow up in the dysfunction of a leaderless Middle Eastern home? Those men were all somebody's sons, brothers, fathers, grandfathers. Was David really obeying some Divine command here, or was this the dictate of his own anger and dysfunctional bloodlust? We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

Making them pass through fire in a brick kiln was alluding to how the Ammonites made their children do this to their god Milcom or Moloch; "making their children pass through the fire" in honour of Moloch (2 Kings 23:10). And yet David has just crowned himself with the crown of Milcom. The Ammonites were known for their cruelty (1 Sam. 11:2; Am. 1:13). David was paying them back, like for like. There is no grace here at all. Again we sense he was not very deeply repentant, or if he was, not for very long. And yet God accepted his repentant heart and appears to contrast it with Saul's impenitent heart when he committed in essence the same sins as David, despising God's word etc.

The record concludes with David returning victorious to Jerusalem. The war with Ammon forms an inclusio around the story of his sin with Bathsheba. We would fully expect

that the war ends in defeat and humiliation for David. But it ends in victory and glory. Military victory was a sign of covenant relationship with God; and rest from enemies was one of the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:11. So this victory, totally undeserved as it was, made the point that David remained in covenant relationship with God. He had been restored.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 13

2Sa 13:1 It happened after this, that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her-

"After this..." opens the tragic story of the consequences for David's sins. Had he resigned as king and just focused upon his family, living in awe of the promises made in 2 Sam. 7, much of the tragic suffering in his family would likely not have happened. All the scenes of failure that we will now read have various connections back to the "this" referenced here- the sins of David.

The romantic love between the two would not have happened if David had had one wife. There would have been no half sister to fall in love with.

Tamar was about fifteen, Amnon twenty-two, David about fifty three and Absalom was twenty.

2Sa 13:2 Amnon was so troubled that he fell sick because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her-

The obsessive love of Amnon for Tamar may have similarities with David's for Bathsheba.

2Sa 13:3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very subtle man-

Truly evil arose for David from his own house, for Jonadab was his nephew. "Subtle" suggests he was going to act like the serpent in Eden, suggesting temptation on the basis of appealing to the human sense of entitlement, regardless of what moral boundaries were crossed.

2Sa 13:4 He said to him, Why, son of the king, are you so sad from day to day? Won't you tell me? Amnon said to him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister-

David's brothers had originally not been that supportive of him, as we recall from their attitude when David arrived to fight Goliath. They would never have quite gotten over Samuel's visit to the family when one by one, they were all rejected and David was chosen as the man after God's own heart, which they were not. And now David had morally disgraced himself. Shimeah had likely passed on his feelings about David to his son Jonadab. This is how jealousy complexes pass on through the generations, with an associated desire to bring down a man to one's own level. Jonadab likely at this stage realized the reason for Amnon's depression. Amnon was the firstborn and the logical successor to the throne; as firstborn son of the king, he ought to be able to have anything he wanted, according to Jonadab. And that included crossing any moral boundaries. We see Amnon's sin as a result of a chronic sense of entitlement to anything, whatever moral boundaries that might involve crossing. And this problem of sense of entitlement because of position... remains a problem for many.

"Son of the king" not only suggests that a king and his family are entitled to anything [the parallel is clear with Naboth's vineyard being taken by Ahab at Jezebel's encouragement, again featuring a sulking royal getting up from his bed of depression and taking what was forbidden]. Jonadab surely guessed or knew Amnon's desire. His idea was that seeing the king had expressed unbridled sexual desire and gotten away with it, why shouldn't his son?

We know David's brothers were estranged from him, so Jonadab as a son of David's brother was perhaps doing this to get at David and depose him from being king. Had David resigned from being king, the Jonadab factor may never have been. He could have focused upon his music ministry, upon teaching Israel not to sin as he did, and focused his 'kingship' hopes on his future Messianic son, rather than focusing upon himself and his immediate descendants as king.

2Sa 13:5 Jonadab said to him, Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to see you, tell him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and dress the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand' -

Jonadab really was the "subtle" (:3) serpent, suggesting the sin in an indirect way without stating it, and operating on the subliminal level. And this is the essence of all our temptations. What goes on in our heart is played before us in external terms in this story. As with the serpent, the temptation and sin functions through eating. The many temptations and falls into sin which the Bible records are really the essential pattern of every man's sin. It all begins with the subliminal images and unarticulated suggestions. See on :20. This theme of subliminal suggestion is continued in 2 Sam. 14:1.

2Sa 13:6 So Amnon lay down and faked being sick. When the king came to see him-

This corroborates with how David visited and prayed for Saul and his family when they were sick (s.w. Ps. 35:13). The Biblical records paint absolutely imaginable and credible character portraits. The uninspired writings are typically unrealistic and inconsistent in their presentations of characters.

Amnon said to the king, Please let my sister Tamar come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand-

Tamar was under the immediate control of her elder brother Absalom. But David as the father and king overrode that. The language of baking cakes and eating from her hand repeats in :5,6,10 to create the impression that Amnon did exactly according to Jonadab's suggestion.

"The cakes" are so stressed in the narrative. The same word translated 'make cakes' is rendered 'to ravish the heart', also in the context of a sister: "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse" (Song 4:9). The "cakes" may have been understood as a kind of aphrodisiac, or at least, sexually suggestive. Literally, "heart cakes". The 'love heart' was not then in vogue, but a woman's breasts are above her heart and so there is an erotic undertone here. The connection is not explicit, but probably the implicit nature of the connection would not have been lost upon Tamar. David likewise surely wondered at these "heart cakes" and yet as with letting Amnon go to Absalom's feast despite misgivings, he allows Amnon to ask Tamar to bring these 'heart cakes' to him in bed.

Amnon uses food in order to rape Tamar (2 Sam. 13:6); Absalom uses food at a feast in order to kill Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28). This was all a reflection of how David gave Uriah food and wine in his deception of Uriah.

2Sa 13:7 Then David sent home to Tamar saying, Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him-

David comes over as involved in the tragedy and would have later felt guilty for letting the plan go ahead; it was all as judgment for his sin of obsessive "love" for Bathsheba. David ought to have perceived that Amnon was wrongly attracted to Tamar. But he gives Amnon the permission to go to her house; even though the 'making of cakes' had hints at eroticism (see on :6). He fails to pick up the hints, and if he does, he just gives in to the request. We will see just the same when he is asked by Absalom to let Amnon attend his feast; clearly David suspected there would be some revenge planned against Amnon by Absalom, but he

still lets it go ahead. His behaviour is similar both times. His lack of discipline towards his sons is the theme both times. David so wanted to see his own 'house' established rather than focus upon the future house to be made by his Messianic future descendant. But he apparently made no effort to raise nor lead them in a spiritual way.

2Sa 13:8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes-

The cameraman is zoomed in close on her taking the dough, kneading it, pouring it out (:9) etc. We are invited to play Bible television with the whole scene.

2Sa 13:9 She took the pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. Amnon said, Have all men leave me. Every man went out from him-

He is quoting the words of Joseph in Gen. 45:1, also in the context of food, and the comment "Every man went out from him" confirms this connection. But his spirituality is all out of context, doing as many do today- quoting bits of the Bible way out of context, to justify their own wrong actions and beliefs. See on :14.

2Sa 13:10 Amnon said to Tamar, Bring the food into the inner room, that I may eat from your hand. Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the inner room to Amnon her brother-

The narrative is well written. The details enable us to imagine the scene, and we are prepared for the calamity which is now about to happen. Tamar surely suspected what Amnon was planning. But she is obedient to him despite guessing what would follow, and that obedience is emphasized- the pan, the cakes etc. are all noted in detail. This was exactly in the spirit of Uriah's loyalty to commands, knowing surely what was going to happen. Again and again we see elements of David's failure now repeated. The sinful, bad actors in the stories all did so from their own volition. But we sense that God worked through it all, confirming them in sin, in order to bring David to see his actions from outside himself. His being made to view his actions being performed by others was likely because he had not repented in a very adequate sense. Yet still he was forgiven. All spirituality, be it repentance, faith, love, joy, forgiveness, is not just black and white. We believe but ask our unbelief to be dealt with. There is a degree and quality to these things, reflected in the degrees of reward in God's Kingdom. We trust in God's acceptance of our low level of repentance, or failure to retain an intensity of repentance. And we are likewise to forgive others, even when the quality of their repentance is very poor. The Lord taught this when teaching that if a person asks us to forgive them for the same sin which they commit 70 x 7 / day, we are to do so- not predicating forgiveness upon perceived quality of repentance.

2Sa 13:11 When she had brought them near to him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, Come, lie with me, my sister!-

These are the words of Potiphar's wife to Joseph. See on :9,14 for how the Joseph story is alluded to and used wrongly, way out of context, by Amnon. It was a desperate attempt to justify the unjustifiable. It was the reflection of how David lay with Bathsheba "because she was cleansed from her impurity". That was an irrelevant, out of context spiritual precondition he laid down. And it was reflected in how Anon was to reason in raping Tamar.

2Sa 13:12 She answered him, No, my brother, do not force me! For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Don't you do this folly-

Sexual sin is likewise termed "folly" (Gen. 34:7). Amnon would be known by all as a "fool" (:13), an empty vain person (Jud. 9:4). Sin is therefore associated with being empty and vain;

and our world and its "entertainment" is so full of emptiness, vanity and folly. This is the quintessence of sin.

2Sa 13:13 I, to where would I carry my shame? And as for you, you will be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you- Such marriages were forbidden (Lev. 18:9; Dt. 27:22), although Abraham had done so. We get the impression that David would have yet again considered himself above the law, and allowed this marriage. He had apparently not learned from his sin with Bathsheba; which I suggested arose from his impression that following the spirit rather than the letter of the law allowed him to actually break basic moral principles. The way Tamar reasons, we might conclude that she was not against marrying Amnon. Perhaps she even liked or loved him; and thus again we see the utter folly of his actions, destroying what could have been a positive marriage just because he wanted immediate gratification of lust. And that of course is a folly played out so often in human life.

Lev. 20:17 is clear that sex with even a half sibling was punishable by death. Yet David apparently was willing to waive this and allow them to marry. Again we see David playing above the law of God. He failed to see that even though this had been the case with Abraham and Sarah, it was not for him to presume upon God's grace. David too had been spared the Mosaic death penalty, but convicted of his sin and his repentance was elicited and required. But he makes no such effort with Amnon. He doesn't apply the death penalty of Lev. 20:17. Nor does he apply the Mosaic laws applicable in a case of rape. The rapist was to marry the victim for life (Dt. 22:28–30), or if the father of the victim disallowed the marriage, he had to pay the bride price anyway (Ex. 22:16,17). But David doesn't apply any of this; he just gets angry, probably from shame and disappointment, but doesn't dispense justice.

2Sa 13:14 However he would not listen to her voice; but being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her-

There are various out of context connections with the Joseph story. Amnon has used the words of Joseph (out of context) in :9. He forces her and lays with her, and then her distinctive garment of many colours (cp. Joseph's) is torn. It is all jumbled, because Amnon was jumbling up the references to the Joseph story to wrongly justify himself. He wishes to give the impression that she had acted as Potiphar's wife, hence he throws her out of the house and has the door bolted behind her, as if she is a crazy, sexually obsessed woman who has tried to lay with him. False justification of fleshly actions with quasi Biblical reasoning is a major failure of so many.

2Sa 13:15 Then Amnon hated her with exceeding great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her-

We are clearly intended to understand that "the love with which he loved her" was not love but lust. And when gratified, it turned to hatred. Amnon's obsessive love for Tamar was an echo of David's relationship with Bathsheba. All this would have been yet another aspect of the emotional trauma which David went through at this time; to fall out of love with the woman for which he had almost thrown away his eternal salvation. And in addition to this, all Israel would have got to know about what had happened- with a fair degree of exaggeration thrown in, we can be sure. Amnon surely hated himself for what he had done once he realized he had done it; but he transferred that anger onto Tamara. It's a classic case of transference of anger with self onto another person. Again, the Biblical record is shown to be absolutely psychologically credible.

Amnon said to her, Arise, be gone!-

This, and bolting the door after her, could be read as him implying that she had sexually assaulted him and not the other way around.

A raped woman would not generally be able to marry nor have children, but just live in a relative's house for the rest of her life. For a 15 year old like Tamar, this was equivalent to social death. The way she rips her virginal garment and puts ashes on her head is a way of mourning her own death. This 'death' is understood by God when Dt. 22:26 compares rape to murder: "As when a man rises up against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter". Nathan's parable compares David's sleeping with Bathsheba with killing another man's lamb. Again, David is brought to see that what he had done with Bathsheba was effectively murder- even though in her case he married her afterwards.

2Sa 13:16 She said to him, Not so, because this great wrong in sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me! But he would not listen to her-

Her high morals are reflected by her deep sense of hurt at being sent away falsely accused. A woman of lower morals would have been more hurt by the rape, and then shrugged and moved on. Amnon did "wrong" to Tamar David's daughter (2 Sam. 13:16). "Wrong" here is the same word translated "evil" in the punishment upon David in 2 Sam. 12:10 "I will raise up evil against you from within your own house / family". The "evil" of Amnon was therefore indeed his own error and sin, but it was used by God and 'raised up' in that God confirmed Amnon in his evil in order to punish David. At the time of Absalom's rebellion, Shimei comments that "Evil [s.w.] has overtaken you [David] because you are a man of blood" (2 Sam. 16:8). But David proactively sought to avoid that "evil": "Get up! Let us flee [from Absalom]... or he will soon... bring evil [s.w.] upon us" (2 Sam. 15:14). We see here the complexities of God's workings. The "evil" was indeed to come upon David, yet he took steps to avoid some of it and God confirmed him in that and delivered him from Absalom. And so 2 Sam. 17:14 "For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin [evil] on Absalom" (NRSV). The complexities and ebb and flow of all this working are beyond any final human analysis; and this explains why there appear various things in our lives which clearly feel to be of Divine intervention, but whose meaning is beyond our analysis.

Amnon's sin had two aspects to it. There was the sin of sexual lust, but this was compounded by what he did with the results of the sin. This matches David's sin of lust with Bathsheba being then compounded by his shameful behaviour in murdering Uriah.

2Sa 13:17 Then he called his servant who ministered to him and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her-

As suggested on :15, the bolting of the door suggested she was a crazy woman filled with sexual lust who had to be excluded forcibly from a man's bedroom, and this she found more hurtful than the rape itself (:16).

2Sa 13:18 She had a garment of various colours on her; for with such robes were the king's daughters who were virgins dressed. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her-

Again we note the stress upon the door being bolted, which was done because she presumably wanted to return to talk with Amnon. And he wished to give the impression she had sexually thrown herself at him and was crazy.

2Sa 13:19 Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her garment of various colours that was on her; and she laid her hand on her head, and went her way, crying aloud as she went-

A woman of lesser morality would perhaps have kept wearing the symbol of her virginity. But she tore it to show she had lost her virginity, indeed it had been torn from her, and she was in mourning for herself seeing nobody else was. We note the internal credibility of the account in that she had just been cooking, and so there were "ashes" readily available to her, which she threw onto her head.

2Sa 13:20 Absalom her brother said to her, Has Amnon your brother been with you?-

This continues the theme noted on :5, of specifics not being stated but implied. "Been with you" meant 'raped you', and Absalom's comment that she need not worry too much about it is tantamount to saying 'I will restore your honour by killing him'. We are left to reflect how it is that which is left unspoken, not specifically articulated, which is so often the sin.

But now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house-

See on :33. These words too were apparently suggested to him by Jonadab. He maybe advised Absalom "Tell her not to worry about it, because...". The subliminal suggestion was "Because you are going to regain her honour by killing Amnon". There are Biblical examples of refusing to take guilt when others feel that it should be taken. Recall how the Lord's own parents blamed Him for 'making them anxious' by 'irresponsibly' remaining behind in the temple. The Lord refused to take any guilt, didn't apologize, and even gently rebuked them (Lk. 2:42-51). In similar vein, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Even if I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret it" (2 Cor. 7:8). He would not take guilt for their being upset with him. Likewise Absalom comforted his raped sister not to 'take it to heart', not to feel guilty about it, as it seems she was feeling that way, taking false guilt upon her.

2Sa 13:21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very angry-

The internal credibility of the character portrayal in the record is shown again. For this is just how he reacted to Nathan's parable about the man who had taken a poor man's lamb.

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps. 43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter, he airily waived the Mosaic law concerning bloodguiltiness (consider the implications of 2 Sam. 14:4-11), and the need to stone rapists (2 Sam. 13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam. 13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron. 26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to have agreed. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led

him to commit the sin of presumption in his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

In the case of Amnon, the law of Moses offered two possible outcomes: death (Lev. 18:11; 20:17), or, to marry Tamar (Dr. 22:28,29). We see from this how God's law often gave different options for the result of sin- the options after adultery being a parade example. This was to teach engagement with the sinner and choosing the most loving outcome for that sin. But David chooses neither of those options, despite claiming to love God's law. He simply gets angry. We note how David is "angry" with Absalom too and he has to flee David's wrath (:37), and David refuses to see him for two years (2 Sam. 14:24). And yet he clearly loved his children despite that anger with them.

We note that David is "angry" with Amnon but doesn't discipline him. The contrast is clear with how he pronounced the death penalty upon the rich man who had selfishly stolen the poor man's only lamb. And in the Psalms he is quick enough to call for Divine death blows upon his enemies. But he says nothing at all about Amnon. We could argue on one hand that he had been humbled by his own salvation by grace, and therefore would not condemn others. And yet it could also be posited that he simply continued to not apply Divine law to his own life nor that of his family. If he was the king of Israel, he was to rule justly and govern. But his lack of disciplinary action or public condemnation shows a lack of both justice and government. This is in sharp contrast to how he earlier condemned the murder of Abner and would later condemn the murder of Amasa (2 Sam. 20). But he makes no public statement about Amnon's behaviour. And the same goes for his lack of public statement or outrage against Absalom's murder of Amnon (:36).

The NEB, LXX and the Qumran texts add: "And king David heard of all these things, and was very angry; but he did not grieve the spirit of his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his first-born". This sounds like his refusal to ever discipline Adonijah in 1 Kings 1:6; as he says in Ps. 38, he was left as a man in his mouth are no rebukes. Absalom later tells the men of Israel that David is incapable of giving them justice- as if this inability of David, his lack of attention to justice, was well known. This must be compared with how David in the Psalms so often condemns his enemies for their lack of justice, presenting himself as the just man of integrity. If he had really experienced total repentance, he would have appealed to others to live a Godly life, not lost his moral compass and continued to dispense justice; he promises he will do this in Psalms 32 and 51. A true sense of justice comes from passing through the process of sin, true repentance, being awed by the grace of forgiveness. But David doesn't pass through this process for very long, or at least, not very intensely. And so he loses justice and moral compass. For he distinctly failed to do justice and discipline with his own sons.

Amnon was David's firstborn, and the heir to the throne. David's hope was that his kingly line would continue through Amnon. If he had been more awed by the promises to him in 2 Sam. 7, he would have accepted that the line from him would not always be on the throne. But at some future point, the Messianic Son of God, son of David, would reign eternally and build up an eternal 'house' of God glorifying people. But David's focus was upon building up his own family, and that is perhaps a factor in why he didn't discipline Amnon and was so furious when Absalom killed him. David's hope would not have been for Absalom, because he was the son of a Gentile woman.

2Sa 13:22 Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar-

David's anger with Amnon (:21) is contrasted with Absalom's silence about the matter, whilst

nursing hatred in his heart which was to come to fruition in the murder of his brother. David's passion, as discussed on :21, is therefore presented as more acceptable than Absalom's secret hatred which came to full term in murder.

Not good nor bad / evil means nothing at all. Adam's choice in Eden was that of everyman in every sin; it was a choice between a total "yes" or a total "no" to God. The desire was to know "good and evil"; and this term is used as an idiom for "everything" (Gen. 24:50; 2 Sam. 14:17,20), the whole area in between good and evil is in this sense "everything" (cp. Gen. 31:24; 2 Sam. 13:22). Adam and Eve were attracted by the possibility of experiencing everything, of having the total knowledge, the omniscience, which is with God alone. Their failure was more than simply eating a fruit; it involved rebellion and pride, a desire to be equal with God-

2Sa 13:23 It happened after two full years, that Absalom had sheep shearers in Baal Hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons-

We note that David did not enforce the death penalty for Amnon, even though the law of Moses required this (Lev. 20:17). We compare this with how he ordered the death penalty for the man in the parable who had stolen the poor man's lamb, even though this was beyond the law's requirements. David had been spared the death penalty and so he reflected that grace to his son; and yet we sense there was also parental bias in the case. By not punishing Amnon with death, nor later Absalom, he allowed a situation to develop which would cause yet more bloodshed.

Absalom's hospitality was fake- he had an agenda. Just as David's was to Uriah when he gave him food and wine. We recall Nathan's parable to David- David had as it were provided a feast for another, but stole the lamb of Bathsheba as the meat. Again and again, there are echoes of David's behaviour in the disastrous actions of his sons- some strong echoes, some weaker. Some comparisons are direct [like Amnon's sexual lust reflecting David's], others like this one are more indirect.

2Sa 13:24 Absalom came to the king and said, See now, your servant has sheep shearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant-

Absalom comes over as hypocritical as describing himself as his father's servant, when he was planning to murder his father's son.

2Sa 13:25 The king said to Absalom, No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you. He pressed him; however he would not go, but blessed him-

The blessing probably involved a gift (1 Sam. 25:27). David surely guessed that there would be some plan by Absalom to slay Amnon, hence his weak argument that they all didn't need to go as it would be expensive for Absalom to entertain them all.

2Sa 13:26 Then Absalom said, If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us. The king said to him, Why should he go with you?-

Clearly David guessed what was going to happen, and in that lies the pain for David.

2Sa 13:27 But Absalom pressed him, and he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him-

We sense David's weakness, giving in to pressure, quite unlike in his days before his sin with Bathsheba. And of courses he had no specific reason to deny Amnon's presence, apart from his premonition that Absalom was planning to kill Amnon.

LXX adds that Absalom: "made a banquet like the banquet of the king". Clearly Absalom had his mind on becoming king and deposing his father. But David is duped by Absalom, even although he has premonitions about what is happening. Exactly the same is

done to David by Amnon asking for permission to have Tamar visit him; and likewise Joab tricks David in 2 Sam. 14, even though David suspects what is going on ("Is not the hand of Joab with you in all this?"). In these, and other, incidents, we see David being treated as he had treated Uriah- he was deceived by David, although he surely had a strong premonition about what was really going on.

2Sa 13:28 Absalom commanded his servants saying, Mark now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine; and when I tell you, 'Strike Amnon', then kill him. Don't be afraid. Haven't I commanded you? Be courageous, and be valiant!-

That Amnon was made drunk by Absalom recalls how David had made Uriah drunk. Every aspect of David's sins was now being repeated in the behaviour of his sons. Absalom's minimizing of the sin and urging the men to be valiant sounds like David's words to Joab after the murder of Uriah. David's usage of his servants is reflected in how Absalom uses servants to do his dirty work of murder. We note that Joab also used a servant to murder Absalom later. "Haven't I commanded you?" is a way of assuring the servants that he takes complete moral responsibility for the murder he is asking them to commit. Absalom's motives may not have simply been a desire for revenge against Amnon for raping his sister. It wasn't a case of blood revenge, avenging the blood of a slain relative. At best it was revenge for hurt pride. But more like it was using the rape as an excuse to eliminate Amnon as he was the firstborn and thereby heir to the throne. Had David resigned the kingship and taught his sons the wonder of the promises of 2 Sam. 7 about the future Lord Jesus, then this obsession with being king may not have been so strong in the sons.

2Sa 13:29 The servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man got up on his mule, and fled-

This is the first mention of mules in the Bible. They were cross bred in disobedience to Lev. 19:19. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored. David was fond of them, having his own mule (1 Kings 1:33), and Solomon was willing to receive them as tribute (1 Kings 10:25).

2Sa 13:30 It happened, while they were in the way, that the news came to David, saying, Absalom has slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left!-

As to why this happened, see on :31. That such a gossip should arise is not surprising, once we realize that Absalom coveted the throne. He would not be against slaying all possible competitors for it, not least the firstborn son Amnon. This was clearly part of his motivation for the murder, and not simply vengeance for Tamar's rape.

Why did David initially believe that all his sons had died? I suggest it was to make him reflect on the promise of 2 Sam. 7, that from one of his descendants would come the Messianic seed who would build his true house. For Solomon was alive at this point so the promises could have come true through him. So David was being nudged towards concluding that a descendant of Solomon would eventually, after he "slept with his fathers", be the Messianic seed. David however had been so focused on his natural and immediate house as the fulfilment of the promises. And so he was given to understand that they had all perished, to attempt to refocus him upon the promises of a Messianic seed and house through Solomon [from where the Lord Jesus did indeed come]. But it is doubtful that this refocus in David's thinking was achieved, at least at this time. And so it is that through failure of our earthly family dreams that we too are intended to refocus upon the Lord Jesus and our ultimate sense of fulfilment solely through Him and the things of His house and Kingdom.

2Sa 13:31 Then the king arose, and tore his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn-

We wonder why David was given this false news to start with. It was perhaps to make him consider the possibility that all the promises about his "seed" had now been abrogated, seeing all his seed had been cut off. Those promises would have been in his mind as he lay on the earth. That posture however is associated with prayer. Perhaps he was praying that through his disgraced daughter Tamar, there would somehow come the promised Messianic seed. Through this trauma he was therefore driven closer to his longing for the Christ, just as we may be, e.g., through a false alarm due to a cancer scare.

2Sa 13:32 Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered, Don't let my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead; for by the appointment of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar-

Jonadab is not specifically stated as having given the idea of this murder to Absalom, but given his behaviour from :5, suggesting sin in a subliminal way, we can assume that he had done the same. "Why not invite Amnon to a feast on your property, you can all get drunk together..." was the subliminal way of suggesting "And you can get him murdered there, away from the court scene in Jerusalem".

Jonadab tells David not to be too upset because only one of his sons is dead. Absalom likewise heartlessly tells Tamar not to be too upset about her rape. This all reflects David telling Joab not to be too upset about the death of Uriah and the other soldiers. This surely is the lesson we are to take, for otherwise the record of Jonadab's words here appears to be without function in the narrative. Jonadab's 'rubbing it in' was surely part of his support of his family in a possible plan to depose David from being king. Had David just humbly resigned, Jonadab would have had no role.

2Sa 13:33 Now therefore don't let my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead; for Amnon only is dead-

This idea of 'don't take it to heart' is exactly what Absalom said to Tamar (see on :20), and we are therefore led to believe that Absalom's words to Tamar were also put in his mind by Jonadab's suggestion. Jonadab knew exactly what was going to happen, even though he was not present; because it was all of his subliminal suggestion to Absalom. He was really a very evil man, but the world around us bombards us with such subliminal suggestion.

2Sa 13:34 But Absalom fled. The young man who kept the watch lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming by the way of the hillside behind him-

This situation is going to be repeated when David later anxiously waits for news of the battle between his supporters and Absalom. He is going to again be waiting anxiously for the news from a messenger and weeping bitterly at the news of Absalom's death (2 Sam. 18:33). Situations repeat in our lives, and even if we cannot attach meaning to event at the time, we at least have the comfort that they bear the same hallmark of Divine involvement in our lives, according to some plan- even if we may not discern it.

2Sa 13:35 Jonadab said to the king, Behold, the king's sons are coming! It is as your servant said-

We sense his smugness. All this was of Jonadab's suggestion, living out the jealousy complex of his father against his brother David. As Jonadab's father had been jealous of his brother

David, so now it was all repeating. For Absalom's desire to remove Amnon was not simply in order to avenge his sister, but because Amnon was in line for the throne which he coveted.

2Sa 13:36 It happened, as soon as he had finished speaking, that behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice, and wept. The king also and all his servants wept bitterly- Perhaps the bitterness of David's grief was because "Amnon" is a form of the word used in the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:16, that his seed would be "established". He likely imagined that his firstborn son would perhaps be that promised seed. But now Amnon lay dead in shame, slain by his own brother, for having raped his own half sister. David's disappointment in his own family life ["my house is not so with God"] was intended to drive him more strongly towards faith in his future "son", the Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus.

2Sa 13:37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai the son of Ammihur, king of Geshur. David mourned for his son every day-

Talmai was Absalom's grandfather (2 Sam. 3:3). Had the Israelites driven out Geshur as they should have done (Josh. 13:13) and David not married a Gentile, then this situation might not have arisen. Absalom would have been left with no supportive place to run. "Geshur" means "joining" and such a joining in marriage to these people is another example of David's un wisdom with women.

David mourns now for Amnon but he had not mourned for the death of his son by Bathsheba, and his omission to do so had been noticed. Under God's guiding hand, all these sins and results of sin were used to educate David.

2Sa 13:38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years-

"Absalom fled" is stressed three times. Or this may also be because a longer account has been abridged, under inspiration. This would also account for the fragmentary style of the narrative at this point. "Three years" may be a summary period and not necessarily to be taken literally.

2Sa 13:39 King David longed to go forth to Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead-

The sense of the Hebrew is that the king's wrath ceased to go forth against Absalom, he stopped persecuting him. For David could have recalled Absalom at any time, and even when he did, he refused to meet him for some time. The sense may be that he ceased trying to kill Absalom. But again there was no discipline. David had been saved from death by God's grace, but that grace didn't remove consequences, and God sought to educate David. David ought to have treated Absalom and Amnon likewise. But he doesn't reprove them nor seek to educate them, and in Absalom's case David just sought to murder him because he was so angry with him. And then got over it. There is no reflection here of the grace shown to him by God. Absalom later tried to kill David ("my own son seeks my life", 2 Sam. 16:11, "You seek the life of only one man... The advice pleased Absalom", 2 Sam. 17:4). Father and son both trying to murder each other shows how far David had fallen from his dream of having an immediate 'house' which would last eternally. His failure, and the failure of his 'house', was to try to focus him upon the promises of an eternal house through his great descendant, the Lord Jesus.

It's possible that David didn't remain feeling like this for Absalom; see on 2 Sam. 14:1,24. David had ineffable sadness in his personal life. He so loved his son Absalom, his very *soul* was *consumed* for that strapping young man (2 Sam. 13:39 AVmg.); but that son bitterly hated David, and coolly plotted to destroy him and his reputation. David loved Abigail and Ahinoam, but those fairy tale romances took a bitter blow when David fell for

Bathsheba. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters (Ps.27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18). David loved Solomon and gave very special attention to teach him the real spirit of the Truth, taking time out from a hectic public life to do so; only for that beloved son to turn away in later life, to fast women, alcohol, materialism, and the perversions of idolatry. David's disappointment in his own family life ["my house is not so with God"] was intended to drive him more strongly towards faith in his future "son", the Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 14

2Sa 14:1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was towards Absalom-

We wonder at Joab's motives. Did he do this because he wanted David to get what he wanted, which was Absalom's return? Or because he wanted Absalom to be king? Men seek for power. Some want to be the king who is crowned (Absalom would be a parade example). Others like Joab want to be the kingmaker, rejoicing that their power gave power to others. Biblical history is designed to help us realize that all the types of characters we meet have been around before, and we are to learn from how the Bible records their behaviour. But the Biblical record is often purposefully open, inviting us to imagine the possible situations and motivations. Hence the word translated "towards" is intentionally ambiguous. It can also mean "against", as in 2 Sam. 14:13; Dan. 11:28. In which case, Joab is seeking to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem and to manipulate David concerning Absalom. Such are the games people play, to this day; see on :24. If indeed David's heart was yearning for Absalom, we have to ask why Joab needed to persuade David to recall Absalom to Jerusalem. And why, after Absalom returned, did David refuse to meet him for some time? On :7 and :24 I suggest some reasons for this, if we retain the translation that David's heart was "toward" Absalom. However, it is clear that there is now tension between David and Joab. This again is understandable in view of the Uriah debacle, whereby David had used Joab to arrange the murder of Uriah with the deaths of other soldiers to cover it. All because David had stayed behind the battle front and slept with Uriah's wife. In the military fraternity, such behaviour is despicable, and surely Joab despised David from that day forward. David's behaviour left him bereft of his former supporters and condemned to a lonely life- although that too was intended to bring him closer to God and to the hope of his future Messianic Son.

2Sa 14:2 Joab sent to Tekoa and fetched there a wise woman and said to her, Please act like a mourner, and please put on mourning clothing and don't anoint yourself with oil, but be as a woman who has mourned a long time for the dead-

This continues the theme of subliminal suggestion in the previous chapter; see on 2 Sam. 13:6. This chapter is all about that. We get the impression that after the sin with Bathsheba, the once strong man David became the subject of all manner of manipulation. I have suggested before that if he had adequately repented and stayed like that, he would not have lost his moral compass and would not have been reduced to the weak figure he was. David walks right into the woman's deceptive story just as he does into Nathan's parable. The woman was "wise" or crafty, the same word used of Jonadab who likewise manipulated David (2 Sam. 13:3). The record is developing how David is repeatedly deceived and manipulated, as he had done with Uriah.

2Sa 14:3 Go in to the king, and speak like this to him. So Joab put the words in her mouth-
As noted on :2, the situation here recalls how Jonadab manipulated Amnon and put words and ideas in his head. Here Joab manipulates a woman in order to pursue his own agenda regarding Absalom.

2Sa 14:4 When the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, showed respect and said, Help, O king!-

This recalls how David had fallen with his face to the ground begging God somehow for a way forward after he had heard that all his sons had died (2 Sam. 13:31). This is another connection with the events of 2 Sam. 13.

2Sa 14:5 The king said to her, What ails you? She answered, Truly I am a widow, and my husband is dead-

Immediately David would have thought of how he had made Bathsheba a widow by murdering her husband.

2Sa 14:6 Your handmaid had two sons, and they both fought together in the field, and there was no one to part them, but the one struck the other and murdered him-

"Strove / fought" is the word used by Solomon in Prov. 13:10: "Pride only breeds quarrels, but with ones who take advice is wisdom". This is true, but so many of Solomon's Proverbs include some self justification. "Quarrels" is the word used here in the parable about the strivings between David's sons. He is implying that all the quarrels about his being the one to have the throne merely came from pride, and the wise will accept Solomon's kingship. He harnesses Divine truths in order to justify himself, and this is a warning for all who claim to hold Divine truth.

Two brothers fatally fighting in a field recalls Cain and Abel. The similarity is so clear that it must have been purposeful. Joab knows that Cain was not slain for his fratricide. However, Cain was exiled- and David could surely have played on this similarity to keep Absalom exiled. But instead he ends up swearing that nobody will harm the murderer. His spiritual sensitivity is not, it seems, at its best.

2Sa 14:7 Behold, the whole family has risen against your handmaid and they say, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he murdered, and so destroy the heir also'. Thus they would quench my coal which is left, and would leave to my husband neither name nor remainder on the surface of the earth-

It would appear that the legislation about the cities of refuge wasn't being practiced at this time. The parallel in David's family would suggest that "the whole family" wanted to kill Absalom, although it could be that they felt likewise about Amnon. The woman is arguing that the Mosaic laws about the avenging of blood didn't take into account her feelings as the mother of the brother who had to be slain. And further, the principle of keeping the name of the dead alive would be broken. She correctly argues that principles are in conflict in this case; and this is often the situation when any legal code, including the Mosaic, is applied. Thus the Lord brings out the point that priests "worked on the Sabbath" to circumcise a child. The reason for these clashes of principle within Divine law was in order to force people to perceive the spirit of the law, and follow that and not the letter. The very structure of the Mosaic law was therefore actually designed to guard against legalistic approaches to it.

"The whole family" suggests all David's family were against Absalom. The emphasis on "the whole family" reflects the situation in David's family, and that includes Bathsheba. David alone was sympathetic to Absalom, just as the woman alone in her family was

sympathetic to her son. Perhaps this is one reason for the apparent contradiction [depending upon the translation we choose] between David's heart being with Absalom, and yet keeping him in exile and refusing to meet him when he did return. Likewise we wonder whether Bathsheba was now manipulating David so that her son Solomon would be in line for the throne rather than Absalom. Repeatedly now, David presents as under the influence of others and having very little personal power of decision as king. He would've been far better to resign as king and focus upon the wonderful promise of his future Messianic Son and his own assurance of salvation. We also note that the hearts of Israel were with Absalom. So we see yet a further fracture within Israel, between the people generally and the royal family.

"My coal which is left" is the image of a fire going out apart from one live coal. A man and his descendants are called a light. It is used of David in 2 Sam. 21:17, and specifically of David's descendant in Ps. 132:17. The story is hitting at David's weakest and most essential point, i.e. that he was desperate for a physical descendant to continue his throne. But he ought not to have been so sensitive to this if he trusted in the promise of 2 Sam. 7 that his future descendant, after his death, would be God's Son who would build a house / family for both God and David.

Joab knew that David considered Absalom his only coal on the hearth. His hopes were set on him alone as the heir to his throne. David has other sons including Solomon, but Joab perceived that David considered Absalom his one and only. And so he puts this position in the mouth of the woman. Had David had more faith and focus on the promises of 2 Sam. 7 about his seed, he would not have had these obsessions. This explains his extreme grief when Absalom dies.

"Rose up against" is the same phrase used in 2 Sam. 12:11 of how evil who rise up against David from his own house. He is being set up to see the woman as himself, and he naturally wants to show mercy to her as he wanted it for himself. He wanted the consequence of sin, evil rising up against him from his own house, to be abrogated; and so he is eager to do this for the woman. In Ps. 3:1 David uses the same phrase to complain that many have risen up against him, lamenting the consequences of his sins. The context there is Absalom's rebellion. He uses the phrase about the wicked rising against him, wishing their judgment, in Ps. 54:3; 86:14; 92:11.

The argument that her husband would be left with no name in the earth, meaning he would lose his inheritance, is tantamount to saying that the woman would be left in the same position as Naomi. David, as a descendant of Ruth and also Naomi, would immediately have sensed the difficulty for the woman and been inclined, given his ancestry, to decide for her. It was indeed a cunningly devised scenario that manipulated him into saying "yes". Just as he had used all his cunning against Bathsheba and Uriah.

2Sa 14:8 The king said to the woman, Go to your house, and I will give a command concerning you-

The slayer of innocent blood was to be slain without pity: "you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you" (Dt. 19:13). But David seems to have stepped up to a higher level when he told the woman of Tekoah that he would protect her son from revenge murder, after he had slain another man. The woman pointed out that if her son was slain, the inheritance would be lost in her husband's name. Here was a case where two principles seemed to be at variance: the need to slay the guilty, and the need to preserve the inheritance. The higher level was to forgive the slayer of innocent blood, even though the Law categorically stated that he should be slain. The Law of Moses is full of such examples of where different levels of response are offered. Thus in the case of adultery, a man could apply the trial of jealousy (Num. 5), kill his wife, divorce her- or, forgive her, as

Hosea did. The very existence of these different levels of response is designed, as they are today, to elicit our maximum level of response. For it surely is always a case of "my utmost for His highest", and a minimalist response to His grace is self evidently inappropriate. And yet again we wonder whether as with bringing the ark to Zion and not disciplining Amnon, David was acting above the law in an inappropriate way.

What should David have done? There was Mosaic legislation protecting those being hunted by revengers of blood. Their cases were to be fairly judged, and refuge given in a city of refuge. This woman implies that the family want to kill her son in order to take the inheritance for themselves; and there was Mosaic legislation to ameliorate that. But David ignores all this, as he does when it comes to responding to Amnon's rape of Tamar. He instead himself gives a 'commandment', again showing himself to be above the law and playing God.

2Sa 14:9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, My lord O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house; and the king and his throne be guiltless-

"The iniquity" in view would perhaps refer to the disobedience which she was suggesting to the laws about the avenging of blood. She wanted more than what David had said, she wanted a concrete pronouncement from him as it were abrogating obedience to that law. And she said she would bear the iniquity of doing so. But this is not how guilt for sin or abrogating God's law is to be dealt with. David was being provoked to consider taking upon himself the "sin" of not demanding Absalom's blood be shed, and indeed restoring him.

2Sa 14:10 The king said, Whoever says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you any more-

So David is waiving the Mosaic law concerning bloodguiltiness, as he did the need to stone rapists (2 Sam. 13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam. 13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron. 26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to agree. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led him to commit the sin of presumption in his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps. 43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout

this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter.

2Sa 14:11 Then she said, Please let the king remember Yahweh your God so that the avenger of blood destroy not any more, lest they destroy my son. He said, As Yahweh lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the earth-

As explained on :10, this is David waiving parts of God's law, and yet doing so from an understanding of grace and pity. And of course the whole situation was designed to lead him to agree to apply these principles to Absalom. But the parody is that Absalom's famous hairs did fall to the ground and were the cause of his death. David's oath that the murderer's hairs would not fall to the earth was in fact not for him to make; for God ensured this did in fact happen to Absalom. Again David is presented as duped and powerless, just as Uriah and Bathsheba were whom he in turn had abused whilst he had power.

2Sa 14:12 Then the woman said, Please let your handmaid speak a word to my lord the king. He said, Say on-

The woman isn't prepared to leave things at the level of subliminal appeal. Perhaps now she speaks on her own behalf, and no longer following the script Joab had given her. The next verses appear to be her own more spiritual argument, at the end of which she basically admits she has been set up to say the script she just has; but despite that, in spiritual terms, she can see a good case for having Absalom back.

2Sa 14:13 The woman said, Why then have you devised such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring home again his banished one-

The woman understood the implications of the promise in Eden when she tells David that “neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him” (2 Sam. 14:14 AV). Whom did God banish? Adam, and all his children. But God ‘devised means’ through the promises of Gen. 3:15 so that this banishment was not permanent expulsion. The means devised was the death and resurrection of His Son, the seed of the woman. But the woman’s point was that therefore, David ought to restore his sinful son, whom he had banished- for “the king does not fetch home again his banished” (2 Sam. 14:13). Her point was that as God sought to restore His banished sons, through the pain and cost to Him of the blood of His Son, so we ought to likewise be inspired to win back the banished. And so we look to those banished from ecclesial life by disfellowship, church politics, personal animosities of past decades, or simply their own outright sins; or those marginalized by poverty, education, disability, health, geography... these are the banished whom we ought to be winning back. And the power in all this arises from the implications of those promises in Eden. Truly the woman of Tekoah was, as she is described, a “wise woman”.

2Sa 14:14 For we must die, and are as water split on the ground, which can't be gathered up again; neither does God take away life, but devises means that he who is banished not be an outcast from him-

Literally, dying we shall die. But that was indeed the wages of sin defined in Eden. Like David, she struggled with accepting the consequences for sin. But she correctly reasons that despite that curse, God devises means to save us out of that just judgment. And again she is correct that we should reflect that in our judgments and efforts for others' salvation.

Her point was that as God in some sense breaks His own laws, e.g. that sin leads to permanent death, so surely David likewise could have the same spirit of grace and bring about the salvation of someone rightly appointed to death. See on :13. It could be argued that her logic is wrong, for the wages of sin is indeed death and God in that sense does take away life. But perhaps her point is that God indeed told Adam that in the day he sinned he would die; but in His grace, He didn't carry out that sentence immediately. Just as Nineveh wasn't destroyed in 40 days as God had stated. Instead, God gave more time- in the hope that Adam would not have to be outcast, and His purpose was to bring Adam back into Eden. That was why God didn't make Adam die "in the day" that he ate of the fruit. And so, the woman reasons, if God's attitude to death and punishment shows such grace, we surely ought to not insist upon His law of death for sinners being immediately obeyed. We should follow His example of letting His grace and hope for our restoration be stronger than the need to punish sin with death.

"God doth not take away life, but devises devices (lit. thinks thoughts, cp. :13 and Dan. 6:14 "the king [Darius]... set his heart on Daniel to save him; and he struggled until the going down of the sun to save him") to the end that he may not [utterly] banish a banished one". This is an allusion to God's grace in sparing David's life when he had deserved death for despising Yahweh's word, adultery and murder. Despite the law stating that, God 'thought thoughts' to get David out of it. We think of the king thinking thoughts all night to try to get Daniel out of the prescribed death sentence. All God's work with man through His Son is in effect the same, a thinking of thoughts to save us from our rightful desert, which is death. And Joab knew this would appeal to David's spiritual mind, and he asks David [through the woman] to do the same for Absalom. We likewise are to reflect God's plan for us in likewise seeking to restore the banished and devising devices to save people from what they deserve. Legalistic judgmental Christianity and church politics is the exact opposite of this.

The argument was that death is final, and so we may as well try to reconcile with each other in this life. David had made it clear that he held out no hope to ever again see his first child by Bathsheba. And now he is taken in by similar reasoning- that he ought to reconcile with Absalom because this life is all we have for relationships. This could tacitly reflect a lack of faith in resurrection and future judgment; again, a lack of faith in the promises of 2 Sam. 7.

2Sa 14:15 Now therefore seeing that I have come to speak this word to my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and your handmaid said, 'I will now speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant' -

The woman has now totally departed from the script Joab had given her, contrasting positively with how in the previous chapter, Absalom followed Jonadab's script exactly. She admits she has been put up to what she has done. And she seems to be saying that despite this, she does indeed see the logic in the request. See on :12.

2Sa 14:16 For the king will hear, to deliver his servant out of the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God-

I suggested on :12,15 that she admits she has been set up with her story. So I think here she means "the king *would have* heard me, had I really been in such a case as I presented to him". The woman claims the avengers would destroy both her son and herself. To slay her was definitely outside of the scope of blood revenge. But David doesn't seek to apply God's commandments, he just gives his own commandment above Divine law. In the parallel being created between the woman and David, he likewise feared death at the hands of his own family. Absalom is recorded as seeking his death, but quite possibly other sons wanted it as

well, as they all madly scrabbled for the throne. Truly David had enemies from within his own house, from the house of Saul, from about every opportunist.

2Sa 14:17 Then your handmaid said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king bring rest; for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad. May Yahweh your God be with you' -

See on :20. Adam's choice in Eden was that of everyman in every sin; it was a choice between a total "yes" or a total "no" to God. The desire was to know "good and evil"; and this term is used as an idiom for "everything" (Gen. 24:50; 2 Sam. 14:17,20), the whole area in between good and bad / evil is in this sense "everything" (cp. Gen. 31:24; 2 Sam. 13:22). Adam and Eve were attracted by the possibility of experiencing everything, of having the total knowledge, the omniscience, which is with God alone. Their failure was more than simply eating a fruit; it involved rebellion and pride, a desire to be equal with God.

In this context, the woman means that she recognizes David's great sensitivity and wisdom, and knows that he would see through her story as a put up situation. But she truly respects him and wishes Yahweh to be with the king. Indeed it seems David was well known for his sensitivity and the ability to hide things from him (see on 2 Sam. 18:13). His wide life experience mixed with his spirituality led to this sensitivity.

2Sa 14:18 Then the king answered the woman, Please don't hide anything from me that I ask you. The woman said, Let my lord the king now speak-

David uses the words of Joshua to Achan (Josh. 7:19), possibly implying he thinks she has sinned and needs to repent for her part in this ruse to manipulate him.

2Sa 14:19 The king said, Is the hand of Joab with you in all this? The woman answered, As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken; for your servant Joab, he urged me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your handmaid-

The woman's honesty is commendable, and she contrasts well with Absalom in the parallel situation of the previous chapter, who was manipulated by Jonadab. "Urged" is the usual word "commanded", as if Joab had in some way ordered or even manipulated this woman to in turn try to manipulate David.

David is duped by Absalom, even although he has premonitions about what is happening. Exactly the same is done to David by Amnon asking for permission to have Tamar visit him; and likewise Joab tricks David in 2 Sam. 14, even though David suspects what is going on ("Is not the hand of Joab with you in all this?"). In these, and other, incidents, we see David being treated as he had treated Uriah- he was deceived by David, although he surely had a strong premonition about what was really going on.

2Sa 14:20 to change the face of the matter has your servant Joab done this thing-

AV "to bring about this form of speech", in other words, the entire performance from her had been designed to David pronounce that the law about the avenging of blood could be suspended in her case; and thereby set a legal precedent for the return of Absalom.

My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are on the earth-

David's soul was broken as a result of his own mistakes and his general experience of life. David's depression resulted in him manifesting all the classic characteristics of the highly strung person. But it led him to his great sensitivity and almost telepathic ability to enter into other's problems was legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which

endeared him to his people (1 Sam. 22:22; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 18:13)- and there is a powerful similarity here with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The woman thought that Angels know everything and therefore David was like an Angel. Angels don't know *everything*. Yet the woman's immature concept isn't corrected. This is not the style of God's engagement with us through the Bible, and it explains why the wrong ideas about demons aren't corrected specifically in the New Testament.

Yet David has been duped by the woman into swearing to her about her son, and thereby opening himself up to having to let his son Absalom return from exile. He doesn't know everything, yet the woman says he is as an / the Angel who knows all (:17,20). We wonder if she was being ironic. But David had earlier deceived Achish into thinking that he was as an Angel of Yahweh and therefore was telling the truth when he falsely claimed he was fighting and killing his fellow Israelites (1 Sam. 29:9). That was another low point in David's life, for which he apparently had taken no judgment. But now he is again paraded as an Angel of Yahweh- but clearly in an ironic sense, for he has been shown to *not* be like an Angel of Yahweh in that he has been deceived. Again, these things are not mere karma, but God's judgments seeking to educate and humble David towards final salvation.

2Sa 14:21 The king said to Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing. Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom back-

"Bring... back" is the word also used for the return of the exiles. I have suggested that all the historical records were rewritten with the exiles in view. This theme of those who deserved to stay in exile being restored by grace was appropriate to them; although most refused to accept they had done anything wrong, and preferred the life in exile.

2Sa 14:22 Joab fell to the ground on his face, showed respect, and blessed the king. Joab said, Today your servant knows that I have found grace in your sight, my lord O king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant-

Clearly Joab had previously asked David to restore Absalom, so it was obvious the woman had been set up by Joab. "Performed the request of his servant" uses the very words of :20 "Your servant Joab has done [s.w. "performed"] this thing [s.w. "request"]". Joab absolutely accepts he had manipulated the woman, and we sense he is ecstatic that he has got his way. There is no record of any contact between him and Absalom at this stage. As discussed on :1, we are still left wondering whether Joab wants this because he wants David to get what he wants; or whether he wants to play the kingmaker in making Absalom king, although he later falls out with Absalom and turns against him.

2Sa 14:23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem-

Joab was certainly enthusiastic for Absalom's return, personally going to Geshur to escort him. It was a round trip of 500 km., a major journey. See on :1 and :22 as to his motives.

2Sa 14:24 The king said, Let him return to his own house, but let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and didn't see the king's face-

If David was indeed still longing to see Absalom as he was in 2 Sam. 13:39, we wonder why he would say this. I discussed on :1 how the word translated "towards" is intentionally ambiguous. It can also mean "against", and we are left guessing whether David's heart is towards or against Absalom; and that affects how we understand Joab's game plan. The narrative creates suspense and has all the elements of a good story, as the readership is left wondering about these things. This was a paradigm in literature far ahead of its time in contemporary writings. David may have changed his feelings about Absalom when he

perceived that in fact Absalom wanted the throne from David. Or perhaps the ambiguity in the narrative reflects David's own mixed feelings. Part of him indeed wanted to see Absalom (2 Sam. 13:39), and he shared the argument of the woman of Tekoah about showing him grace. But another part of him recognized that Absalom wanted to kill him as he had Amnon, in order to take the throne for himself.

Allowing Absalom to come to live in Jerusalem but keeping him a captive of the court, unable to meet David, suggests David only half forgave him, because to 'see the face' meant to have all sin or offence forgiven. David thus failed to reflect the total forgiveness he had received, despite his repentance not being very long lasting nor deep. Instead he made an issue with the quality of Absalom's repentance. Had he disciplined and forgiven Absalom, as God had done to him, the rebellion may well not have happened. And he ought to have focused his sons upon the great promises of 2 Sam. 7 concerning the future king, thereby making present kingship meaningless.

According to how we translate, David's heart was for Absalom but he refused to speak with him nor see his face. As discussed on :7, one explanation of that apparent contradiction is that Bathsheba's influence may have been exerted to keep Absalom in disgrace for the sake of Solomon. In this case, the David who once controlled and used Bathsheba is now having the same done to him by Bathsheba. We recall how later, Bathsheba reminds David that he has promised her that her son Solomon will be his heir to the throne. Clearly she had manipulated him to get this out of him.

2Sa 14:25 Now in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him-

Absalom is presented as similar to Saul- externally attractive to Israel, and apparently the man born to be king according to his appearance. "No blemish" is the language of how the High Priest and sacrifices were to be. His "crown" of hair would then be associated with the High Priest's mitre, imitated by the uncut hair of the Nazirite. All this suggests that potentially he could indeed have been a priest-king. There were many potential ways forward for the promises to David to be fulfilled, and perhaps he was one of them. And yet they all came to nothing, Solomon especially, until they came to full term in the work and person of the Lord Jesus.

2Sa 14:26 When he cut the hair of his head (now it was at every year's end that he cut it; because it was heavy on him, therefore he cut it); he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight-

Immediately we sense his vanity, cutting his own hair and weighing it. Possibly he was a Nazirite and was making a big show of renewing the vow every year, thus hiding his vanity behind a front of religious piety. LXX "two hundred shekels according to the royal shekel", GNB "about five pounds according to the royal standard of weights" David had apparently standardized the weight of a shekel. This would have been the equivalent to the "shekel of the sanctuary" often mentioned in the law of Moses. The priests were intended to have a standard shekel which was kept in the sanctuary; but it seems David did this priestly work by creating such a shekel. This is yet another example of David acting as priest and spiritual leader of Israel, effectively as High Priest.

2Sa 14:27 To Absalom there were born three sons and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a beautiful appearance-

This woman was named after Absalom's sister whom Amnon had raped. LXX adds "and she became the wife of Roboam the son of Solomon, and bare him Abia" although that contradicts 1 Kings 15:2; 2 Chron. 11:20-22. According to 2 Sam. 18:18, Absalom had no

sons. Perhaps his three sons of 2 Sam. 14:27 had died in their youth or childhood. for infant mortality was high in those times. Or maybe he had fallen out with them, and they had disowned each other.

LXX adds: "And there were born to Absalom three sons and one daughter, and her name was Tamar: she was a very beautiful woman, and she becomes the wife of Rehoboam son of Solomon, and she bears to him Abijah". If LXX is correct then this incestuous marriage was used by God in the line of His Son: "Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, Abijah begot Asa" (Mt. 1:7).

2Sa 14:28 Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem; and he didn't see the king's face-
To see a king's face implies acceptance by him. So as discussed above, David's longing to see Absalom in 2 Sam. 13:39 had changed. Something had changed, and I suggest that may have been because he perceived that Absalom wanted him dead because he wanted the throne.

2Sa 14:29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king; but he would not come to him: and he sent again a second time, but he would not come-

Joab had clearly promised Absalom that he could get him an audience with the king. But something had changed; perhaps Absalom had made clear his plans to kill his father and become king. Or there had been some personal fallout between Absalom and Job. Or maybe Joab decided that his own pride and power could not or would not be best served by being a kingmaker to Absalom, but would be better served by continued loyalty to David.

2Sa 14:30 Therefore he said to his servants, Behold, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire. Absalom's servants set the field on fire-

We note how the ruling classes of Israel had their own forms of livelihood. Saul still retained his farm, Absalom had sheep, Joab grew barley. There was no very developed system of taxation for the ruling classes to live off. Again, the record has absolute internal consistency. Likewise in 2 Sam. 23:11, Shammah defended a field of barley because it was valuable to the Israelites. And in this we have a corroboration of this record with how Absalom had burnt Joab's field of barley. We may wonder why Joab slew Absalom. It could have been that to lose a field of barley was to lose food for many months or even a year. It was therefore a major loss to Joab. As Shammah defended a field of barley with his life, so Joab was so vengeful at the loss of his field of barley that he later slew Absalom.

All these dramas were related to David's sin with Bathsheba. He had a neighbour, Uriah, to whom he did great wrong because of the fire of his own lust. And so here too we see neighbours in similar conflict and David's son Absalom behaving nastily against his own neighbour. We note too how Absalom makes two attempts to get his way and then in frustration, acts foolishly and violently. Likewise David tried twice to manipulate Uriah (2 Sam. 11:8,13) and in frustration plots violence against him after those two frustrations.

2Sa 14:31 Then Joab arose and came to Absalom to his house and said to him, Why have your servants set my field on fire?-

The plan of getting Joab to come to him certainly worked, although it was a desperate one.

2Sa 14:32 Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent to you saying, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king to say, Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still. Now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there is iniquity in me, let him kill me'-

Job had had a change of mind as to how Absalom could best serve his own interests of pride and power, and the result of that was that Absalom was left in limbo. There certainly was iniquity in Absalom because he had slain his brother Amnon. We see here how conscience

for sin so easily declines over time, and the passage of the years works a kind of pseudo atonement. But God's dealing with sin is not like this. We may forget about past sins or the wonder of having been forgiven them, but God doesn't (2 Pet. 1:9).

Absalom is asking for David to regard him as either guilty or innocent; to slay him for his sin of murdering Amnon, or forgive him and allow him to live a normal life. Absalom complains that living in this half-forgiveness is an unbearable position. David saw Absalom play out before his eyes the case of a person who was only half forgiven, or who felt that way whilst the one they had offended awaited their fuller penitence. This was exactly how David was. God was waiting for fuller penitence and David like Absalom was miserable until he would reach that point. David was waiting fuller penitence from Absalom, but it seems to me that this was just what God was waiting for from David. Absalom should either be kept in exile, slain- or totally forgiven. But David was operating a policy in between those Biblical options, just as many churches and individuals do today in struggling to accept others. And so providence made such a case play out before David's eyes to bring him to understand that semi penitence is an unbearable position both for the sinner and for God the forgiver.

2Sa 14:33 So Joab came to the king and told him; and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom-

We are not told the content of their discussion or whether David formally extended forgiveness to Absalom. The next we read in 2 Sam. 15 is that Absalom is moving freely in Jerusalem and garnering support for his putsch. The depth of coverage of the record varies; we are given detailed descriptions of Tamar kneading the dough for the cakes she made Amnon, whereas here, when we would love to know what David and Absalom said to each other- there is nothing. Did Absalom repent? Did David forgive? What was the role of Joab? I suggest that this is intentional, because these records are designed to promote our reflection and imagination, so that we might enter deeper into the characters portrayed.

Under the law, Absalom should have died. But David thinks that he can just lift the entire consequence for Absalom's sin; just as he expects God to remove all the consequences of his sin, and chafes at any suffering because of his sins. We recall how he begged God not to slay his first son by Bathsheba, but that request wasn't heard. The hollowness of David's life is shown by how he kisses Absalom yet clearly with misgivings, and then Absalom goes on to use kisses to usurp David (2 Sam. 15:5).

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 15

2Sa 15:1 It happened after this, that Absalom prepared him a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him-

"Prepared" or "established" is a major theme in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Absalom thought he could prepare / establish his own kingdom, himself. Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). Solomon's contenders for the throne were all stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents in Proverbs

between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

But "prepared" is also the word for 'to get / obtain' and thus connects to the prohibition upon the king of Israel to get chariots and horses (Dt. 17:16). Absalom is therefore presented as the king Israel doesn't need. And yet David had horses and chariots and is positively accepted in the narrative... because his heart condition was acceptable to God.

Having men run before his chariot meant Absalom was having himself proclaimed as king. 1 Sam. 8:11 had warned that the king they desired would be so vain as to have men so this. And yet both Absalom and Adonijah (1 Kings 1:5) did so, reflecting their ignorance of God's word.

2Sa 15:2 Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate. It was so, that whenever any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgement, then Absalom called to him and said, What city are you from? He said, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel-

This is the situation which David complains of in Ps. 69:12: "Those who sit in the gate talk against me". *This Psalm contains words which are later applied to the Lord's death; and we will see later that David's sufferings for sin during Absalom's rebellion exactly match the Lord's sufferings when He carried the judgment for sin.* It was David's own son who stood in the gate talking against his own father (2 Sam. 15:2-6). This was the typical consequence of David's sin with Bathsheba which Nathan had predicted; and yet when it happened, David complains about it, as if still struggling to accept Nathan's words, and not focused enough upon the simple wonder of the fact he had been forgiven and his life preserved by God's amazing grace.

2Sa 15:3 Absalom said to him, Behold, your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed by the king to hear you-

We note his hypocrisy. He criticizes David for not delegating power because David wants it all for himself; as an excuse for Absalom wanting power. Absalom has no interest in justice, only in his own power. For he tells everyone that their case is good and just- and he will give them what they want if he is the judge. We note that David had centralized judicial power in himself; and yet he was hopelessly compromised as a judge by what he had done with Uriah and Bathsheba.

Heb. 'There is no king to hear you'. David was effectively not functioning as king and not dispensing justice. He should therefore have resigned from the job. David is presented as desperately clinging on to power and being king in name only and not function. He should have focused his life on the promises of his Messianic Son eternally being king instead of him. All clinging on to power likewise reflects a lack of full focus on the Lord and His Kingdom. We can cling on to power in relationships, in business, in church life... No matter how small our power is.

2Sa 15:4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that each man who has any suit or cause might come to me, and I would do him justice!-

Absalom told everyone that he would give them justice, even though the people who came to him were probably against each other. He promised whatever people wanted, in return for them giving him power. This is the spirit of politics to this day. David's inability to dispense justice is seen in his lack of discipline of Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah his sons. As discussed before, his lack of moral compass and judgment after the Bathsheba affair cannot be simply ascribed to his feeling that he had not been condemned and so he was not going to condemn others. Rather I suggest does it reflect a lack of abiding penitence and awe at God's

personal grace to him. Those who have truly experienced the repentance-forgiveness-peace with God process in a matter are always very clear that what they did was wrong, and are the first to urge similar sinners towards repentance. But despite David's promise to do this in Ps. 32 and elsewhere, there's no evidence he does so in an ongoing sense. There is e.g. no special campaign by David to educate Israel as to the folly of adultery, deception and murder.

"Do justice" is better translated 'to justify'. Absalom was promising every man that he would justify them, count them as right even if they weren't. This is what God had done to David by forgiving his sins regarding Uriah. But David doesn't do it for others, he didn't reflect the grace shown to him. Simply because he didn't proactively get involved with people. Perhaps after being tricked by the woman from Tekoah, he pulled back from involvement in judging cases.

2Sa 15:5 It was so, that when any man came near to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand and took hold of him and kissed him-

This could imply that he didn't let people prostrate themselves before him, but lifted them up and hugged them. This was the style of greeting used by Joab in 2 Sam. 20:9, and we wonder if this continues the theme of the last two chapters- a man influencing another. Maybe we are to get the hint that Joab was influencing Absalom still, although when Absalom finally grabs power, Joab decides to still support David.

Perhaps the focus is on "any man", "all Israel" (:6). He gave every man the impression he thought they were right simply because they came to him. We thereby see the paradox: he offered justice, but actually he was simply pronouncing every man to be in the right. That is not justice. And we see the same today. Solomon alludes to his brother when in Proverbs he condemns the unjust judge who justifies the wicked.

2Sa 15:6 Absalom did this sort of thing to all Israel who came to the king for judgement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel-

LXX "made his own"; the hearts of Israel were stolen from David to Absalom. Perhaps this was to make David reflect upon how he had stolen the lamb of Uriah, according to Nathan's parable. Solomon's later condemnations of those who steal were true enough (Prov. 6:30; 9:17), but as ever with the Proverbs, Solomon harnesses God's truth to his own justification and the criticism of those whose supporters he deemed were still a threat to his throne.

2Sa 15:7 It happened at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to Yahweh, in Hebron-

"Forty years" creates chronological problems. Some texts read "four years". I have elsewhere commented that this is a symbolic period and not to be always read literally; for if the forty year reigns of Saul, David and Solomon are read literally, we again have chronological problems. Absalom's claim to have vowed to Yahweh was again hypocritical. There is no historical record of him having made such a vow, nor of his presence in Hebron, the previous capital of Judah before Jerusalem was taken from the Jebusites. Hebron would have been the second city in Judah after Jerusalem. It was his birthplace, so perhaps that fact was being twisted by him.

Absalom was lying, and not lying very well. Because if the vow related to his return to Jerusalem, why did he ask permission from David to go offer his sacrifice in Hebron? Absalom had been back from exile for some time, so why now at this point announce he had to pay a vow for returning from exile? David surely picked up on this, as the lie is obvious. Absalom had lied to him previously about the reason for taking Amnon to another town- where he murdered him. So David agreed but with a premonition about what was to happen.

Just as he had sent Uriah to his death with Uriah having a strong premonition about the deception.

2Sa 15:8 For your servant vowed a vow while I stayed at Geshur in Syria saying, 'If Yahweh shall indeed bring me again to Jerusalem, then I will serve Yahweh' -

Jacob had vowed: "If God will be with me... then shall Yahweh be my God: and this stone... shall be God's house" (Gen. 28:20-22- words quoted by faithless Absalom in 2 Sam. 15:8). The implication was that Jacob didn't consider Yahweh to be his God at that time. And yet God had promised Abraham that he would be the God of his seed (Gen. 17:7,8); Jacob was aware of these promises, and yet he is showing that he did not accept their personal relevance to him at this time. And Absalom quoted them about himself. This accords with how Amnon likewise quoted words of Joseph out of context to justify his sin against Tamar. Likewise Bible phrases and precedents can be quote right out of context in order to justify what is clearly wrong. Absalom was kidding himself that murdering or deposing his father was going to be 'serving Yahweh', just as all manner of evil is done in the name of doing God service. Perhaps the Lord alludes to this in Jn. 16:2. See on 2 Sam. 17:13.

Absalom alludes to Jacob's vow at Bethel. Which in fact Jacob never kept. So Absalom's allusion to Jacob's vow reflects his surface level spirituality, making vague Biblical allusion to justify his own fleshly agenda. Which we can all be guilty of.

2Sa 15:9 The king said to him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron-

David had enough power to still need to give Absalom his blessing to travel. And he must have guessed what would happen. But he was hopelessly compromised. It had been the same when Absalom had begged the king to allow Amnon to come to his shearing festivity, when David again had surely guessed what would happen. As with allowing Amnon to have Tamar take love cakes to him in his bedroom alone, and allowing Amnon to go to Absalom's party, David surely had a premonition about what was going to happen. Just as Uriah did in David's deception of him. David the deceiver was deceived- but in order to teach and educate him as to the dimensions of his sins, and not as some simplistic experience of karma.

2Sa 15:10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel saying, As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron!' -

Hebrew tenses are not exact, so we are to read that Absalom "had sent spies". See on :36.

Hebron was the old capital of Judah. We discern from 2 Sam. 19:11 that Judah was now the least supportive of David.

2Sa 15:11 Two hundred men went with Absalom out of Jerusalem, who were invited and went in their innocence; and they didn't know anything-

These men were presumably leaders of Judah, and were invited to Hebron to celebrate Absalom's devotion to Yahweh's service at the feast he had proclaimed there (:7). They were unaware of his plans. But his idea was that they would fall in behind him, and David would be left in Jerusalem without most of his government. To use a feast of dedication to Yahweh in this way is as bad in our days as manipulating the breaking of bread feast to our own ends.

The role of these men is difficult to understand in that we wonder how they could be totally innocent, knowing nothing of Absalom's plans- when he had prepared a chariot and horses and men to run before him [the proclamation of a king], and had clearly been working towards this usurping of David. Did they really go on this military journey not knowing what was going on? Perhaps we are invited to deduce that on one level they knew nothing, and the Biblical record sometimes records things as they appear rather than as they actually are- but, we are also to conclude that they went surely suspecting what they were being used for. And

that is the exact picture of Uriah going back to the battle front under David's manipulation. Again and again, aspects of David's sin are played out before his eyes- so that he would understand the dimensions of his sin and repent.

2Sa 15:12 Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. The conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom-

Those sacrifices were supposed to represent Absalom's dedication to Yahweh's service (see on :7,11). It was cruel abuse of the things of God.

Ps. 3:1,2 refers to this time. The people considered that God wouldn't now help David (Ps. 3:2); there was a spiritual argument used against David, no matter how wrong it was. We have here a classic example of a collapse mentality, whereby a feeding frenzy begins against an innocent man, and quasi spiritual arguments are brought in to support it. "Many" in Ps. 3:1,2 is the same word used for how the people "increased" with Absalom. "Rise up" in Ps. 3:1 is the word used of Ahithophel wishing to 'rise up' and pursue David (2 Sam. 17:1; 18:31 *"I will arise and pursue after David "*). In response to the rising up of others against him, David asks God to 'rise up' (Ps. 3:7 s.w.). David's prayer in Psalm 3 was answered, and Ahithophel 'rose up' and committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

The person in view in Ps. 41:9; 55:13,14 is clearly Ahithophel, David's counsellor, the "man of my peace" (2 Sam. 15:12). He was Bathsheba's grandfather, so we can imagine how his bitterness with David developed.

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.

Saul felt that David had conspired against him (1 Sam. 22:8,13), and now the same word is used of Absalom's conspiracy against David. Perhaps David was being taught how Saul felt, he was learning the implications of his past actions and how others felt because of them. And that is one window upon the meaning of our experiences.

2Sa 15:13 A messenger came to David saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom-

David surely already perceived that over the years, Absalom had already stolen the hearts of Israel. The repeated stress upon the "men" of Israel may suggest Absalom was particularly attractive as a leader to the men; whereas David had been attractive to the women of Israel.

We wonder why we have this detail that a messenger told David of the general state of the hearts of the Israelites. Surely it was to recall the huge role played by messengers in the Uriah and Bathsheba drama. Constantly David is being reminded of why things were as they were. It was his fault. And yet he seeks to always blame it upon others.

2Sa 15:14 David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for else none of us shall escape from Absalom. Make speed to depart, lest he overtake us quickly and bring evil down upon us and strike the city with the edge of the sword-

David knew that Absalom intended to murder him and his supporters. It was David's servants who had perished along with Uriah (2 Sam. 11:17), and David desperately wanted to learn from this and not again bring death to his servants as a result of his folly. "Overtaken" is the word used of how David was overtaken by his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 40:12 "My iniquities

have overtaken me"). The way he was saved from being overtaken by Absalom in judgment for this was perhaps an answer to his prayer of Ps. 40:12. And yet we notice that although David knew his sins had overtaken him, he didn't want judgment for the sins to overtake him. On one hand that is natural, but on another hand, we see again his struggle in accepting consequences for his sin with Bathsheba.

Amnon did "wrong" to Tamar David's daughter (2 Sam. 13:16). "Wrong" here is the same word translated "evil" in the punishment upon David in 2 Sam. 12:10 "I will raise up evil against you from within your own house / family". The "evil" of Amnon was therefore indeed his own error and sin, but it was used by God and 'raised up' in that God confirmed Amnon in his evil in order to punish David. At the time of Absalom's rebellion, Shimei comments that "Evil [s.w.] has overtaken you [David] because you are a man of blood" (2 Sam. 16:8). But David proactively sought to avoid that "evil": "Get up! Let us flee [from Absalom]... or he will soon... bring evil [s.w.] upon us" (2 Sam. 15:14). We see here the complexities of God's workings. The "evil" was indeed to come upon David, yet he took steps to avoid some of it and God confirmed him in that and delivered him from Absalom. And so 2 Sam. 17:14 "For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin [evil] on Absalom" (NRSV). The complexities and ebb and flow of all this working are beyond any final human analysis; and this explains why there appear various things in our lives which clearly feel to be of Divine intervention, but whose meaning is beyond our analysis.

"The edge of the sword" is literally 'with the mouth of the sword'. The sword is spoken of as a mouth that devours. Yet this was just the image used by David when he excuses the murder of Uriah and the other soldiers: "the sword devours one as well as another" (2 Sam. 11:25). David had airily spoken of the sword devouring, and that was just one of those things. But now he is brought face to face with the sword devouring him and his loved ones- and he is frightened and flees. Again, nothing in this experience was wasted. It was all in order to persuade David of the dimensions of his earlier sin which he had so airily dismissed at the time. We note that God felt it necessary to keep explaining these things to David. God does not willingly afflict repentant sinners. So this all suggests David was not very deeply or permanently repentant. He still failed to realize the depth of what he had done, and as discussed on 1 Kings 1, it seems in the final bedroom scene as he dies God was still trying to teach him the real nature of what he had done in his bedroom.

2Sa 15:15 The king's servants said to the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king chooses-

We are intended to sense their extreme loyalty to David. They had of course realized his failures, but on balance believed that he was the anointed king of Israel and was overall a man of God worthy to be followed. We too at times need to stop ourselves judging a brother or sister in Christ for their out of character failures.

2Sa 15:16 The king went forth, and all his household after him. The king left ten women, who were concubines, to keep the house-

He would have recalled Nathan's prediction that his wives would be slept with by his usurper. He took his wives with him but left the concubines, surely knowing their fate. He did not seek to stop that prophecy coming true; he humbled himself to accept his sin and the judgment pronounced for it. See on 2 Sam. 16:21.

These concubines were "left behind" when David fled and were slept with by Absalom; just as Bathsheba was left in Jerusalem when Uriah went to Rabbah to fight, in broadly the same direction David had gone at this point.

2Sa 15:17 The king went forth, and all the people after him; and they stayed in Beth Merhak- The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us. "Beth Merhak" is literally 'the last / far house', the last house on the edge of Jerusalem, on the banks of the Kidron. This detail declares David to be an exile; he has left the last house in Israel and will cross the Jordan out of Israel. The lessons learnt in his exile from Saul, when he fled Israel, were now to be drawn on and reinforced, and David's learning of those lessons is going to be tested. The way he decides he doesn't need the ark with him would indicate that spiritually, in his heart, he comes through well. The record of course is designed as encouragement for the later exiles of Judah that they too could return to Zion, even when all seemed impossibly stacked against them ever doing so.

2Sa 15:18 All his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the Gittites, six hundred men who came after him from Gath, passed on before the king- The figure of 600 may not be literal, and alludes to the 600 men whom David commanded whilst fleeing from Saul in earlier years. They were maybe called "the men of Gath" not because they were Philistines from Gath, but because they had been with David in Gath when he lived there for over a year when fleeing from Saul. Their loyalty had not been ultimately swayed by David's failure with Bathsheba. They recalled David's undoubted faith, spirituality and bravery as a soldier of Yahweh, and didn't allow themselves to be fazed by his temporary failure over Uriah. LXX adds "and halted at the olive tree in the wilderness". The idea may be that the mount of Olives was still as it were with David in the desert, just as God's presence was just as much with him there as in the tabernacle and before the ark in Jerusalem.

2Sa 15:19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, Why do you also go with us? Return, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile. Return to your own place- Naturally David feared that his ranks would be infiltrated by Absalom's agents. Ittai was a Philistine who had only recently joined David's ranks (:20); all the indications were that he was an agent for Absalom. David refers to Absalom as "the king", accepting that he was no longer king. But David's scepticism of Ittai was proven wrong. He turned out a loyal follower of David and just a few days later, was in command of a third of David's men (2 Sam. 18:2). Again David presents as a man who gets it wrong in his judgments. The Tekoite woman's comment that he is wise as an Angel and knows everything... is again shown to be nonsense and mere ingratiation.

2Sa 15:20 Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us, since I go where I may? Return, and take back your brothers. Mercy and truth be with you-

Although David was sceptical of Ittai, he speaks to him in spiritual terms, wishing this Gentile the "mercy and truth" of covenant relationship with Yahweh. LXX "and the Lord shew thee mercy and truth". This is just how David had spoken to the men of Jabesh (2 Sam. 2:5,6). We are shown how David's past experiences were now repeating in this crisis, and he was demonstrating that he had learned the lessons. Our crises are likewise designed to evoke memories of past experiences, and we are to demonstrate that we have learned the lessons. Likewise "I go where I may" is just how he had felt at the time of Saul's persecution (1 Sam. 23:13 "David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose- again the 600 men are mentioned). He felt circumstances repeating, and perhaps hoped that Yahweh would likewise miraculously preserve him against seemingly overwhelming odds.

2Sa 15:21 Ittai answered the king and said, As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, even there also will your servant be-

By using the term "Yahweh" and swearing by Him, Ittai shows that he has accepted covenant relationship with Yahweh. And his promise of loyalty to David is expressed in terms of the Gentile Ruth's words to Naomi, when also in exile (Ruth 1:16,17).

2Sa 15:22 David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones who were with him-

David accepted Ittai as sincere. And we marvel at the power of God's truth. A Philistine, from Goliath's home town, had accepted covenant relationship with Yahweh and therefore accepts His anointed king, David. Even though David had lied to the men of Gath and later slain them, and had recently disgraced himself again over Bathsheba. The power of God's truth was greater than all the disadvantages for that truth in Yahweh's chosen representative. And this is a powerful challenge to those who turn away from God because of the bad examples of His representatives.

2Sa 15:23 All the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over towards the way of the wilderness-

Although Absalom is presented as having much support, "the country" is presented as sharing in the tragic grief of this sad procession of David going into exile. The triple emphasis upon "passed over" shows David's unity with his people and theirs with him. The exiles reading this would have seen the similarities with their own exile from Zion. It was also due to the effect of their sins; but they too had hope of restoration, despite much opposition. The crossing over Kidron was to be repeated by the Lord Jesus (Jn. 18:1), suffering as if He were a sinner although He was personally innocent. "The way of the wilderness" was the road to Jericho, used by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho being beaten [= suffering for his sins, in the parable], and being saved by grace and now law. Surely the Lord had David in mind, and is presenting the long day of his tragic exile as being the experience of everyman.

2Sa 15:24 Behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God; and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people finished passing out of the city-

David had learned from previous history and experience that the ark should not be used as a talisman. He had learned in his wilderness years that God's presence was just as close in a man's heart as if that man were in His presence before the ark. We note too that they "set down" the ark having learned the lesson from David's inappropriate transportation of the ark on a wagon previously. Passing out of the city is parallel with passing over Kidron (:23), because that was the border of the city (see on :17). Again we see internal corroboration and consistency within the records.

The record of crossing a river with the priests and the ark standing by recalls the miraculous crossing of Jordan [the other way] by Joshua. "Until all the people finished passing out / over" is taken from Josh. 4:11. David's exit from God's land is presented in terms of Israel's entry into it. The idea may be that back is in fact forward, in God's bigger purpose.

2Sa 15:25 The king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find grace in

the eyes of Yahweh, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His dwelling place-

The lesson for the exiles was that restoration from exile was to be by grace and not at all because they deserved it or had been unjustly treated. David has in view Jacob as he fled into exile, also a sinner justly on the run; but he too was eventually to be restored. David prayed for restoration to the place of the ark (Ps. 43:3), so his words should not be read as mere fatalism.

The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament.

I have discussed on 1 Sam. 4:3 how the ark was often seen by Israel as a talisman. David had brought 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. 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. But, so true to real spiritual life, he also had tendencies towards needing the physical and religious when it came to the ark.

David sending the ark back to Zion appears to be his statement that he recognizes God as king in Zion- but whether or not God wants him as His human agent for kingship, God must decide. Here David gets closest to accepting he may have to give up the kingship. I have often suggested that he ought to have resigned from being king and thus save so much of the suffering that was designed for his learning this fact. The real kingship was to be that of the Lord Jesus, and at some far future point, after David was sleeping with his fathers.

David's sending Zadok, Abiathar and the ark back to Zion can be read as a positive statement that he was content with the presence of God with him and didn't need the physical presence of the ark. He was rejecting the myth that the ark was needed in order to win a military conflict. However as always with David, his motives are mixed- because he wants Zadok and Abiathar back in Jerusalem to act as his spies there.

2Sa 15:26 but if He say thus, 'I have no delight in you;' behold, here am I. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him-

This resignation to God's will matches the Lord's attitude. These words are applied directly to the exiles, when they are assured that at their restoration, Yahweh would delight in them (Is. 62:4), just as finally He did in David (2 Sam. 22:20). David also has in view how the land of the Kingdom was to be given by grace if Yahweh delighted in His people, even though the obstacles to possessing it appeared huge (Num. 14:8). And he too stood near the Jordan river as they had done. He reasoned from Biblical precedent. David on this long day of exile (see on :17) is David at perhaps his best in spiritual terms.

2Sa 15:27 The king said also to Zadok the priest, Aren't you a seer? Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar-
The connection between being a seer and needing to therefore return to Jerusalem is unclear. Hence LXX "See! thou shalt return...". But perhaps David is simply making a word play- Zadok was a seer, one who saw and relayed what he had seen. And so he was to do the same in relaying to David what he saw going on in Jerusalem under Absalom.

2Sa 15:28 Behold, I will stay at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me-

"The plain of the wilderness" (AV) is the plain of Jericho (Josh. 5:10; 2 Kings 25:5; 2 Sam. 2:29; 17:16). "The way of the wilderness" in 2 Sam. 15:23 was therefore the road to Jericho, used by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho being beaten [= suffering for his sins, in the parable], and being saved by grace and now law. Surely the Lord had David in mind, and is presenting the long day of his tragic exile as being the experience of everyman.

2Sa 15:29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they stayed there-

David was concerned for the ark. His desire it not accompany him reflected that, and also his willingness to accept that he may be killed by Absalom and the ark destroyed in the fighting. He knew his son had no real respect for Yahweh. And he knew from his earlier experiences that God's presence would be with him whether or not the ark was with him.

2Sa 15:30 David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered, and went barefoot: and all the people who were with him covered each man his head; so they went up, weeping as they went up-

This may be slightly out of chronological sequence. But it is noted that David went there to worship (:32). We note how the Lord Jesus was likewise around the mount of Olives before He crossed the Kidron in Jn. 18:1. His covered head and going barefoot would suggest he recognized it was holy ground, and that he was there as a sinner. He was to likewise cover his head in mourning when Absalom was dead and the rebellion was over (2 Sam. 19:4), just as he did when Absalom came to power (2 Sam. 15:30). We get the impression that it was grief every way for David, whether Absalom lived or died. And this is indeed the take away lesson for us- that the outcome of sin is a lose lose situation. The point made to David by his covering his head before and after Absalom's death is that despite his best efforts, there was no way for him to avoid the grief caused by his actions with Bathsheba.

2Sa 15:31 Someone told David saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. David said, Yahweh, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness-

Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather, and his defection was surely not unexpected to David. But we can imagine the bolt of pain which he experienced as he received the news. This turning of wisdom into foolishness is alluded to be in Is. 44:25. The exiles were being comforted that all the wisdom of Babylon would likewise be turned into foolishness, and they would likewise be restored. David's prayer was considered and answered by a decree passed in the court of Heaven; see on 2 Sam. 17:14 "Yahweh had ordained to defeat [s.w. 'turn to foolishness'] the good counsel of Ahithophel". The answer to David's prayer began immediately- :32 says that having prayed this and worshipped God, despite not having any answers, Hushai appears. The decree to answer David's prayer took immediate effect, although it took time to work out as with Daniel's prayer of Dan. 10. Hushai is going to be the answer and the means of subverting Ahithophel's counsel. The same path is seen in answers to our own prayers. It is surely to this that Ps. 3:4 alludes: "I cry to Yahweh with my voice, and He answers me out of His holy hill". This Psalm is titled "A Psalm by David, when he fled from Absalom his son". The "holy hill" is surely the mount of Olives where David was when he prayed (:30). Psalm 3 appears to be a flow of consciousness psalm, recording David's thoughts at that moment. In this case, he believed his prayer was answered. He believed the decree had gone forth- and that faith was rewarded. Hushai appeared... and a

process was set in motion that would save David from Ahithophel's counsel. David seems to have perceived this at the time, even though the outworking of the answer to his prayer wasn't visible. For David fled from Absalom with his head covered (2 Sam. 15:30) but in the Psalm he tells himself that Yahweh will lift up his head (Ps. 3:3).

Surely all this encouraged the Lord, whose final hours were so full of connection with David at this time. He too prayed on the mount of Olives before His arrest (Mt. 26:30). There are many connections between the Lord's death and David's flight from Absalom. He "arises" and leaves Jerusalem as David arose and fled, goes to the mount of Olives, crosses the Kedron with weary followers, is betrayed by his familiar friend [Ahithophel = Judas, "friend why have you come?" cp. Ps. 41:9; 55:13, who did what Ahithophel planned to do, taking a group of men to come upon Jesus by night, focusing solely on taking Jesus], the betrayer then hangs himself, receives assurances of loyalty "even if I must die with you", restrains his followers from smiting with the sword [Peter=Abishai], resigns himself to God's will as David in :26- and dies. David is saved. David's experiences were a judgment for his sins; and so the Lord, who never sinned, experienced what it feels like to be judged for sin. Thus He identified with us, to the point that He is able to feel how we feel in condemnation for sin; He experienced it, although personally innocent. Thus many of the Psalms predicting the Lord's death are actually initially about David's sufferings at the hands of others [like Absalom] because of his sins.

2Sa 15:32 It happened that when David had come to the top, where God was worshipped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn, and earth on his head-
The mount of Olives was clearly one of the "high places" where Yahweh was legitimately worshipped (1 Sam. 7:17; 9:13); hence David ascends it barefoot as if on holy ground. Such high places were not God's ideal intention, especially as this mount was so near to the sanctuary. But He still accepted worship there, such is His desire by all means to meet with man even on less than ideal terms.

2Sa 15:33 David said to him, If you pass on with me, then you will be a burden to me-
This may have been because of his age. As in 2 Sam. 19:35, it was older men who had known David in earlier years who were faithful to him at this time.

2Sa 15:34 but if you return to the city and tell Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king. As I have been your father's servant in time past, so will I now be your servant; then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel'-

This raises the question as to whether lying is always wrong, necessarily. Rahab's lies and those of the Hebrew midwives at the exodus are rewarded as acts of faith. But this is of course a slippery slope. But such open questions are left for our reflection, underlining that spiritual life cannot be run by laws but by principles.

2Sa 15:35 Don't you have Zadok and Abiathar the priests there with you? Therefore it shall be, that whatever thing you shall hear out of the king's house, you shall tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests-

David's experience of having friends within the court of Saul prepared him for having friends within the court of Absalom, when both those men were hunting him. One experience prepares us for another, years later.

2Sa 15:36 Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send to me everything that you shall hear-
We get the impression David is being presented as matching Absalom's "spies throughout all

Israel" (:10) with his own smaller scale espionage system. And his worked, whereas Absalom's much larger system failed. It was David against Goliath all over again.

2Sa 15:37 So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city; and Absalom came into Jerusalem- Absalom entered Jerusalem the day David fled (2 Sam. 17:1). The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us. Ahithophel's advice to attack David immediately was undoubtedly the best advice.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 16

2Sa 16:1 When David was a little past the top, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits and a skin of wine-

As noted on 2 Sam. 15, the circumstances David faced repeated incidents throughout his earlier life, or the essence of them. He had earlier unexpectedly encountered a gift of 200 loaves of bread coming towards him in the wilderness, from Abigail (1 Sam. 25:18). She may well have been with him at this time too. Raisins and wine were also part of the present Abigail had sent him. The situations were clearly controlled by God. David was being comforted, as we are by perceiving these things, that situations never spin totally out of Divine control. Even in our lowest moments there are evidences that somehow God is involved, even if we cannot attach meaning to event.

2Sa 16:2 The king said to Ziba, What do you mean by these? Ziba said, The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as are faint in the wilderness may drink-

We will learn from 2 Sam. 19:26,27 that Ziba had deceived Mephibosheth, who had desperately wanted to come to support David. It could be that Ziba was going over to Absalom's side, and the present was intended for him; whilst he abandoned his master Mephibosheth, who wanted to support David. But encountering David and his sizeable party on the road, Ziba changed his position and claimed the gift was for David, and Mephibosheth was aiming to become king.

Psalm 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" refers to this time. Shimei and other "enemies" were aware of his path. The reference is to the feasts prepared for him in the desert by Ziba (2 Sam. 16:2) and Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27-29). But the phrase "prepare a table" is that used of the preparation of the table of shewbread (Ex. 40:4), and it is used in a religious sense in Is. 65:11; Ez. 23:41. Perhaps David held some kind of religious ceremony whilst on the run, the equivalent to our breaking of bread meeting. And his experience of the Lord's table strengthened him with great encouragement, as we also can experience.

"What do you mean by these?" and David's reference to Saul as Ziba's master (:3) suggest he was cynical of Ziba's gift. But he is persuaded by it and accepts what Ziba says, that Ziba is faithful to David and Mephibosheth was trying to become king in the line of Saul. And so he gives Ziba what he tacitly wants- the estate of Saul handed over to him from Mephibosheth. But later David will find that Ziba was lying (2 Sam. 19:26). Again we see the deceiver deceived; and he was deceived whilst on one level suspecting what was going on, just as happened to him with Amnon and twice with Absalom; just as happened with Uriah.

2Sa 16:3 The king said, Where is your master's son? Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is

staying in Jerusalem; for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore me the kingdom of my father'-

A bit of reflection would have indicated the untruth of this; because clearly Absalom was obsessed with becoming king, and would not want to restore the house of Saul after all they had done to the house of David. Further, Mephibosheth was from Benjamin, and it was the people of Judah, especially those in Hebron, who wanted Absalom to rule over them. It was he and not the reclusive cripple Mephibosheth who had stolen the hearts of Israel. David is told the truth of the matter in 2 Sam. 19:25-30. But the point is that David is again portrayed as being deceived, and an inept judge of where truth lies. His deceit of Uriah yet again is played out before his eyes. In 2 Sam. 14 he likewise failed to discern the true intention of the woman from Tekoah, and was again duped. Absalom's complaint that David was not a fit judge was not therefore untrue. And it was part of being the king of Israel that he should judge, and judge justly. David desperately hung on to being king when he should have realized his own failure as king, resigned, and focused on the wonderful promise of the future eternal king in his line- the Lord Jesus.

2Sa 16:4 Then the king said to Ziba, Behold, all that pertains to Mephibosheth is yours. Ziba said, I do obeisance. Let me find grace in your sight, my lord, O king-

Although the news was fake, David didn't know that at the time. It would have seemed that all the grace he had shown to the house of Saul was in vain, and had not resulted in any loyalty but rather in an ill fated, opportunistic attempt to grab power for himself. This fake news was surely used by God to provoke in David a collapse mentality, which was intended to make him cast himself further upon God's grace alone. But we have here another example of David acting too hastily, as he did to the woman from Tekoa.

2Sa 16:5 When king David came to Bahurim, behold, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera. He came out and cursed continually as he came-

Psalms 7 is relevant to this cursing. Ps. 7:1 describes it as "A meditation by David, which he sang to Yahweh, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite". But Cush may be another name for Shimei; or perhaps "the black one of Benjamin" may be another term for Saul. But much in the Psalm is so appropriate to Shimei's cursing of David as he fled from Absalom. But it could equally refer to some supporter of Saul the Benjamite during David's wilderness years. Most likely it could be that a Psalm composed in the wilderness years was later rewritten by David with reference to Shimei's abuse of him.

Psalms 109:17 also seems to reference Shimei: "Yes, he loved cursing, and it came to him. He didn't delight in blessing, and so it was far from him". This points towards Shimei, whose cursing of David at the time of Absalom's rebellion clearly hurt David very deeply. At the time, David forgave him. But he didn't maintain that intensity of forgiveness, because on his deathbed he asks Solomon to ensure Shimei even as an old man is slain because of it. His statement here that the cursing "came to him" may be a 'future perfect', stating the future as if it has already happened, as a way of stating intention. And David expressed this intention to Solomon to ensure Shimei was cursed with death for his cursing. We too struggle to maintain levels of forgiveness we grant to people, and we perceive how God's "frank" and permanent forgiveness (Lk. 7:42) is of an altogether higher quality and nature than our forgiveness.

Why did the cursing of Shimei happen at Bahurim? It was to here that the weeping husband of David's ex-wife Michal had followed her (2 Sam. 3:16), after David had cruelly commanded that she should be taken from him [despite having had children by him] and live in disgrace at Jerusalem. He never slept with her and she was effectively a prisoner of court. This was a cruel thing to have done, a way of getting back at his ex and establishing his own

power. Paltiel her husband followed her until Bahurim, where he was forced to go back. Now David is weeping at Bahurim, having lost all he once held dear. He is being made to understand how Paltiel felt, and the Father was thereby seeking to elicit David's repentance. There is no evidence that David responded to the Divine nudge in this case. We would love to read that he sent word to release Michal and let her return to Paltiel, but there is nothing at all to suggest this. Rather we are told that she remained desolate in David's house until the day of her death.

David's route out of Jerusalem towards Mahanaim was the very route Uriah would have taken to Rabbah. Every step of his miserable path he would have been reminded of the fatal journey he had sent Uriah on. But still he was met by grace on that path, with feasts prepared for him.

2Sa 16:6 He cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David; and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left-

Death by stoning was the punishment for adultery, and it was hard for David to argue that this was inappropriate. He had been saved from that by grace, but now it seemed that God was demanding that the death penalty be carried out. David would have been beating himself up that he had not responded to the grace shown him as he ought to have done.

David was marching through a valley with steep sides, from the top of which Shimei could cast stones. Psalm 23 refers to this march, especially Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death". There was naturally the fear of an ambush, for David's location was thereby clearly known to his enemies. Yet "I will fear no evil, for You are with me". David's sense that 'God is with me' is that of 'Emmanuel', God with us, the great comfort to the exiles in Isaiah's restoration prophecies. He felt the essence of the result of the yet future work of the Lord Jesus.

We have to notice the reversal of David's stoning of Goliath. Now it is he who is surrounded by Philistine soldiers, his only loyal men- and he is being stoned by an Israelite who is not only stoning him but also cursing him by Israel's God. Perhaps this was to correct any possible subsequent pride he had had because of his victory. He was being made to feel how Goliath felt. Possibly that is why he declines Abishai's offer to cut Shimei's head off, which is what David had done to Goliath.

2Sa 16:7 Shimei said when he cursed, Be gone, be gone, you man of blood, and base fellow!- Shimei called David a "bloodthirsty man" (:7,8 s.w.). And the same words are used by God about David (1 Chron. 28:3). So we can wonder whether David was too quick in Ps. 5:6 to assume that the 'man of blood' who was hated by God and was of course not him. "Base fellow" is "man of Belial" and that is just what Abigail had called Nabal (1 Sam. 25:25). Doubtless David had prided himself on doing the right thing in waiting that Nabal the "man of Belial" to die of natural causes before taking Abigail as wife. But he is being shown that he is no better than Nabal. Indeed later David is to admit that he has "done foolishly" (2 Sam. 24:10), no better than Nabal the fool. So possibly he did learn from this. Again we see that all his sufferings were not mere karma, not Divine anger for the sake of it; but judgments designed to elicit his repentance and appreciation of the dimensions of his actions and their effect upon others. That this continued so long and so repeatedly in his life suggests he overall failed to get most of the lessons most of the time. Likewise with all our experiences.

2Sa 16:8 Yahweh has returned on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned! Yahweh has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son! Behold, you are caught by your own sinfulness, because you are a man of blood!-

It was the blood of Uriah and the soldiers killed alongside him which was being punished.

But Shimei says that David had shed the blood of the house of Saul. This was all a cruel mixture of truth and error. David would likely have noted the reference to the house of Saul, and wrongly corroborated it with Ziba's claim that in fact Absalom was planning to be co-regent along with Mephibosheth. Shimei's accusation was false- David was not fleeing from Absalom because of anything he had done to Saul. Indeed he had consistently acted honourably towards Saul and his family, the very opposite of Shimei's false accusation. But the purpose of the obviously false accusation was to elicit humility in David and recognition of his sin with Uriah and Bathsheba; for that was the real reason why he was fleeing from Absalom. And indeed David had been a "bloodthirsty man". David did have blood on his hands, and the experience of false accusation was intended to elicit his recognition of that. The blood he had on his hands was of Uriah and the soldiers of Israel; not the blood of Saul and his family who were slain by God. And that is often the purpose behind our experience of false accusation- to elicit in us an awareness of our actual sins. And it possibly worked, because David accepts that this cursing is from Yahweh. We too need to spiritually respond to false accusation as we are intended to and not get hung up in bitterness upon the injustice of it. And yet despite Shimei's curses being not wrong in essence, David was still so hurt by them that he asked Solomon to slay Shimei. This was surely a case of hurt pride.

Amnon did "wrong" to Tamar David's daughter (2 Sam. 13:16). "Wrong" here is the same word translated "evil" in the punishment upon David in 2 Sam. 12:10 "I will raise up evil against you from within your own house / family". The "evil" of Amnon was therefore indeed his own error and sin, but it was used by God and 'raised up' in that God confirmed Amnon in his evil in order to punish David. At the time of Absalom's rebellion, Shimei comments that "Evil [s.w.] has overtaken you [David] because you are a man of blood" (2 Sam. 16:8). But David proactively sought to avoid that "evil": "Get up! Let us flee [from Absalom]... or he will soon... bring evil [s.w.] upon us" (2 Sam. 15:14). We see here the complexities of God's workings. The "evil" was indeed to come upon David, yet he took steps to avoid some of it and God confirmed him in that and delivered him from Absalom. And so 2 Sam. 17:14 "For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin [evil] on Absalom" (NRSV). The complexities and ebb and flow of all this working are beyond any final human analysis; and this explains why there appear various things in our lives which clearly feel to be of Divine intervention, but whose meaning is beyond our analysis.

We could render "You are in your own evil". This evil was the evil God had said would arise from David's own house, and Shimei is consciously alluding to this- hence David's comment that Yahweh has bidden Shimei curse in this way. But still David seeks to wriggle out of it, hoping that because of this manifestation of the evil, God would bless him with good (:12). Although he perceives God has raised up Shimei to curse him, he is far from penitent and bitterly resents this consequence- later commanding Solomon to murder him. Again he shoots the messenger, just as he did with the man who told him of Saul's death, as his servants feared he would do to them if they told him his child by Bathsheba had died, and as I suggest Ahimaaz did when he couldn't bring himself to tell David that his son Absalom was dead.

We ponder the truth of "Yahweh has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom". So far in the Hebrew Bible, nobody has ever claimed that they are speaking for Yahweh when in fact they weren't. David understands Shimei as acting on Yahweh's behalf (:10). The language is so similar to Yahweh's judgment of 1 Sam. 15:28 "The Lord has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you [Saul] and has given it to another [David]". For David, this should have made no difference, and it should have honed his focus upon the promise of 2 Sam. 7- that after his death, he would be resurrected to see his Divine seed reigning on his

throne eternally. So quite possibly God did take the kingdom away from David and give it to Absalom; but he was vain and therefore slain, and so the kingdom returned to David.

2Sa 16:9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?-

This was how David had felt about himself (1 Sam. 24:14 cp. 2 Sam. 9:8; 16:9). So his humility precluded him from having Abishai's attitude.

Please let me go over and take off his head-

The Philistines in 1 Sam. 29:4 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.

It was Abishai who had wanted to kill Saul in 1 Sam. 26:8,9 but was then restrained by David; and David now twice restrains him from killing Shimei, Saul's relative (2 Sam. 16:9; 19:22,23).

2Sa 16:10 The king said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? Because he curses, and because Yahweh has said to him, 'Curse David', who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' -

To curse the king was a capital offence under the law (Ex. 22:28). Abishai was acting according to the law- if indeed David was still king. The fact David restrains him could be read as his recognition that he was not in fact the king of Israel at this point. He is at least willing to accept that he may have lost the throne; and this temporary loss of the throne was surely to make him focus more on the promised seed of 2 Sam. 7, who after David's death would reign eternally upon David's throne, in David's resurrected presence.

David *assumes* that "the Lord hath said unto [Shimei], Curse David"; but later he orders Solomon to punish Shimei for doing this. So it seems that David had a way of assuming God had spoken when it was more his own assumption. It is another example of David's tendency to wildly over interpret, which led him to a mistaken obsession about building the temple and assuming Solomon to be his Messianic seed.

Or we could read this as an example of where Yahweh confirms an evil man in his evil way, telling him to do what he wants to do; just as the evil spirit from Yahweh confirmed Saul in his downwards path. And indeed there was some truth in Shimei's cursing of David; for he was guilty of blood and should have been stoned to death. We note with possible interest that another "son of Gera", Ehud, also spoke a word of Yahweh as judgment to a wicked king (Jud. 3:15).

2Sa 16:11 David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, who came forth from my bowels, seeks my life. How much more this Benjamite, now? Leave him alone, and let him curse; for Yahweh has invited him-

David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote: "Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man...as

he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so may it be far from him. He clothed himself also with cursing as with a garment..." (Ps. 109:16-18). Again we see in David both grace and less noble feelings at the same time- pride, vindictiveness, unforgiveness...

2Sa 16:12 It may be that Yahweh will look on the wrong done to me, and that Yahweh will repay me good for the cursing of me today-

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).

David still considers that he is unfairly suffering "wrong" ['evil']. Although this was the specific punishment for his great sins in the Bathsheba affair. And yet he has just accepted that Shimei's stoning of him was just and from God, in that he deserved it. We see here what we surely have all experienced- lip service to the idea that we are sinners and justly condemned to suffering and death, and yet chafing at these things being unfair in our personal case. All at the very same time.

I suggest that it is at this exact moment, reflecting upon Shimei's words, that Psalm 3 was composed in David's mind. And without doubt Ps. 109:28 fits in here: "They may curse, but You bless. When they arise, they will be shamed, but Your servant shall rejoice. Let my adversaries be clothed with dishonour, may they cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe". The rest of the Psalm is David's ranting against Shimei and Ahithophel, with some words of it being quoted in the New Testament about Judas. But the logic is concerning. David doesn't accept that the cursing of Shimei is just, even though he admits God has bidden Shimei curse. Even at this time, he begs for judgment upon Shimei. And he likes to imagine that because he was being cursed, therefore God would have pity upon him and bless him. David thereby refuses any idea that there is a connection between his sins and his experience of being cursed. The essential accusations of Shimei were true, even if the details weren't. David's reaction here seems typical- thinking he can as it were bend some good from God out of his sufferings for his sins.

2Sa 16:13 So David and his men went by the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him, and cursed as he went, threw stones at him, and threw dust-

The language of cursing and dust recalls Gen. 3:19. That David's sin is indeed an epitome of all our sins is proved by the way in which the record of it is framed in the language of the fall. Adam is presented as David. Gen. 2:8,17 = 2 Sam. 12:5; Gen. 2:17 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 6:2 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 12:10; Gen. 3:7 = 2 Sam. 12:11; Gen. 3:8 = 2 Sam. 11:24; 12:12; Gen. 3:21 = 2 Sam. 12:13; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 16:11; Gen. 3:19 = 2 Sam. 16:13. It should also be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7=Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7=Is. 1:18; Ps. 65:2=Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

Throughout all these experiences, David was composing Psalms. Ps 7:4,5 records David's objections to having his glory rolled in the dust by Shimei, an allusion to Shimei throwing dust at him. He denies that he has done evil to people as accused, and insists he has done only good. This was true of the house of Saul, but he fails to see that he had been a man of blood to Uriah.

2Sa 16:14 The king, and all the people who were with him, became weary; and he refreshed himself there-

The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us.

2Sa 16:15 Absalom, and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him-

Absalom entered Jerusalem the day David fled (2 Sam. 15:37; 17:1). Ahithophel's advice to attack David immediately was undoubtedly the best advice.

2Sa 16:16 It happened, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, had come to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, Long live the king! Long live the king!-

Hushai doesn't define which king he has in mind. This raises the question as to whether lying is always wrong, necessarily. Rahab's lies and those of the Hebrew midwives at the exodus are rewarded as acts of faith. But this is of course a slippery slope. But such open questions are left for our reflection, underlining that spiritual life cannot be run by laws but by principles. See on 2 Sam. 17:20.

2Sa 16:17 Absalom said to Hushai, Is this your kindness to your friend? Why didn't you go with your friend?-

There is a kind of parallel here with David probing Ittai as to whether he wasn't in fact an agent of Absalom (2 Sam. 15:19).

Here we have another example of a man knowing or suspecting that he is being lied to or likely to be deceived, and falling headlong for the deception anyway. This happens several times to David, and I have noted that this was precisely the case with Uriah as he returned to the battlefield with a letter from David, and as he marched to an engagement where he was sure he would be killed. What David did is being played out before his eyes yet again.

2Sa 16:18 Hushai said to Absalom, No; but whoever Yahweh and this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his will I be, and with him I will stay-

This again (as noted on :16) is phrased ambiguously; for Hushai believed that Yahweh and the true Israel of God had chosen David and not Absalom. Hushai's double speak is so obvious! We enquire why Absalom didn't see through it. We can only conclude that God's Spirit can work directly on human minds to blind and also reveal.

2Sa 16:19 Again, whom should I serve? Shouldn't I serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so will I be in your presence-

Hushai accepts that David has indeed lost the throne, for the time being.

2Sa 16:20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give your counsel what we shall do-

Ahithophel's counsel directly leads to the fulfilment of Nathan's prophecy that a usurper would sleep with David's wives. Perhaps he based his counsel about this upon Nathan's words. But probably those words of Nathan had been privately stated to David and not generally known. So we reflect how Ahithophel's advice and Absalom's acceptance of it was all of their own genuine freewill. And yet it was to fulfil God's word of punishment.

2Sa 16:21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, Go in to your father's concubines, that he has left to keep the house. Then all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong-

Ahithophel assumed that such behaviour would make David hate Absalom. But he had not factored in David's deep spirituality and humility. For this did not make David hate Absalom, and at his death, David was heartbroken, despite having been reestablished as king. Further, I suggested on 2 Sam. 15:16 that David left his concubines in Jerusalem fully aware of what would happen according to Nathan's prophecy. But he did not seek to stop that prophecy coming true; he humbled himself to accept his sin and the judgment pronounced for it.

The record in 2 Sam. 15:16; 16:21 uses a slightly strange word as to how David "left ten women, who were concubines, to keep [specifically, to guard] the house". We of course wonder how the ten women were supposed to guard David's house against Absalom's army. If we stick with just the idea of 'keeping the house', why would David so wish there to be no break in the housekeeping in his absence? I suggest the better translation is that he left the ten women 'in the guard house'. And so again we have the scenes with Uriah played out again before David's eyes. He slept with Uriah's wife, called Uriah back from the front, got him drunk and urged him to go home and sleep with his wife. But Uzziah instead lay down to sleep with David's servants at the gate of David's house- clearly, the guard house: "Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord" (2 Sam. 11:9). Now David used that same guard house to try to hide ten of his women. We may note that the guarded house they were finally kept in (2 Sam. 20:3), the house of guarding / keeping, is described with a related word to that used for 'keeping / guarding' in 2 Sam. 15:16; 16:21.

The reasoning was that some Israelites guessed that David and Absalom might reconcile; and then David would seek revenge upon those who had backed Absalom. So the idea was to make David so hate Absalom that it was clear to everyone that there would never be any reconciliation between them. To publically lay with David's wives was the ultimate humiliation for David. His lack of response to it shows him to have been truly weak and humiliated.

2Sa 16:22 So they spread Absalom a tent on the top of the house; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel-

Walking upon the roof of his house connects with several passages which associate the roof top with a place of idolatry: 2 Kings 23:12; Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5. It may be that David regularly worshipped the idol of Bathsheba in his mind, upon the bed which he had on the house top. David's sin with Bathsheba is therefore not such a momentary slip. Significantly, it was in that very place where Absalom later lay with his wives in retribution for what he had done (2 Sam. 16:22). From this we could infer that David lay with Bathsheba in that same place on the roof top. This is significant insofar as it shows how exactly the thought leads to the action. David's thoughts in that spot were translated into that very action, in precisely the same physical location.

We recall that David had intentionally left those women behind. Had he really loved them, he would by all means have taken them with him- and so the threatened judgment of 2 Sam. 12:11,12 would not have come true: "I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun". God of course foresaw David's lack of love for those women. Again we note that although people are said to love David, David is never recorded as loving anyone.

These women were likely the concubines / harem of Saul, which had been given to David by Yahweh [Nathan rebuked David about taking Bathsheba because "I gave your master's wives into your bosom"]. Now they were used and claimed by Absalom. Again the incident was designed to recall Nathan's words to David's memory.

2Sa 16:23 The counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if a man inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom-

As noted above, Ahithophel's words about sleeping with the concubines were in fact a repetition of Nathan's inspired, prophetic words to David. Ahithophel was perhaps indeed inspired at times to speak God's words as a prophet. But this didn't mean therefore that all he said was true. The fact Absalom will now prefer Hushai's advice over Ahithophel's shows how Absalom didn't respect God's word. He ignored the words of the man accepted as an inspired prophet, and instead followed advice which was designed to appeal to his pride. And yet Absalom's failure was all in God's purpose. Again we marvel at the intricacy of how God works with men.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 17

2Sa 17:1 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, Let me now choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David tonight-

Absalom entered Jerusalem the day David fled (2 Sam. 15:37). The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us. Ahithophel's advice to attack David immediately was undoubtedly the best advice. Even if we understand a "thousand" as a military grouping rather than a literal figure, this was a considerable number of men to have available. Truly the support for Absalom was not inconsiderable.

Psalm 3 refers to this time. "Many" in Ps. 3:1,2 is the same word used for how the people "increased" with Absalom (2 Sam. 15:12). "Rise up" in Ps. 3:1 is the word used of Ahithophel wishing to 'rise up' and pursue David (2 Sam. 17:1; 18:31). In response to the rising up of others against him, David asks God to 'rise up' (Ps. 3:7 s.w.). David's prayer in Psalm 3 was answered, and Ahithophel 'rose up' and committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

Ahithophel's speech is all about him- "I will... let me". Clearly he is motivated by personal revenge upon David because Bathsheba was his granddaughter. In fact, Ahithophel was so obsessed with this personal revenge that when his plan was rejected by Absalom in favour of Hushai's, he kills himself. Hushai's speech instead focuses upon Absalom and what Absalom could do and what glory he could achieve for himself. This appeal to Absalom's pride was what won Absalom over, although it was all of God's hand in the minds of the men with Absalom. For they all originally thought that Ahithophel's advice was good. But then suddenly changed.

Yet we note that the Psalms relevant to this time have David cursing Ahithophel, bemoaning his lot that his former trusted friend has turned against him. Consider Psalm 41: "My own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate bread with me, has lifted up his heel against me [quoted about Judas but initially about Ahithophel]. But You, Yahweh... raise me up, that I may repay them... uphold me in my integrity" (Ps. 41:9-12). Or Psalm 55: "It was not an enemy who insulted me, then I could have endured it... But it was you, a man like me, my companion, and my familiar friend. We took sweet fellowship together... Let death come suddenly on them, let them go down alive into Sheol. For wickedness is in their dwelling, in their midst. As for me, I will call on God. Yahweh will save me... He will never allow the righteous to be moved. But You, God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction" (Ps. 55:12-23). But Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. David's lamenting of the situation and cursing of Ahithophel reflects a total lack of remorse over his sins, and a refusal to accept consequence. And a total disregard of the huge grace God showed him by not demanding the death penalty. The fact we are all still alive, despite being worthy of death, must be appreciated by us. And it will help us cope with disappointment and injustice at the hands of others, and lower our expectations of what we consider is our "right" in this life.

2Sa 17:2 I will come on him while he is weary and exhausted, and will make him afraid. All the people who are with him shall flee. I will strike the king only-

This was clearly designed to appeal to what Absalom wanted to hear and to happen. He wanted power over the people; he therefore wanted his father dead, believing that this would mean that his father's supporters would give up and come under his power. Ahithophel's advice was to kill one man [David] and let the rest of the men around him flee. This was exactly David's plan for the murder of Uriah- although it happened that Joab allowed other men were killed to make the plan look less obvious. Time and again we see David's past behaviour played out before his eyes.

2Sa 17:3 and I will bring back all the people to you. The man whom you seek is as if all returned; and so all the people shall be in peace-

The LXX reveals deeper the flattery used here. The idea was that the people with David of course really loved Absalom and had been with him in their hearts, but had just temporarily left him to go with David; and they would very easily return to Absalom without the need for bloodshed, if David alone were to be slain: "And I will cause all the people to return unto thee, as the bride returneth to her husband. Only one man's life dost thou seek, and unto all the people there shall be peace".

2Sa 17:4 The saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel-

As noted on :3, it was indeed excellently expressed advice. It appealed to Absalom's pride, and the elders would commend it as designed to avoid mass bloodshed. The same mentality is employed as in the argument to kill the Lord Jesus- it were better one man died at the hands of Rome than many, so went the argument.

2Sa 17:5 Then Absalom said, Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he says-

"Hear likewise" could suggest that Absalom assumed that such excellent advice would surely likewise be agreed by Hushai also. Seeing they all liked Ahithophel's plan, this request for a second opinion is unusual and clearly God made Absalom do this. He does work directly on human minds, sowing seeds and making men make choices and decisions they may not otherwise have made. The Holy Spirit works in this way in human hearts to this day.

2Sa 17:6 When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him saying, Ahithophel has spoken like this. Shall we do what he says? If not, speak up-

The Divine author is as a cameraman zoomed in upon the scene. What might otherwise seem superfluous recording of words is done so that we can enter more fully into the scene, waiting with baited breath, as it were, to see if Ahithophel's smart advice is going to be followed. It was such good advice in the context that it would seem impossible to overturn it. Indeed 2 Sam. 16:23 says that it was from God; so we have an example of where God speaks a word but it is over to man to fulfil it or not.

2Sa 17:7 Hushai said to Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time-

"At this time" could imply that the previous counsel, to sleep with David's concubines, was "good" (2 Sam. 16:21). Hushai was willing to go along with that because he knew that this is what Nathan's prophecy had stated would happen. But there had been no Divine word about David being slain by Absalom.

2Sa 17:8 Hushai said moreover, You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are bitter in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field-

Hushai was the last person to have seen David. His description of David as bitter and aggressive as a bear robbed of her cubs was so untrue. David was depressed and weak. There are lies and twists of truth throughout this tragic narrative. Ziba lies, Shimei lies, David lies to Shimei, Absalom has lied, and David's deliverance is worked out through Hushai's deceit.

How to love the unlovely, to live without bitterness, to not be a psychological victim of our past experiences, is absolutely vital for the true child of God. In David and above all the Lord Jesus we see this achieved so supremely. He was at times bitter, as the imprecatory Psalms reveal, and as Hushai commented, David was a man "bitter of soul" (2 Sam. 17:8 RVmg.). But there is also every reason to think that David at this point was not in fact bitter over what he had lost. He accepts he has sinned and is being judged, and throws himself upon God's grace to restore him. But his tendencies to bitterness were well known, and so Hushai's claims about David were absolutely credible to his audience. And he advises therefore not to assume too easily that such a bitter man would give up without there being bloodshed. And avoiding bloodshed was important in order to keep Absalom's demand for loyalty credible.

Your father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people-
The idea of attacking the entire group and hoping to thereby get David... was unrealistic, Hushai argues. He likely would not lodge with the people. He would be like Jacob in his night of crisis, fleeing from Laban and meeting Esau.

2Sa 17:9 Behold, he is now hidden in some pit, or in some other place. It will happen, when some of them have fallen at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom!'

Hushai imagines that Ahithophel leading a band of men to take David will not be a good idea. For Ahithophel was seen as a prophet, a spiritual man, an advisor- and not a military man. By contrast, David and his men were military men; and had a long track record of winning battles against superior forces. Hushai plays on the deep concerns about not causing bloodshed. The image of David hiding in a "cave" (Heb.) naturally recalls his hiding in a cave and nearly having the mastery over Saul. Hushai wishes to recall these classic images of David and warn against thinking that a quick victory over him was possible.

2Sa 17:10 Even he who is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, will utterly melt; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men-

The military prowess of David and his close circle was legendary. And everyone wanted to avoid bloodshed and find a way of destroying David alone. Playing on that concern, Hushai started to make huge sense to all present.

2Sa 17:11 But I advise that all Israel be gathered together to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude-

Hushai's doublespeak continues, at least in the Hebrew. For "Gathered together to you" can also mean "against you" (as in Gen. 34:30; Mic. 4:11; Zech. 12:3). And yet his doublespeak isn't perceived by Absalom.

We must remember that baptism means that we are *now* the seed of Abraham, and the blessings of forgiveness, of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and God's turning us away from our sins are right now being fulfilled in us (Acts 3:27-29). Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (2 Sam. 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6)- all in antitype of how Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

And that you go to battle in your own person-

This was an appeal to Absalom's pride. he was not a military man, but being the figurehead of an inevitable victory by sheer force of numbers was going to appeal to him. And the idea was that the force of numbers would mean that only David and his immediate hard core followers would put up a fight; and it was they who needed to be eliminated and not anyone else. This was also an appeal to the concept of kingship in Israel (1 Sam. 8:20; 18:16)- a king was supposed to lead Israel to victory in battle rather than stay at home and leave it to others, which is what Ahithophel's advice amounted to. And David was in shame exactly because he had not led his men in the Rabbah campaign and had instead remained in Jerusalem and committed adultery (2 Sam. 11:1). Again and again, there are echoes of David's sin with Bathsheba throughout the record. Joab advises David to at least symbolically lead the Israelite army into Rabbah once it falls (2 Sam. 11:27,28) and that's the very advice Hushai is giving to Absalom. Quite possibly at the time Ahithophel had advised David to take Joab's advice.

2Sa 17:12 So shall we come on him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light on him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him we will not leave so much as one-

"As the dew falls on the ground" suggests this would be an easy and effortless victory. This is inviting Absalom to act as Saul, using spies and intelligence to track down David to some hiding place and then suddenly come upon him. The idea was to kill not only David but his immediate band of warriors. These were the very men to whom the kingdom of Israel owed its existence. To agree to slay them all was really treason of the worst sort. But jealousy means that all true qualifications and history of the other people are ignored, in the mad obsession with their destruction. The same thing goes on in church infighting today.

2Sa 17:13 Moreover, if he be gone into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there isn't one small stone found there-

This alludes to the tearing down of a leprous house. There was the quasi religious claim that Absalom's putsch was in fact his devoted service of Yahweh (2 Sam. 15:8); and this is now accompanied by the suggestion that any supporting David were an unclean, leprous city which must be pulled down stone by stone.

2Sa 17:14 Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For Yahweh had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Yahweh might bring evil on Absalom-

David had prayed for Ahithophel's wisdom to be turned to foolishness (2 Sam. 15:31). In response to this, Yahweh had 'ordained' in the court of Heaven that this was to happen. And He worked upon the psychology of those men and their perceptions, so that Ahithophel's advice was defeated.

Was it really *good* counsel? Not in God's eyes. It was only 'good' for Absalom from a fleshly viewpoint. And yet the record speaks from Absalom's perspective; it speaks of something definitely evil as being "good" within the context in which it was given. Thus the record here refers to men's bad thinking as if it is correct. This explains why there are no footnotes throughout the Bible, pointing this kind of thing out; and why the wrong understandings of demons aren't specifically corrected in the New Testament.

Amnon did "wrong" to Tamar David's daughter (2 Sam. 13:16). "Wrong" here is the same word translated "evil" in the punishment upon David in 2 Sam. 12:10 "I will raise up evil against you from within your own house / family". The "evil" of Amnon was therefore

indeed his own error and sin, but it was used by God and 'raised up' in that God confirmed Amnon in his evil in order to punish David. At the time of Absalom's rebellion, Shimei comments that "Evil [s.w.] has overtaken you [David] because you are a man of blood" (2 Sam. 16:8). But David proactively sought to avoid that "evil": "Get up! Let us flee [from Absalom]... or he will soon... bring evil [s.w.] upon us" (2 Sam. 15:14). We see here the complexities of God's workings. The "evil" was indeed to come upon David, yet he took steps to avoid some of it and God confirmed him in that and delivered him from Absalom. And so 2 Sam. 17:14 "For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin [evil] on Absalom" (NRSV). The complexities and ebb and flow of all this working are beyond any final human analysis; and this explains why there appear various things in our lives which clearly feel to be of Divine intervention, but whose meaning is beyond our analysis.

2Sa 17:15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Ahithophel counselled Absalom and the elders of Israel that way; and I have counselled this way-

Hushai of course was desperately playing for time. He knew that David and his group were not far away, having only left Jerusalem the same day Absalom arrived there. The small group who were loyal to David within the court of Absalom correspond with those within the court of Saul (see on :17). Like all our crises, this one was really intended to allow David to apply all he had learned over the years.

Hushai's messaging David in this way suggests he actually didn't think his suggestion would be accepted by Absalom. The fact it was accepted, when it was not the best advice and the record itself calls Ahithophel's advice "good / better", is all a sign of God's grace and His ability to work on human hearts to accept wrong advice or teaching. Even bad advice is used by Him in His wider purpose. To save His beloved, those with a heart like David.

2Sa 17:16 Now therefore send quickly and tell David saying, 'Don't lodge this night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people who are with him'-

"The plain of the wilderness" (AV) is the plain of Jericho (Josh. 5:10; 2 Kings 25:5; 2 Sam. 2:29; 17:16). "The way of the wilderness" in 2 Sam. 15:23 was therefore the road to Jericho, used by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho being beaten [= suffering for his sins, in the parable], and being saved by grace and now law. Surely the Lord had David in mind, and is presenting the long day of his tragic exile as being the experience of everyman.

2Sa 17:17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying by En Rogel; and a female servant used to go and tell them; and they went and told king David. For they didn't want to be seen to come into the city-

The coming into the city recalls Jonathan being "in the city" whilst David was in exile outside it. We noted on :15 the similarities with the time when a minority in the court of Saul were loyal to David. Jonathan and David could not be seen together and had to communicate very carefully; and so it was here. The female servant, the lowest of the low in society, as both a woman and a slave, was the vital and crucial link between the two young men and the faithful priests in the city. This is typical of how God works.

2Sa 17:18 But a boy saw them, and told Absalom. Then they both went away quickly, and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down there-

There were clearly a number of faithful supporters. The poor servant woman, the wealthy

home owner in Bahurim... and yet they are presented as struggling against the "boy" who noticed and reported things, and Absalom's servants (:20). It was really a repeat of the situation with Saul and David.

2Sa 17:19 The woman took and spread the covering over the well's mouth, and spread out bruised grain on it; and nothing was known-

"The woman" could refer to the servant girl of :17, or it could be as GNB "The man's wife".

2Sa 17:20 Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house; and they said, Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? The woman said to them, They have gone over the brook of water. When they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem-

Literally, 'they are over the water'. And they were over water, because they were hiding in a well just above the water at the bottom of it (:18). Again, as discussed on 2 Sam. 16:16, this raises the question as to whether lying is always wrong, necessarily. Rahab's lies and those of the Hebrew midwives at the exodus are rewarded as acts of faith. But this is of course a slippery slope. But such open questions are left for our reflection, underlining that spiritual life cannot be run by laws but by principles. Indeed the way the woman lies about two men of God by saying they had gone away over a river is so similar to Rahab's situation. It could be that the woman was inspired by Rahab.

2Sa 17:21 It happened, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David; and they said to David, Arise and pass quickly over the water; for thus has Ahithophel counselled against you-

The implication was that Absalom was so vain and unstable that he might still change his mind and follow Ahithophel's advice.

2Sa 17:22 Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they passed over the Jordan. By the morning light there lacked not one of them who had not gone over the Jordan-

The crossing of Jordan after the lie of a woman definitely recalls the faithfulness of Rahab in lying about another two men of God; see on :20. All the people passing over Jordan uses the very words of Josh. 3:17, as if this retreat was going to turn into a magnificent defeat through their restoration. It also recalls Jacob passing over Jordan, in the direction David was going, and then finally returning in restoration by God's grace (Gen. 32:10). All this was intended as encouragement to the exiles in Babylon as they read these records.

2Sa 17:23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose, and went home, to his city, and set his house in order, and hanged himself; and he died, and was buried in the tomb of his father-

Whatever other reasons there were for Ahithophel's suicide, one was simply his difficulty to live with the fact that the truth he knew was not accepted by others. He spoke as the oracle of God (2 Sam. 16:23) and so he felt sure he had God on his side in giving the advice he did. His advice about Absalom sleeping with David's wife on his roof was a repeat of what Nathan the prophet had said from God. In essence, this is a common problem. We feel we know some truth, we may be sure it is in fact Divine truth; but if it is refused by others, we find it hard to live with. We are not secure in our own personal relationship with God. This misery at not having one's truth accepted by others is commonplace; and explains the miserable lives of so many conspiracy theorists.

"Set his house in order" is literally he ordained / commanded concerning his house. The same word as in :14- Yahweh had ordained / commanded to destroy his counsel. God's anger is

clearly against this angry man, and He is 'with' David. But this man's anger was in a way justifiable because of what David had done to his granddaughter Bathsheba. Good people can become so bitter and enraged at others' sin and injustice that they themselves fall into sin and self destruction. Church life is full of this.

His suicide may have been because he knew that if Hushai's counsel was followed, David would defeat Absalom- and surely kill Ahithophel in vengeance. Indeed it is unclear when his suicide happened. It may well have taken him some days to return to his home, and then on news of Absalom's death he committed suicide. It wasn't simply because of loss of face. The fact he feared David would do this, indeed he was totally certain David would, gives a tacit insight into David's character. He had murdered his wife Bathsheba's husband, and would clearly murder her grandfather. There is again no hint that despite the vast forgiveness and grace shown David, he has any noticeable grace himself. His character has not been apparently transformed. He had murdered Uriah and been forgiven, but would murder Ahithophel for advising to murder him. Shimei merely threw dust at David during Absalom's rebellion- and David on his deathbed commands Solomon to murder Shimei for it. For sure, Ahithophel's fear of David's revenge was not unfounded. Psalm 3, subtitled as referring to the time David fled from Absalom, has David asking God to smash the teeth and destroy the lives of "the wicked", any who were his "enemies". He clearly had a death wish for them all.

Ahithophel's suicide was a kind of answer to David's prayer at this time in Ps. 5:10: "Hold them guilty, God. Let them fall by their own advice; thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You". Whilst his suicide was completely his decision, it was also an answer to David's prayer at this point.

As believers in the representative nature of the Lord's sacrifice, we are thereby empowered to break out of the routine of our lives. Life becomes valuable; we number our days with wisdom (Ps. 90:12). We no longer fear failure, for firstly we know there is forgiveness in Christ, and secondly, our focus is upon living the real life of ultimate discovery and adventure, able to live with the fears which this presents to us. Failure is no longer a problem to us; for the aim is ever before us. We will not be like Ahithophel, committing suicide because he ran out of political highway and lost his power to others. Our failures are nothing more than temporary setbacks, as the baby who stretches out her hands to the lamp on the ceiling and cries because she can't reach it. We take them all, even our sins, in the spirit of the cross- the supreme failure which became the supreme triumph of God and the true person.

2Sa 17:24 Then David came to Mahanaim. Absalom passed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him-

Mahanaim had at one time been the capital of the Israelite kingdom under Abner and Ishbosheth, during the seven years when Abner had led the opposition to David's kingdom in Judah. And now David found refuge there. He had shown much grace to the house of Saul at that time, and now, many years later, he was finding grace in the one time capital of his opposition.

2Sa 17:25 Absalom set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man, whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother-

There is much unclarity over "the Israelite", because that seems obvious, unless the point is that he was not of Judah. The texts read "Jezreelite", and 1 Chron. 2:17 has "Jether the

Ishmeelite". In this case the idea is that this man was not an Israelite, and had slept with the daughter of the serpent, Nahash. The patriotic, brave and loyal Joab was followed by someone of poorer qualification, even though his relative had slept with this man.

2Sa 17:26 Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead-

The description of Barzillai as a Gileadite (:27) shows that Absalom did not enjoy universal support from the rest of Israel.

2Sa 17:27 It happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim-

As happens in a crisis, all manner of people came out of the woodwork and showed their respects. David had been friends with Nahash but had fought against his son Hanun, Shobi's brother (2 Sam. 10:2). But a theme of this time of crisis is that Gentiles who had once been David's enemies, and whose families and relatives David had slain in war such as Ittai (see on 2 Sam. 15:19-21), now come out on David's side. They could only have done so because they had been converted to the God of Israel by David, their one time national enemy. Rogelim in Gilead likewise may well have been Gentile territory, and his descendants were unable to prove their genealogies (Ezra 2:61-63), although they wished to serve as priests and support the restored Kingdom, just as their ancestor supported David's restoration. Machir was the man who had allowed Mephibosheth to stay with him (2 Sam. 9:4,5), and would have been deeply impressed by David's huge grace to Mephibosheth and the house of Saul. He thereby realized that David was a man of God despite out of character failings.

2Sa 17:28 brought beds, basins, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans, lentils, roasted grain-

"Beds" suggests that they stayed there for some time and were fed by their hosts. This would have been a considerable commitment. David "lay" at Mahanaim (2 Sam. 19:32), suggesting he was sick.

2Sa 17:29 honey, butter, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David, and for the people who were with him, to eat: for they said, The people are hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness-

Psalm 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" refers to this time. Shimei and other "enemies" were aware of his path. The reference is to the feasts prepared for him in the desert by Ziba (2 Sam. 16:2) and Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27-29). But the phrase "prepare a table" is that used of the preparation of the table of shewbread (Ex. 40:4), and it is used in a religious sense in Is. 65:11; Ez. 23:41. Perhaps David held some kind of religious ceremony whilst on the run, the equivalent to our breaking of bread meeting; perhaps Barzillai's feast was turned into a religious experience. And his experience of the Lord's table strengthened him with great encouragement, as we also can experience.

Psalm 42 clearly has reference to David's time at Mahanaim, which could have been months (2 Sam. 17:24; 19:32), whilst fleeing Absalom. David "lay" there for some time (2 Sam. 19:32), as if he was ill at this time. This was the original context of the Psalm, but David sitting by the waters in exile was obviously relevant to the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon. Hence the title in the Syriac: "A Psalm which David sung when he was an exile and desired to return to Jerusalem"; the Arabic "A Psalm for the backsliding Jews". Psalm 42 is all relevant to this time in David's life:

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, God- The theme of water

in this Psalm (:7 too) is appropriate to David being by the waters of the Kidron and then the Jordan as he fled from Absalom. David sitting by the waters in exile was obviously relevant to the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon.

Psalm 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?- This reveals David's special longing for the sanctuary in Zion, where he 'appeared before God' to keep the Mosaic feasts (Ex. 23:17). But the application to the Lord Jesus is very clear- His was the ultimate, actual appearance before God in Heaven.

Psalm 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually ask me, Where is your God?- This would imply that David's enemies had access to him whilst he lay at Mahanaim in exile from Absalom; we recall how Shimei followed David on the route, cursing him as he went. Or perhaps his own supporters were saying this. The exiles were likewise mocked in Babylon; and the Lord Jesus likewise on the cross.

Psalm 42:4 These things I remember and pour out my soul within me, how I used to go with the crowd, and led them to God's house, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day- This is David recalling how he used to lead the people towards the sanctuary on Zion on feast days. "God's house" however suggests the temple, and this was not built in David's time. So this may well have been added under inspiration when the Psalm was used by the sons of Korah in the Babylonian exile; see on :1.

Psalm 42:5 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God!- This kind of self-talk should characterize all of God's true people. For this is the very essence of spiritual mindedness. Psalm 42 has many echoes of the cross, although primarily it refers to David's longing for the tabernacle whilst exiled by Absalom. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (:5 AV) is the same in the Septuagint as Mt. 26:38 "Now is my soul troubled".

For I shall still praise Him for the saving help of His presence- Perhaps applicable to a vision of glory appearing to the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, transferring some of the glory of His countenance to Jesus as He did to Moses, so that the Lord's arresters initially fell down when they saw Him. David spoke of praising God for the health of His face; and then talks of how God is the source of the health of *his* face (Ps. 42:5,11 RV). It's as if the glory of the invisible God rubbed off upon David, as it did literally for Moses, whose face became radiant with the glory of the Angel who spoke to him.

Psalm 42:6 Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar- This may have been the area of Mahanaim, where it seems David remained whilst in exile from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:24). "The heights of Hermon" is literally 'the Hermons', LXX "the Hermonites", perhaps referring to the mountain range which began at Mount Hermon and continued to the Mahanaim area. "Mizar" is unknown, but could be read as "the little hill" (LXX). However, this interpretation of the geography could appear forced, especially with the reference to "cataracts" in :7. Hence Ray Stedman suggested that David was recalling "an experience that he had when he was in the northern part of Israel near Mount Hermon, at the head of the Jordan River, on a little peak of the range where Mount Hermon is located, called Mount Mizar (which, incidentally, means "little mountain"). On that occasion he could hear the waterfalls of that mountainous region, the thundering cataracts. He became aware of how they seemed to be calling to one another, "deep calling unto deep," and it reminded him that the deeps in God call out to the deeps in man".

Psalm 42:7 Deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls. All Your waves and Your billows have swept over me- Waterfalls" is better "cataracts", perhaps referring to the spot on the Jordan River where he was sitting as he composed this Psalm. See on :6. David like Jonah feels he has drowned and is in a living death.

Psalm 42:8 Yahweh will command His grace in the daytime. In the night His song shall be with me: a prayer to the God of my life- Yahweh's song connects with how the exiles also by the waters (of Babylon) were asked to sing Yahweh's song, the Psalms used in temple worship. David says that he will sing Yahweh's song, the temple liturgy, even though in exile from the temple. For he realizes that God's presence is not limited to the sanctuary. GNB may be correct in suggesting: "May the LORD show his constant love during the day, so that I may have a song at night". "The God of my life" could mean the God who alone could preserve David's life; or the God who was the focus of David's life.

Psalm 42:9 I will ask God, my rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?- The prototype of Christ feeling forsaken was in David feeling forsaken by God when he fled from Absalom (Ps. 42:9; 43:2; 88:14); but clearly he was not actually forsaken. Despite these feelings, David was spiritually mature enough to still consider God as his "rock", even though he felt God wasn't coming through for him as he expected. He expresses the same in Ps. 43:2. "Oppression" was what God's later people were to suffer at the hands of their enemies (s.w. Is. 30:20; Dt. 26:7); David's suffering was seen as that of God's later people, and so his Psalms were reused in this context.

Psalm 42:10 As with a sword in my bones, my adversaries reproach me, while they continually ask me, Where is your God?- David was sensitive to words; whilst in exile from Absalom, his enemies clearly had access to him and were communicating with him "continually". And he felt those words as swords. The sword that pierced Christ's soul on the cross was the sword of the abuse which was shouted at Him then (Ps. 42:10); and the piercing of Christ's soul, Simeon had said, was the piercing of Mary's soul too. In other words, they were both really cut, pierced, by this mocking of the virgin birth. Neither of them were hard and indifferent to it. And the fact they both stood together at the cross and faced it together must have drawn them closer, and made their parting all the harder. She alone knew beyond doubt that God was Christ's father, even though the Lord had needed to rebuke her for being so carried away with the humdrum of life that she once referred to Joseph as His father (Lk. 2:33). For everyone else, there must always have been that tendency to doubt.

Psalm 42:11 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him, the saving help of my countenance, and my God- "Despair" is the word used of David's feelings after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 38:6). It is the word for bowing down, for humility. But nobody likes being bowed down in humility, and David likewise wriggles against it. But we see here the kind of self-talk which is characteristic of all those who are truly spiritually minded. This 'bowing down' was to characterize the sufferings of Judah for their sins (s.w. Is. 2:11; 5:15; 26:5). David was possibly asking himself a rhetorical question- Why was he bowed down? Because God wanted to humble him so that He might restore him. But "help" is the usual word for 'salvation', and "countenance" is the usual word for 'face'. 'Save my face' would be a fair translation. And here again we encounter our concerns as to whether David's repentance was as thorough as it might have been. He did

indeed confess his sin and seek forgiveness. But so much of his praying at this time is for God to save him from shame, and to judge and destroy and eternally condemn those at whose hands he was receiving judgment for his sins. And this was the problem with the exiles whom he later came to represent.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 18

2Sa 18:1 David numbered the people who were with him, and set over them captains over thousands and captains over hundreds-

This would imply David had major support. However, "thousands" and "hundreds" are often not to be read literally, but refer rather to regiments or military divisions. The captains of these thousands and hundreds were Joab and Abishai (:2), men of proven low moral character. And yet the reference to captains over thousands and hundreds clearly alludes to the Mosaic commands to set wise, upright men over hundreds and thousands: "You shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds"; "wise men and known... made... heads over you, captains of thousands, captains of hundreds" (Ex. 18:21; Dt. 1:15). Joab was the man who had actually executed David's command to murder Uriah, getting other soldiers to die to cover it; he was hardly a "man of truth". David's conscience was surely touched by appointing Joab to be a "captain" at this time. Time and again we see David's behaviour to be far from obedient to God's law, which he said he loved and studied all the time. Likewise we will note the use of a mule by him, for Solomon to sit on as a sign he was king, and the possibility that Absalom was riding David's mule. But mules as cross breeds were forbidden under the Mosaic law.

2Sa 18:2 David sent forth the people, a third part under the hand of Joab, a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite-

We note how David had come to trust Ittai to lead his troops, having only recently doubted his loyalty (2 Sam. 15:21,22). He was persuaded of his sincerity and not disappointed. We marvel at the power of God's truth. A Philistine, from Goliath's home town, had accepted covenant relationship with Yahweh and therefore accepts His anointed king, David. Even though David had lied to the men of Gath and later slain them, and had recently disgraced himself again over Bathsheba. The power of God's truth was greater than all the disadvertisements for that truth in Yahweh's chosen representative. And this is a powerful challenge to those who turn away from God because of the bad examples of His representatives. And yet again we note how David has so few solid friends. His own tribe of Judah and people of Israel have gone off after Absalom; so that he has to appoint a Philistine man whose loyalty he doubts as his army commander. Likewise after Absalom's death he appoints Amasa, Absalom's general, as his general. David is thus portrayed as a lonely man whom others only want to use, and his final deathbed scene shows his family treating him likewise. An appropriate end for a man with no love and only narcissism.

The king said to the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also-

The significance of this is that David is harking back to how he had not gone out to war with his armies at the time of 2 Sam. 11:1, and it had led him into the sin with Bathsheba. At every point we find God referring him back to that sin. It seems that after the sin, David insisted on going out with his troops to battle even when he was too old to effectively do so (2 Sam. 21:17). It was the duty of Israel's king to lead Israel in battle; but David had failed to do so at the time of his sin with Bathsheba. And now he is being forcibly reminded that he is in fact

incapable of leading Israel in battle, and the same point will be made in 2 Sam. 21:17. It's not that God wanted to keep haunting David with his sin; rather was He earnestly trying to get David to re-live the sin and repent more fully, appreciating more what he had done to others.

2Sa 18:3 But the people said, You shall not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us-

They had been informed of the reasoning of Ahithophel and Hushai. They realized that Absalom wanted David personally dead, and they reflect their loyalty to David by reasoning as they do. Hence his forces at this time are called "the servants of David".

But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore now it's better that you are ready to help us from out of the city-

It had become a kind of proverb in Israel that David was worth ten thousand, after the words of the women at the time of David's victory over Goliath in his youth (1 Sam. 18:7); it was said right towards the end of his life, and contributed towards the jealousy felt toward him. People failed to perceive that the whole conflict was about the glory of God and not the human channel through which that was achieved. And yet one theme of the David story is of mixed motives. We wonder whether his soldiers realized that the civil war would end as soon as Absalom was dead, and so they were out to find and kill Absalom as soon as possible- and they knew that if David were present with them in the battle, this would be impossible. Again, David is deceived by those ostensibly on his side. His deceit towards Uriah keeps being played back to him before his eyes.

2Sa 18:4 The king said to them, I will do what seems best to you. The king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands-

This seems to reflect David's weakness of resolve and personality at this time, and perhaps he was like this for the rest of his life. He was focused only upon Absalom at this point, and agrees to "do what seems best to you". Hundreds and thousands refer to military units rather than literal numbers.

2Sa 18:5 The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. All the people heard when the king commanded all the captains concerning Absalom-

These are terms of endearment. "Young man" is literally 'boy' or 'child', and "deal gently" means to be 'soft', as one would deal with a baby. David comes over as besotted and out of touch with reality to ask that this murderer be treated delicately like a baby. Had David lived in the real world he would have faced his sins and repented of them, but it seems his denial of his sins led him to enter a make believe, Alice in wonderland world of his own making. Or at best, a very distorted version of reality generally.

2Sa 18:6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the forest of Ephraim-

Although Absalom was of Judah, his army is described as "Israel", as if David's men were the true Judah. By making this assault it would see that Absalom had not taken Hushai's advice, and had rushed ahead to try and remove David as soon as possible, so as to cement his power. The tragedy for Ahithophel was that his advice was more or less followed; his suicide in protest at Hushai's being thought better was therefore premature and rooted in hurt pride.

2Sa 18:7 The people of Israel were struck there before the servants of David, and there was a great slaughter there that day of twenty thousand men-

"Were struck" could imply there was some Divine involvement and striking down of

Absalom's forces, which David's servants followed up on. This could explain the rather strange statement that the forest ate up more of Absalom's men than David's men killed with the sword (:8).

2Sa 18:8 For the battle was there spread over the surface of all the country; and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured-

This is what David had prayed for in the Psalms; that his enemies at the time of Absalom's rebellion would be "consumed" (e.g. Ps. 71:13). David's desire was heard in that the sword and the forest devoured or consumed Absalom and his forces (2 Sam. 18:8). But when the prayer was answered, David wept bitterly for the loss of Absalom. We are thereby warned to be careful what we pray for, lest we receive it- which in some form we will. The forest would have been full of steep gorges leading down to the Jordan. But as suggested on :7, there may be reference here to some supernatural destruction of men. Or the idea may be that more perished whilst being chased in the forest, than in the actual battle.

2Sa 18:9 Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, so that he was taken up between the sky and earth; and the mule that was under him went on- It is stressed that Absalom had a mule, which was also the animal used by him to escape at the time he slew Abner. It was appropriate that at his death, he was also on a mule. And even more so, because the mule was a crossbred animal, which was against the Mosaic law. All through, Absalom comes over as a man who paid no respect to God's law in matters great or apparently small.

It's unclear whether "Absalom was riding on his mule" refers to his own mule or that of David. Quite possibly he was riding David's mule because this was a sign of being king- Solomon rode on David's mule as a sign that he was the chosen king (1 Kings 1:33,38). The clear picture is of his desire to be king leading him to his death, under God's providence. Absalom was left hanging on a tree- the punishment for treasonous kings in Josh. 8:29; 10:26.

2Sa 18:10 A certain man saw it and informed Joab and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak-

Contrary to pictures in children's Bibles, the idea is not that Absalom was suspended by his long hair. It seems rather that his head hit the forked boughs of the oak tree, and he was stunned and left hanging. His head and not his hair "caught hold of the oak" (:9). That said, it is inevitable that his head catching in the oak involved his hair, because the word "catching" (:9) is more appropriate to hair being entangled than a head being stunned. The woman of Tekoah had misled David into promising that not a hair of the head of her son would be damaged / "fall to the earth" (2 Sam. 14:11), and her son represented Absalom. On the basis of this judgment, David had to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem with David guaranteeing that not a hair of his head would fall to the earth. But Absalom's famous hair did fall to the earth. David is thereby presented as powerless and unwise in his judgment of his people. He was unfit to be king. He was intended to get the point, to take the nudge, and resign from being king and just focus on his music ministry and rejoice in the amazing assurance of personal salvation he had in 2 Sam. 7. But like so many men, those wonderful things weren't enough for him. He wanted it all visibly now in this life.

2Sa 18:11 Joab said to the man who told him, Behold, you saw it, and why didn't you strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten pieces of silver, and a belt-

The belt may refer to a military rank; Joab says he would have promoted the man and given him money, unless the "ten pieces of silver" also refers to some kind of badge of office.

2Sa 18:12 The man said to Joab, Though I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I still wouldn't put forth my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai saying, 'Beware that none touch the young man Absalom' -

The incident shows the intense loyalty of this anonymous man. David had a way of inspiring such deep loyalty; and this looks ahead to how we should be inspired by the Lord Jesus, refusing all material advantage for the sake of obedience to His word and wish, even if those wishes appear nonsensical to us.

2Sa 18:13 Otherwise if I had dealt falsely against his life (and there is no matter hidden from the king), then you yourself would have set yourself against me-

The soldier is saying that for sure David would have killed him had he killed Absalom. And Joab wouldn't have protected him, Joab wouldn't have stood up to David. We again have an insight into David's vengefulness and lack of hesitation to shed blood, even that of his own soldiers [cp. his murder of Uriah]- juxtaposed against his obsessive love for his wayward sons. We will later see that this explains the nervousness of Ahimaaz to even tell David that his son was dead, just as the courtiers had feared to tell David his child by Bathsheba was dead. It seems David's character was unchanged by the Bathsheba incident and his experience of amazing grace; and we are to learn from that. David's soul was broken as a result of his own mistakes and his general experience of life. David's depression resulted in him manifesting all the classic characteristics of the highly strung person. But it led him to his great sensitivity and almost telepathic ability to enter into other's problems was legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which endeared him to his people (1 Sam. 22:22; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 18:13)- and there is a powerful similarity here with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew seems to mean that the man knew that had he killed Absalom, then Joab would have been the first in saying that he must be killed for having slain the king's son. Perhaps David had implied there would be the death penalty for doing this. And yet as with Amnon and Absalom, he refuses to carry out the death penalty against Joab for slaying Absalom. And again, this lead to further problems for him in that finally Joab too would revolt against him. David didn't carry out these death penalties because he realized he must reflect the grace shown to him in not having to die for what he had done to Uriah. And yet reflecting grace is not cheap; for David, in each of these cases, it meant long term suffering. Yet we marvel at God's way; for the promise that David not die but instead would suffer huge grief in his family life was a result of his subsequently responding to the grace shown him. We see here how God's word comes true through the faithful response of His people to His grace.

2Sa 18:14 Then Joab said, I'm not going to wait like this with you. He took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak-

Heb. 'in the heart of the terebinth', possibly implying that this oak was associated with idolatry, and Absalom died caught up in his own idolatry, both literally and in terms of worshipping his own ego and obsession with the throne. The "darts" were likely sharpened sticks, for he grabbed whatever was at hand. "The heart" would refer to the trunk of his body, seeing Joab didn't actually succeed in killing Absalom with them (:15).

2Sa 18:15 Ten young men who bore Joab's armour surrounded and struck Absalom, and killed him-

The only other reference to "ten young men" is to the ten young men of David in 1 Sam. 25:5. We wonder if David had used this group of ten young men in murdering others, and now a similar group were used to slay his beloved son. We noted on 2 Sam. 11:2 that some texts [notably the Qumran Samuel Scroll] add the comment that Uriah had been Joab's armourbearer. Joab clearly despised what David made him do to Uriah, and now uses his replacement armourbearers to slay David's son.

2Sa 18:16 Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel; for Joab held back the people-

"The people" could possibly refer to the followers of Absalom. I say this because the Proverbs are full of allusion to David's history, as David sought to ever glorify his father David and set him up as the parade example of wisdom. And Prov. 24:16 uses the same word for 'holding back' people from destruction. We get the impression that the possible translation "Joab wished to spare the people" may be valid, according to the context. Joab didn't want there to be bloodshed. It recalls the situation in 2 Sam. 2:28 where again Joab had blown a trumpet to restrain civil war. We see the mixture of spirituality and unspirituality in Joab. He genuinely wished to stop the bloodshed, and yet he slew Absalom. Again the record leaves us wondering as to his motives. He had apparently initially supported Absalom's bid for the throne; was he trying to show for all time that he didn't support Absalom? Was he so loyal to David that he realized Absalom had to be slain, and anyway, Absalom was worthy of death for having slain Amnon? Or was he simply wanting revenge for Absalom burning down his barley field? Surely all these elements featured in his thinking. Human motivation is so complex, and therefore God alone can judge it.

2Sa 18:17 They took Absalom, and cast him into the great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Then all Israel fled everyone to his tent-

Josh. 7:26 describes the covering of Achan with a cairn likewise; for he too was the troubler of Israel. Again we see the mixture of thinking in the characters before us; Biblical allusion mixed with disobedience to David. Raising a heap of stones was another way of saying that the people were stoning the dead person; and stoning was the punishment for the disobedient son (Dt. 21:20,21). At the time of Absalom's rebellion, David had prayed that his enemies be cast into a pit and die before their time: "But you, O God, will cast them down into the lowest pit; the bloodthirsty and treacherous shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you" (Ps. 55:23). But when this happens to Absalom (2 Sam. 18:17), David is heartbroken. Clearly his prayers were uttered in a flush of hot blood, and remain a powerful reminder to think about what we are asking for, and be properly motivated in our requests. For in essence, we receive what we ask for. In one sense, God hears *all prayers* (Ps. 139:4, 1 Jn. 5:14,15; 1 Pet. 3:12) although He doesn't always give the answers desired ("You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:3)). But the answers are not as we expect and some answers may only come in the Kingdom age; and it is the essence of the prayer that will be heard, not necessarily the specific request. A request not to die of a particular disease may be technically unanswered; but the essence of the prayer is that we are asking not to die. And we will not, when we are immortalized.

2Sa 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself the pillar, which is in the king's vale; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in memory. He called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Absalom's monument, to this day-

Perhaps his three sons of 2 Sam. 14:27 had died in their youth or childhood. for infant mortality was high in those times. Or maybe he had fallen out with them, and they had disowned each other. His aggressive attitude to his own father may have been triggered by his own experience of this at the hands of his sons. Despite having just slept with his father's wives, who were presumably still fertile (2 Sam. 16:22), Absalom had no hope or patience to hope that he would have sons by them. "The king's vale" is that of Gen. 14:17. Having built the memorial there, Absalom had thereby again hinted at how he considered himself fit to be a king. His vanity was clearly expressed. The pillar to his own glory is contrasted with the heap of stones of :17, which was his true memorial- casting him in the inglorious role of Achan the troubler of Israel. It was not uncommon for men who had no descendants or whose sons had disowned them [or vice versa] to make a pillar to keep their name in memory. There are examples of this in the surrounding nations. This practice is specifically referred to when Is. 56:5 offers the eunuch "a monument and name that is better than sons and daughters". Had Absalom believed the promises of 2 Sam. 7, he would have rejoiced that Messiah would come in his father's line and have an eternal family. But like David, he wanted it here and now.

2Sa 18:19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, Let me now run and bear the king news, how that Yahweh has avenged him of his enemies-

David had prayed that God would judge and avenge him of his enemies (Ps. 43:1 and often). But we must be careful what we pray for; because we do receive the answers. Those angry prayers of David were not mixed with grace, and so he now received their answer- when it was not what he wanted.

2Sa 18:20 Joab said to him, You shall not be the bearer of news this day, but you shall bear news another day. But today you shall bear no news, because the king's son is dead-

See on :21,22. There was in Hebrew an association between carrying tidings, and good news. You didn't carry tidings if there was no good news. This is the background for the Greek word *evangelion* translated 'Gospel' which means, strictly, 'good news that is being passed on'; for example, the good news of a victory was passed on by runners to the capital city. Once it had been spread around and everyone knew it, it ceased to be *evangelion*; it was no longer news that needed to be passed on. But in that time when there was a *joyful urgency* to pass it on, it was *evangelion*. Notice, heralding is not the same as lecturing. Our community for far too long equated preaching , good newsing, with lecturing. Lecturing seeks no result; whereas the herald of God has an urgency and breathlessness about his message. There must be a passion and enthusiasm in us for the message of Christ and His Kingdom. More to be feared than over emotionalism is the dry, detached utterance of facts as a droning lecture, which has neither heart nor soul in it. Man's peril, Christ's salvation...these things cannot mean so little to us that we feel no warmth or passion rise within us as we speak about them.

2Sa 18:21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, Go, tell the king what you have seen! The Cushite bowed himself to Joab, and ran-

Bearers of good news were often given presents (:22), and bearers of bad news could be punished. Joab wanted to save Ahimaaz from this, so again we see a level of decency in the mixed character of Joab. Messengers of low rank were often sent with bad news (:27), and so Joab sends a Cushite, an Ethiopian servant, to carry the news.

2Sa 18:22 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said yet again to Joab, But come what may, please let me also run after the Cushite. Joab said, Why do you want to run, my son, since that you will have no reward for the news?-

As discussed on :21, good news was rewarded with a gift. Joab appears to want to save Ahimaaz from the shame of bringing bad news. He already realizes that the victory is going to be bad news for David. Hence LXX “thou hast no good tidings for profit if thou goest” and the Vulgate “thou wilt not be a bearer of good tidings”.

2Sa 18:23 But come what may, he said, I will run. He said to him, Run! Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite-

The *kikkar*, or Jordan valley. The battle had been fought on the east of Jordan. Ahimaaz ran up the valley and then turned inland, whereas the Cushite took the more direct route through the forests, which ended up being slower.

2Sa 18:24 Now David was sitting between the two gates-

David was sitting in the space between the inner and outer gates. Over this was a room (:33), and the watchman was over the outer gate. It was in this kind of space that Joab had murdered Abner, and David may have been thereby prepared for news that Joab had committed yet another murder he disapproved of. We marvel at the sensitivity of the record, which can only be Divine, and is quite different to contemporary historical writings which are always grossly exaggerated and pay no attention to such details.

And the watchman went up to the roof of the gate to the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man running alone-

The word for "watchman" here is that used in Ps. 5:3, where David says he "will watch expectantly" for the answer to his prayer. We must be careful what we pray for. Because we will likely receive it in some form. If indeed the context of Ps. 5 is that of Absalom's rebellion, then we have to note that this same word for 'watching expectantly' is used repeatedly of the expectant watching for news of the battle with Absalom (2 Sam. 18:24-27); and the news was not what David wanted to hear. Absalom had been slain. But he had asked God to save him from Absalom's rebellion, and promised to "watch expectantly" for the answer. He had been told that evil would arise from within his own house, and by this point he surely should have perceived what that meant. But he is praying desperately that Absalom's life will be saved, instead of accepting God's will and the result of his own actions. We note the reference to the wall, and possibly the connection is with how Uriah was slain by men on a wall, at David's command. Now David's eyes, his watchman, are effectively high on a wall, seeing the death of his son.

2Sa 18:25 The watchman cried, and told the king. The king said, If he is alone, there is news in his mouth. He came closer and closer-

David's under his breath comments of millennia ago are recorded here, so that we might enter into the stress of the situation. Those comments are absolutely credible as what he would have muttered as the news is about to break for him. The messenger was alone, not accompanied by a host of fleeing people. Being alone might be read as good news. And David was clutching at any straw which might mean good news for him.

2Sa 18:26 The watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the porter, and said, Behold, a man running alone! The king said, He also brings news-

"To the porter" is LXX "into the gate"; he was calling to David who was sitting in between the gates. It is obvious that a messenger running was bringing news. But David's muttered comment is noted because of the scale of detail this scene is being recorded at. And such comments are absolutely typical of someone nervously awaiting highly significant news.

2Sa 18:27 The watchman said, I think the running of the first one is like the running of

Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. The king said, He is a good man, and comes with good news-
This kind of throw away comment is typical of people in great anxiety. The record has every reason to be believed. These words were really said, these things truly happened. As noted on :21,22, good news was carried by men of higher standing than those who carried bad news. Therefore David's hopes were raised, thinking that this must mean there was "good news". Although he realized that "good news" to those around him might be bad news for him, i.e. the death of his son.

2Sa 18:28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, All is well. He bowed himself before the king with his face to the earth and said, Blessed is Yahweh your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted up their hand against my lord the king!-

Ahimaaz could not bring himself to tell David the bad news about Absalom. Surely he knew that he was dead. Like Joab, he knew David would be saddened by this, but focused upon the bigger picture- David's side had won, thanks to Yahweh's help. "Delivered up" is literally 'shut up' (s.w. Ps. 31:8), which could mean they had been conquered and taken captive. The intensity builds, as David clings to the hope that Absalom has been captured and not killed.

2Sa 18:29 The king said, Is it well with the young man Absalom? Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, even me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I don't know what it was-

David knew from 2 Sam. 12:10 that the sword would not depart from his house. He had seen Amnon slain, and he obviously sensed Absalom must also die. But he was quite naturally praying and hoping against hope that somehow the predicted consequences of his sin with Bathsheba might be limited. Surely he must have asked himself multiple times "Why, why ever did I do that?". The huge consequences of that brief period of sin remain as a warning to us all.

These messenger scenes after Absalom's death are similar to the messenger scenes after Uriah's death. Both times Joab gives the instructions to the messenger, there is the theme of Joab being unhappy with David's actions although only here does he rebuke David; and Joab is aware of the fact the message will not be what David wants to hear. David's servants likewise didn't want to inform him of the death of his child from Bathsheba "lest he will do harm" to the messenger carrying the bad news (2 Sam. 12:18). Why didn't Ahimaaz tell David the news about Absalom? He had run so hard with the news and now he fails to tell David what David wants to know. Everyone knew Absalom was dead. But he loses his nerve and lies to David. And why did the other messenger state it so obliquely? Surely because David hadn't changed from the wrathful man he was at the time of the Bathsheba matter. The pouring out of grace and forgiveness upon him hadn't changed him much. David had arbitrarily slain the man who told him of Saul's death. Even if the man was exaggerating in the hope of getting some reward from David, this was extreme reaction from David. I discussed on 2 Sam. 16:8 that David's later command to slay Shimei was also a shooting of a messenger, because Shimei's cursing of David was consciously repeating the words of Yahweh to David about his sin. And his courtiers clearly knew he was capable of killing the messenger of news about his son's death. We see how David didn't really grow spiritually at all in this area, and many others- despite God's great efforts. And yet he will be saved, by grace. There was no 'expiation by suffering', no learning from suffering even, no being made perfect by suffering. Rather is this an example of failure to respond, pigheadedly holding on to our narratives about ourselves and our own innocence to the very end, going to our grave planks refusing to get it- and still being saved by grace. And that is the point of all this history of David... It's comforting to ourselves personally, and helps us think better of believers who come to the end of their days still wrong and bitter about various issues.

2Sa 18:30 The king said, Turn aside, and stand here. He turned aside, and stood still-
After such a long run, it would have been hard to stand, let alone to stand still. He did so in reflection of his deep respect for David.

2Sa 18:31 Behold, the Cushite came. The Cushite said, News for my lord the king; for Yahweh has avenged you this day of all those who rose up against you-
David in the Psalms records how he hated those who 'rose up' against him, and that includes Absalom. 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 had prayed too quickly in his Psalms against those who rose up against him; and now he will have his answer. We must be careful what we pray for, for in a sense we will receive it.

2Sa 18:32 The king said to the Cushite, Is it well with the young man Absalom? The Cushite answered, May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you to do you harm, be as that young man is-
See on :31. "Enemies... who rise up against you" is a quotation from Dt. 28:7. This was to be the blessing for obedience to the covenant, and the curse upon those outside of the covenant. The Cushite had likely thought hard about how he was going to express the news, and he chose a Biblical quotation through which to do so- perhaps a good pattern for us in such difficult situations. And indeed he was correct; Absalom had indeed despised the covenant, and David [for all his sins] had been faithful to it. And the Cushite servant perceived that; David's out of character failures didn't mean he had been unfaithful to the covenant. And that is how we too must consider those who fail in out of character ways.

2Sa 18:33 The king was much moved, and went up to the room over the gate, and wept. As he went, he said, My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! I wish I had died for you, Absalom, my son, my son!-

This situation is a repeat of when David had anxiously waited for news of the commotion caused at Absalom's party when he slew Amnon (2 Sam. 13:34). Now again he will weep bitterly for the death of a son. Situations repeat in our lives, and even if we cannot attach meaning to event at the time, we at least have the comfort that they bear the same hallmark of Divine involvement in our lives, according to some plan- even if we may not discern it.

The scene is of David sitting between the gates and going up over the gate to get news of Absalom and weeping there for his death. It was from a wall above a gate that the archers shot from and killed Uriah (2 Sam. 11:23,24). David viewed Bathsheba from the roof (2 Sam. 11:2), and this was matched by the roof on which Absalom slept with David's wife, and the way the watchman sees the two messengers running with news of Absalom's death (2 Sam. 18:24), and it was on a roof that David lamented his son.

I discussed on 2 Sam. 12 that the death of David's son by Bathsheba was in a sense the son taking the death penalty for the father. And David seems to have understood it that way, as he strangely acts with joy and a sense of freedom once the child is dead, rather than mourning. But now he wishes he had died instead of his son Absalom. Yet again we see how the dimensions of what David did are acted out as it were in front of his eyes. He is brought by these circumstances towards self understanding, and comprehension of the dimensions of what he did in the Bathsheba-Uriah sin. And he is specifically being convicted of his lack of remorse over the death of Bathsheba's child, which was directly his fault. We might also note that David doesn't mourn the death of Uriah and his soldier comrades. He is now being nudged as to his previous lack of remorse and devaluing of human life.

There is possibly here the idea that David felt that he himself deserved the punishment of death. Or we could read this as being said in the spirit of Moses (Ex. 32:32) and Paul (Rom. 9:3), who were willing to have given their lives, had it been possible, to save others. And yet despite that element to David at this point, there is clearly a marked inconsistency in him; for he is very severe in his judgments at times (2 Sam. 12:5,6), slaying the messenger who said he'd slain Saul; and yet huge grace to his sons [Amnon allowed to have Tamar visit him alone and not executing him, not executing Absalom and allowing him back, and now to Absalom]. I suggest David's obsession with his sons was rooted in his refusal to accept the meaning of the promises to him about his future Son, and his effort to make those promises fulfil in one of his own sons. This is how he set Solomon up for final failure. And so at this point he has conviction for sin, a selfless desire to die for his son; and yet this wasn't very deep nor did it abide long. Just as happened after his conviction of sin by Nathan.

There is however another possible take on David's extreme mourning for Absalom. Extreme mourning has featured in his life before- after the deaths of Saul, Abner [Saul's general], Ishbosheth [Saul's son] and Amnon [David's firstborn]. In each of those cases, the mourning and extremely public nature of his grief was without doubt politically motivated, seeking to demonstrate his innocence from having slain a rival for power [Amnon as his firstborn could also be seen as a rival]. It would be hard to argue that David simply had a soft streak for his fallen enemies, because his Psalms have hatred for enemies as such a major theme. So whilst it is hard not to discern some element of genuine grief in David as regards Absalom, as ever with him, it seems likely that he had other motives as well. After all, David was seeking to reconcile with the men of Judah, who had generally backed Absalom. His promotion of Amasa their army commander to be the commander of his army is proof enough of his political consciousness and concern about his image with the men of Judah.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 19

2Sa 19:1 It was told Joab, Behold, the king weeps and mourns for Absalom-
Why is this added? Joab was fully aware the king would be upset for the loss of Absalom. Perhaps it is noted here to provoke us to imagine the kinds of feelings and self talk Joab had when he was told this.

2Sa 19:2 The victory that day was turned into mourning to all the people; for the people heard it said that day, The king grieves for his son-
The king's grief became that of the people. They are presented as at one with him. His spirit was theirs. And this looks ahead to the relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people.

2Sa 19:3 The people sneaked into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle-
Truly the victory was turned into a defeat. "The city" is Mahanaim, not Jerusalem.

2Sa 19:4 The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, My son Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son!-
David covered his head in mourning when Absalom was dead and the rebellion was over, just as he did when Absalom came to power (2 Sam. 15:30). We get the impression that it was grief every way for David, whether Absalom lived or died. And this is indeed the take away lesson for us- that the outcome of sin is a lose lose situation.

2Sa 19:5 Joab came into the house to the king and said, You have shamed this day the faces

of all your servants, who this day have saved your life, and the lives of your sons and of your daughters, and the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines-

This implies that David's wives and little ones all went with him in the tragic departure from Jerusalem. David's "servants" were specifically his soldiers, who are repeatedly called "David's servants".

2Sa 19:6 in that you love those who hate you, and hate those who love you. For you have declared this day, that princes and servants are nothing to you. For today I perceive that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it would have pleased you well-

The accusation is fair enough- that David had no regard for the lives of his men, because of his unreasonable love obsession, in this case for Absalom. This is a repeat of the situation with Bathsheba, where his obsession with her led him to disregard the lives of his men, both Uriah and the other men of Israel who died to cover his murder. Again and again, what David did is replayed before his eyes; not to haunt him just for the sake of it, but to lead him to deeper understanding of the dimensions of his actions previously. Had Absalom won, he would have killed both David and all his inner circle. And that, Joab concludes, would have been pleasing to David.

We see the internal harmony of the record in that Joab's reaction to Abner's being sent away in peace (2 Sam. 3:24) is in spirit so similar to his frustration here with David over the death of Absalom. We note the internal consistency in the record of Joab's character; another reason to believe these records are absolutely credible and inspired by God.

The more we look for it, the more we see other examples of where material relevant to David is applied directly to all believers in the New Testament, thus setting him up as our example and realistic pattern. Joab's comment about the way David loved his enemies (2 Sam. 19:6) was thus verbatim picked up by the Lord and set up as the example for each of us. And yet David only came to be so kind and forgiving because of his experience of God's forgiveness to him over the Bathsheba incident.

2Sa 19:7 Now therefore arise, go out, and speak to the heart of your servants; for I swear by Yahweh, if you don't go out, not a man will stay with you this night. That would be worse for you than all the evil that has happened to you from your youth until now-

Joab speaks to David roughly, and not at all as a man should speak to his king. This was partly his style, but it also is a tacit reflection upon David's loss of power. Joab speaks the truth when he implies that David was about to lose all power because of his attitude to Absalom's death; he no longer had a strong power base. We can better understand why Solomon in his Proverbs is always making sideways swipes at his potential competitors for the throne. He did not inherit a strong position and had to establish his hold on power.

At the time of David's sin against Uriah, Joab had told David to come to the battle front and 'take' Rabbah lest someone else take the glory and name it after themselves. His behaviour here is similar, as is David's acquiescence. Again David is being reminded of what happened at Rabbah, to help him re-live the results of his sin and repent.

2Sa 19:8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. They told all the people saying, Behold, the king is sitting in the gate. All the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled every man to his tent-

Now "the people" of David are contrasted to "Israel", implying David's supporters are the true people of God. They passed before David in some formal procession in order to receive his thanks.

2Sa 19:9 All the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, and he saved us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom-

The strife, or conflicting opinions / judgments (Heb.), regarded who they should respect as their king. Sadly there was no expressed opinion that they should again accept God as their king. There were clearly no other credible options as king apart from David, and the people always remembered that David had fulfilled the Divine potential for the king of Israel- that he would save them from their enemies. Absalom and nobody else had done this.

2Sa 19:10 Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why don't you speak a word of bringing the king back?-

Their anointing of Absalom was effectively a disannulling of David's Divine anointing as their king. They therefore felt leaderless unless there was some formal ceremony whereby David was restored as king. LXX adds "And the word of all Israel came to the king".

Typically the word of the ruler went out to all Israel, but this is stated the other way around, hinting at David's weakness. The initiative for David's restoration came from the ten tribes, and was only later accepted by Judah (:11). All Israel were to be united by their common acceptance of having betrayed their intended king, and by the experience of his grace. See on :16.

2Sa 19:11 King David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests saying, Speak to the elders of Judah saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house? Since the speech of all Israel has come to the king, to return him to his house-

David again seems to misjudge things and act unwisely. He is set to return over the Jordan and thence to Jerusalem and become king again. But there's nobody to meet him and symbolically convey him over Jordan. So he sends Zadok and Abiathar to get his tribe, Judah, to bring him over Jordan. It was this perceived nepotism towards Judah that led to the next rebellion, by Sheba from Benjamin (2 Sam. 20:1). Again we see some point to Absalom's complaint that he couldn't judge-and thereby again, David is shown unfit for kingship. And it was part of being the king of Israel that he should judge, and judge justly. David desperately hung on to being king when he should have realized his own failure as king, resigned, and focused on the wonderful promise of the future eternal king in his line- the Lord Jesus.

See on :10. Judah had been the strongest supporters of Absalom, for he had been declared king in Hebron, the historical capital of Judah (2 Sam. 15:10). Yet it was the ten tribes who proposed the restoration of David as king. Clearly those closest to David [the tribe of Judah and the people of Jerusalem] were the most disgusted and disillusioned by his behaviour with Bathsheba and Uriah.

2Sa 19:12 You are my brothers, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king? '-

This could be read more as an assurance of forgiveness than a rebuke. The suggestion was that they did want the restoration of David as king, but they should be more vocal about it; and the message thereby assured them that David was not looking to take any vengeance for their betrayal. See on :13.

2Sa 19:13 Say to Amasa, 'Aren't you my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you aren't captain of the army before me continually in place of Joab' -

Eph. 5:30 makes the amazing statement that even now, "We are of members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones". In a very detailed study of this language, Henricus Renckens

concluded: "In Israel, in order to say that someone was a blood relation, one said: "He is my flesh and my bones" (Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9:2; cp. Gen. 37:27; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13 ff.; Is. 58:7)". This is how close we are to the Lord Jesus- blood relatives. This language could in no way be justified if Jesus were God Himself in person.

David is repeating the lessons he learned after the death of Saul, where he showed huge grace to his enemies- and it worked. Even though it ran against the grain of all secular sense and wisdom. And so now he does the same, in offering the post of commander-in chief to the general of the rebel army. But it was a huge risk, and the fact Amasa accepted it shows the fickleness of men within the arena of human politics. And this could reflect David's mad descent into unwisdom and inability to control his hatred of Joab for rightly killing Absalom. All this could show that David has little moral compass left. So again we are left to ponder whether this was grace, or desperate politics to get the men of Judah back with him. And quite likely, knowing David, it was a mixture of both. His appeal to Amasa that they were blood relatives is somewhat suspect because the same was true of Joab whom he was replacing. More likely David alludes to the covenant of 2 Sam. 5:1, whereby David was accepted as king because he was of the same "bone and flesh" of his people. But David made and then broke his covenant with Shimei and was overall of low integrity...

2Sa 19:14 He bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as one man; so that they sent to the king, saying, Return, you and all your servants-

We see the fickle nature of human hearts. They had been won by David from Saul, then Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Judah, and now David bows those hearts back to him, in a very short space of time; and then those hearts are won by Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:2. We think of how the people who once cried "Hosanna" were soon shouting "crucify Him!", and soon after that were so supportive of the apostles preaching Jesus as Christ that the authorities were scared to touch them.

2Sa 19:15 So the king returned, and came to the Jordan. Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to bring the king over the Jordan-

Judah accepted the implicit assurance of :11 that David was not going to be seeking vengeance for their betrayal of him.

2Sa 19:16 Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, who was of Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David-

The common experience of David's grace bound together the house of Saul the Benjamite who had persecuted him, along with those of David's betrayers within Judah. Grace is the basis for true unity amongst God's people, rather than any set of agreed theologies. The message for the exiles was that the restoration of the Davidic king was to unite them, along with the ten tribes, as explained on :10.

2Sa 19:17 There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went through the Jordan in the presence of the king-

"Went through" implies they charged into the river, to demonstrate their zeal to bring the king back- when in fact both Shimei and Ziba had been really on Absalom's side, and had entertained the hope of using the situation to forge a coalition between Absalom and the remnants of the pro-Saul party of Benjamin. "A thousand" may not be a literal number, but can refer to a family or regiment.

2Sa 19:18 A ferry boat went to bring over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, when he had come over the Jordan- Grammatically, the "he" seems to refer to Shimei. He went over the Jordan and met David on the eastern bank, before David himself had passed over as recorded in :39.

2Sa 19:19 He said to the king, Don't let my lord impute iniquity to me, nor remember that which your servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart-

In the same way as God did not impute iniquity to David (Ps. 32:2), so David did not 'impute iniquity' to Shimei for cursing him, and did not carry out a rightful death sentence against that man (2 Sam. 19:19,21). Note how Shimei uses the very same wording which David used in *his* repentance: "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 19:20). The similarity of language leaves us expecting David to forgive Shimei permanently, and not impute iniquity to him. David does this for a passing moment, but then commands Solomon to ensure Shimei is slain for what he had done. David presents as totally unappreciative of the grace shown him, and totally unreflective of it in his later personal relationships. The David who wrote Psalm 32 about his experience of imputed righteousness by grace... is now asked to impute righteousness and to forgive. But he only does so for a moment, his experience of grace didn't have any permanent effect upon him. For he will tell Solomon to "not hold him [Shimei] guiltless", i.e. not to impute righteousness to him but to let his guilt stand, even though David accepted that Shimei's cursing of David was from God, in that David deserved death by stoning and had indeed slain innocent blood. And God's grace likewise can trigger no more than a mere moment of deep feeling and reflection as we sit in a church service, after which we revert to the graceless way of the flesh, endlessly recalling others' past failures and wanting to punish them for them. And yet we can read David's grace to Shimei at this point as only apparent grace; it could well have been politically motivated. For David was concerned about the rumours from Ziba that the house of Saul had wanted to take power at the time of Absalom's putsch, and indeed there was always a Saulide element wanting to get power. The fact a Benjamite, Sheba, rebels against David soon afterwards (2 Sam. 20:1) could suggest that David was not wrong to fear the Benjamites and want to placate them. So grace to Shimei rather than killing him immediately was also a way to keep the house of Saul [of whom was Shimei] without any excuse to rebel. As ever with David, even his better sides and actions have political overtones.

David swore to Shimei that "you will not die" (:23), accepting Shimei's grovelling: " "[I am] guilty... did wrong... I have sinned"... do not hold [me accountable]... do not remember... may the king not bear it in mind". But David did bear it in mind, he did remember, and he did hold Shimei accountable unto death". David's request that Solomon bring Shimei's white hair to the grave with blood on it suggests a deep hatred of Shimei, and a desire to see his skull cracked open so that blood flowed over his white hair. And they were David's final words. And yet he will be saved... he is in the list of saved faithful ones in Hebrews 11, and the promises of 2 Sam. 7 implied his unconditional salvation.

Shimei's request for David not to "take it to his heart" was just the words of David to Joab regarding the death of Uriah and the other soldiers. Jonadab used it to David about the death of Amnon, and Absalom uses it to Tamar about her rape. Again we see David seeing the dimensions of his own words and sins being played out in front of his eyes. Seeing the results of our words and actions on the screen of others' lives is often more powerful than any personal introspection. And this is why we have meetings with the people we do in life.

2Sa 19:20 For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore behold, I have come this day

the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king-

See on :19. Shimei's claim to sincere repentance is rather mitigated by this exaggerated claim, that he was the "first" representative of Ephraim, an idea which covered all of the ten tribes, to welcome the restored David. But David is full of grace at this time and forgives him, without pointing out the fact he was still telling untruths.

God told Shimei to curse David (2 Sam. 16:10). Afterwards, Shimei repents and acknowledges that by doing so he sinned (2 Sam. 19:20). And although David recognized that God had told Shimei to curse him (2 Sam. 16:10), David tells Solomon not to hold Shimei "guiltless" for how he had cursed him (1 Kings 2:9). As with the evil spirit from Yahweh working upon Saul, a man is encouraged by God to do the sinful act in which he has set his heart.

2Sa 19:21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, Shall Shimei not be put to death for this, because he cursed Yahweh's anointed?-

To curse God's representative was seen as cursing God (1 Kings 21:10; Ex. 22:28). And so to curse "Yahweh's anointed" was seen as cursing Yahweh (2 Sam. 19:21) and worthy of death. "Yahweh's anointed" was a title for the High Priest (Ex. 22:28), and confirms that David was seen as both King and High Priest. David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not.

2Sa 19:22 David said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be adversaries to me?- 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.

When reviewing the references to *ha-Satan* ("the adversary") in the Old Testament, it's significant that a number of them occur in the context of the life of David. There was an incident where David behaved deceitfully with the Philistines with whom he once lived, and he is described as being "a Satan" to them (1 Sam. 29:4). That's another example of where the word 'Satan' doesn't necessarily have an evil connotation- a good man can be an adversary, just as Peter was (Mt. 16:21-23) and God Himself can be (2 Sam. 22:4). But we find that David and his dynasty were afflicted with Satans, adversaries, from then on. The word is used about human beings who were adversarial to them in 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kings 5:4,18; 11:14-22,25; Ps. 109:6,20 (Heb. "They say, "Appoint a wicked man against him, let an accuser [*Satan*] stand on his right hand"). David's enemies are described by a word related to 'satan' in Ps. 38:20; 71:13; 109:4. Note that it is stated that *God* stirred up men to be 'Satans' to David and Solomon- whatever view we take of 'Satan', clearly it or he is under the direct control of God and not in free opposition to Him.

Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For don't I know that I am this day king over Israel?-

David is here learning from the spirit of his enemy Saul (1 Sam. 11:13). This shows David's generous spirit, in learning from the good attitudes of a man who in other parts of his life was wrong and abusive to him, and rejected by God. And yet it would seem that David was playing with words when he says that nobody will be put to death "this day". Because later, on a later day, he commands Solomon to slay Shimei. Again we see David apparently showing grace whilst being politically motivated [to give the Benjamites no cause for a rebellion] and deceitful. The fact a Benjamite, Sheba, rebels against David soon afterwards (2 Sam. 20:1) could suggest that David was not wrong to fear the Benjamites and want to placate them.

2Sa 19:23 The king said to Shimei, You shall not die. The king swore to him-

David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote: "Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man...as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so may it be far from him. He clothed himself also with cursing as with a garment..." (Ps. 109:16-18).

2Sa 19:24 Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither groomed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace-

See on 2 Sam. 1:23. Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam. 9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house, even though he strongly disagreed with Saul. There was no fear of guilt by association with Bible characters, but rather a standing up for Godly principle in whatever situation they were in.

Mephibosheth's lack of care for himself was part of his sorrow at what had befallen David, and it was proof enough that Ziba had misrepresented him to David as planning to become king. For in that case he would have shaved and made himself as attractive a candidate as possible. Having not pared his nails or beard was evident proof that he had been in mourning for some time, since David had fled Jerusalem. See on :25.

2Sa 19:25 It happened, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth?-

But David has still not even crossed the Jordan (:39). This is out of chronological sequence, and refers to a future meeting between the two in Jerusalem (:30, in David's own house). It continues the theme of Ziba in :17. Mephibosheth's "coming down" in :24 would therefore mean 'came down from his house in the highlands of Benjamin near Gibeah to Jerusalem,' not 'came down from Jerusalem to the Jordan'.

2Sa 19:26 He answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, I will saddle me a donkey that I may ride thereon, and go with the king; because your servant is lame-

Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem near David's palace, for he ate at his table every day with him. He had wished to leave Jerusalem along with David's sad group who fled from Absalom, but perhaps he only heard of the crisis too late and anyway Ziba had deceived him

so that it was too late to leave. Clearly Ziba intended to manipulate things so that he would forge a coalition between the Saul supporters and Absalom, using Mephibosheth as a pawn in his game. He as the kingmaker would have had the real power in the coalition. This manipulation of others and revelling in being the kingmaker was exactly Joab's weakness, and we see how Abner had failed in this way with Ishbosheth. The repetition of the themes shows how human nature articulates itself in the same way despite the differing situations. And this is the whole purpose of these narratives.

2Sa 19:27 He has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God. Do therefore what is good in your eyes-

Mephibosheth's absolute joy at David's restoration means that he is happy to be slandered, misunderstood by David and even lose all his property (:30)- for joy at the restoration. This was a powerful challenge to the exiles in Babylon, many of whom weighed up what the restoration might cost them, and sided with remaining in exile rather than entering into the abandon and joy of the restoration. And the message of the Gospel is for us too a message of the Davidic kingdom being restored. Whether we are slandered or misunderstood should be made irrelevant by the wonder of that reality. The fact David cannot decide who is telling the truth, therefore telling Ziba and Mephibosheth to divide Saul's land between them, shows that in fact David is not like an angel who knows all things. We saw the same irony with the woman of Tekoah, who makes the same statement to David at the same time as she deceives and manipulates him. David is thereby presented as a man with a former reputation for wisdom and perception, but who now has no wisdom nor prescience. There are plenty of hints that it is Ziba who is guilty but David shows scant interest in justice. He just wants to get on with the job of being king again, in the same spirit in which he didn't waste time mourning the death of his first child by Bathsheba, but got on with capitalizing on God's grace in not slaying him and getting Bathsheba to push out another baby for him. Dt. 25:1,2 states that if there is a dispute between two men, the innocent man must be acquitted, but the guilty man punished. But David doesn't bother doing this; and again he proves Absalom's point, that he is not giving judgment to Israel as the King of Israel was intended to.

2Sa 19:28 For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king-

This could refer to how David had not slain the house of Saul, and also possibly to the events of 2 Sam. 21:6-9, which may not be placed in chronological sequence and may have already happened at this time.

Yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right therefore have I yet that I should cry any more to the king?-

The wonderful honour of sitting at the Lord's table should likewise mean for us that all anger at slander or being disbelieved (:27), or loss of personal wealth (:30), is thereby eclipsed.

2Sa 19:29 The king said to him, Why do you speak any more of your matters? I say, you and Ziba divide the land-

As discussed on :27,28, all argument between brethren and all concern about material things should be made irrelevant by the wonder of the restored Kingdom and our experience of the grace which allows us to be there. David had earlier responded to Ziba's slander that Mephibosheth had betrayed David by giving Ziba all Mephibosheth's land, in faith that he would one day be restored as king. But now he appears to tell the two men to just divide the land. Or he could be saying that they should return to the original 'division' of the land, whereby the land was Mephibosheth's but Ziba farmed it.

2Sa 19:30 Mephibosheth said to the king, Yes, let him take all, because my lord the king has come in peace to his own house-

As discussed above, Mephibosheth was so thrilled with the restoration of the Kingdom that all issues of material things were now seen as irrelevant by him. If he was to continue to sit at David's table (cp. our participation at the memorial feast), then such matters were irrelevant. This is a powerful challenge to us, the weak and lame who sit by grace at the table of the Son of David.

2Sa 19:31 Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim; and he went over the Jordan with the king, to conduct him over the Jordan-

Rogelim in Gilead may well have been Gentile territory, and his descendants were unable to prove their genealogies (Ezra 2:61-63), although they wished to serve as priests and support the restored Kingdom, just as their ancestor supported David's restoration. As noted on 2 Sam. 17:27, some of David's most loyal friends at this time of crisis were Gentiles.

2Sa 19:32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even eighty years old: and he had provided the king with sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man-

This would imply that David was there for some while at the time of 2 Sam. 17:29 (see note there), and "while he lay..." sounds as if he was ill at that time.

2Sa 19:33 The king said to Barzillai, Come over with me, and I will sustain you with me in Jerusalem-

As Barzillai had sustained David with a feast in the wilderness, David wanted to have Barzillai at his table in Jerusalem, and to be "sustain" him for the rest of his life. As with Mephibosheth, to eat at David's table was the sign of ultimate acceptance. And this is the wonderful significance of our sitting at His table at His invitation today. We are never to deny others a place at that table.

2Sa 19:34 Barzillai said to the king, How many are the days of the years of my life, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?-

In essence he has the same attitude as Mephibosheth. He is so thrilled at the good news of the restored kingdom of David that he despises all material advantage to himself. And this is our pattern, if we really grasp the good news of the restored Kingdom (Acts 1:6).

2Sa 19:35 I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern between good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be yet a burden to my lord the king?-

Solomon's whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai here. 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). Solomon was living out his father, using the same phrases his father had used, and yet he clearly had no real personal commitment to Yahweh as he turned away to idols in his old age. The lack of true zeal within our community, after several generations 'in the Truth', may be related to all this too. We each need to seriously examine ourselves in this connection, and know the meaning of personal conversion.

2Sa 19:36 Your servant would but just go over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward?-

Again we are awed by this man's selfless response to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, which good news we receive in the good news of the Kingdom of God. He wasn't interested in personal reward, his focus was upon the glory of God and His appointed "son" David. And

we too will not see things so much in terms of our personal "reward" in God's Kingdom when it is finally restored, but will instead be consumed with the joy of the fact that God's Kingdom has been restored.

2Sa 19:37 Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, by the grave of my father and my mother. But behold, your servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good to you-

We could infer from the reference to "the habitation of Chimham which is by Bethlehem" (Jer. 41:17) that Chimham was given a piece of land from David's personal inheritance at Bethlehem. This was the depth to which David appreciated loyalty to him at a time when he seemed a hopeless cause. And the same will be seen true in the rewards given by the Lord Jesus to those who have followed Him now, when true Christianity seems a hopeless cause.

2Sa 19:38 The king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good to you. Whatever you require of me, that I will do for you-

Perhaps the grant of land in David's patrimony in Bethlehem (see on :37) was what Barzillai asked for Chimham. He was happy himself to be buried in the inheritance of his parents, but wished something more for Chimham.

2Sa 19:39 All the people went over the Jordan, and the king went over. Then the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned to his own place-

We note the order. The people went over first, followed by the king. He was no longer their charismatic leader, but they were his advance guard. We are left with a lovely impression of Barzillai, but his name means 'hard / iron hearted', and we marvel at how the hard hearted were so transformed by David's grace and the joy of the prospect of the restored Davidic kingdom- a pattern for us all.

2Sa 19:40 So the king went over to Gilgal, and Chimham went over with him. All the people of Judah brought the king over, and also half the people of Israel-

It was the ten tribes who had first proposed the restoration (:9,10). But it seems due to wanting to steal the show for themselves and other tribal jealousy issues, the elders of Judah hadn't invited them to the celebration at Gilgal. Therefore only some of them were present. But during the celebration at Gilgal, which would have lasted some days, the rest of the ten tribes representatives arrived; "all the men of Israel" (:41).

2Sa 19:41 Behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household, over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?-

See on :40. They were seeking for David to rebuke Judah, especially as it appears that David's men were apparently open to this special treatment by the men of Judah. There is no recorded response of David; for the men of Judah butted in with their response first, and this is adequately answered by the men of Israel in :43. Perhaps this reflects David's passivity at the time. Or maybe it is one of those open ended points in the narrative, intentionally left hanging so that we imagine what his gracious response would have been. For at this time he was the master of all grace and unity to all.

2Sa 19:42 All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is a close relative to us. Why then are you angry about this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's cost? Or has he given us any gift?-

Their idea was that they were totally genuine in their desire to see David restored, and it was not because they hoped for any personal benefit from him. Saul had practiced nepotism, aiming to enrich his own tribe of Benjamin (1 Sam. 22:7), but David had not done so to Judah. Again the theme taught by the reactions of Mephibosheth and Barzillai is continued- we should rejoice in the prospect of the restored kingdom of David not because we look for any personal benefit, but because of the wider glory of God.

2Sa 19:43 The men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more claim to David than you. Why then did you despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel-

See on :40. Their argument reflects how David had always actively stood for the unity of all Israel, and the ten tribes could therefore argue that he was as it were ten parts theirs. LXX adds: "And I am the firstborn rather than thou". The right of firstborn had been removed from Reuben and transferred to Joseph, who had a double portion (Dt. 21:17) and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, "the house of Joseph" (2 Sam. 19:20), therefore could rightly claim to be the most significant part of all Israel. Their logic was indeed stronger, but the matter was allowed to pass. The joy of the prospect of the Kingdom should lead us also to pass over all these kinds of slights and weaknesses of our brethren.

"We have ten parts in the king" wasn't said sincerely, because soon afterwards "all the men of Israel" would be saying that they had no part in David (2 Sam. 20:1,2).

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 20

2Sa 20:1 There happened to be there-

That wonderful scene of grace and unity at David's restoration in 2 Sam. 19 was attended by some who were unmoved by it; and sought for their own faction to have power.

A base fellow, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew the trumpet and said, We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, Israel!-

True as the Proverbs are which condemn "a worthless / wicked person" (Prov. 6:12; 16:27; 19:28), again we have a subtext of Solomon seeking to justify himself and his father David, and to criticize the various competitors to Solomon's throne. "A worthless person" is the term used for Nabal (1 Sam. 25:17), those in David's camp who were not fully supportive of David (1 Sam. 30:22), Sheba who plotted to overthrow the Davidic line as king (2 Sam. 20:1), and particularly of those who wanted to overthrow Solomon as king (2 Chron. 13:7). We note the speculation that Sheba was the father of Bath-Sheba. In this case we see the same scenario as with Ahithophel- Bathsheba's family were bitter with David because of what he did, and the consequences kept returning upon David. From the Divine viewpoint, this was in hope that he would repent.

"We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, Israel!" was to be repeated by those who didn't want David's line reigning over them (1 Kings 12:16). The sentiment of Sheba didn't go away, and it was likely because of the repugnance of David's character and behaviour in so many ways. And yet he was God's man, and the huge amount of Biblical information about him is there to present us with the challenge of an unpleasant man, with so many character and behavioural weaknesses, who had a heart for God and will be saved by grace. He is without doubt the major human figure of the Old Testament; and his ultimate salvation is there to encourage so many of God's children who are so similar to him.

"We have no portion in David" seems to directly, intentionally contradict the statement by the men of Israel that they had ten parts in David (2 Sam. 19:43). We could take this as a call to establish a separate Benjamite-led state independent of the others. The seeds of division were clearly there within Israel well before the division into Israel and Judah at Rehoboam's time. Despite just having stated that they had ten parts in David, "all the men of Israel changed from following David, and followed Sheba" (:2). Their desire for this was strong, as David himself recognized in :6 "Sheba son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom". They strongly hankered to return to how things were under Saul, when Benjamin rather than Judah dominated- despite the fact Saul practiced nepotism. This was about as bizarre as the Israelites wanting to return to Egypt. But we have here yet another example of how man thinks that "the former days were better". This is a strong part of our native wiring.

We note that Sheba's catch cry was that Israel had no part in David, and :2 states that the men of Israel followed Sheba rather than David. Clearly there was disillusion with David personally- unsurprisingly. The same words are used when the kingdom divides; the majority of Israel wanted no part in "David" (1 Kings 12:16). This is all tacit reflection of how disillusioned the populace was with "David" personally. David's own tribe of Judah rebelled against him in supporting Absalom, and now the other tribes showed their feelings by supporting Sheba under the credo of "we have no part in David". David clearly lacked popular support after the Bathsheba incident and only remained in power because there remained no credible alternative to him.

2Sa 20:2 So all the men of Israel changed from following David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah joined with their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem-

We see the fickle nature of human hearts. They had been won by David from Saul, then Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Judah, and in 2 Sam. 19:14 David bows those hearts back to him, in a very short space of time; and then those hearts are won by Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:2. We think of how the people who once cried "Hosanna" were soon shouting "crucify Him!", and soon after that were so supportive of the apostles preaching Jesus as Christ that the authorities were scared to touch them.

But "from Jordan even to Jerusalem" reflects how the argument between Judah and the other tribes began due to the quarrel about bringing David back as king by crossing the Jordan. Basically the other tribes withdrew and Judah alone conducted David from Jordan to Jerusalem and this led to the discontent of the others.

2Sa 20:3 David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in custody, and provided them with sustenance, but didn't go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood-

These were presumably the concubines with whom Absalom had slept. The implication could be that this was when he first returned from exile in Mahanaim. Which would mean that the revolt of Sheba was almost immediately after he had crossed the Jordan, making a mockery of the 'unity meeting' held at Gilgal in 2 Sam. 19 to officially restore David as king.

Why did David do this when Sheba began his rebellion? Possibly because he feared Sheba may lay with them as Absalom had done. Whatever the reason, David shows no care for the women as persons, for his actions precluded them from personal relationships and left them as prisoners of the court. He had treated others like this not least Michal.

The women were placed in custody, prisoners of the court, until they died. Nor did David sleep with them. This all seems like punishment- for sleeping with Absalom? But this seems a harsh punishment, seeing they had little choice. And this likely was Saul's harem which David had taken over, as Nathan reminded him in 2 Sam. 12. Had David taken these women

with him to safety, then the incident need never have occurred. We wonder at how David could be so harsh in judgment given his own sexual and related sins. It was the same punishment he gave to Michal his ex-wife. He appears to still not 'get it' regarding the seriousness of his sin and the greatness of God's grace to him. Another reading is that he made them live in "widowhood" as a kind of permanent mourning for Absalom who David sees as having married them by sleeping with them. But by refusing them sex and children, enforcing this by imprisoning them, we see David having no care about those women as persons. It was all for the symbolism of 'grief for Absalom'.

2Sa 20:4 Then the king said to Amasa, Call me the men of Judah together within three days, and be here present-

David had replaced Joab as head of the army with Amasa (2 Sam. 19:13) who had been the general leading Absalom's soldiers against him. We could read this as a politically inept move by David; or we could see it as an example of being gracious, which is being humanly unwise- and paying the price for being gracious. David was repeating the lessons he learned after the death of Saul, where he showed huge grace to his enemies- and it worked. Even though it ran against the grain of all secular sense and wisdom. And so now he does the same, in offering the post of commander-in chief to the general of the rebel army. Joab was obviously deeply resentful of this and totally didn't understand grace.

2Sa 20:5 So Amasa went to call the men of Judah together; but he stayed longer than the set time which he had appointed him-

The delay in raising an army may have been because many were unwilling to come out and support David. As Samuel tarried longer than the set time Saul expected (1 Sam. 13:8), 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. Amasa's delay and failure to immediately chase after Sheba was interpreted as meaning that he was again being disloyal to David as he had been during Absalom's rebellion. But we do not know why he delayed, although the note on :13 suggests there were genuine reasons and Amasa was loyal to David still. What we do know is that Joab will now deceive him and kill him, clearly motivated by jealousy over the fact he had been replaced by Amasa as the leader of the army. Although he would have justified it by claiming as he did when he murdered Abner, that Amasa was a threat to David. Again we see how Joab's self interest and pride precluded him from understanding grace.

Although we could see the appointment of Amasa as an act of grace, we could also see it again reflecting David's un wisdom as a leader, his lack of good judgment, and thereby his disqualification from being king of Israel. He should have resigned after the Bathsheba affair. The people would naturally have expected that Amasa would be punished. Instead of this, he is asked to raise an army in David's name. And men would hesitate about joining such a leader. Was he really loyal? Would he use them in a new rebellion? And what would Joab do? He would not respond well to the former enemy general taking his place. David ought to have foreseen that appointing Amasa was going to create a whole raft of problems. But he didn't. His un wisdom is so clear.

2Sa 20:6 David said to Abishai-

Amasa had been appointed general, but he was absent. Instead of treating Joab as the second in command, David addressed Joab's brother Abishai as the de facto army general. All this provoked huge resentment in Joab. It seems David had a personality clash with Joab,

frustrated at his refusal to understand grace and complaining that Joab was "too hard" for him.

Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your lord's servants, and pursue after him, otherwise he will get himself fortified cities, and escape out of our sight-

David is far more proactive and not as mournfully passive as he was during Absalom's rebellion. This reflects how he realized that Absalom's putsch was the fulfilment of Nathan's words to him about the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba. But he clearly didn't see Sheba's power grab in the same light.

David's plan to immediately hunt Sheba without delay and besiege him in a walled city was exactly the advice of Ahithophel to Absalom against David. It could be argued that David is just doing to others as was done to him, and in this he showed no grace. Or he was again experiencing history being played out before his present experience. He was now feeling like his son Absalom had felt and reasoning like Absalom, the son he both loved and hated [according to the Psalms]. Like Absalom, David wastes time by trying to raise a large army- but then he cuts that short and Joab goes after Sheba personally. Just as Absalom had done.

2Sa 20:7 There went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the mighty men; and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri-

The abiding loyalty of these men to David (2 Sam. 8:18; 15:18) is incredible. Joab's sad end at Solomon's hands in 1 Kings 2:28 is the more tragic. The idea could be that the "him" is Amasa rather than Abishai. Joab's troops were loyal to their new general and went "after" Amasa. Joab calmly murders Amasa and then leads the troops to victory over Sheba, rallying them after him- thus declaring himself the de facto general again. His victory against Sheba and retention of power for David meant it was impossible for David to really sanction Joab for the murder of Amasa.

2Sa 20:8 When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them- Amasa had presumably been raising an army in Benjamin. Literally, "Amasa went before them". Having raised some forces, by a rapid march he overtook the soldiers of Joab and Abishai at Gibeon, and there assumed the place of commander over them too. And thus demoted Joab and Abishai, whose soldiers were loyal to them and not Amasa whom they had just been fighting. It was a recipe for disaster, reflecting David's unwisdom.

Joab was clothed in his battledress that he had put on, and on it was a sash with a sword fastened on his waist in its sheath-

The only person in David's life whose belt is noted is Joab (2 Sam. 20:8; 1 Kings 2:5). But Ps. 109:8,19 wish curses upon the man who was well known for his belt. See notes there for the extent of David's anger with Joab and his desire for the man's condemnation because of it- even though David was not himself perfect.

And as he went forth it fell out-

It *seemed* that the sword at Joab's side accidentally fell out of its scabbard as he went toward Amasa to greet him (2 Sam. 20:8) – but it was on purpose, of course. The Bible sometimes describes things as they appear, even if that appearance is incorrect. This explains why the wrong understandings of demons aren't specifically corrected in the New Testament.

2Sa 20:9 Joab said to Amasa, Is it well with you, my brother? Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him-

Amasa was surely aware of how Joab had slain Abner, but as will be discussed on :10, on another level, he took no cognizance of this. "Well with you" is the word *shalom*, and is

referred to in Solomon's comment that Joab shed the blood of war in peace, perhaps meaning 'in the name of peace' (1 Kings 2:5).

2Sa 20:10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand. So he struck him with it in the body, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and didn't strike him again; and he died. Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri-

There are many similarities between Joab's murder of Asahel and how Abner, Saul's general, had murdered Joab's brother Asahel (2 Sam. 2:18-23). Both incidents occurred near Gibeon. There was dialogue between the killer and the slain before the killing, which was through piercing the enemy's belly. Both times the soldiers paused because of the killing, but in both cases Joab did not stop but went on pursuing the fleeing enemy, unto victory. I suggest the similarities are to suggest to us that Joab all these years later was still motivated by blood lust. He wanted to do to another as had been done to his brother. And this kind of thing plays out continually in the minds and deeds of men, unless the influence of the Spirit breaks the cycle of psychological inevitability.

Joab had murdered Abner in the same way in 2 Sam. 3:27. We note the internal consistency in the record of Joab's character; another reason to believe these records are absolutely credible and inspired by God. See on 2 Sam. 19:6. The blood of Amasa went all over Joab, even into his sandals (1 Kings 2:5). Joab is being painted as a man who was a man of blood, for whom human life meant little and he slew too quickly. And David protests that Joab and his brothers are too "hard" for him, implying that he is a softy unlike them. But that is not the case. David is also a man of blood, killing easily, by deception and without reason; and Joab is his alter ego rather than his opposite. And David fails to perceive that. We too have alter egos, people who behave similarly to us in other contexts. They are placed in our lives to provoke our introspection, and yet too easily like David we end up condemning them. We think of David's eager condemnation of the man in the parable who had stolen his neighbour's beloved lamb.

We wonder why Amasa "took no heed to the sword...". Drivers can see an accident coming, but not swerve; there is a lack of cognition somewhere in the human psyche. Pilots take off at times knowing that their wings are frozen, and crash. Amasa saw the sword and must have seen the possibility of death, but didn't take cognizance of it. Samson must have known, on one level, what Delilah would do. The human Lord Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, and yet acted on another level as if He didn't. It should have been obvious to the British and French that Germany would start a war in 1938. But mankind is in amnesia, somewhere, somehow, we fail to recognize the obvious. Likewise with the nearness of the Lord's return, with the urgency of our task in witness, with the evident need to follow God's word- this lack of cognizance so often comes into play. We really ought to pray, earnestly, for open hearts and eyes and obedient lives before our daily reading.

It is part of human nature not to perceive the obvious when we have a subconscious reason not to, or a distraction. Maybe Amasa was more concerned about fighting Sheba, and considered that Joab would of course not touch him because they were soldiers fighting on the same side. Or we can know something on one level, but not on another. It helps explain why the Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him (Jn. 6:64), and yet how He could really trust in Judas as his own familiar friend, confide in him (Ps. 41:9), tell him that he would sit with the other eleven on thrones in the Kingdom (Mt. 19:28). This was ever a serious contradiction for me, until considering the Samson : Delilah relationship in depth. A man can know something about someone on one level, but act and feel towards them in a quite different way than this knowledge requires. In the same way, it was in one sense true that the Jews "knew not whence I come" (Jn. 8:24,14 RV) and yet in another sense they knew perfectly well the Divine origin of Jesus (Jn. 7:28). David likewise must have

known Absalom's deceit; but he chose not to see it, for love's sake. "They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things [just as Absalom did in the gate]... but I, as a deaf man, heard not" (Ps. 38:12,13). One also gets the sense that the Gibeonites' deception was somehow guessed by the elders of Israel, but against their better judgment they disregarded the telltale signs (Josh. 9:7). Amasa, taking no heed to the sword in Joab's hand... against his better judgment, surely, is another example.

2Sa 20:11 There stood by him one of Joab's young men and said, He who favours Joab, and he who is for David, let him follow Joab!-

We see here the beginnings of Joab's move towards trying to himself seize power at the time of Adonijah's rebellion. He places his name before David's, and asks men to follow him rather than David. We learn how evil actions begin with baby steps towards them.

2Sa 20:12 Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the midst of the highway. When the man saw that all the people stood still, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a garment over him, when he saw that everybody who came by him stood still-

It was a particularly bloody murder (1 Kings 2:5). "The men" were the troops Amasa had raised to be loyal to David; see on :13.

2Sa 20:13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri-

"All the people" refers to the troops Amasa had raised to fight on David's side against Sheba; they followed Joab, which would indicate that Amasa's delay in coming was not due to any disloyalty to David; see on :5. So this delay was used as an excuse by Joab to doubt Amasa's loyalty, and use that as a cover for slaying him- when his motive was really personal jealousy. This covering of the motive of personal jealousy goes on all the time in life.

2Sa 20:14 He went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, and to Beth Maacah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him-

The location of any place called Berim is unknown, so we may go with LXX "and all the chosen men were gathered together". Abel Beth Maacah (:15) may well have connections with Maacah, mother of Absalom. Quite possibly he went there because there was much discontent with David there.

2Sa 20:15 They came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maacah, and they cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart; and all the people who were with Joab battered at the wall, in order to throw it down-

"Battered" translates a word meaning 'to undermine' or to dig pits. By all means they were seeking to tear down the wall, yet we will see on :18 that Joab had disobeyed the command of Dt. 20:10 to firstly dialogue before besieging a city. LXX "all the people with Joab proposed to throw down the wall". This was the advice of Hushai, to drag the wall of any city where David was into a river. Again and again, David is being reminded of his previous salvations by grace.

2Sa 20:16 Then a wise woman cried out of the city-

LXX "from the wall". Again we have the murder of a man by a wall, due to betrayal by his own side, recalling that of Uriah. Both Uriah and Sheba perished because of a woman. The Hebrew in :21 is literally "through the wall" s.w. "at" a window in Gen 26:8. The reference is to one of the apertures made for the archers. This was how Uriah was slain, by an archer shooting through such a window on the wall. And it was through such an opening that the

woman spoke to Joab and possibly passed Sheba's head to him. Constantly the scenes associated with the Bathsheba and Uriah debacle are replayed to David, with God thereby ever seeking to nudge him towards greater realization and repentance. His confession was that "Against You, You only have I sinned", in contrast with Joseph's appreciation that adultery is a sin against both God and man. David never seems to have grasped this. Despite all the constant oblique reminders.

Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come near here, that I may speak with you' -

This coming near to a city wall recalls the murder of Uriah, again under Joab's command and with Joab's full complicity. Joab would immediately have thought 'I must be careful not to be killed as Uriah was'. All these rebellions were related to David's sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, and there are many conscious and unconscious allusions back to it.

2Sa 20:17 He came near to her; and the woman said, Are you Joab? He answered, I am. Then she said to him, Hear the words of your handmaid. He answered, I do hear- 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.

2Sa 20:18 Then she spoke saying, They used to say in old times, 'They shall surely ask counsel at Abel'; and so they resolved things-

The text is difficult. The idea may be that as in AVmg. "They plainly spake in the beginning, saying, Surely they will ask of Abel, and so make an end", meaning that Joab ought to have done as in Dt. 20:10 and summoned the city to surrender before besieging it. Joab comes over as over hasty and with no interest in following the Biblical rules of engagement. Hence LXX also hints at this: "It was asked in Abel and in Dan whether the customs have failed which the faithful of Israel ordained".

LXX "Of old time they said thus, Surely one was asked in Abel, and Dan, whether the faithful in Israel failed in what they purposed; they will surely ask in Abel, even in like manner, whether they have failed. I am a peaceable one of the strong ones in Israel; but thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother city in Israel: why dost thou seek to ruin the inheritance of the Lord?".

2Sa 20:19 I am among those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the inheritance of Yahweh?-

Joab was looking to destroy the city for the sake of his mission against Sheba. The woman's argument is that which should be used against all such campaigns which are based around guilt by association. The grammar suggests she speaks of herself as a personification of the city: "I am peaceable faithful ones of Israel". Cities are often called mothers (as 2 Sam. 8:1), and their surrounding villages are called their daughters. And she may be saying that the whole city was faithful to Israel, which calls forth Joab's response that if this were so, why then were they harbouring Sheba. The woman's claim to be faithful in Israel may mean that she was faithful to David as king of Israel. She seems to be saying that Joab ought to have begun with dialogue rather than besieging the city and thus assuming their disloyalty. This would've been in accordance with the law which prescribed that a city should be summoned to surrender before it was besieged (Dt. 20:10).

2Sa 20:20 Joab answered, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy-

Joab may mean 'I am personally not doing this to you, I have a Divine mandate to destroy a false leader called Sheba'. But that doesn't actually answer the woman's wisdom of :19. Joab ought to have asked for the head of Sheba at the start, but he doesn't apologize for his actions and his refusal to seek dialogue first; see on :18.

2Sa 20:21 The matter is not so. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against the king, even against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. The woman said to Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall-

The Philistines in 1 Sam. 29:4 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.

2Sa 20:22 Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. They cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. He blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each man to his tent. Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king-
Joab has before blown a trumpet to end a civil war and further bloodshed. Although he was a renowned and unjustified murderer, he seems also to have had a genuine concern to limit bloodshed within Israel. This is the kind of contradiction within human characters which is brought out continually in the record; we see it especially in David's character. We reflect upon it, and realize these were not just isolated individuals, but are typical of us all. Solomon later alludes to the wisdom of this woman in this situation (Ecc. 9:13-16), again with the unspoken implication that Joab was a fool. Solomon's writings are true enough but constantly contain attacks upon those with whom he or his father had had conflicts; and Solomon slew Joab as a contender against his power base.

2Sa 20:23 Now Joab was over all the army of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites-

That is, Joab was restored to be over the army, as David had given that job to Amasa as a sign of grace to his betrayers. Again David is shown to be powerless and manipulated. Joab asked Amasa's men and also Abishai's men to follow him if they followed David, and they did. Joab therefore effectively declared himself commander of all the army- against David's wishes, but with David unable to stop him because of how the soldiers were loyal to Joab and had all agreed to his leadership in the campaign against Sheba. The powerlessness of David comes to a crescendo on his deathbed, where he is impotent, even with the gorgeous Abishag ministering to him; with Bathsheba on the scene as well. Perhaps this gradual and consistent taking of power away from this once strong and powerful warrior was to humble him, so that he might be saved.

2Sa 20:24 and Adoram was over the men subject to forced labour; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder-

This is a similar list to that in 2 Sam. 8:6-8, but with the addition of the office of Adoram "over the men subject to forced labour". This was exactly what Samuel had predicted Israel's king would do. And it seems David fell into this too, and Solomon took that unwisdom far

further, to the point that people complained he was beating and whipping them with his demands.

The list of officers now given is similar to that when David first became king. But there is one difference. Adoram was over the forced labour, and he remained throughout Solomon's reign until he was killed when Rehoboam became king. David began to use forced labour, a kind of equivalent to demanding taxation, paid by labour rather than in cash. This was just what Samuel had warned Israel of regarding a king. Solomon extrapolated from his father's weakness in this, as he did regarding women and horses.

2Sa 20:25 and Sheva was scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests-

We note how those faithful to David in his wilderness years were in office for 40 years (2 Sam. 8:6-8). This is highly unusual in political circles. The impressive long term continuity in David's inner circle reflects a unity which was achieved by genuine respect and loyalty towards David and his specific Divine anointing as king- despite his evident weaknesses and failures. We too are to be loyal to our weaker brethren for the sake of who they are in Christ. Likewise only a truly Christ-centered approach brings true unity amongst God's people and servants.

2Sa 20:26 and also Ira the Jairite was chief minister to David-

The similarity with the list of 2 Sam. 8:6-8 but this office replaces the comment that "David's sons were chief rulers". They had either been killed or were deemed by David unsuitable. We notice that Solomon, the son with whom David came to be besotted after the loss of Absalom, doesn't figure in any of this, perhaps because of his youth. The absence of reference to David's sons is tacit reflection of how David's dreams for his "house" to fulfil the promises of 2 Samuel 7 hadn't worked out. Does this suggest David had lost relationship with his sons who previously held this office? That would be a hint that he had failed in his efforts to fulfil the promise of 2 Sam. 7 through his immediate family. Everything was nudging him to accept the only fulfilment of his family hopes would be through his future seed, the Lord Jesus. LXX has "priest" for "chief minister".

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 21

2Sa 21:1 There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David sought the face of Yahweh. Yahweh said, There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put to death the Gibeonites-

The record in 2 Samuel is not necessarily chronological but follows themes. This material may be inserted here to follow on from the mention of Gibeon in 2 Sam. 20:8, where Joab had killed Amasa. The seven victims were all young and unmarried, which would suggest a date earlier in the reign of David. And it would be more appropriate that judgment for Saul's misbehaviour came early on in David's reign, rather than as it were being remembered much later. "Three years, year after year", could refer to the three years after Saul's death.

Saul tried to kill all the Gibeonites (1 Sam. 28:2) and quite possibly he justified killing Gibeonites on the basis of cleansing the land from the original inhabitants (Ex. 34:11-16; Dt. 7:2); Gibeon was within the tribal area of Saul's tribe Benjamin but they weren't Benjamites. He likely wanted to destroy them and then give their land and city to his own tribe, fulfilling his promise to the Benjamites to give them property of their own. Seizing Gibeon would've been the ideal way to do this without seizing anything from other tribes. And surely he was mindful of how his failure to kill the Amalekites had cost him the kingdom, and so he perhaps thought he could make up for that by killing the Gibeonites. But he overlooked the

covenant Joshua had made with the Gibeonites not to destroy them. This is so psychologically credible- that a man in bad conscience with God would transfer his guilt onto others, and punish them for it.

But it could be that this incident is chronological, and follows on from the theme of the previous chapter- that there was a revival of interest in re-enstating a Saulide king from Benjamin, given growing disillusion with David personally. God raises the judgment for what Saul did possibly 22 years after he had done it. A reminder that because judgment isn't executed at the time, it doesn't mean God has somehow abrogated it. We also note the slowness of David to perceive that atonement was needed- the famine went on for three years, despite the promise of the covenant that there would not be famine if Israel were obedient.

The incident of Saul killing or trying to kill the Gibeonites isn't recorded. We would rather have expected there to be some punishment for his slaying of the priests at Nob. Possibly this slaying of the Gibeonites was related to that. But it isn't recorded. The idea may be that God still recalls sin, even some obscure sin, either actually slaying them or seeking to slay them, perhaps "only" killing seven of them as that's how many victims were required in compensation, done decades ago. God said there was blood guilt on Saul's family for what Saul had done. Atonement had not been made at the time and there is such a thing as delayed judgment and community guilt. One dimension of sin is that it affects others.

The word translated "bloodguilt" clearly refers to culpability for committing murder (Ex. 22:2; Num. 35:27; 2 Sam. 16:7; Is. 33:15; Ez. 9:9). It is legitimate for God to bring judgment for a sin upon a later generation, indeed His Son taught that the blood of previous murders would be "required of this generation". In the last day, "The earth will reveal her bloodshed and no longer cover her slain" (Is. 26:21). Likewise the blood guilt of previous generations was required of the generation that experienced the Babylonian invasion (Ez. 9:6-10). Ahab and Hezekiah had judgment brought upon their descendants because of their sins, but not in their days (1 Kings 20:29; 2 Kings 20:6-19). This was "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Ex. 20:5; 34:7); "In the lands of your enemies... because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away" (Lev. 26:40). But all this was negotiable, and David had himself negotiated his own blood guilt by appealing to God's grace.

David in Ps. 51:14,16 had specifically asked God to remove his bloodguilt involving Uriah (and the other soldiers of Israel slain at the time), without sacrificial expiation of the kind the Gibeonites were demanding: "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation... For You don't delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it". Despite being a man of blood guilt (Ps. 51:14), as Shimei rightly said in cursing him on behalf of Yahweh, David asks God to remove all blood guilty people from his presence as he doesn't want their company (Ps. 59:2; 139:19). Indeed David sees such people as the epitome of wickedness- when he himself had blood guilt and had only been saved from it by grace. He simply refuses to accept his blood guilt in any lasting sense. The same Hebrew term for blood guilt is used in 1 Sam. 25:26, where Yahweh through Abigail "Withheld you [David] from blood guilt"- by the grace of sending Abigail to David in His wisdom and grace. And David recognized at the time that indeed he had been saved from bloodguilt by being stopped from killing Nabal (1 Sam. 25:33 s.w.). David likewise had assured the woman of Tekoah that blood guilt would not be required from her son, and he would by Kingly decree ensure that those who sought to expiate the son's blood guilt by his murder wouldn't be allowed to do so (2 Sam. 14:11). And thus by extension he gave the same guarantee of safety from blood guilt revenge to his son Absalom who had murdered Amnon. But now, despite all this experience with bloodguilt being removed by grace, David allows bloodguilt to be demanded, without a thought for seeking the Divine grace and wisdom that had saved him from bloodguilt. Why? Perhaps he

just couldn't be bothered. Perhaps he knew that the death of the house of Saul, who had only recently risen against him under Sheba, was no bad thing for him politically. Or perhaps he just made a too hasty judgment without having thought through the implications- because he was not as conscious as he should have been of God's great grace to him over bloodguilt.

This graceless attitude to bloodguilt was continued by Solomon, who uses the argument to justify slaying Joab in order to cleanse David's descendants from blood guilt for the murders Joab had committed (1 Kings 2:31-33). Solomon's argument here is weak; because as noted on 2 Sam. 21:1, David had been saved from his own blood guilt by grace, and he ought to have reflected that in turning down the request of the Gibeonites. But Solomon just repeats his father's political usage of blood guilt expiation, and wrongly reasons that he has to slay Joab lest David's family be charged with blood guilt seeing that Joab was David's cousin, of the same blood family. It could be argued that Joab had killed Abner as revenge or expiation for Abner's blood guilt in killing his brother Asahel. But David and Solomon then make Joab have blood guilt for the murder. Clearly David and Solomon were seeking to impute the guilt of blood upon people and use it as an excuse to murder them. Whereas David definitely had blood guilt for Uriah, the soldiers who died with him and likely many other cases. Yet David was saved from it by the grace of imputed rightness. And yet, so ungratefully, he seeks to impute guilt to others and punish them for it.

All this fits the theme of David continuing to suffer so hugely for his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, likewise committed many years ago, but still noted by God and requiring atonement or at least, repentance. No matter how long ago the sin was committed, or how obscurely, the consequences remain. We at this point in the story are wondering why God doesn't just give David a break, and let the consequences stop. But we are being shown the seriousness of sin and its Divine judgment; and how actual repentance and change are sought from us by God. So perhaps this is why the incident occurred at this time, to nudge David to likewise consider his sins and their ongoing judgment and the need to make amends. The abiding judgment for Saul's sins was to remind him that he was in the same situation. David's statement at the time was that "Against You only have I sinned", as if he discounted any sin against Bathsheba, Uriah and their families. This helps us understand why this matters occurs at this time. I am not saying that textual dislocation and out of chronology events do occur in the Biblical text. But I always seek to more carefully consider the context before coming to that conclusion, and here we have a classic example.

We likewise wonder why this judgment affected all Israel if it were just Saul's sin, and why didn't it come upon Saul in his lifetime. Again the answers were to teach David that his sin would affect his nation and house after him, and many others suffered because of his sin. And out of Saul's many sins, why pick this one with the Gibeonites? Surely because it involved a willful breaking of covenant with them [the one Joshua had made]- just as David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband. Likewise we ponder why an unrecorded sin of Saul is made so significant in its consequence- and again we see the answer through the material being placed at this point in the narrative. David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah had been done secretly, just as Saul's sin against the Gibeonites had been unrecorded.

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. This is a possible take. But elsewhere in this commentary I have explained that on the other hand, David was wrong not to have appealed for grace and Divine intervention and answered the Gibeonites wrongly by letting them have their demands.

2Sa 21:2 The king called the Gibeonites and said to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn to them: and Saul sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah)-

Joshua 9 records how the Gibeonites had been promised security by Joshua, although they were Hivites who were to have been destroyed (Josh. 9:7; Dt. 7:2). Saul's apparent zeal to obey part of God's word whilst ignoring the covenant made by Joshua recalls how he murdered or expelled all witches (1 Sam. 28:9), in almost fanatic obedience to Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6. Saul's zeal to punish the apostate was really a classic case of psychological transference. He knew, subconsciously, that he was a sinner and deserved punishment for his sins. So he transferred those sins on to others, and punished them, revelling in it. But he was picking up verses from the Bible out of context, and with the witches, he himself used one. It was this attitude which was deeply displeasing to God. And the fact all Israel had known of this and done nothing to honour the covenant made in their name with the Gibeonites... meant that all Israel had to suffer the results of the famine.

2Sa 21:3 and David said to the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of Yahweh?-

"Atonement" is not used here in a religious sense but simply meaning a covering, which the Gibeonites understand as hinting at a financial payment (:4). For David personally had not sinned against them, and atonement in the religious sense was only appropriate towards God. But the Gibeonites like to use it in a religious sense, playing God by demanding that without the shedding of blood there could be no reconciliation with them.

"Atonement" translates a word which has the idea of expiation. And we will learn in :14 that God was entreated or, as it could be rendered, "appeased". But many questions are left open. To whom was expiation made in :3- to God or the Gibeonites? And :14 says that "After that God responded to the prayer for the land". If "appeased" is the idea, then how is God appeased by *prayer*, specifically, the prayer / blessing of the now appeased Gibeonites? Clearly He was not so much appeased by dead bodies on a tree as by prayer, and the wronged praying for those who wronged them. This clearly touches Him. We note the rains didn't come as soon as the men were slain, but some months afterwards. He clearly was not appeased by the physical slaying and blood of victims. So whilst the images of expiation and appeasement are possible, they seem to me to hang by a slender thread.

However if we go for the idea of expiation and appeasement, we could conclude that indeed Yahweh was appeased by the death of Saul's descendants. But the implication is that David could have thrown the situation upon God's grace and direction, as he did his own blood guilt, and God could have forgiven the guilt some other way. "Wherewith shall I expiate..." was a question David ought to have known the answer to, had he remained aware of God's grace to him earlier. The answer was in an appeal to God, but he fails to do this.

2Sa 21:4 The Gibeonites said to him, It is no matter of silver or gold between us and Saul, or his house; neither is it for us to put any man to death in Israel-

The law of Moses forbade the payment of money as compensation for murder (Num. 35:31). That David had apparently hinted at this possibility in :3 would therefore suggest that he was

willing to break the letter of the law of Moses, a feature of David's which was largely an outcome of his understanding so well the spirit of the law. And yet it was to lead him into the sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. And yet it has to be said that this was a difficult legal situation. God had shown that the sin of Saul needed some atonement, but Saul was dead. The Gibeonites were asking for blood as atonement, although they accept it is not within their power to execute this.

He said, Whatever you say, that will I do for you-

This was unwise, because David was to be asked to break the law. But he perhaps lacks the humility to pull out of this blanket promise he has now made. We think of Herod offering to do anything for Herodias' daughter. The law of Moses forbade money compensation for murder (Num. 35:31,32) because that would devalue the human life and the seriousness of taking it. But the David who had experienced God's grace in not taking his life for murder and adultery could surely have found a way to not agree with this. And surely David could have argued that killing Saul's descendants wasn't obedience to the principle that the shedder of blood must be slain. And Saul's death in battle could have been accepted as his judgment for all his sins. David's desire to placate the Gibeonites rather suggests he failed to appreciate the grace shown to him when it came to guilt for murder. And this was extreme guilt- making descendants suffer for murder committed by an ancestor. And leaving their bodies exposed for months, in disobedience to the law, all suggests that David judged and spoke far too quickly. And did so without grace. David doesn't throw himself upon God for direction and wisdom, although he does do so in the incident of the numbering of Israel. The same language of God being entreated for the land is in 2 Sam. 24:25; but only after David had placed himself in God's hands and cast himself upon His grace and direction. And that is what he ought to have done here. Perhaps he learnt there from his failure here.

2Sa 21:5 They said to the king, The man who consumed us, and who devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the borders of Israel-

This implies Saul's campaign against them had been widespread and systematic. See on :2. The lack of record of it was to match how David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah had been supposedly in secret- but was having a delayed outcome of judgment just as Saul's 'secret' unrecorded sin.

2Sa 21:6 let seven men of his sons be delivered to us, and we will hang them up to Yahweh in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of Yahweh. The king said, I will give them-

One theme of the record is that David simply does what the Gibeonites ask, without any cavil nor attempt to negotiate with them nor with God. The Gibeonites say: "let them be given over to us" and David replies "I will give them over... The king took... The king handed them over" (:6-9).

The Gibeonites' demand that the crucifixion of the victims be done in Gibeah, Saul's home town, shows again their desire for the worst possible judgment against Saul. Their description of Saul as "Yahweh's chosen" is surely ironic and shows again the depth of their hatred.

Their allusion is to Num. 25:4, where the bodies of the leaders in the worship of Baal were hung up to turn away Yahweh's anger (cp. :1). But the seven sons of Saul were not personally responsible for the sin. And David had solemnly vowed before Yahweh to Saul and Jonathan on at least two occasions that he would not destroy their seed. David's acquiescence therefore was wrong, and like Herod and other kings trapped by their own pride to fulfil their promises, so David agrees to the death of Saul's sons. He ought to have said something like "I have vowed a vow not to do this, I believe in grace, and will not allow this to happen. I will throw myself down before Yahweh and beg for this situation to be resolved

another way". But pride stops him. Yet David generally was humble in this kind of thing. So as with the sin with Bathsheba, I take this to be an out of character failing of David.

2Sa 21:7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of Yahweh's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul-
As noted on :6, David had made a similar oath before Yahweh to Saul (1 Sam. 24:21,22). But he seems to justify breaking that by arguing that he was honouring a similar oath he had made to Jonathan. I suggested on :6 what his response ought to have been.

2Sa 21:8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholahite-

David chose the sons of his ex wives Merab and Michal as the victims, however we read the text [Michal could have 'brought them up' for her sister as she herself remained childless until the day of her death]. And this reflects his bitterness towards them and desire to cut off any likely contenders for his throne after the Saulide rebellion under Sheba. David comes over as wrong all around in this matter. Michal was his former wife. He had broken up Michal's marriage with Paltiel even though Paltiel wept over it. And now he slays Michal's five sons. If this is the same Barzillai who was later so kind to David at the time of Absalom's rebellion, then we see that man's grace, forgiving David for slaying his five grandchildren. And it contrasts with David's low estimate of the value of human life which we again see.

God sees to the end of a man's history, indeed to the end of all and every human history, He weighs men, and weighs them up in grace. Further, we all likely struggle with the unspirituality of others against us. We ponder how brother X or sister Y can really be a Christian, can have any real relationship with God, because of how we see them act. This struggle over these kinds of issues is, in my experience, the number one reason why people leave Christian communities. The raw anger, hatred and viciousness they see in others disillusion them, and they walk. The pull of materialism, of false doctrine etc., are actually not significant reasons in the majority of cases I know of where a believer has quit the community of believers. It's nearly always personal disillusion with the evil side of their brethren. All I can say is, Consider David's poorer side. Think of men like the Philistines who became David's most loyal bodyguards and soldiers, Adriel and Phaltiel, women like Rizpah, the mothers of Moab and Edom, who all likely considered David a sadistic maniac-given their experience of him. And, of course, Uriah, who surely knew all along what was going on. They saw the weaker side of David. Thanks to the extent of Biblical revelation about David, we see a wider picture. And even if that wider picture remains invisible to us concerning brother A and sister B, try to imagine that they have a prayer life, read Scripture, are loved by God, and probably in some ways and to some extent do respond to that love... and leave the final analysis of human character to the God who judges, weighs and knows far deeper, more graciously, more hopefully, than we ever can in this life.

David had loved Jonathan's sister Michal, and she loved him; only for her to come to despise David's spirituality, and to be unfaithful to him (2 Sam. 21:8 implies she had even more relationships than just with Paltiel). But then David killed her five sons. She was part of the ineffable sadness of David's personal life.

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.

2Sa 21:9 He delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before Yahweh, and all seven of them fell together. They were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, at the beginning of barley harvest-

That is, at Passover (Dt. 16:9). At the time when David ought to have been celebrating God's deliverance from death by grace, he was putting to death innocent young people, who may have been no more than children. Sacrificing them on the first days of barley harvest suggests they were going along with a pagan ritual- for human sacrifice on the eve of harvest is attested in Canaan. In Hittite and Ugarit myth, Mot was killed by Anat between the barley harvest and autumn rains and Mot's body was believed to have been dismembered and exposed. And so human sacrifice at the time of the harvest rains was practiced in Canaan. Again we get the impression that the Gibeonites were out to humiliate them at all costs. And David ought rather to have refused to go along with such paganism. We keep asking, why does David go along with this? It really does seem that he was politically motivated by allowing the deaths of his potential Saulide rivals. And refusing to show any grace.

2Sa 21:10 Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her on the rock-
To form a tent for her to live in whilst she protected the bodies day and night from wild animals.

From the beginning of harvest until water was poured on them from the sky-
The heavy rains usually came about six months after the beginning of harvest. The rain

clearly meant that the famine had ended; God is presented as having been appeased by the deaths and so rain comes.

She allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day, nor the animals of the field by night-

The idea of blood sacrifice being required to bring rain suggests that the Gibeonites believed in a rain god. Yet when David is asked to give seven men of the family of Saul as a blood sacrifice to appease the rain god who was not sending rain, David agrees. He doesn't make the Biblical argument that rain being withheld indicates the need for repentance before Yahweh, and that sacrificing humans is wrong and won't change anything in this context. He gives in to the false understanding of the Gibeonites, breaking his undertakings to Saul and Jonathan by doing so, and selects seven men to be slain and hung up. We read of the mother of two of them, Rizpah, lovingly watching over the bodies of her sons day and night, with all the distraction of true love (2 Sam. 21:10). David didn't have to do this. But he did. We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8). He doesn't seem to have cared for the mother's feelings, nor for the lives of her sons. And note that David makes up the total of seven men by having the five foster sons of his own estranged wife Michal slain. Was this not David somehow hitting back at Michal, who had mocked him for his style of worship in 2 Sam. 6? And how did Adriel, the father of those five sons, feel? He wasn't of the house of Saul, but because of David's desire to placate someone else, he lost all his sons, just because his wife had died and Saul's daughter had raised them. And yet this same David is recorded as saying soon afterwards: "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his ordinances were before me; And as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also perfect toward him; And I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in his eyesight" (2 Sam. 22:22-25).

To leave the bodies impaled was specifically disobedient to the Mosaic command that respect must be shown even to the executed- their bodies were not to be left hanging and were to be buried on the day of their execution (Dt. 21:22,23). And yet the bodies were left there from barley harvest to the first rains after the Summer (:10), about five months. This was downright humiliation. We can rightly assume that Rizpah dearly wanted to bury the bodies but was not permitted to. Indeed, leaving the bodies hanging was punishment for breaking covenant with Yahweh in Dt. 28:26: "And your corpse shall be food to all the birds of heaven, and to the animals of the earth; and no one shall frighten them away". Rizpah frightening away the "birds of heaven" sounds therefore like her protest at this treatment. She was trying to show that her sons had not broken covenant. One purpose of this narrative may be to highlight the weakness of David. He knew God's law so well, or so he claims in Ps. 119. But he allows it to be flouted, and at best appears impotent to stop the Gibeonites abusing Saul's descendants. If the event is in chronological order, then we would have yet another example of David's impotence, culminating in the picture of his sexual and physical impotence in the closing scene of his life. The once so powerful is being progressively rendered powerless- not so much in simplistic judgment for the sake of it, but in order to coax and nudge him towards greater self understanding and repentance.

This wasn't the first time David had slain men for bloodguilt and then displayed their bodies. He had done so when Ishbosheth was slain by his own men, and David in turn killed them for their bloodguilt and hung up their bodies: "When wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood [Heb. 'his blood guilt'] of your hand, and take you away from the earth? David commanded his young men, and they killed them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up" (2 Sam. 4:11,12). But David did this for political reasons, to try to prove his own innocence of slaying Saul's son,

his rival to the throne. So when it happens again here with David granting the request of the Gibeonites, we likewise suspect David's motives are mixed.

2Sa 21:11 It was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done-

It seems it took David the six months alluded to in :10 to respond. He gathers up the bones of the men or boys, along with those of Saul and Jonathan, and gives them a decent burial.

2Sa 21:12 David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh Gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, in the day that the Philistines killed Saul in Gilboa-

David's burial of the bones of Saul and Jonathan right afterwards seems to me to have been politically motivated. He had allowed Saulide contenders for the throne to be cut off and publicly humiliated but now he seeks to wash his hands of any accusation of being against Saul. If he had trusted the earlier word to him, that he would replace Saul, then he need not have gone along with the Gibeonites' demands.

The last mention of the David : Jonathan relationship is in 2 Sam. 21:12-14, where we read that David personally ("he" cp. they") took and carried the bones of Saul and Jonathan to their final resting place. The love of David for Jonathan is apparent. We are invited to imagine David carrying the bones of his best friend, perhaps just the ashes of them (1 Sam. 31:12,13), cradling them (or the container) in his arms, weeping as he walked. How about this for pathos. The words of David's lament in 2 Sam. 1 would have surely come to his mind. It is almost certain that David memorized them, seeing it was taught as a song of remembrance (2 Sam. 1:18). There would have been the restimulation of so much. So that is how the Spirit concludes the story, David walking off into the sunset with the bones of Jonathan. It should be remembered that this occurred after David's disgrace with Bathsheba. The thought must surely have gone through his mind: It's a good thing dear Jonathan isn't here to see it. The very name of the prophet Nathan, the expositor of David's sin, would have restimulated David. For 'Jonathan' means 'Yahweh-Nathan'. It is quite likely that in practice David would not have pronounced the 'Yah' prefix; he would have called Jonathan 'Nathan' (how many 'Jonathan's do you know whose name isn't abbreviated by their friends?). The reason why there is so much pathos in the story, so powerfully expressed, is to set us a standard of love and feeling towards Christ; for Jonathan represents us, and the love of David for him really is a reflection of the love of Christ for us. Truly do we sing that "Thou art far above / dearest of human love".

David's rush to publically bury and respect the remains of Saul and Jonathan is laboured in :12-14. Again we sense political thinking and motivation in David. Sheba was from the tribe of Saul and his rebellion had been more dangerous for David than Absalom's. Perhaps having allowed the family of Saul to be so humiliated, he now rushes to show respect to them. This was trying to ingratiate himself to the men of Judah by allowing the abuse of Saul's descendants, and then to the men of Benjamin by honouring the memory of Saul. David's motives as ever were mixed.

2Sa 21:13 and he brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son: and they gathered the bones of those who were hanged-

The extreme grief of Rizpah is intentionally contrasted with this symbolic gesture from David in at least giving the sons an honourable burial, although it took David six months to do so. He is presented as callous in the face of very genuine grief caused by his pride and refusal to honour his covenant before Yahweh that he had made with Saul.

2Sa 21:14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. After that God responded to the prayer for the land-

David was wrong in killing those seven men or boys. God is not appeased by blood sacrifice in that sense. It was the prayer of the Gibeonites that 'appeased' God and not the murder of those men. After the horror of what he had done was brought to his attention, David buried the bones of Saul as if he felt he should have been more respectful to the house of Saul (2 Sam. 21:12) and only then God responded to the prayer for the famine to be lifted (:14)- as if He sought respect for the house of Saul and not the disrespect of killing seven random relatives of Saul's on the say-so of mere men. If indeed God wanted the sacrifice of those men, we would surely read that immediately after their murder He lifted the famine; but He did so only after David had subsequently shown respect to the house of Saul as a token of regret and repentance for what he had authorized.

2Sa 21:15 The Philistines had war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines. David grew faint-

The material in 2 Samuel isn't chronological. The material we have now at the end of the book appears to be various cameos of the life of David which are for some reason not incorporated into the book as a whole. Perhaps the common theme in them all is that they mention David's weaknesses in various ways. We now read of how David was "faint", physically weak during a battle. It is one of a number of hints that he did not enjoy good health. We think of him laying sick at Mahanaim during Absalom's rebellion, and the copious evidence in the Psalms that he had a breakdown of his health soon after the sin with Bathsheba. These events are located in 1 Chron. 20:4-8 immediately after the capture of Rabbah, which was again not David at his spiritually strongest.

2Sa 21:16 and Ishbibenob, who was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being armed with a new sword, was about to have slain David

We wonder therefore whether David's faith failed him at this point, or whether he did not have the level of faith he showed when he triumphed over Goliath. David had mocked armour as a source of strength, and yet this suggests David almost perished because of the weaponry of this Philistine. I suggested on :15 that the cameos from the life of David which conclude 2 Samuel all have the common theme of David's weakness.

2Sa 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him, and struck the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him saying, You shall go no more out with us to battle, that you don't quench the lamp of Israel-

The significance of this is that David is harking back to how he had not gone out to war with his armies at the time of 2 Sam. 11:1, and it had led him into the sin with Bathsheba. At every point we find him repentant and playing along with how God too was referring him back to previous points in his life. It seems that after the sin, David insisted on going out with his troops to battle even when he was too old to effectively do so (2 Sam. 18:2).

2Sa 21:18 It came to pass after this, that there was again war with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was of the sons of the giant-

We note that the *Rephaim* had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). The "giants" of Gen. 6:2-4 were therefore humans and not celestial beings. "Gob" is LXX Gath; see on :20 for the significance.

2Sa 21:19 There was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite's brother, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam-

Elhanan was from the small village of Bethlehem, and therefore was likely a childhood friend of David's. He like us with the Lord Jesus was inspired by David's victory over Goliath. He saw what was potentially possible for man in faith, just as we are shown through the Lord's victory on the cross what is possible for men apparently saddled with human nature.

2Sa 21:20 There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, twenty four in number; and he also was born to the giant-

David fought the Philistines at Gath (see on :18), and yet we note that he lived with Achish at Gath for over a year, and some of his most loyal followers were Philistines from Gath like Ittai. His victories over them therefore elicited humility and faith from some of the Philistines there. They realized that David and his men won their victories not in their own strength, but because of Yahweh. And they humbly came into covenant relationship with the God of their enemies, and fellowship with their one time enemies and murderers of their friends and families. It is humility which is the critical requirement in coming to the true God, and no amount of apparently high powered intellectual argument and slick presentation can replace that.

2Sa 21:21 When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, killed him- 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. Jonathan was brother to the crafty Jonadab, who led Absalom into major sin by his subliminal suggestions. We see how faith and unbelief can exist within the same family.

2Sa 21:22 These four were born to the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants-

David took five stones to kill Goliath but used only one. Was he faithless and doubting that the first one would hit home? Or did he aim to use the other four on Goliath's four giant sons (2 Sam. 21:16-22)? 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? If he did aim to use the other four on Goliath's four giant sons, 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.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 22

2Sa 22:1 David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul-

We naturally want to know when this time was, when David was delivered from Saul and all his enemies. Abner's words in 2 Sam. 3:18 seem relevant. He tries to persuade the elders of Israel to have David as king by arguing that "For the Lord promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies'". This may then be the moment at which David sung this. We note how Nathan quotes these words back to David at the time of the Bathsheba failure: "I anointed

you king over Israel, and delivered you from the hand of Saul". This would again associate these words of David with his becoming king. However there seems no reason to me to consider 2 Samuel 21-24 as anything but chronological. The day of David's deliverance from his enemies is only logically at the end of his life.

As Abner recalled, God had promised David that He would use him to deliver Israel from their enemies: "For the Lord promised David, 'By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies'" (2 Sam. 3:18). But David adapts this, even twists it, to apply to his personal enemies. Possibly there is here a reflection of David's narcissism, and lack of appreciation that it was not all about him, but about the good he could do for others.

David doesn't see his deliverance from Saul as God saw it. Nathan has used the very words "saved / rescued out of the hand of Saul" in condemning David: "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul". God saw this fact as making David's sin with Bathsheba all the more shameful. David sees this fact as demonstration that he is of pure hands and was delivered because of his own righteousness.

Perhaps in this song David is alluding to things which had not been recorded or perhaps were generally unknown- like a great theophany to him, and Divine rescue of him from certain death at the hands of his enemies. Coming out in older age with such testimonial tributes to God's grace in earlier life is psychologically credible, and what many have done. This would be similar to how the previous chapter talks about a major sin of Saul's, and its consequences, which was unknown to the Biblical record.

We note the similarity between the Hebrew words for Saul and *sheol*, the grave, and indeed David now goes on to thank God for saving him from death on various occasions. And yet the greatest salvation from death he experienced was that from the death penalty for his sins with Uriah and Bathsheba. But he makes no specific reference to this, unless we take his talk of being dramatically saved from some great death by a theophany, God coming down, as referring to that. And even then we wonder why he had to reference it in such an oblique and disguised manner. After all, he had vowed in Psalm 32 to publically tell the world of his salvation from the death penalty for those sins, and this song at the end of his life would seem the obvious place to do so. But he doesn't, at least not specifically.

This song quite rightly [on one level] celebrates how God had saved David from certain death in various military confrontations, and had given him great victories. But David is sanitizing his past, talking in terms of conflict-deliverance-glorious victory, just as many kings boasted. His references to God as a rock, tower and stronghold seem to have in view his deliverances from Saul; see on :49. Rocks and strongholds feature much in the record (at least ten references- 1 Sam. 22:4,5; 23:14,19,25-28; 24:1,3,23). But that was in his earlier life pre-Bathsheba, and he has little to say about the majority of his kingship after that. And David carefully omits to mention God's salvation of him from his greatest 'death'- the Divine death penalty mandated for his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband and other men to try to cover it. And he makes no more than passing allusion to the huge grace shown him in 2 Sam. 7, where he was promised a pretty well unconditional eternal salvation through resurrection to behold his future descendant reigning eternally on his throne. Like every man, David had a strong tendency to whitewash himself, assuming the passage of time had worked a kind of quasi atonement for his sins. And yet God, as predicted through Nathan at the time, worked constantly to jog and nudge David to realize the dimensions of his sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent sinful behaviour. In the hope he would come to a higher grade of repentance. All these failures in appreciation by David are a relevant challenge to all of us, especially those who have already walked many years in the Lord.

This is largely the material found in Ps. 18. The Psalm concludes with a reference to David as the anointed, so this could be a Psalm composed when Saul was slain and David was finally declared king, and his anointing came to fulfilment. It is a "song" but it has no strophes (unlike most of the Psalms), perhaps because it was intended for use at a procession. But quite possibly what was originally a song of thanks at David's declaration as king over Judah was then edited by him at the end of his life. Because parts of the song allude to the promises made to him in 2 Sam. 7, which was after this accession to the throne. Further 'his enemies and Saul' suggests he had many enemies but the greatest one was Saul. This is a style found elsewhere- e.g. "Nineteen men and Asahel" (2 Sam. 2:30); "Go spy out the land and Jericho" (Josh. 2:1); "King Solomon loved many foreign women and he loved the daughter of Pharaoh" (1 Kings 11:1).

Ps. 18:1 adds "I love You, Yahweh, my strength". This bald statement "I love You" is intentionally startling, and is the only place where we read this; usually we read the word of God's love to man. Here, David simply tells God "I love You"

2Sa 22:2 and he said, Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, even mine-
This is the language of rocky terrain, the type where Saul chased David and God saved him multiple times.

David's description of how the cherubim acted in his life in 2 Sam. 22 is full of Angelic language:

- v. 2 "My rock"- an Angel (Gen. 49:24)
- v. 3 "My shield"- the Angel who made the promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:1)
- v. 3 "My saviour"- as the Holy Spirit Angel was to Israel (Is. 63:8-10)
- v. 7 "He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears"- the language of Angelic limitation regarding the Angel who dwelt in the temple.
- v. 9 "fire"- God makes His Angels a flame of fire (Ps. 104:3,4).
- v. 10 "came down " - God manifest in the Angels, as at Sodom and Babel.
- v. 11 "a cherub. . did fly. . wings of wind". Gabriel could "fly swiftly"; the Angels are made "spirits"- winds.
- v. 12 "darkness. . thick clouds"- the Angel dwelt over the darkness of the Most Holy and in the pillar of cloud; cp. the scene during the Angelic manifestation at Sinai.
- v. 15 "arrows. . . lightning"- Angel cherubim language
- v. 16 "the blast of the breath (spirit) of His nostrils". God's spirit is manifested through Angels.
- v. 17 "He sent from above, He took me"- the physical movement of the Angels from Heaven to earth to obey God's word
- v. 25 "Before His eyes"- Angels
- v. 37 "Thou hast enlarged my steps. . so that my feet did not slip"- the Angel keeping David from sinning?
- 23:1 "God of Jacob"- an Angel
- 23:3 "the rock of Israel" (an Angel) inspired David- which is the work of Angels.

2Sa 22:3 God, my rock, in Him I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge. My saviour, You save me from violence-

The "city of David" was not a city, it is defined in 2 Sam. 5:7 as a stronghold, and elsewhere the term is used specifically of the burial places of the Davidic kings: "David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David". It was a hill southeast of Jerusalem. In the wilderness Psalms, David so often talks of Yahweh as his stronghold, his fortified tower. And we think of 2 Sam. 22:1-3: "David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

and he said, Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, even mine; God, my rock, in Him I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge. My saviour, You save me". But once he settles in Jerusalem, we repeatedly read of the city / stronghold of David, the area he built a fortification around, the "milo". Again we see his spiritual decline once he settled down and we must beware of this. He himself and his fortified home fortress was his own stronghold rather than Yahweh.

David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Truly David is our example. David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. "The God of my rock is *my* shield... he is a shield to *all* them that trust in him" (2 Sam. 22:3,31). "*I* am in a great strait; let *us* fall now into the hand of the Lord" (2 Sam. 24:14) reflects this. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). And many of these Psalms of praise seem to have their origin in his experience of forgiveness regarding Bathsheba.

2Sa 22:4 I will call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies-

We can render "derided, I called to the Lord; I called for help from my enemies", in which case the allusion is to his feigning madness before Achish, calling for help and being delivered (1 Sam. 21:14). As nearly always in this song, the reference is to the events of David's glory days in his 20s and not to the bulk of his life. He is sanitizing his past.

The tenses can be read as 'I kept on calling and kept on being saved'. David's focus of all his praises upon Yahweh was what he wanted his people to follow (Ps. 22:3). The implication of "worthy" could imply a contrast with other gods, as in Ps. 96:4 "He is to be feared / praised above all gods". This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on Ps. 18:31; Ps. 12:8; 16:4), and that idolatry was prevalent in Israel at the time.

2Sa 22:5 For the waves of death surrounded me. The floods of ungodliness made me afraid-

Ps. 18:4 "the cords of death", alluding to Saul trying to ensnare David in a trap that will lead to his death (1 Sam. 18:21). The allusion is also to Saul calling David a "son of death", certain to die, in 1 Sam. 20:31. Always the allusions are to David's life in his 20s, his dramatic deliverances during his halcyon years. Never to his not so wonderful life post Bathsheba. It could be argued that David is writing or singing these words after he was made king and Saul was dead. But he still had many "enemies" to be saved from (:1), and the placement of this song at this point in the narrative surely suggests it was David doing what most kings of the time did at the end of their lives- recount the glory of their lives and thank their god for all their victories and deliverances. "The day" when God had delivered David from all his enemies (:1) is surely only the "day" of the end of his life. David felt as if he had been a sacrifice bound to an altar, as man drowning in water, and therefore about to be pulled into the grave (Ps. 18:5). The allusion is to Isaac and his miraculous deliverance from such cords, thanks to the ram in the thicket whom David is later to understand as representative of the future Messianic saviour; for the Lord quotes David's "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1) as the Aramaic *sabachthani*, "entangled", the word used of the ram entangled in the thicket.

"Ungodliness" is 'ungodly men', 'men of Belial'. We think of Nabal, a man of Belial (1 Sam. 25:17,25). But he was saved from killing Nabal by God's grace to him through Abigail.

David makes no reference to this. See on :27. But probably the reference is to large numbers of such men rising against David and almost killing him (:6), which would apply more naturally to the time of Absalom's rebellion. David's fear is not much hinted at in the record, but here he himself admits to it.

2Sa 22:6 The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death caught me-

"Cords" is literally the pangs, hence AV "sorrows" (as in Acts 2:24 "having loosened the pangs of death"). David saw even the death which he feared as the birth pangs to a rebirth in resurrection. Just as had been hinted at for him in the promises of 2 Sam. 7. But because he was saved out of imminent death, perhaps his focus on that future resurrection was diminished. See on :5. David felt he had come face to face with death, to the point that his salvation was effectively a resurrection. The response to this near death situation is described here, but it is hard to locate such an incident in the historical records. Perhaps there was a particular salvation from death at Saul's hands which isn't recorded, but David alludes to it here.

"Caught me" is Ps. 18:5 "Came on me", or literally 'went before me'. The same word is used in Ps. 59:10: "My God will go before me with His grace". David was inside his house surrounded by his enemies (Ps. 59:1), and escaped through a window. As he planned the escape, he believed that God's grace would go before him. At the end of his life he appears to reflect upon this incident, glorying that although he was "compassed about" with the threat of death, seeing the house was surrounded by Saul's men intending to kill him; yet God's grace had somehow gone before David and prepared a way of escape (Ps. 18:5,18 s.w.).

The Ras Shamra texts speak of the insatiable appetite of Mot for dead people- he eats them ceaselessly with both hands. There are frequent parallels drawn between Mot / Mawet, and the grave: 2 Sam. 22:5,6; Is. 28:18; Hos. 13:14; Job 28:22; 30:23; Ps. 6:5; 18:5; 89:48; 116:3; Prov. 2:18; 5:5; 7:27. The point is that Mot / Mawet doesn't exist, it is simply to be understood as the grave. For very often, language used about Mot in the pagan literature is applied to God in order to show Mot's effective non-existence. The significance of this point is that at times, the Bible refers to pagan ideas about 'Satan' like figures in order to deconstruct them, and show their effective non-existence in the light of the supremacy of the one true God.

2Sa 22:7 In my distress I called on Yahweh. Yes, I called to my God. He heard my voice out of His temple. My cry came into His ears-

The reference to "my distress" could be to how David returned to find that the Amalekites had plundered Ziklag and taken his wives and children captive, and his men turned against him. "David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because they were grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters... David inquired of Yahweh" (1 Sam. 30:6-8). The theophany which is now described could possibly refer to some unrecorded events at the time when David pursued after the Amalekites and recovered the captives. The references to pursuing after a "troop" and overtaking them (:30,38) would then refer to this too. Likewise "You have delivered me from the contentions of my people" (:44) would refer to David regaining control of his mutinous men at this time. Another alternative is that the theophany refers to how David heard the cherubim "marching on the tops of the balsam trees" in 2 Sam. 5:24.

David imagines his prayers as coming into the heavenly throne room, and eliciting a response. His later obsession with building a physical temple for God was a departure from how he had earlier perceived God's temple- as being in Heaven, and accessible by faithful prayer.

2Sa 22:8 Then the earth shook and trembled. The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry-

It is hard to locate such an incident in the historical records. Perhaps there was a particular salvation from death at Saul's hands which isn't recorded, but David alludes to it here. Or perhaps the language here is that of theophany and God manifestation; it may not literally describe things which happened, but the hand of God in saving David was no less than as if He had appeared as He did at Sinai. For the language of earth shaking and quaking is that of the Sinai theophany and the deliverance from Egypt.

The parallel Ps. 18:7 has "the mountains". David felt that the whole of Heaven was aware of him and his dramas; just as all the Angels rejoice every time one sinner repents. 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.

The theophany described in :8-16 clearly alludes to that at Sinai (Ex. 19:16-18; Jud. 5:4,5; and how David understood Sinai's events in Ps. 68:8; 77:16-18). David could be referring to some unrecorded amazing theophany and deliverance that he experienced; or he could be making the point that God's grace and salvation shown to him personally was as awesome for him as the vast outpouring of God's power, meaning, covenant, love, grace and awe on Sinai. Which is something we can relate to. The unrecorded amazing deliverance of David may be his way of describing his salvation from the Divine death penalties regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. For he makes no mention of this deliverance... which was the greatest deliverance.

2Sa 22:9 Smoke went up out of His nostrils. Fire out of His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it-

This sounds like the symbolic language of theophany and God manifestation, rather than describing actually observed events in literal terms. The allusion is clearly to what happened at the exodus and Sinai, which David felt had been repeated for him in essence; as it is for all in covenant relationship with the God who saves.

2Sa 22:10 He bowed the heavens also-

The same phrase used of Moses stretching out his hands toward the heavens, and God responding by delivering His people (Ex. 9:22,23; 10:21).

And came down. Thick darkness was under His feet-

As Yahweh came down at Sinai (Ex. 19:11 s.w.). The idea is that as God had miraculously intervened for the salvation of His people in history, so David felt He had in his life; although there is no historical record of such dramatic scenes as on Sinai and at the Red Sea. We likewise experience His interventions; they aren't as dramatic as in history, but none less dramatic in ultimate reality. This coming down in a saving theophany was what David had in fact prayed for in Ps. 144:5. He asked for a theophany to save him, no less that what happened at Sinai (s.w. Ex. 19:18-20), when again God had as it were made the mountains smoke by His touch. We marvel at David's spiritual ambition, unafraid to ask for a similar theophany to save him. And here he reflects at the end of his life that this prayer was in fact answered. The relevance to the exiles is that Yahweh was prepared to "bow" (s.w. "stretch out") the heavens and "come down" to restore the exiles; but they chose not to make use of that huge potential (s.w. Is. 40:22; 42:5; 64:1).

God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned

Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so- but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time (1 Pet. 3:18-21).

2Sa 22:11 He rode on a cherub, and flew. Yes, He was seen on the wings of the wind-
"Wind" and "spirit" are the same words in Hebrew. The cherubim chariot are presented as God's vehicle of manifestation, and this was language the exiles would've been familiar with through the visions of Ezekiel. Yet this is not to say that David also had such a vision. Rather did he perceive God's huge cherubic activity through the various experiences of salvation and grace he had in his life. And this is the same for us. The reference may simply be to God as it were riding on clouds in glory: "He makes the clouds His chariot, He walks on the wings of the wind" (Ps. 104:3).

2Sa 22:12 He made darkness pavilions around Himself: gathering of waters, and thick clouds of the skies-

All the scene at God's manifestation on Sinai. The Old Testament describes Yahweh, the one true God, as riding through the heavens on chariots to the help of His people Israel (Dt. 33:26; 2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3; Is. 19:1; Hab. 3:8). But Baal was known as the *rkb 'rpt*, the one who rides upon the clouds; and he is here being deconstructed.

This could also be an allusion to the exodus. Rashi suggests: "He put [a protective] darkness around", alluding to how the pillar of cloud and the darkness separated between the Egyptians and Israelites (Ex. 14:20).

2Sa 22:13 At the brightness before Him, coals of fire were kindled-

The "coals of fire" speak of Divine judgment (Ps. 140:10), and were part of the cherubim vision (Ez. 1:13; 10:2). Hail and thick clouds were the judgment threatened upon the Assyrians in Hezekiah's time (Is. 28:2; 30:30). David's experience becomes developed as relevant to the manifestation of God in salvation in other contexts.

2Sa 22:14 Yahweh thundered from heaven, the Most High uttered His voice-

Ps. 18:13 adds "hailstones and coals of fire", alluding to the destruction of Sodom. And yet there is no recorded incident of God consuming David's enemies like this. But he felt that God had indeed come through for Him in no less powerful a way. And we can feel and experience the same.

2Sa 22:15 He sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and confused them-

This continues the thanksgiving that his prayer of Ps. 144:6 had been answered. He had asked for a saving theophany of the magnitude of what was seen at Sinai. Now at the end of his life, David was thankful that this prayer had in fact been answered. David rejoices that Divine "arrows" were sent to destroy his enemies (Ps. 7:13; 18:14; 45:5; 64:7; 144:6), in fulfilment of God's promise to do so to the sinful within Israel (Dt. 32:23,42). But David had realized that those same arrows had been fired by God into him in judgment for his sin (Ps. 38:2). But David appears unaware that he is rejoicing at the arrows fired at his enemies, when his sin with Bathsheba also merited Divine arrows to be fired at himself. This realization was perhaps to help David understand that his rejoicing in Divine arrows of judgment being fired at his enemies had not been mature; for he himself had to realize that he was worthy of the same.

"And confused them" is the language of God's enemies being destroyed (Ex. 14:24; Josh. 10:10; Jud. 4:15; 1 Sam. 7:10). Possibly there had been some supernatural intervention by

God against Absalom's army, when we read that the forest consumed more of the enemy than did the sword. But there seems no other such example.

2Sa 22:16 Then the channels of the sea were exposed, the foundations of the world were laid bare by the rebuke of Yahweh, by the blast of the breath of His nostrils-

The opening word "then" is significant. As the channels of water were laid bare at the exodus, so God had acted for David. As discussed above, this section sounds like the symbolic language of theophany and God manifestation, rather than describing actually observed events in literal terms. The allusion is clearly to what happened at the exodus and Sinai; the essence of what God did then was experienced by David, just as it can be by us in our crises.

2Sa 22:17 He sent from on high and He took me, He drew me out of many waters-

The allusion is clearly to Moses, drawn out of the waters and thereby saved from death (Ex. 2:10). David is saying that the salvation he had experienced was no less than on the level and significance of what God did for Moses. We can look at His work in our lives likewise, and thereby cease considering that men like Moses had far more dramatic and significant experiences of God than we do.

"Waters" are usually symbolic of armies or nations. David felt he had been surrounded and faced with certain death, but had been as it were airlifted to safety by God. The language here says that God has done this, but it is parallel with David's prayer for this to happen in Ps. 144:7. This triumphant song is therefore praise for the prayer of Ps. 144 being answered. We cannot locate any particular historical incident of fulfilment; perhaps it was too personal and wonderful to be recorded. Just as a Christian man or woman might feel it inappropriate to record God's most dramatic salvation of them when they write their autobiography.

2Sa 22:18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me-

That thanksgiving was because he had prayed for salvation from "those who hate me" in Ps. 9:13 (s.w.). We have here a direct example of gratitude for answered prayer. It seems Saul and his supporters were the initial reference of the "strong enemy" (see on :1). These words are an allusion to his prayer of Ps. 69:14, asking to be delivered from "those who hated me" at the time of Absalom's rebellion. So we can reject the idea that this Song was written early in David's life; it is indeed his end of life reflection. Now at the end of his life David reflects that he has been delivered from those who hated him (s.w.). At the time, he wept bitterly for Absalom's death; but now in maturity he realized that this was in fact an answer to his prayers.

On one level, David's thanksgiving and gratitude is commendable. But his biggest and worst enemy was himself and his failure to recognize that reflects immaturity rather than spiritual maturity. We would far rather see a recognition that he had been his own worst enemy, but by grace he had been saved from himself. But we don't see that.

2Sa 22:19 They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support-

The phrase "day of calamity" is consistently used of a day of Divine condemnation, especially of Judah at the hand of the Babylonians (Dt. 32:35; Job 21:30; Jer. 18:17; 46:21). Perhaps the Psalm was reworked as comfort for the exiles, that they could be saved even out of the day of their condemnation. And maybe David has the idea that he had been worthy of Divine condemnation, and the judgment was being articulated at the hands of his enemies- but by grace alone, God saved him from it.

"Support" is literally 'my stay', a staff for David. Possibly the reference is to the time of Absalom's rebellion in Ps. 23:4 "Your rod and staff [the rod and staff that is You] comfort me".

2Sa 22:20 He also brought me out into a large place. He delivered me, because He delighted in me-

"Delighted" is the same word as in Ps. 51:6 "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts". This is the word here used by David at the end of his life of how God desired or delighted in him. Perhaps this desire or delight was because of the "truth" in David's heart in recognizing his sins and accepting God's grace. He had left God to decide whether He delighted in him when he fled Absalom (2 Sam. 15:26), and now he triumphs that God had done so, by grace (2 Sam. 15:25). And yet we could equally argue that indeed, God delights in confession of sin when it is the "truth" in the inward parts, But at the point of this song, is this how David still understands it? He seems to reason that God delights in him because of his righteousness. And not because of his inner contrition, as he had earlier understood at the time of Ps. 51.

When the Lord's mockers jeered "If he desireth him" (RV), they were alluding to the LXX of Ps. 18:19 and 91:11. God cannot be tempted, otherwise He would have responded. 'If God *likes* Him', is what they were really implying.

Being brought out or escaping to freedom may be a reference to the night he escaped from his house with Michal's help. Or he may have in mind the time when he was saved from effective captivity in Gath: "You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, You have set my feet in a large place'.

At the time of Absalom's rebellion, David's critics mocked "Let Yahweh rescue him, if He delights in him" (Ps. 22:8). David himself considered God's delight in him to be open to question and over to God to prove: "he king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find grace in the eyes of Yahweh, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His dwelling place; but if He say thus, 'I have no delight in you;' behold, here am I. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him" (2 Sam. 15:25,26). David seems to now triumphantly consider that Yahweh does delight in him. But he does so on the basis that he considers that Divine delight in him to be a reward for his righteousness and clean hands (:21). Whereas the deliverance from Absalom was because Yahweh by grace alone 'delighted' in David.

2Sa 22:21 Yahweh rewarded me according to my righteousness. He rewarded me according to the cleanness of my hands-

David seems to have in mind 1 Sam. 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". Likewise Saul says that David had "rewarded" him good when Saul had "rewarded" David evil (1 Sam. 24:18). He considers that he got saved from Absalom (see on :20) because of his good and gracious action towards Saul years before that. But that is salvation by works. He considers his hands were clean *in relation to Saul* and therefore this, he considers, saved him from the post-Bathsheba judgments. But those judgments were exactly because he did have blood on his hands. And the fact he didn't previously was no atonement or cleansing. Ps. 24:4 may suggest that David perceives 'cleanness of hands' to be a way of saying he hadn't worshipped idols (see on :24), as the ideas are paralleled: "He who has clean hands... who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood".

But from another angle, we recall how it was the wise actions of Abigail which saved David from getting blood on his hands by killing her and her kids, as David had intended to do. He was saved from having blood on his hands by grace, God's grace, working through

Abigail (1 Sam. 25:30,31). But there is no mention of that now by David, rather a simplistic persuasion that he had pure guiltless hands and that is why he was preserved and delivered by God.

David was yet to learn that he himself was a sinner and no man apart from the Lord has clean hands or total personal righteousness. Yet David twice repeats this self righteousness. If this were written at the end of his life, then he appears to have lost the intensity of contrition for sin he had at the time of his repentance about Bathsheba. We too can allow the passage of time to blunt our sense of wonder at God's grace to us, and even reinterpret our sins as nothing major.

Verses 21-25 sound as if David is really commending himself. Possibly he was indeed too self congratulatory at this point. But his words clearly allude to the requirements for Israel's king in Dt. 17:18-20. If, as suggested on :1, he sung these words when he was first made king, he could be reflecting God's position that David was the king whom He had chosen in line with His requirements in Dt. 17:18-20: "When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must write for himself a copy of this law in a book... It shall be with him and he must read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them. Thus his heart will not be raised up above his brothers, and he will not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom".

2Sa 22:22 For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God-

It would be hard to better describe David's sins with Bathsheba and Uriah than 'wickedly departing from God'. If David at the end of his life could say that he was upright and had kept himself from his iniquity (2 Sam. 22:21-24). He could only say this by a clear understanding of the concept of imputed righteousness. Paul's claim to have always lived in a pure conscience must be seen in the same way. And yet it seems to me that David ought to have added what we would all add if saying this- that this is only by grace, and me a sinner being counted righteous.

"Wickedly departed" is the word usually translated "condemn" (e.g. Ps. 37:33). Those who depart from God condemn themselves. This is a major Biblical theme; that the condemned are more self-condemned rather than condemned by God. "We make the answer now". But later David was to realize that he too had wickedly departed from God, and confession of that was vital for salvation (s.w. Ps. 106:6).

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". And yet in all this David is without grace, thinking on the basis of human merit soliciting Divine response.

2Sa 22:23 For all His ordinances were before me. As for His statutes, I did not depart from them-

Depart or "Put away" (Ps. 18:22) is the word used for how God departed from Saul because he didn't keep God's statutes (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:12; 28:15). David is therefore comparing himself favourably with Saul; for this is his triumph song after Saul has been slain (see on :1). And yet in essence, David and Saul did the same sins and David was preserved by grace thanks to his heart for God- and not because he sinned less than Saul. "And his statutes did I not put away from me" (Ps. 18:22). We think about his adultery, murders, lies... And especially in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, he broke so many Divine statutes. "You

shall not murder”, “You shall not commit adultery”, “You shall not steal” (2 Sam. 12:4,7–10) and “You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife”.

2Sa 22:24 I was also perfect towards Him-

A true seed of Abraham, who were to walk with or before Yahweh blameless (s.w. Gen. 17:1). David may be using 'perfect' in the sense of complete, undivided. In which case [as noted on :21] he may be protesting that the fact he didn't worship idols therefore made him somehow "perfect towards" Yahweh. And perhaps his lack of idolatry led to him thinking that lies, adultery, murder and family smashing were all quite legitimate because he didn't worship idols.

I kept myself from my iniquity-

This sounds like a boast in his iron willed self-control. He would never be able to boast like this after the sin with Bathsheba. It is God by His grace who keeps men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and not the rigid self-discipline of the deeply religious. "My iniquity" could suggest some specific temptation David had. He boasts that he kept himself from it. But yet he did so many other sins... Alternatively David may refer to how "my iniquity" lurks in every man but we are to keep ourselves from it, having recognized it as always being latently there. David surely alludes to his words to Jonathan that there is no "iniquity" in him (1 Sam. 20:1,8). But now at 70 years of age, it is not exactly of integrity to take those earlier words of youth, uttered in a specific context of having done no iniquity to Saul, and use them as explanation of why God had been so good to David throughout his life. God's goodness had been on the basis of grace, and not David's lack of iniquity towards Saul at an earlier point. He broke his promise to Saul not to slay his descendants, and as argued on 2 Sam. 21, this was a sin of David's and was from political reasons. So David would have been wrong to argue that he was totally blameless in his actions toward Saul.

2Sa 22:25 Therefore Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eyesight-

David was yet to learn that he himself was a sinner and no man apart from the Lord has clean hands or total personal righteousness. Yet David twice repeats this self righteousness. In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Ps. 18:23-26 has David describing his own uprightness before God, and how God only shows His grace to the pure and upright. How little did he understand grace! Worse still, he several times bids God judge men according to their sins (Ps. 5:10). It is against this background that we must understand the significance of David's statements that after Bathsheba, after how God did *not* deal with him according to his sin, there were no rebukes of others now in his mouth. Realizing the extent of his personal sin and the depth of God's grace led David to not only be less reproachful of others; but also to be less hurt by their unkindness to him. And in these things we surely have a great lesson to ourselves.

2Sa 22:26 With the merciful You will show Yourself to have bowed the neck; with the perfect man You will show Yourself perfect-

We have here the mixture of spirituality and yet arrogance which we can often detect in ourselves. David recognizes his salvation has been through God's mercy; but he sees himself as having earned this mercy by being "perfect". The same word is used of Job, but he had to be taught that that status was a case of having righteousness imputed to him by grace; and

because David was unwilling to really learn this, he had to be taught it through the righteousness imputed to him after his sin with Bathsheba.

David especially recognized the humility of God. In 2 Sam. 22:26 he uses an unusual word to describe how God is "merciful" to His faithful people. The word only occurs elsewhere in Prov. 25:10 concerning 'bowing the neck' in shame or reverence. And this is what the Hebrew means: to bow the neck. This, David recognized in his time of spiritual maturity, was what God does in response to those who shew a truly spiritual attitude to their brethren.

"Merciful" can also be translated "faithful", as in GNB "you are faithful to those who are faithful to you". In this case, David would be alluding to his faithfulness to his covenant with Jonathan. His idea is that God has been faithful to His covenant with David in 2 Sam. 7 because David has been faithful to his covenant with Jonathan. This totally disregards the huge grace behind the covenant with David as commented upon on 2 Sam. 7. David significantly omits to accept he had not been faithful to the oath he made to Saul before Yahweh, not to harm his seed. For we have seen on 2 Sam. 21 that he did do so, and at several points appears to have tacitly ensured Saul's descendants were cut off if they appeared a potential threat to his throne. He was not a faithful covenant keeper, and was hardly faithful to Uriah and many others. David is certainly being selective about his past, and sanitizing himself.

"The perfect man" could refer to David's idea that he has 'perfect' devotion to God in that he worships no idols. And God will match this by a similar focus upon us. Or the Hebrew could be rendered "the upright hero", which raises the ugly vista of David considering that his heroic victories as a young man made him somehow worthy of God's acceptance in later life.

This verse is at the center of the song. There are 365 Hebrew words in the song, 182 on each side of the word "perfect". The centerpiece of David's argument is his innocence, rather than God's grace. And that says... not much for David's maturity and perception. On one hand, he was indeed made pure from his sin by grace, as he exalts in Psalms 32 and 51. But as ever with David, his spirituality is not pure. On one hand yes, he can rightly reason that God has treated him as justified, counted righteous, and had indeed cast David's sins behind His back. But if any of us were to tell the world of our spotless moral purity, we as convicted sinners would naturally add the rider that this is only by Divine grace through the Lord, seeing we eagerly confess that we of ourselves are sinners. But there is none of that here with David. Psalm 119, composed during his wilderness years on the run from Saul, has many references to his own sins. But that now seems far from him. And the spirit of Psalms 32 and 51, glorying in Divine grace and justification of sinners by grace alone, is likewise now far from him... As with Gideon and so many others, he reached pinnacles of understanding and spirituality which he spent the rest of his life receding from. And yet will still be ultimately saved. David is presented as the very opposite of what we might expect from a spiritual hero-progressively growing in grace until he faces his grave planks in gentle, calm spirituality and closeness to God. His final words recorded to Solomon breathed judgment and hatred rather than any grace or personal expectation of future glory at the resurrection.

2Sa 22:27 With the purified You will show Yourself pure, with the crooked You will show Yourself tortuous-

"The pure" connects with David's plea for a pure heart to be restored to him after his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 51:10). We could argue that he considered that he had been so cleansed of that sin that he was treated as pure. Or it could be that he simply forgot how he had been so impure in what he had done.

David's claim here is that God blessed the righteous and cursed the wicked, confirming each in their way. This may have some truth to it, but his claim is a tacit reflection of his

failure to understand the grace shown to him. Theoretically he had grasped it in Ps. 32, stating that God counts as right those who are not right, by grace. But now he reasons as if he has no grasp of the grace concept.

"Tortuous" translates a Hebrew word *pathel* which is very similar to the Hebrew for Ahithophel, David's one time confidante and counsellor, Bathsheba's grandfather, who betrayed him to Absalom. David was saved from Ahithophel's counsel by grace alone and by the loyalty of Hushai. But instead he appears to gloat over how God, as he saw it, had punished Ahithophel and justified himself. He appears to be oblivious to the fact that Ahithophel had good reason to be against him; and wishes all manner of curses upon him in the Psalms composed at this time.

David sees himself as the pure, and Saul as the crooked. Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "condemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshiped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

2Sa 22:28 You will save the afflicted people, but Your eyes are on the proud, that You may bring them down-

Again David perceives Saul as proud, and Saul's initial apparent humility must therefore be considered in this context. Perhaps he became proud, or maybe he had always been that way, and only appeared humble. But the word "people" may have been added when the Psalm was used by the exiles, for salvation for "the afflicted people" was the prophetic message to them (s.w. Is. 49:19).

David may be alluding to how he had proclaimed his own humility in God's eyes in dancing before all when the ark came to Zion: "I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased [afflicted / brought down] in my own eyes" (2 Sam. 6:21,22). But humility is hardly something that a man self proclaims...

2Sa 22:29 For You are my lamp, Yahweh. Yahweh will light up my darkness-

The phrase is only used of the lighting of the lamps in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:37; Num. 8:2). I noted on Ps. 17:8 that David sees himself as located on the mercy seat, in the Most Holy place. "You will light my lamp" refers to his Messianic hopes for his family.

2Sa 22:30 For by You, I run against a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall-

Such victories were given to David against the Philistines; the idea is as in GNB "You give me strength to attack my enemies and power to overcome their defenses". "Troop" is the

word used of the Amalekites whom David overcame (1 Sam. 30:8,15). The leaping over a wall may refer to the way that Zion was captured (2 Sam. 5:6-8).

2Sa 22:31 As for God, His way is perfect. The word of Yahweh is tested. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him-

"The word" specifically in view may be the prophetic word that David would be king and thereby overcome all of Saul's machinations (see on Ps. 119:1).

2Sa 22:32 For who is God, besides Yahweh? Who is a rock, besides our God?-

David in his Psalms repeatedly alludes to the song of his ancestor Hannah. He effectively quotes 1 Sam. 2:2 here; 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.

David perceives his victory over Saul as the vindication of Yahweh above other gods. This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on Ps. 12:8; 16:4).

2Sa 22:33 God is my strong fortress. He makes my way perfect-

A reference to his victory over Goliath without human armour, trusting completely in God (see on :34,35).

2Sa 22:34 He makes His feet like hinds' feet, and sets me on my high places-

As in :35, this may be a reference to his victory over Goliath, which he saw as the epitome of all his victories. For he ran swiftly towards Goliath before releasing the stone which slew him. Or as mentioned on :30, getting his high places may allude to the conquest of Zion from the Jebusites.

2Sa 22:35 He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms bend a bow of brass-

Perhaps alluding to how it was David's dexterity of hand as a slinger which gave the victory over Goliath. But he recognizes that this was all of God. He is careful not to exalt as if his strength was his own.

This is another allusion to the song of Hannah (see on :32). Here, it is to "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 yet David applies it to himself. 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.

2Sa 22:36 You have also given me the shield of your salvation. Your gentleness has made me great-

God's gentleness, His humility / bowing down (Heb.) has made us great, lifted us up (Ps. 18:35). And we respond to it by humbling *ourselves*. Paul's take on "the shield of your salvation" is that it means "the shield of faith" (Eph. 6:16). If we enquire 'Faith in exactly what?', the answer is 'faith in salvation at the end of the day, that God will finally save me'. The Hebrew can mean gentleness but it has the idea of condescension, so the idea may be 'Your answers to my prayers for help'.

2Sa 22:37 You have enlarged my steps under me. My feet have not slipped-

David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22;

62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). But now at the end of his life, he considers his feet haven't slipped. But David's feet did slip terribly in relation to the Bathsheba affair. But he looks back on his life and whitewashes himself. Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

2Sa 22:38 I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them. I didn't turn again until they were consumed-

This is written *after* God had subdued Saul and David's other enemies (:1). He is taking this as a portent of future victory against all other enemies. But I will explain on :40-43 that David did not use all the potential authority and power of judgment which he was given. David pursuing his enemies alludes to David pursuing and overtaking a band of his enemies (1 Sam. 30:8). But again, David is alluding back to heroic deliverances and victories in his twenties. But human life isn't solely the halcyon years of youth. His life post Bathsheba was nothing to write home about. And he makes hardly any reference to it now at age 70 as he looks back on his life. In Ps. 18:37 "overtaken them", alluding to Ex. 15:9- again, David is saying that God's work for him was as dramatic as His salvation of Israel at the Exodus.

2Sa 22:39 I have consumed them, and struck them through, so that they can't arise. Yes, they have fallen under my feet-

Ps. 18:38 changes the tenses: "I will strike them through, so that they will not be able to rise. They shall fall under my feet". See on :38. This refers to the potential power of judgment David felt he had been given, but this is not to say he would use it.

2Sa 22:40 For You have armed me with strength for the battle. You have subdued under me those who rose up against me-

David reflects how his victory in battle by God's strength meant that all was subdued under him (s.w. Ps. 8:6), a Psalm about the victory over Goliath). The victory in battle which he had in view was supremely that over Goliath, his most major and applauded victory, where he stood over Goliath in triumph. But again, he is harping on about his halcyon days and not taking into account the majority of his adult life post Bathsheba. To a far greater extent, the victory of the Lord Jesus meant not simply the subjugation of Israel beneath Him, but of all creation, including the natural creation.

2Sa 22:41 You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, so that I might cut off those who hate me-

Those who hated David surely refer to the house of Saul (:1). But David did not cut them off- even though he was given the opportunity of doing so. Literally, "I silenced those who hated me". The reference would then be to the defenders of Jebus / Jerusalem who hated David / were hated by David (2 Sam. 5:8). Perhaps his 'leaping over a wall' (:30) references his capture of the walled city of Jebus.

2Sa 22:42 They looked, but there was none to save; even to Yahweh, but He didn't answer them-

A reference to God refusing to answer Saul just before he died (1 Sam. 28:6). David is enjoying making the point that his enemies had no salvation, Saul's shield was cast away and

he died in battle: "the shield of the mighty was shamefully cast away, the shield of Saul was not anointed with oil" (2 Sam. 1:21). David rejoices that in contrast, "you gave to me the shield of Your salvation" (:36). David fails to realize that the historical record actually paints Saul and himself as sinning in parallel. If anything, David sinned worse than Saul. He was saved by Divine grace because he had a heart for God. But instead he here posits that God chose to save him and not Saul because he was somehow more pure and righteous than Saul. He totally misses the grace of God towards him.

The Lord Jesus was well aware of the connection between God's refusal to answer prayer and His recognition of sin in the person praying (2 Sam. 22:42 = Ps. 2:2-5). It is emphasized time and again that God will 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). Every one of these passages must have been well known to our Lord, the word made flesh. He knew that 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 only if they forsook Him (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). We can therefore conclude that His desperate "Why have You forsaken me?" was because He was so intensely identified with our sins that in the crisis of the cross, He indeed felt forsaken because of sin. He did not sin, but felt like a sinner; He thereby knows how sinners feel.

In their extremity even the Gentiles cry for mercy to the "unknown God" of their enemies (as in 1 Sam. 5:12; Jonah 3:7); there are no atheists on a plane going down.

2Sa 22:43 Then I beat them as small as the dust of the earth. I crushed them as the mire of the streets, and spread them abroad-

I noted on :41 that David didn't execute the judgments against the house of Saul which he could have done. The language of being "crushed" or "cast out" and being driven by the wind is that of Divine judgment. It could be that David intends us to understand that although he was given the opportunity of judging them ["that I might cut off...", :41], he didn't- he left it to God's judgment. The 'spreading abroad' may refer to him making Moabite captives lay down and be slain: "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" (2 Sam. 8:2). This was hardly David at his best, and surely is an example of how he shed blood indiscriminately. But he rejoices in it as if it were some special reward from God for his piety.

2Sa 22:44 You also have delivered me from the strivings of my people. You have preserved me to be the head of the nations. A people whom I have not known will serve me- David expected in faith that now he was solidly established as Israel's king, the surrounding Gentiles would come to serve him and his God (see on :50). Verses 44-46 should all be past tenses, "served me" etc. We could render "You kept me as head of the nations" in which case the allusion would be to how under Achish the Philistine he was made "keeper of my head" (1 Sam. 28:2). Again, an allusion to his pre Bathsheba life.

"Let people serve you" was the blessing promised to Jacob in his moment of weakness, as he crouched before his father in fawning deception (Gen. 27:29). And yet David applies this promised blessing to himself (2 Sam. 22:44).

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".

2Sa 22:45 The foreigners will submit themselves to me. As soon as they hear of me, they will

obey me-

David's vision was that his kingdom would take the good news of Israel's God to the surrounding Gentiles (see on :50). Some of them would submit to David and his God, whereas others would not (:46). But if we read as past tenses, the reference would be to how at the mere rumour of David's victories, Toi king of Hamath submitted to David (2 Sam. 8:9). But the Hebrew for "submit" is strictly 'to feign obedience'. This is exactly what happened with the Amalekite who lied about killing Saul (2 Sam. 1:2–16), coming kneeling to David; and Baanah and Rechab (2 Sam 4:5–12), who each came to David expecting a reward from him. Again we note these were all incidents pre-Bathsheba.

2Sa 22:46 The foreigners will fade away, and will come trembling out of their hiding places-
This may allude to how Saul's persecutors of David included "foreigners" such as Cush (see on Ps. 7:1) and Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 22:22). We should read in the past tense, "faded away", like plants scorched by the burning sun, which is the figure in Ex. 18:18. The idea repeatedly is that as God did for His people at the Exodus, so He had done for David. And so He does for us all.

2Sa 22:47 Yahweh lives! Blessed be my rock! Exalted be God, the rock of my salvation-
David had earlier lamented that Saul "My enemy" (= Saul, 1 Sam. 18:29; 19:17) was "exalted over me" (Ps. 13:2 s.w.). The David who had once triumphed over his enemy Goliath now felt that Saul was triumphing over him. This, in the bigger Divine picture, may have been to keep David from pride at the amazing victory and triumph. And he learned the lesson. David was indeed to triumph / be exalted over Saul (:49), but he saw it is God triumphing / being exalted. His praise Psalms are full of this word and idea- of the exaltation of God (Ps. 57:5,11) and not himself.

2Sa 22:48 even the God who executes vengeance for me, who brings down peoples under me-
An allusion to how David had restrained himself from murdering Saul when he could have done, and instead had trusted in God to execute vengeance. Here David reflects that God had indeed cast down the peoples *under him* (2 Sam. 22:48; Ps. 18:47); by saying this he considers that his prayer of Ps. 56:7 has been answered: "In anger cast down the peoples, God". Perhaps when he prayed it, he just wanted God's anger to be poured out immediately, the day of judgment to come there and then, when the scales will be adjusted and men and nations cast down or lifted up. But he reflects that in a sense that had happened in his life, in that the peoples were cast down beneath *him*.

This is what Baanah and Rechab told David when they presented him with Ishbosheth's head: "Behold, the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; thus, the Lord has given my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his descendants" (2 Sam. 4:8). As ever, David is alluding to things in the pre-Bathsheba part of his life. And he is citing his own refusal to personally take vengeance on Saul (1 Sam. 24:26, "May the Lord judge between you and me, and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you" (1 Sam 24:13)) as the basis for God giving him the throne over the people, who had [so David claims] been brought down under him. David's response to Baanah and Rechab is to comment that "Yahweh... has redeemed my life from all distress" (2 Sam. 4:9). He alludes to how he had told Saul "so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the Lord, and may He deliver me from all distress (1 Sam. 26:24). Even at that point, he had the idea that his deliverances by Yahweh were because he had not taken vengeance upon Saul. Now apparently at the end of his life, he has the same attitude. Grace to him by God doesn't seem to be in his thinking. David also seems to have forgotten that he had intended taking vengeance on Nabal, but was stopped from this by God's grace through Abigail's wisdom

urging David not to avenge himself with his own hand (1 Sam. 25:23–35). It was only because this stopped him taking vengeance that God took vengeance for him. But the grace of it all is lost upon David.

We can read "who brought down the people [peoples could be an intensive plural for the great people, Israel] under me". The reference would be to his overcoming the internal opposition to his rule. But that opposition was because of the great disillusion with David because of his actions over Bathsheba and Uriah and his subsequent politically foolish moves. He ought to have resigned the kingship, but he didn't. Yet here he credits God for keeping him on the throne, leaving us to ponder whether he really appreciated God's undeserved grace in this... And again he is sanitizing how things were. The series of revolts against David in the later years of his reign rather question his claim that the people had been "brought down" beneath him. The cry of Sheba the Benjamite "To your tents O Israel! What portion have we in the son of Jesse?" was to be repeated at the end of Solomon's reign. Even on his deathbed, David had to deal with a rebellion by his son Adonijah, backed by Joab his own general.

2Sa 22:49 who delivers from my enemies. Yes, You lift me up above those who rise up against me. You deliver me from the violent man-

"Deliver" translates the word commonly used in the record of David's escape from Saul when his house was surrounded one night (1 Sam. 19:10,11,12,17,18). Again we see David harking back to his glory days and the deliverances when he was a young man- and glossing over the majority of his kingship. David's enemies were the Philistines and other nations, from whom God had given David "rest" at the time of 2 Sam. 7:11 ("Yahweh has given you rest from all your enemies"). But the term is also used of Absalom and his followers by Ahimaaz and the Cushite (2 Sam. 18:32 "the enemies of my lord the king [are] like the young man" Absalom). But God's deliverance of David from Absalom and his supporters was not at David's hand; he didn't go out to fight in the battle. The victory was because of Joab daring to disobey David's order not to kill Absalom. And Joab rightly mocks David for having more sympathy with his enemies than with his own men. This was hardly David at his most glorious and heroic on the battlefield, but he likes to spin it that way.

See on :47. The violent man was initially Saul (see on :1). The Hebrew word *hamas* [basically meaning 'physical violence arising from wicked plans'] is quite common in Scripture, and the usages speak of how God is provoked by *hamas* to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people (Gen. 6:11-13; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 1:9) and also to intervene in order to save His people (Ps. 18:49; Ps. 72:14). How amazingly appropriate that an organization actually called *hamas* has arisen in these last days to do violence to Israel! If Biblical history means anything to us, clearly enough God's intervention in appropriate judgment and salvation cannot be far off. Note how Hagar's persecution of Sarah- typical of the Arab-Jew conflict- is described as her *hamas* (Gen. 16:5).

2Sa 22:50 Therefore I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations. I will sing praises to your name-

David was one of the few in the Old Testament who had a sense of taking the good news of Yahweh's covenant to the Gentiles. And he apparently did so through exporting his musical productions to the surrounding peoples, who may well have been able to understand David's Hebrew.

2Sa 22:51 He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore-

"Deliverance" is 'salvation'. This could be a reference to how at the time of Absalom's rebellion people considered that "there is no salvation for him in Yahweh" (Ps. 3:3). It's good to see that David does end with gratitude for grace and that he does mention the eternity of the promises made to him in 2 Sam. 7. David's song is presenting himself as the ideal king of Israel, who loved Yahweh and His word, saved Israel and was eternally blessed. We as readers know this is a highly sanitized view of himself. But in his "last words" in 2 Sam. 23 David appears to admit that his "house" was "not so with God", and "he that rules over men must be just"- and he had not been that.

The Psalm concludes with a reference to David as the anointed, so this could be a Psalm composed when Saul was slain and David was finally declared king, and his anointing came to fulfilment. But the reference to eternal salvation for "his seed" could suggest it was composed after he had received the promises of 2 Sam. 7.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 23

2Sa 23:1 Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse says, the man who was raised on high says, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel-

The words of David in 2 Sam. 23:1 are not "the last words of David" in that he spoke many other recorded words, both in 1 Kings 1 and in the 1 Chronicles record of his words to Solomon about the temple. But they are called "the last words of David". We conclude that "being a prophet", these are his last prophetic words. Words spoken by direct inspiration from God as revelation from God. Here is the difference between revelation and inspiration. All the Bible is inspired and a true record of what was said or done. But not all is revelation. And so if these are the last prophetic words of David, we can conclude that his words to Solomon about the temple were not by direct revelation from God. God had said He didn't want David to build a temple. But David is reported as saying God had told him to arrange for Solomon to build it. And he made these statements in the fortieth year of his reign, i.e. right at the end of his life (1 Chron. 26:31).

Summing up, we can read this as a dialogue:

David [at the close of his song of self praise in 2 Sam. 22]: "He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore" [assuming he and his son were so pleasing to God that they were worthy of an eternal dynasty]

God [forcing David to utter the words through inspiration]: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God [in contrast to David's rule]. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (AV).

David [struck by his own arrogance and the marvel of God's grace to him, arriving at a moment of truth]: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure! It is all my salvation and all my desire, that the wicked should not flourish" (LXX).

God [responding to David's characteristic condemnation of others]: "All of the ungodly shall be as thorns to be thrust away, because they can't be taken with the hand; but the man who touches them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear. They shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place".

"The man who was raised on high" reflects his self glorifying argument of the previous chapter. David for the latter part of his life was unloved, disrespected, manipulated and hardly 'on top' of Israel, with all the rebellions against him. This was the situation right up to

his death bed. He glories in his anointing, but Saul likewise was anointed- of itself, this meant nothing. Indeed God's take on David's anointing was that seeing "I anointed you king over Israel", his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah was the more culpable and reprehensible (2 Sam. 12:7). But David just fixates on the fact he had been anointed and saw that as part of his glory. David's self aggrandisement here is going to be cut short by God now forcing him to say words he wouldn't have wanted to say- that Messiah, God's son rather than his son, was God's King and the true anointed or Christ of God. David was not God's ultimate anointed or Christ. He here introduces himself as the anointed, the Messiah of Israel's God- and God then puts a word in his mouth that corrects this. It is David's great Messianic descendant who will fit this, and it is He who will judge the wicked- not David. We can note a juxtaposition here between David's self designations here, and the word God puts in his mouth seeking to humble and correct him.

If we accept the LXX, David's self congratulation is even worse: "Faithful is David the son of Jesse, and faithful the man whom the Lord raised up to be the anointed of the God of Jacob". He had hardly been "faithful".

His self designation as Israel's psalmist was perhaps akin to claiming to be the most popular pop star in the country. It was self claimed by him. And we note that Solomon wrote 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32; and 5000 according to 1 Kings 4:39 LXX), far more than David. Or we could take "the sweet psalmist of Israel" to mean 'the one Israel considers sweet and sing psalms to', alluding to the women singing songs of praise to him after his murder of Goliath. Indeed ESV gives "the favourite" instead of "sweet", as does the French "favori des chants d'Israel". As noted throughout 2 Sam. 22, this would be a case of him continuing to focus upon isolated incidents from his halcyon glory years, and overlooking the fact that for all his life post Bathsheba he was not respected, indeed he was despised by Israel.

2 Sam. 23:1-5 gives quite some insight into the nature of David's spiritual maturity at the end. He comes over as:

Sure of his salvation

Aware of his own failures and frailty, acknowledging that his family 'was not so with God'

Deeply aware of God's grace

Having a clear vision of Jesus the future Messiah, even foreseeing how He would be pierced with a weapon and slain by wicked men- in order to attain our salvation

Aware that his own rulership was pathetically inferior to that of the Lord Jesus

Appreciative that all these wonderful things are rooted in the covenant made to himself, which was all his salvation and desire.

These very same themes we find recurring in the lives of many other servants of God.

2Sa 23:2 The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me. His word was on my tongue-

This is a classic statement of Divine inspiration, putting His word upon the tongue of the inspired writers and speakers of His word. But the point is, having glorified himself in his self descriptions in :1, he now has God forcibly placing His words and perspectives into David's mouth, as he would now speak forth as a prophet, just as Balaam did. "David the son of Jesse says, and the man... says" matches "Balaam the son of Boer says, and the man... says" (Num. 24:15). I discuss on 2 Sam. 24:1 how there, David is again likened to Balaam. The idea here may be that the previous song of 2 Sam. 22 was David's words, his self perception, the recording of which is inspired but not necessarily the content- a classic case of the difference between inspiration and revelation. But now in these final words we have a direct prophecy from God which is in fact critical of David as king, showing his deficiency compared to God's requirements for kingship and leadership over His people. So 2 Sam. 22 was David's

take on himself, and now 2 Sam. 23 is God's take on David. We see something similar in the book of Job, where men give their take on themselves, saying various things which aren't correct, and then God gives His take. The takes of Job on himself, of the satan, the friends and Elihu on Job... All this is in some way criticized and debunked by God in the final speeches. So those human takes on Job are recorded under inspiration, but are not all correct because God debunks them all.

2Sa 23:3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'One who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God-

This may have been spoken to David by Samuel when he was first anointed; or by special revelation to David when he first became king. Prov. 29:2 alludes to this, saying that when the righteous rule, the people rejoice (s.w.). The king of Israel was to ever remember that God was the ultimate king; and was to rule therefore in respect of Him.

But it seems to me that this is God's direct comment on the closing line of David's hymn in 2 Sam. 22:51: "He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore". God wants to demonstrate that "His king" is not in fact so much David, but the future Lord Jesus. And David's passing reference to the promises to him, right at the end of a hymn glorifying himself, rather missed the point. David was not "His king" in the Messianic sense, and neither would his son Solomon be. And we will see that the verses that follow appear to continue this idea of God and David in dialogue, with interjections from both sides.

David post Bathsheba had not reigned justly over man; Absalom's complaint to the men of Israel that his father didn't give justice, he didn't judge / rule justly, had some currency and men were in agreement with that complaint. That's why they backed Absalom and others who offered an alternative to David. David was not just towards Uriah and Bathsheba; nor was he just in refusing to deal with the sins of his sons Amnon and Absalom, who committed rape and murder without David's direct judgment. He was manipulated by the cunning woman of Tekoah, and as discussed on 2 Sam. 21, he was unjust in allowing the seven descendants of Saul to be murdered when this was avoidable. He was likewise unjust to Michal and her husband Paltiel; and likewise to his concubines whom he forced into being prisoners of court with no possibility of sex, marriage nor children. By agreeing an 'equal guilt', 50/50 judgment between Ziba and Mephibosheth, David hardly judged justly; he was most unwise to initially totally believe Ziba. Likewise he promised Shimei immunity from judgment but then asked Solomon to murder him. He was hardly just or fair to Joab either, whom he clearly personally disliked although he was so dependent upon him. His final words of command to Solomon about murdering such people were hardly judging justly. Joab rightly criticized David for unjustly being obsessed with Absalom and turning the victory for David's people into mourning.

Only David's greater son, Messiah, could be righteous or "just" in the fullest sense of the word, and this characteristic of Him is picked up in later Messianic prophecies (e.g. Jer. 23:5; Is. 11:2,3; Zech. 9:9). These words are repeatedly alluded to in later Messianic prophecies. There are so many allusions that it is as if the Spirit really wants to emphasize that David is here prophesying of a future Messianic figure and not himself nor his immediate children. David's hope was that Solomon would rule like this (Ps. 72:2), but these inspired "last words" appear almost a deconstruction of David's hopes for Solomon as expressed in Psalm 72. There are several connections with David's Psalm for Solomon in Psalm 72, which was his Messianic hopes for Solomon. Ps. 72:6 speaks of Solomon as coming down like rain upon mown grass. But David's insistence Solomon was the Messiah were misplaced and actually disobedient to God's promises to him. Here David is made to prophesy that Messiah would come after the rain, as the dawn after a cloudy and rainy night. The reigns of David and

Solomon were that dark night. Not at all as David reasons in Ps. 72.

2Sa 23:4 shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, like the clear shining after rain’-

This suggests that the ruler in view was to be as the sunrise, after the clouds and darkness of the night have dispersed. This was indeed how David's reign appeared after the reign of Saul. But the clouds returned in the course of David's reign, and it looks ahead to the coming of David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus, to arise as the dawn and re-establish David's kingdom as God's eternal Kingdom on earth (s.w. "sun rises" Mal. 4:2). "Clear shining" is the word used for the "brightness" of the cherubim which were to return to Zion along with the exiles to establish eternal brightness there, with a restored Davidic king (Ez. 1:4; 10:4).

The reference would be to a cloudless morning, implying that all that preceded Messiah's reign [including those of David and Solomon] were reigns obscured by clouds. This of course contrasts with David's preceding song of self praise and congratulation about the glories of his reign in 2 Sam. 22. God is making David prophecy about a cloudless morning to come, a light that does not dim. The idea is that unlike David, the lamp or light of Israel that was now going out, the light of His greater Son would be a light that continues growing and increasing.

The morning without clouds contrasts intentionally with David's boast that God had come down to him in thick clouds (s.w. 2 Sam. 22:12). Messiah's Kingdom would feature the direct revelation of God, not in clouds and darkness. Likewise the "brightness" of 2 Sam. 22:13 will be eclipsed by this bright (s.w. clear) shining without clouds. "You are not the man" is the message; the future Lord Jesus was to be the One. Truly it's all about Him and not about me.

2Sa 23:5 Most certainly my house is not so with God-

David is one of the major Old Testament types of the Lord Jesus. The words of David in Ps. 16 are quoted in Acts 2:25,29 concerning Jesus: "I have set the Lord always before me... He is at my right hand... You will not leave my soul in hell, neither will You suffer Your holy one to see corruption". These are words describing David's feelings about his own death and resurrection; and yet so identified was he with the Messiah, that they are quoted as being directly true of Jesus. But Acts 2:29 also quotes these words with a slightly different spin- in that David saw the Lord *Jesus* always before him, and it was this sense that stabilized him. This could only have been true in that David understood all his feelings and present and future experiences [e.g. resurrection, not being suffered to corrupt eternally] as being typical of the Lord Jesus. He so understood himself as a type of the One to come that he saw this person as ever with him. This is the extent of the typology. 1 Chron. 17:17 in Young's Literal has David saying: "Thou hast seen me as a type of the man on high" [i.e. Messiah]. David describes himself at ease with clearly Messianic titles such as 'the Christ', 'the man raised on high', and then goes on to speak of the Messiah who *is to come* on the "morning without clouds", admitting that "verily *my* house is not so with God" (2 Sam. 23:1-5). This is only really understandable if we accept that David consciously saw himself as a type of the future Messiah.

This seems David's interjection, a "wow" moment when he realizes that indeed his house / family is not so with God. Yet that was foreseen by the promises of 2 Sam. 7. All eventualities were foreseen, even the falling away of the bearers of the covenant of God, so that such an event as this would not annul the covenant.

There is an intended ambiguity in the Hebrew text of 2 Sam. 23:5. The AV has: "Although my house be not so with God...this is all my salvation"; whilst the NIV and other

translations suggest the opposite: that because his house *was* in order, therefore this was all his salvation and desire fulfilled. Solomon and David were sure that the house of David was “with God”, and yet from God’s perspective they weren’t, and the fulfilment of the promises would have to be in the future Messiah. We could translate: “Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; For all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it grow?”. In which case, David appears still not to have 'got it'. He sees his house / family as in order and the basis for that house eternally continuing.

Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He doesn't make it grow- Gods covenant with David was "sure" or, to be kept, the same word David has just been using of how he had kept God's ways (2 Sam. 12:22,24). Even though David had not kept God's ways, God would keep His word to David. That is grace, being faithful to others when they are unfaithful to you.

David's "desire / delight" was in God's law (Ps. 1:2 s.w.) and also in the things of the future Kingdom of God (s.w. 2 Sam. 23:5); our "delight" in those things is reflected in our attitudes to God's word. And we shall be finally judged according to our 'delights', our dominant desires (s.w. Ecc. 3:17 "God will judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work"; Ecc. 8:6 "For there is a time and procedure for every purpose"). The Lord Jesus was devoted to sharing Yahweh's "delight" (Is. 53:10 "the will of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand"). We shall be judged according to what are our dominant desires.

Is. 26:8,9 parallels “the desire of my soul” with “my spirit”; it is the dominant desire of a man. For David, the salvation promised to him through Christ was “all my desire” (2 Sam. 23:5). The direction of his life was towards that end. Is our salvation all our desire and will? All who love his appearing will be saved. If salvation is our dominant desire, it will be granted.

Or this could be God's interjection, to the effect that David's salvation was all His good pleasure or will. In this case we have God and David here in dialogue.

The Hebrew is however difficult, and I suggest the idea is as follows:

David [struck by his own arrogance and the marvel of God's grace to him, arriving at a moment of truth]: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure! It is all my salvation and all my desire, that the wicked should not flourish" (LXX).

God [responding to David's characteristic condemnation of others]: "All of the ungodly shall be as thorns to be thrust away, because they can't be taken with the hand; but the man who touches them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear. They shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place".

2Sa 23:6 But all of the ungodly shall be as thorns to be thrust away, because they can't be taken with the hand-

David's psalms are full of his relish at judging the wicked, and his preceding song of self glory in 2 Sam. 22 has much to say about them, almost gloating over them. God gives His perspective here. Messiah, and not David, is to be the sole judge and condemner- not David. David has had much to say in his previous song about the judgment of his enemies. Perhaps here we have God's response- that to condemn and judge others, the judge must be morally qualified. And therefore the only final judge will be Messiah and not David. Indeed the fact of His crucifixion, His piercing, would be the supreme qualification. The Lord said the same, that because He is Son of Man, He can therefore have all judgment given Him. "The

ungodly" is "the sons of belial", who David has mentioned in 2 Sam. 22. I suggested there that he has Nabal in view. And God's comment is that such sons of Belial are judged by God and not David- and Nabal was a parade example, smitten by God not David.

The ungodly, like thorns, cannot be taken away by human hand. The sensitivity of the Lord Jesus constructed the parable of the wheat and weeds with the aim of showing the thoughtful how deeply inappropriate is their desire to root up the tares. He clearly had in mind the prophecy of Himself in 2 Sam. 23:6,7: "The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken by (human) hands: but the man that shall touch them (Christ) must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place (just outside Jerusalem) "where Christ was "fenced with iron". It isn't possible for us to uproot the tares because this can only possibly be done by the one who totally uprooted sin in Himself, dying to it on the cross. This association between Christ's right to judge and His victorious death is shown by the way the "tares" will be burnt in the same area as He was crucified in. Phil. 2:9-11 reasons along the same lines; because Christ died for us, He *therefore* has the right to have every knee bowing to Him at the judgment. On account of being "the Son of man" and yet also being our perfect Messiah, He has the right therefore to be judge (Jn. 5:27 cp. Dan. 7:13,14). The Lord understood all this; and to the thoughtful, those who would grasp His allusion to 2 Sam. 23, He was saying: 'If you think you can root up the tares, if you think you have that wisdom to identify the tares, you are really insulting the greatness of what I achieved on the cross. It's only on account of that that I have the ability and right to divide wheat from tares, sheep from goats'.

But Adam Clarke understands this simply as "A metaphor taken from hedging; the workman thrusts the thorns aside either with his bill or hand, protected by his impenetrable mitten or glove, till, getting a fair blow at the roots, he cuts them all down. The man is fenced with iron, and the handle of his bill is like the staff of a spear. This is a good representation of the dubbing-bill, with which they slash the thorn hedge on each side before they level the tops by the pruning-shears. The handle is five or six feet long. This is a perfectly natural and intelligible image".

2Sa 23:7 but the man who touches them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear-
See on :6. David recognizes that he had failed, that his house was "not so with God", and yet through the future Messiah, "the light of the morning", who would be pierced by a spear, the promises to him regarding his eternal future would indeed be fulfilled (2 Sam. 23:4,5,7). The idea is that no human hands like David's could harvest and gather the thorns to burn them. It needed a man with a long pole to do so. But this man would be filled or pierced by that same pole / spear. And where he was pierced by it "in the same place", they would be burnt. At Gehenna just outside Jerusalem where the Lord was crucified on a pole. We are not to judge because it wasn't us who died on the cross, perfect and sinless. We will find all joy and peace through believing in this and thereby quitting judgment for all time. We are not to judge because we cannot.

They shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place-

This could mean that in the place where the Messianic seed was to be filled with the iron of a spear, those who did this to Him would be burnt. Perhaps they will be literally resurrected to judgment and burnt in the valley of Hinnom, near the place of the Lord's crucifixion. The burning up of the wicked as thorns or weeds *at the last day by the Lord Jesus* [not by David nor Solomon!] is a major theme (Mt. 3:10; 13:30; Lk. 19:27; Heb. 6:8.). The image of gathering thorns out of a field is applied by the Lord in perfect context. He taught that it is not for imperfect man to gather them out, but He will do at the last day. He alone is qualified to do so, and David's desire to do so was inappropriate. To root them out, or clean the ground of them, men do not lay hold of them with the bare hand; but only the Man who was killed by

the same pole with which He would root out the thorns. Exactly because the Lord was crucified on the pole, as Son of Man, He is ultimately qualified to judge the other sons of men. This explains the many links in John's Gospel between the cross and judgment; "now is the judgment of this world" etc.

2Sa 23:8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb Basshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite, who slew eight hundred at one time-

"Captains" is a form of the word translated "thirty" used in :23, and is evidence that the "thirty" are not to be read as a literal number; in any case, 37 names are given for the "mighty men", not 30. And there are more in the parallel record in Chronicles. Likewise "hundred" need not be taken literally as 100, rather like the term "legion", and can refer to a military group.

2Sa 23:9 After him was Eleazar the son of Dodai the son of an Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines who were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel had fled away-

"Defied" is the word used of how Goliath had defied Israel (1 Sam. 17:10,25,26,36,45). Later Philistine defiance is described with the same word (2 Sam. 21:21). David's victory over Goliath was inspirational to other Israelites, just as the Lord's triumph on the cross should be to us.

2Sa 23:10 He arose, and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand froze to the sword; and Yahweh worked a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to take spoil-

We note that Yahweh worked a great victory through David over Goliath (same phrase in 1 Sam. 19:5; see on :12), specifically *without* a sword. But this man was inspired by David and used in the same way, although his faith was perhaps weaker in that he used a sword, unlike David who turned down the offer of Saul's sword.

2Sa 23:11 After him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. The Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the people fled from the Philistines-

The Chronicles record says it was full of barley, so perhaps lentils were grown together with barley. Shammah defended the field of barley because it was valuable to the Israelites. And in this we have a corroboration of the record with how Absalom had burnt Joab's field of barley (2 Sam. 14:30). We may wonder why Joab slew Absalom. It could have been that to lose a field of barley was to lose food for many months or even a year. It was therefore a major loss to Joab. As Shammah defended a field of barley with his life, so Joab was so vengeful at the loss of his field of barley that he later slew Absalom.

2Sa 23:12 But he stood in the midst of the plot and defended it, and killed the Philistines-

"Defended" or "delivered" is the word used for David's victories (1 Sam. 17:37; 30:8,18,22) which were clearly so inspirational to his men, as the Lord's victory should be to us.

And Yahweh worked a great victory-

The record continually gives the glory to Yahweh for working through His willing workers. They did not achieve these victories in their own strength alone. The very phrase as in :10 of 1 Sam. 19:5 describing how Yahweh gave David the great victory over Goliath. This was clearly inspirational to David's men in their own battles, just as the Lord's victory on the cross

should not be seen simply as a historical achievement for us, but an abiding inspiration to us to in essence do likewise.

2Sa 23:13 Three of the thirty chief men went down-

Not literally thirty; see on :23.

And came to David in the harvest time-

1 Chron. 11:15 "to the rock"; see on :14.

To the cave of Adullam; and the troop of the Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim-

The giants of the Philistines were in the valley of the giants. And they even had a garrison in David's home town (:14). They appeared insuperable. This refers to an incident during the campaign of 2 Sam. 5:17.

2Sa 23:14 David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem-

The hideout of 2 Sam. 5:17. The rock or hill of Adullam was surrounded by valleys fully viewable from the top of the hill, making it a strong position. Yet despite the obvious tactical advantages of the place, David's Psalms repeatedly describe Yahweh as his rock, stronghold and fortress.

2Sa 23:15 David longed and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!-

This has absolute psychological credibility. A leader of partisans sitting with his men in a cave, bitterly reflecting that the enemy have placed a garrison in his home village... would indeed make such a passing, under his breath comment like this.

2Sa 23:16 The three mighty men broke through the army of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but he would not drink of it, but poured it out to Yahweh-

We see here the intense personal loyalty to David which is a theme throughout the record. It looks forward to that which there is to be between the Lord Jesus and we who follow Him in these outlaw days of our generation.

2Sa 23:17 He said, Be it far from me, Yahweh, that I should do this! Isn't it the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. The three mighty men did these things-

Despite the intense personal loyalty which David inspired, he is to be commended for not allowing this to turn into a mere personality cult. He poured out that water to Yahweh, feeling unworthy to drink it. We note that water represented blood. This is a warning against being too literalistic in requirements concerning the elements of the breaking of bread service. David perceived the spirit of the law about drink offerings, and "poured [water] out to Yahweh" (:16) in a cave, not being a Levitical priest, and far from the sanctuary.

2Sa 23:18 Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the three. He lifted up his spear against three hundred and killed them, and had a name among the three- "Hundred", like "legion", need not be read literally; it could refer to a group or military subdivision. Again the idea of singularly attaining victory against a multitude is a replication in spirit of David's victory over Goliath.

2Sa 23:19 Wasn't he the most honourable of the three? Therefore he was made their captain:

however, he didn't attain to the three-

This apparently means that he was demoted. This happened several times, as David considered that military valour was not the prime qualification for the post of army general, but rather perceiving grace and not shedding the blood of war in peace. Because Joab clearly failed to understand grace, David replaced him with Amasa- whom Joab later murdered out of jealousy.

2Sa 23:20 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds-

Benaiah was one of David's senior military commanders (2 Sam. 8:18; 1 Chron. 27:5), and the Hebrew of 2 Sam. 23:20 can be translated "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada the priest, as head", i.e. of a group of David's mighty men. The Jehoiada in view as his father would therefore be Jehoiada the priest. The idea is that priests were also military leaders within David's army, indeed it seems there were a large group of them as ordinary soldiers in 1 Chron. 12:27. This shows how priesthood was not understood as abstract spirituality, but that spirituality was articulated in practice. And this, along with the hints in the names of the mighty men that some were Levites, is significant in that the Levites were not numbered as they were exempt from military service (Num. 1:47). But these chose to do it. See on 2 Sam. 24:5.

He killed the two sons of Ariel of Moab: he went down also and killed a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow-

Perhaps this incident occurred at this time of the campaign in 2 Sam. 8:2. Although that campaign was not David and his men at their spiritual best; see note there. We see him following the path of David, whose victory over a literal lion gave him courage to fight Goliath. So Benaiah was inspired by David personally to kill a lion, and then kill two lion like men (AV) of Moab. The lion would have been driven by the cold from the forests, and was preyed upon people. Benaiah therefore risked his life for the sake of his people, and slew the lion.

2Sa 23:21 He killed an Egyptian, a goodly man-

Literally, a man to look at. This was because he was five cubits tall (1 Chron. 11:23).

And the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear-

Again this is a repeat of the spirit of David's victory over Goliath, coming to Goliath with a staff and sling, and slaying him with his own weaponry. The point is repeatedly made that like the Lord's victory on the cross, David's over Goliath was programmatic for the inspiration of his followers to be like him.

2Sa 23:22 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did these things, and had a name among the three mighty men-

As noted on :19, there seems to be the idea that some of these men were demoted. Thus Benaiah was both amongst the three, but didn't attain / remain amongst them (:23). "The three" is likely not to be read too literally, but may be a technical term for a group office, like "the thirty"; see on :23.

2Sa 23:23 He was more honourable than the thirty, but he didn't attain to the three-

The numbers "three" and "thirty" are not necessarily to be taken literally. A form of the word for "thirty" is used of the "captains" in :8, and of Pharaoh's captains (Ex. 14:7; 15:4); in any case, 37 names are given for the "mighty men", not 30. And there are more in the parallel record in Chronicles.

David set him over his guard-

Heb. 'David appointed him to his audience', he was a member of David's inner circle of advisers on the basis of his faith shown in personal life, and not because of any possession of only theoretical wisdom.

2Sa 23:24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem-

Elhanan had also replicated David's victory over Goliath; see on 2 Sam. 21:19.

2Sa 23:25 Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite-

This Shammah was "Shammuth the Izrahite" of 1 Chron. 27:8. "Izrahite" there could be "the Zarhite" a man descended from Zerah the son of Judah. But he was from Harod (2 Sam. 23:25), near mount Gilboa in the north. Perhaps he was given this name because he had done something valiant for Saul in the last fateful battle he fought in that area against the Philistines.

2Sa 23:26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikesh the Tekoite-

He is called a man of Ephraim in 1 Chron. 27:10. But Beth-Palet [he was a "Paltite", 2 Sam. 23:26] was a town in the tribe of Judah. We get the impression that many of these men were living outside the territory of their native tribes. That could have been for various reasons, but perhaps we are to conclude that the men who supported David were [as with us and our loyalty to Jesus] those who had had non standard personal lives which left them isolated from their home areas.

2Sa 23:27 Abiezer the Anathothite-

A priestly town in Benjamin. Perhaps he too was a priest; see on 2 Sam. 23:20.

Mebunnai the Hushathite-

Sibbechai of 2 Sam. 21:18. He was a descendant of Zerah of Judah (see also on :25) (1 Chron. 4:4; 27:11).

2Sa 23:28 Zalmon the Ahohite-

Called Ilai in 1 Chron. 11:29. There is only one Hebrew letter different. This would be an example of slight errors in copying which are found in the Hebrew text, although overall it is Divinely inspired.

Maharai the Netophathite-

This was near Jerusalem and the Levitical singers lived there after the exile (Ezra 2:22; Neh. 11:28); so he too may have been a Levite living in Judah. See on :20.

2Sa 23:29 Heleb the son of Baanah the Netophathite-

See on :28.

Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin-

He was from Saul's birthplace, and so would have rejected Saul for David, although David was not from his tribe. He did what was counter instinctive and countercultural, as all David's followers did. And as do the followers of his greater Son.

2Sa 23:30 Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash-

Pirathon was in Ephraim (Jud. 12:15), and there was always antipathy between Judah and Ephraim. So as noted on :29, here again was a man who stepped out from his surrounding cultural expectations in loyalty to David.

2Sa 23:31 Abialbon the Arbathite-

Beth Arabah was a small settlement right out in the desert (Josh. 15:61; 18:22), therefore also called Arabah (Josh. 18:18). From such a poor and obscure place there arose a man who was attracted to David's cause (2 Sam. 23:31), just as the Lord calls all manner of unusual people to Himself today.

Azmaveth the Barhumite-

Coming from Bahurim, he would have been aware of David's shameful behaviour there (see on 2 Sam. 3:16) and yet he still followed David. He would have seen David's actions to Michael and Paltiel as out of character with David generally, and didn't allow his loyalty to be fazed by them.

2Sa 23:32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan-

Eliahba was from Shaalabbin in Dan in the far north, very far from David's origins (2 Sam. 23:32; Josh. 19:42). But somehow he encountered David, and loyally followed him. We marvel at the extent of those who followed David; they were from all over Israel. In those days of limited communication, we wonder how he came to know David well enough to give his life to his cause. But it is the same marvel as we reflect how people are called to the Lord Jesus today.

2Sa 23:33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite-

To reconcile this with the record in Chronicles, we may need to read Shammah as one of the sons of Jonathan of the preceding verse. We could then read this verse along with the last part of :32 as "Jonathan the son of Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite."

2Sa 23:34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite-

Beth-Maachah was a town in Naphtali (2 Sam. 20:14), confirming the impression that David's closest supporters were not just local family friends, but men providentially drawn to him from all over Israel.

Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite-

Eliam was the father of Bathsheba, making Ahithophel her grandfather. We can more readily understand why he turned against David after his shameful behaviour with his granddaughter.

2Sa 23:35 Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite-

Arab is in Judah whereas Carmel is in northern Israel. The juxtaposition of the two confirms the impression that David's supporters were from all over Israel. The way they were all united together around this man from Bethlehem is amazing, and points forward to the gathering of the disparate followers of the Lord Jesus around Him today.

2Sa 23:36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite-

Chronicles has "Joel the brother of Nathan" but Igal and Joel in Hebrew are very similar. Igal would have been a Syrian from Zobah, perhaps one of the soldiers who fought against David (2 Sam. 10:6) and then converted to him. The Gittites who followed David were likewise Philistines from Gath who were once his enemies but converted to his God, and devoted themselves zealously to Him. This is an incredible witness to the power of Yahweh to convert, because such willing defections of individuals to the people and God of their enemies, and being zealously committed to Him, was unheard of in their society. See on :37.

2Sa 23:37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armour bearers to Joab the son of Zeruiah-

As noted on :36, the one time enemies of David such as Zelek the Ammonite became his most committed followers. Or perhaps his conversion was a result of the one time friendship between David and Ammon, and the support for David by Shobi (2 Sam. 17:27). Likewise Naharai was from Beeroth, which although counted to Benjamin (2 Sam. 4:2) was inhabited by Gentile Gibeonites, whom Saul had persecuted.

2Sa 23:38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite-

The faithful Ithrites (2 Sam. 23:38) were from Kirjath Jearim (1 Chron. 2:53), perhaps converted to a more spiritual outlook by the long presence of the ark amongst them (1 Sam. 7:2).

2Sa 23:39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all-

As noted on :20, the number "thirty" need not be read literally, Uriah is mentioned last to draw attention to him. His father in law was also one of the mighty men (:34), so the shame of what David did was felt very strongly in the ranks of his closest followers.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 24

2Sa 24:1 Again-

I will suggest on :25 that there are similarities with the cursing of the land at the time of 2 Sam. 21:14. So "again" may mean that this final cameo of Davidic history is another example as that of 2 Sam. 21, of where Yahweh's anger was against the land of Israel and He was then "entreated for the land" by repentance and sacrifice. And in both cases, David was at fault. The "again" further encourages us to view 2 Sam. 21-24 as chronological, following on from 2 Sam. 19 and before the death of David in 1 Kings 1; although 1 Chron. 21-27 describing David's words to Solomon about the temple appear to follow on from 2 Sam. 24. We see David forced to penitence in 2 Sam. 23 for his arrogant end of life speech in 2 Sam. 22; now he sins again in wanting to establish the Kingdom here and now, repents again, but slips back in his words to Solomon and his final deathbed scene in 1 Kings 1.

The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel-

This common phrase is typically used of God's anger with Israel for idolatry, which was clearly a problem amongst them even at David's time. He didn't want to punish them. The census gave them the opportunity to pay a half shekel each for "atonement money" (Ex. 30:12-15), lest they be struck with plague. It seems God worked through David's fear of an invasion or forthcoming battle with a 'satan' / adversary, so that he took a census and the people had the chance to pay that atonement money in loyalty to Yahweh. But they didn't- and so they were struck with plague. David's feeling of guilt over the matter is understandable, but I will argue on :10 that it was more a case of false guilt.

The anger of Yahweh being again kindled reminds us of the Balaam narrative. And there are so many other similarities- an Angel, called a 'satan' (as in 1 Chron. 21:1), sword in hand, trying to rebuke a man who is pursuing a wrong path (Num. 22:31). I discussed on 2 Sam. 23:2 how the way God put a prophetic word in David's mouth is replete with allusions to Balaam. So it seems the parallel between Balaam and David continues. We naturally enquire, What was David's wrong path? Seeing it was not a sin to take a census. It was something pretty big, given the amount of judgment for it and his deep contrition. I suggest the wrong path was his desire to gather an army in order to establish his promised kingdom there and then by foreign conquests, and numbering Israel in the wider context of establishing a physical temple system and a workforce for Solomon to use in forcibly establishing some kind of Kingdom of God on earth. Unlike Balaam, David does repent. But it seems not for

long, because he goes on to set up Solomon for building the temple and murdering his contenders.

And He moved David against them saying, Go, number Israel and Judah-

This is an example of God's Spirit moving people to do things, operating on their heart through circumstances- in this case, the 'satan' of some opposition which provoked David to take a census of his fighters. Or we can deduce that David's 'satan' (1 Chron. 21:1) was his obsessive desire to see the promises of 2 Sam. 7 fulfilled in himself, his immediate family and a physical temple designed by himself. This was confirmed by God in that He does lead into temptation by confirming man in the way he himself freely chooses. But in the bigger picture, God used this failure of David's to punish Israel for their sinfulness.

But comparing with the Chronicles account, this incident is followed by David's numbering the Levites and assigning certain numbers of Israelites to the various tasks of labour required for building the temple. So his numbering of Israel could be because of his old 'satan'- his internal desire to push ahead with glorifying his own family through his son building a physical house for God. When God had specifically stated that He didn't want that. Perhaps this is why David feels he has sinned, when taking a census was not of itself a sin. He so often is convinced of his sins, as he does as noted on 2 Sam. 23 and as he did after his conviction by Nathan... but slips back from these peaks of contrition and humility. But seeing David was so set upon this, God confirmed David in his misplaced desires and moved him to number Israel in this context. The numbering was therefore possibly not because of a military threat, but from David's desire to arrange the labour required to build and sustain the temple complex he envisaged his son building. This would fit chronologically- so that 2 Sam. 21-24 are not in fact random incidents put together at the end of 2 Samuel, but are strictly chronological. David's numbering of the Levites and making plans for numbers of workers were done in the fortieth year of his reign, i.e. right at the end of his life (1 Chron. 26:31 "In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought for, and there were found / numbered among them mighty men of valour at Jazer of Gilead. His brothers, men of valour, were two thousand seven hundred..."). This numbering was "for every matter pertaining to God, and for the affairs of the king".

There is no sin in taking a census just as there is no sin in jotting down how much money you have in various bank accounts or investments, and working out your total net worth. It's the motive for doing so, and your attitude and feeling before and after which can be sinful. And so it was with David here. We recall Moses and Aaron taking the census without sin (Num. 1:4); indeed there were three censuses conducted in the wilderness, and David had numbered his men in 2 Sam. 18:1, as had Joshua (Josh. 8:10). Perhaps David's bad motives were the 'satan' in view, confirmed by God. We also must factor in that a census of Israel stands in direct contrast to the fact Abraham's seed would not be able to be counted for multitude (Gen. 13:16). The promises to David had spelt out how this would happen- after David's death, he would have a descendant who would be God's Son, who would have a house / family that would last eternally. And David would be resurrected to participate in that eternal age. By numbering Israel, David was ignoring that promise, with all the Divine grace implicit in it- and that was the essence of his sin here. The connections with Balaam continue, in that God also tried to teach Balaam the same in Num. 23:10: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel?".

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents, as the four gospels are records of the same events but using different language. 2 Sam. 24:1 records: "Yahweh... moved David against Israel" in order to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel account in 1 Chron. 21:1 says that "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David" to take the census. In one passage God does the 'moving', in the other Satan does it. The only conclusion is that God acted as or through a 'Satan' or adversary to David. He did the same

to Job by bringing trials into his life, so that Job said about God: “With the strength of Your hand You oppose me” (Job 30:21); ‘You are acting as a Satan against me’, was what Job was basically saying. Or again, speaking of God: “I must appeal for mercy to my accuser (Satan)” (Job 9:15 NRSV). The idea is sometimes used to describe our greatest adversary, i.e. our own sin, and at times for whole systems or empires which stand opposed to the people of God and personify sinfulness and evil. But it seems obvious that it is a bizarre approach to Bible reading to insist that whenever we meet these words 'Satan' and 'Devil', we are to understand them as references to a personal, supernatural being.

Perhaps the satan which moved David to number Israel was a Satan-Angel, as in the case of the righteous Angel involved with Balaam, acting as a satan / adversary, and with Job. The parallel with Balaam is that God sent a Satan-Angel against him because His anger was kindled against Balaam (Num. 22:22, the same phrase as in :1). The Angel may have acted directly on David's heart to bring about a trial for both David and Israel. This is one of the many indications that the numbering of the people was not David's sin. See on :10. But the adversaries to David and Israel were at that point the surrounding nations. Even if an Angel was involved, the immediate 'satan' would have been an approaching enemy army; and David wanted to know how many men he had to fight off that invasion. Or it could have been an extension of the gathering of troops made at the time of 2 Sam. 20:4, when David wanted to know how many soldiers he could really count on after Absalom's rebellion. See on :2.

2Sa 24:2 The king said to Joab the captain of the army, who was with him, Now go back and forth through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the sum of the people-

The list of David's mighty men just given in 2 Sam. 23 included men literally from Dan to Beersheba. I suggested on :1 that the occasion of this census may have been when David wanted to know how many soldiers he could really count on after Absalom's rebellion. It's possible that although out of chronological sequence, the catalogue of mighty men in 2 Sam. 23 was the result of this census. This would explain Joab's comment in 1 Chron. 21:3 "Are they not all my Lord's servants?", as if to say 'Loyalty to you is not in question, taking a census won't prove loyalty to you'.

2Sa 24:3 Joab said to the king, Now may Yahweh your God add to the people, however many they may be, one hundred times-

Joab is alluding to Dt. 1:11. For all his unspirituality, he did also have a spiritual side. He was not unaware of the scriptures, and seemed to want to do what was genuinely best for Israel. Men with deeply mixed motives is quite a theme of the Bible's historical records; and that is because they are true to life. For that is how people are.

And may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king delight in this thing?-

"May the eyes..." implies 'May it happen in the king's life-time', an allusion to the promises to David that his eyes would see his seed and house established. But that was to happen after David slept with his father's in death. Joab is surely repeating David's wrong interpretation of the promises to him.

The numbering of Israel was another weak moment for David (note 2 Sam. 24:3,4,10), leading to suffering for others. Yet this same David had written that “there is no king saved by the multitude of an host” (Ps. 33:16). Perhaps this was an expression of repentance after this incident; or, if written before it, an example of David being over confident of his faith. “Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?” (1 Chron. 21:3) suggests Joab suspected the people would not pay the half shekel required when a census was taken, and so would be led into sin. Although it was their fault, the situation was provoked by God Himself provoking

David to take the census, because His anger was kindled against Israel (:1). This would then be an example of God confirming a sinful people in the way they wished to go.

2Sa 24:4 Notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the army. Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel-

The army captains likewise agreed with Joab that the census was not a good idea. This incident is at a time when David's word prevails against Joab and the generals, and we get the impression that this would not have happened after his sin with Bathsheba, after which Joab speaks and acts towards David in a belligerent manner. So the incident may be not in chronological order; indeed many argue that none of the cameos of Davidic history at the end of 2 Samuel are in chronological order. But see my arguments to the contrary on :1.

2Sa 24:5 They passed over the Jordan, and encamped in Aroer, on the right side of the city that is in the middle of the valley of Gad, and to Jazer-

The list of cities given in this section is detailed, and if they just describe the itinerary and maximum extent of the route taken by the generals in making the census, we wonder why such detail is given. I suggest that the areas named were those where they found significant numbers of men loyal to David and willing to fight for him. For that was the purpose of the census. Jazer was a priestly city (Josh. 21:39). Yet it was on the very borders of Hebrew territory, suggesting that Israel gave the Levites the remotest and very poorest of their cities, rather than the best. Yet we also see the theme discussed on 2 Sam. 23:20 continued- that the Levites, although exempted from military service by the Law (Num. 1:47), were often to be found amongst David's most loyal soldiers.

2Sa 24:6 then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; and they came to Dan Jaan, and around to Sidon-

"Tahtim Hodshi" is unknown, so we can go with LXX "to the land of the Hittites to Kedesh". Sidon likewise was never really inhabited by the Hebrews (Jud. 1:31) but rather by the Phoenicians, who are therefore called the Zidonians. But the idea may be that in these Gentile areas, David had soldiers he could count on. Because it is a theme of the list of commanders in 2 Sam. 23 that David's most loyal supporters were often Gentiles or from distant, isolated areas. This is often the case with the Lord's supporters in this life.

2Sa 24:7 and came to the stronghold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites; and they went out to the south of Judah, at Beersheba-

This could be simply defining the borders of the areas covered. But there is also the possibility that just as the mighty men of David were from various odd places, there were pockets of loyalty to David in various unusual places such as the city of Tyre- which was never generally inhabited by the Israelites. And likewise, the list of the mighty men in 2 Sam. 23 include Gentiles who had previously been David's enemies. And so it is possible that amongst the Canaanites, there were groups of men loyal to David who could be counted as his loyal soldiers.

2Sa 24:8 So when they had gone back and forth through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days-

The maximum human gestation period may have been thus understood at the time. We can understand the concern of Joab and the generals; they were going to be scattered throughout Israel and this would leave the nation very weak and open to attack. We see the contradiction, the fear was of some 'Satan', some external group of attackers, and yet by the military

leadership scattering amongst Israel to take the census, they were left even weaker before the threat. We wonder at what stage David was ever able to allow his army generals nine months to take a census. We get the impression that he was under constant military threat, especially after the sin with Bathsheba. So this incident may have occurred well before that.

2Sa 24:9 Joab delivered the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men-

According to 1 Chron. 21:5, there were 1,100,000 "men that drew sword" in Israel.

According to 2 Sam. 24:9, there were 800,000 "valiant men" in Israel, according to the same census. One way to reconcile this is to focus on this distinction between "valiant men" and standard soldiers. The Samuel record is perceiving that there was a higher level of commitment amongst some who were numbered. There were the enthusiasts, and those who merely could draw a sword. They were all living on different levels.

The numbers are also difficult because the Hebrew word for "thousand" need not mean a literal 1,000, but it is at time used to refer to a military subdivision. And it can have different definitions in some areas and at some times and by some writers. That is likely the reason for the difference between the numbers presented in Samuel and Chronicles, rather than textual corruption. If taken literally, the numbers are unrealistic; nearly 2 million soldiers (according to Chronicles) in the combined kingdom would imply a huge total population. Even if there were six million population in the territory they then inhabited (about 11,000 square miles), this would give an average population density of 600 / square mile. It seems really doubtful that the country could have supported this.

The Levites were not numbered as they were exempt from military service (Num. 1:47), indeed Joab didn't number Benjamin or Levi (1 Chron. 21:6) which would further heighten the total population.

"Drew the sword" is the same phrase used in 1 Chron. 21:16 of how the destroying Angel had a drawn sword in his hand. The idea seems to be that God's Angelic power was more than a match for thousands of Israelites with their drawn swords. This would be an argument in favour of the idea that David did indeed sin at this time by trusting in his own swords, although the greater sin appears to have been with the people; see on :10.

2Sa 24:10 David's heart struck him after that he had numbered the people-

This phrase is used three times of David; his heart struck him concerning cutting off Saul's skirt (1 Sam. 24:5- false guilt), about Bathsheba (Ps. 102:4- true guilt) and now about numbering the people (2 Sam. 24:10), which I suggest was a mixture of true and false guilt. Unlike with his sin with Bathsheba, David offers repentance before the judgment for his sin has been given. The grade of his repentance here does appear to be higher, but he still slips back from it in that he goes on to command Solomon to build the temple, prepares for it, and sets Solomon up to slay all potential rivals.

David said to Yahweh, I have sinned greatly in that which I have done-

The response is similar to that to the sin with Bathsheba, again before a prophet. Balaam also said the same words (Num. 22:34), and again we find an Angel 'standing'. Although David did take false guilt, it seems there was some element of real failure.

But now, Yahweh, put away, I beg you, the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly-

We are not told specifically what "iniquity" David had in view. For to take a census was not of itself a sin. Possibly David in mind his great iniquity, the specific iniquity, with Bathsheba and Uriah. He had not adequately repented of it, and now he realizes that. Or perhaps "the iniquity" was his general desire to see the promises of 2 Sam. 7 fulfilled in himself and his

family immediately, with a physical temple instead of a house of believers in his future Messianic descendant. And I have suggested that it was this fundamental desire which may have been behind his desire to take Bathsheba. And all this is so typical of our experience. Incidents may trigger false guilt over something, but we are led by them to recognize our real guilt over another matter.

The allusion is to the foolishness of Saul (1 Sam. 13:13). He feels he is no better than Saul for his trust in human strength; see on :14. 1 Chron. 21:6,7 says that David's "word" of command of the census was "abominable" to Joab, and also God was "displeased" with "this thing", the same Hebrew translated "word". Unless this refers to His displeasure with Joab for despising David's word. Yahweh had likewise been "displeased" with David in the matter of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:27 s.w.). But although David's lack of faith wasn't good, it seems to me on balance that he was largely taking false guilt. Perhaps we are to read that God was displeased with Israel's lack of response to the word of command about the census, seeing Israel didn't pay the half shekel required at the time. Indeed David's trust in human numbers would not have been pleasing to God, it was a slip backwards. But we wonder whether he took false guilt in this matter. For it was allowable to take a census of Israel, although there was to be a half shekel tax paid at the time, which if not paid would result in plague (Ex. 30:12-15). Joab perhaps guessed that those numbered would not pay this and therefore the census would lead Israel into sin. This is why God chose the punishment of plague; not upon David, but upon Israel. Yet David perhaps realized all that, but knew that his lack of faith in wanting a census, his lack of consideration for the weakness of others, would lead them into sin and punishment. And therefore he felt guilty. It could be argued that his sacrifice atoned for himself and for the people, but they still suffered for not having paid the required "atonement money". But then we must balance against this the comment that "David had done that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). No mention is made of the matter of the census. There is true guilt, the guilt we should take for our actual sins; and false guilt, the guilt put on us by others and the malfunctioning of the human conscience. In this matter of David's guilt about the census, we may have an example of a man taking false guilt. The fact Israel and not David were punished with plague would rather confirm this. It may be impossible for us to sort out within us what is true guilt or false guilt, at least not be any intellectual process. But we can rest assured that all our guilt, of whatever kind, is met in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate guilt offering.

2Sa 24:11 When David rose up in the morning, the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying-

Gad was to write his record of these things (1 Chron. 29:29), so maybe his record has been incorporated here into 2 Samuel.

2Sa 24:12 Go and speak to David, 'Thus says Yahweh, I offer you three things. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you' -

When given a choice, Ahaz declined to choose, and was condemned for it (Is. 7:11). David declines to choose, because he preferred to fall into God's hands of grace than decide himself; and is not condemned. The same actions can be committed with different motives, and therefore only God can judge. But the invitation to "choose one of them" was for David's education, to elicit his reflection as to whether it was appropriate that he were punished, or the people; or he be punished along with the people. God's choice of plague was in accordance with the teaching of Ex. 30:12-15, that if Israel didn't pay the atonement money at the time of a census, they would be punished with plague.

2Sa 24:13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land?-

LXX "three years", in line with 1 Chron. 21:12. As king, this would not have hurt David personally. He was asked to consider whether this was appropriate.

Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days of plague in your land? Now answer, and consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me-

Fleeing before his enemies would have declared David not to be the king of Israel. For Israel had demanded a king to lead them to victory against their enemies. This option was tantamount to David accepting that he was not fit to be Israel's king; and indeed it seems to me that he should have resigned the kingship after the Bathsheba affair. We note that David nearly died in a battle and had to be rescued by his men (2 Sam. 21:15-17) and his men had asked him not accompany them into battle with Absalom lest he be slain (2 Sam. 18:3)- all hardly the picture of the invincible warrior leader. We may well ponder why we have in such detail the lists of David's warriors and their heroic deeds in 2 Sam. 21:15-22; 23:8-23. One answer is that the contemporary records of the end of a king's life list solely his heroic deeds; but the Divine record seems to give the honour to David's warriors, as if to say that it was *their* heroic military deeds which saved Israel more than David's.

Famine and plague were punishments for disobedience to the covenant; and David as a supposed man of God and self appointed priest of his people was supposed to be able to intercede with God to end them. All the options reflected his spiritual impotence. And yet God does in fact allow David to intercede and shorten the plague, :15 LXX "from morning until dinner time". It's as if once again, God's heart is touched by David's genuine heart for Him. Even though that was not His initial intention.

Famine, war and plague are the three Divine judgments listed in Ez. 14:21 as coming upon Jerusalem at the time of the exile. David had already experienced war and famine (because of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. 21). Now he was to experience plague. The lesson to the exiles was that these judgments had indeed come because of sin, but the experience of them could be cut short by intense prayer and repentance after the pattern of David. For Yahweh "relented" of the three days plague because of David's prayer and sacrifice. See on :15. We see here the open ended nature of His purpose.

2Sa 24:14 David said to Gad, I am in distress-

The phrase "sore distressed" in 1 Chron. 21:13 is that used of Saul's great distress on the night of his final condemnation (1 Sam. 28:15). David felt he had been foolish as Saul had been (2 Sam. 24:10 = 1 Sam. 13:13). David had replaced Saul because of Saul's apostacy, but he was being made to realize through this experience (even if it was all false guilt), that he too was a sinner and saved by his acceptance of grace, and not because he was intrinsically better than Saul.

Let us fall now into the hand of Yahweh; for His mercies are great. Let me not fall into the hand of man-

"His mercies are great" is the language of Ps. 51:1 about God's mercy to David at the time of his sin with Bathsheba. This confirms the suggestion that "the iniquity" brought to David's mind was the nexus of sins surrounding the Bathsheba incident and not merely taking a census. David appealed to God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba (Ps. 51:1). Perhaps he learned from that, and chose to throw himself upon that same mercy. But the exact timing of this incident isn't clear. Perhaps it was because of learning about God's grace through this incident that he later learned to throw himself upon God's great mercy when he sinned with Bathsheba and against Uriah. David's experience of God's grace stayed with him when he faced up to the results of his errors in the future. From experience, he can ask to fall into the

Lord's hand rather than man's, because "His *mercies* are *great*" (2 Sam. 24:14)- using the same two Hebrew words he had used when Nathan came to him in Ps. 51:1: "Have mercy upon me... according unto the *multitude* [Heb. 'greatness'] of thy *tender mercies*". And so the experience of God's gracious mercy over one sin fortifies us to believe in His grace when, sadly, we fall again; although, in passing, I think that in 2 Sam. 24, David himself didn't really do so much wrong. Yet he perceived himself to have sinned, so the point is still established.

David's resignation of the choices seems to reflect genuine contrition at this time. Had he chosen war, his own personal safety was in no danger as he would only flee before his enemies and not be slain. Had he chosen famine, his own wealth would have secured his and his own family's survival. This same point is made if we read all this as meaning that in fact David chose the option of plague. By asking to call into God's hand we can read David as saying that since pestilence comes directly from God, unlike the other options, he therefore chose that option. When this was the option that could affect him personally unlike the other ones.

Truly David is our example. David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. "The God of my rock is *my* shield... he is a shield to *all* them that trust in him" (2 Sam. 22:3,31). "*I* am in a great strait; let *us* fall now into the hand of the Lord" (2 Sam. 24:14) reflects this. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). And many of these Psalms of praise seem to have their origin in his experience of forgiveness regarding Bathsheba. The Lord based His parables of the lost sheep and the man finding the treasure of the Gospel in a field on the statements of David (Ps. 119:162,176), as if He saw David as representative of all those who would truly come to Him. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1), David wrote, after experiencing God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba. But Paul sees this verse as David describing "the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6). Each of us are in need of a like justification; therefore we find ourselves in David's position.

God is kinder than men. It's better to be punished by Him than by men. This puts paid to the Catholic conception of God as a merciless torturer of wicked men. Clearly the doctrine of eternal torments was invented by men, not God.

2Sa 24:15 So Yahweh sent a plague on Israel from the morning even to the appointed time; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men-

"The appointed time" could refer to the time of the evening sacrifice, which David was to offer on Araunah's property and not at the sanctuary [Cp. 1 Kings 18:29, 36; Dan. 9:21; Acts 3:1. This is supported by the explanation given in the Targum: "from the time of the slaying of the perpetual sacrifice until it is burned"]. Or the idea may be that there was an "appointed time" of suffering but it was not defined, because it was open ended- the terminus depended upon the intensity of David's prayers and sacrifice. The three day period of plague (:13) was changed because "Yahweh relented" (:16)- because of David's prayer shortening the stipulated time period. This is why there can be no prescriptive chronology of events in the last days, nor date set for the Lord's return. The appointed time is variable, depending upon factors such as human prayer, repentance and taking the Gospel to all the world.

LXX "So David chose for himself the mortality: and they were the days of wheat-harvest; and the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning till noon, and the plague began among the people". The death of 70,000 throughout Israel must have turned public opinion yet further against David, as the deaths would have been perceived to be David's

fault- the people bearing the judgment for his sins. He died unloved and unlamented, contrary to other great leaders of Israel who were long lamented after their deaths.

2Sa 24:16 When the angel stretched out his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it-

1 Chron. 21:16 says that the Angel had a "drawn sword" in hand, the same words used of the Angel before Balaam (Num. 22:23,31). His donkey "turned aside", using the same word for "stretched out" here. The sin of Balaam was connected with idolatry, and I suggested on :1 that this was the reason for God's anger being kindled against Israel. The sin of Balaam has connections with that of Israel, but not particularly with that of David. Again we get the impression the judgments were for the sake of the sins of the people, the anger of Yahweh was with them, rather than with David for wanting to take a census.

Yahweh relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who destroyed the people, It is enough. Now stay your hand. The angel of Yahweh was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite-

This could imply that Araunah's area was about to be destroyed. But it seems we have here an example of the summary being made, and then we read how that came about. Perhaps David was in Jerusalem, maybe praying at the sanctuary, and saw the Angel standing over the nearby hill of Jebus or Moriah. His prayer and obedient, urgent sacrifice then stopped the Angel right there. The Angel "stood" by the threshing floor (1 Chron. 21:15), as if the Angel's path of destruction was stopped right there by the sacrifice offered in that place.

The encouragement for the later generation of Jews was that the evil planned upon Jerusalem could be relented from; if there was genuine repentance. God's hand here was "stayed", but the encouragement was that God would not "stay" His hand in His program of redemption; the same word is often translated "fail" in the assurance that God will not fail His people in ultimately restoring them.

This "destroying Angel" (1 Chron. 21:15 RV) is surely "the destroyer" who operated in the wilderness. We see here one Angel having the ability to formulate a purpose and another blindly carrying it out until told not to- a scenario which we see repeated elsewhere (e. g. at the Passover and in Ez. 9). It was only David's prayer which lead to "the destroyer" ceasing. Notice how the Angel repented and then encouraged David to offer a sacrifice so the Angel would be "entreated for the land" (:19,25). Similarly, the Angel repented of punishing Israel and wanted to restore them, and to enable this to happen He encouraged the people through Ezra to be spiritual. Thus Angelic repentance has to be confirmed by human action.

2Sa 24:17 David had spoken to Yahweh when he saw the angel who struck the people, and had said-

1 Chron. 21:17 adds "David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord standing between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. And David and the elders, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces".

Behold, I have sinned, and I have done perversely; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me, and against my father's house-

This was effectively asking God to abrogate the promises about his family of 2 Sam 7. I suggested above that David's "iniquity" was not the census but his desire to force a fulfillment of the promises to him in terms of an immediate physical house and the declaration of Solomon as Messiah. Now, for a moment, he sees his failure; and says he recognizes that God's hand ought to be against his "house". But God by grace doesn't take up David's suggestion. Yet soon David has relapsed into his plans for temple building and his machinations for Solomon to be king and slay all possible other contenders for the throne. David takes all the blame upon himself [although :1 is clear the people were also guilty], for his offence had been the immediate cause of the plague, and it is characteristic of

true penitence to dwell exclusively on our own sin, without mentioning the complicity of others. So the grade of David's repentance does seem quite genuine, as it was regarding the Bathsheba affair. But again, he slipped away from that intensity. "These sheep..." may imply David saw himself as the shepherd or king, whose error has caused all this suffering for the sheep. In which case, he is accepting that he is a failure as a king.

Thanks to David building an altar at his own expense and asking God to kill him and his family, God stopped the plague upon Israel (2 Sam. 24:16,17- the stretched out hand of God in destruction was what David asked to be upon him and his family). Israel were suffering the effect of their own sin, in not paying the temple tax (Ex. 30:11-16); but in the spirit of Christ, David was willing to die for them. And his dominant desire was counted as if it had been done, and thanks to his self-sacrificial spirit, the people were saved when they personally were unworthy. The wrath of God can be turned away by the actions of those He is angry with (Num. 25:4; Dt. 13:15-17; Ezra 10:14; Jonah 3:7,10; 2 Chron. 12:7; Jer. 4:4; 21:12). And yet that wrath can also be turned away by the prayers of a third party (Ps. 106:23; Jer. 18:20; Job 42:7). This means that in some cases, our prayers for others can be counted as if they have repented. We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7). Through *our personal* dying to the flesh, the life of Christ is manifest not only in us, but is made available to others: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:10-12). The life that is even now made manifest *in us* is also made available to work in others because death to the flesh has worked in us personally.

2Sa 24:18 Gad came that day to David-

At the direction of the Angel (1 Chron. 21:18).

And said to him, Go up, build an altar to Yahweh on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite-

2 Chron. 3:1 implies David assumed that the spot where the Angel appeared to him in 2 Sam. 24:17,18 was where he should build the temple. It is another example of David's tendency to wildly over interpret, which led him to a mistaken obsession about building the temple and assuming Solomon to be his Messianic seed.

2Sa 24:19 David went up according to the saying of Gad, as Yahweh commanded-

1 Chron. 21:16 says that David went along with the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth. David is always presented as totally obedient to the prophets in his life (Samuel, Nathan and Gad), unlike Saul who was consistently disobedient to God's word through Samuel.

2Sa 24:20 Araunah looked out-

From the place in the threshing area where he was threshing wheat, where he and his four sons had hidden from the presence of the Angel (1 Chron. 21:20). The records in Chronicles and Samuel perfectly fit with each other, although clearly focusing upon different elements of the scene; just like the gospel records.

And saw the king and his servants coming on towards him. Then Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground-

Chronicles has "saw the Angel". 2 Sam. 24:20 "saw the king". This may reflect the confusion between *malak* ["Angel"] and *melek* ["king"], especially as ancient Hebrew didn't add the vowel points and the consonants of the two words are the same, *m-l-k*. Or it could be that Araunah saw David and also at the same time saw the Angel behind him in some form.

2Sa 24:21 Araunah said, Why has my lord the king come to his servant? David said, To buy your threshing floor, to build an altar to Yahweh-

The urgent thing required was sacrifice to God represented by the Angel hovering over the hill where both men were standing, about to slay the people of Jerusalem. We wonder why David firstly asks to buy the threshing floor, as this was a long process which Araunah may have needed to think carefully about as it was his home. Maybe this is a hint that Araunah was not a worshipper of Yahweh and therefore the land must be bought before an offering to another God could be made upon it. There is more evidence for that on :23. Or it may be that David wanted to offer the most genuine sacrifice, which was thought to be offered upon one's own property. He offered to buy the threshing floor "for the full price" (1 Chron. 21:22), the same phrase used of Abraham's purchase of property from the Canaanites in Gen. 23:9. This confirms the impression that Araunah was a Canaanite and not an Israelite.

That the plague may be stopped from afflicting the people-

This is the very phrase of Num. 16:48,50 and Num. 25:8; Ps. 106:30, where the people of Israel suffered from plague because of their idolatry, and Aaron stopped it, standing between the living and the dead. David was in an identical position to Aaron, again acting as the High Priest. And again we have evidence that the essential sin being punished was not David's taking of a census, but Israel's sin (see on :1).

2Sa 24:22 Araunah said to David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Behold, the cattle for the burnt offering, and the threshing instruments and the yokes of the oxen for the wood-

Chronicles adds "and the wheat for the meat offering". LXX "and the wheels and furniture of the oxen for wood". "The threshing instruments" may have referred to quite a major and expensive piece of equipment. But Araunah totally senses the urgency of the situation and is willing to offer even this as wood.

2Sa 24:23 all this, my king, does Araunah give to the king. Araunah said to the king, May Yahweh your God accept you-

AV "All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king". This could mean that Araunah ['the scarlet one', maybe hinting at royalty] was king of Jebus at the time; or had once been. The way Araunah speaks of "Yahweh *your* God", whereas David speaks of "Yahweh *my* God" (:24) could support the idea that he was a Gentile. But he was genuinely willing to give freely toward the offering of sacrifice to Yahweh. There are three different spellings of Araunah's name in the record, and this might suggest his name was unusual and a Gentile name, which could be legitimately be transcribed in different ways in Hebrew. See on :21.

2Sa 24:24 The king said to Araunah, No; but I will most certainly buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to Yahweh my God which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver-

I have suggested that the historical records were in places edited and made relevant for the exiles; and given their mean attitude to offerings in Mal. 1:10,13,14, David's example and principle would have been pertinent. And this is an abiding principle; sacrifice is to be costly, we are to be left "minus", rather than being without cost to us.

1 Chron. 21:25 speaks of 600 shekels for "the place", whilst 2 Sam. 24:24 mentions 50 shekels for the threshing floor and oxen. The entire area was later bought, in order to build the temple on that site (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1).

2Sa 24:25 David built an altar to Yahweh there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So Yahweh heard the prayer for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel- LXX "And the Lord hearkened to the land", as if His pity was stirred by the tragedy seen there. The idea is the same as in 2 Sam. 21:14, that the sin had affected the land, but sacrifice meant that the land's suffering stopped once it had been repented of and atoned for. 1 Chron. 21:26 adds that God "answered him from the sky by fire on the altar of burnt offering". This is just the language of God justifying Himself over Baal at the time of Elijah. I have suggested throughout that the plague was essentially punishment for Israel's idolatry; see on :1. The Angel put the sword back into its sheath (1 Chron. 21:27) at Yahweh's command. We have here a visual representation of God's sensitivity to human prayer and repentance. Burnt offerings always precede peace offerings (2 Sam. 24:25), because sacrifice is the principle upon which we can have peace with God. But David remained traumatized by the incident, fearing the sword he had seen (1 Chron. 21:30). This was a similar reaction by him to how he feared association with the ark for some period after the slaying of Uzzah (1 Chron. 13:12,13). The similarity in reaction is another indication that the record is true and the character portrayals absolutely consistent, as could only be true of a Divinely inspired record.

LXX adds "and Solomon made an addition to the altar afterwards, for it was little at first". The site was purchased for this; see on :24.

We reflect that God heard David's prayer and stopped the punishment. But if, as I have suggested, the sin was David's desire to accomplish the Kingdom by his own efforts... he returned to that sin. And God surely foreknew that. The quality of David's repentance was intense and sincere at the moment, as it was with the sin with Bathsheba. But it didn't remain at that level and he degraded from that level. But still God, at that moment, forgave. We conclude that God forgives, or deals with sin, in various ways. Sincere, lasting repentance is only one of them. He recognizes the sin exists, but can choose to overlook it or deal with it in various ways. As a Jewish writer puts it so well: "Remission can be accomplished in any number of ways: God can carry the sins away (compare the scapegoat ritual) so they are no longer connected to (and no longer have an effect on) the sinner; God can pay them no attention by passing them by; God can moderate God's anger, change God's mind, exercise compassion, and forgive or ameliorate punishment; God can wash away the sins, so they disappear like a laundered stain; God can throw them far away into the water, where they will have no impact. What a wonderful conflation of images for forgiveness, even when deserving of punishment".