

Samuel

The 1st Book of Samuel

Samuel is described in Acts 3:24 as the first of the prophets.

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Before we start let's take a look at some poignant words written before our time:

“The history of man invariably shows moral failure and never shows the opposite. This is a fact denied by fashionable religious teachers. God, in order to maintain relationship with his people, set up Priests, but they defiled His courts; He rose up Judges but they became idolaters; He commissioned prophets but they, apart from inspiration like Samuel, Elijah, and Jonah showed partiality, self-will, or rebellion. He introduced Kings but they rebelled against Him and burnt the Bible. Finally He sent Him who was both Prophet Priest and King and they nailed Him to a cross. As a result Israel remains under wrath until the day when with broken and contrite heart they shall look on Him whom they have pierced. In that day a Government will be founded impossible of failure.”(Williams)

“The church no longer believes in a literal hell where people suffer. This doctrine is incompatible with the infinite love of God. God is not a Judge but a friend and lover of humanity” (Pope Francis)

We need to hear from the true prophet of God again. We need to get back to the Bible, we need to get back to God and His Son Jesus Christ because the United Kingdom and indeed the whole world are in rebellion against God and we are all suffering the consequences.

Eli's sinful sons

The Priesthood was corrupt and the nation of Israel was without spiritual leadership. The two sons of Eli were Priests but knew not the Lord and they were evil men their names were Hophni and Phinehas. Under the old covenant, the covenant of the Law, men were handed down leadership and Priesthood positions because their father had those positions before them. No account was given to their spiritual prowess, or their conduct in public. These men were wicked and yet they and their father Eli were Priests of the Lord. Eli was the 15th Judge and the 7th High Priest of Israel and he judged for 40 years. If Eli were to be obedient to the Law as Priests, he should have put his sons to death for their bad behaviour. Being an indulgent father he merely remonstrated with them pointing out in chapter 2: verse 23 their guilt in provoking a public scandal, and also leading others to do wrong in verse 24, and the sin they themselves committed against God in verse 25. These men had passed the point of no return as far as God was concerned according to verse 34, and God's judgement was soon to come upon them. God's judgement will soon come upon all who rebel against the Word of God including those who name the name of Christ but hide secret sins but then again all sin is known to God anyway.

1 Samuel Chapter 2:22

Now Eli was very old and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation.

The sins of Eli's sons affected all Israel, who looked to the Priests for spiritual guidance and example but they heard unsavoury stories that must have affected their trust and belief in God and certainly the Priesthood who brought them out of bondage in Egypt. What was worse was that the women they corrupted were the women who gave their time and zeal for the things of God in the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:8). The two sons, Hophni and Phinehas as Priests of the Lord were responsible

for presenting God to Israel, looking after the tabernacle, and accepting the sacrifices of the people, but they failed miserably. The duties of Priests like Eli's sons were commanded by God in Leviticus Chapter 3.

These men sold the best portions of the meat offering and gave choice portions to their families. They were violent, greedy and provoked public scandal, and lay with the prostitutes that assembled at the door of the Tabernacle. Also they misappropriated the burnt offerings of the people and desecrated the Tabernacle of the most Holy God. Before the Priest took his portion of the offering, which was the right shoulder and breasts of the offering he was required to consecrate the offering to God by burning the fat upon the altar. (Lev.3:5; 7:31). Beside not doing this and taking the flesh that they had absolutely no right to take according to God's law (Lev. 8:31). These men's behaviour and irreverence to God and the Tabernacle caused the people of Israel to loathe bringing their sacrifices to the Lord. It is a great shame that men often fail when placed in any position of responsibility or glory. Men and women in high office and in Parliament in our time, some even in Christian circles misbehave and send a very bad testimony causing damage to the hearts of hundreds of other followers of Christ. A Christian is to be in the world, but he must not let the world be in him.

Nadab and Abihu, Priests of the Lord serving in the Tabernacle, were '*devoured*' by the Lord because they burnt the sacrifice with what the Bible calls 'strange fire'. This fire was from their own censer, a fire made by human hands then offered before the Lord. The fire should have come from the Brazen Altar that was originally lit by God himself, and a type of Christ and Him Crucified; their fire and the offering therefore could not be recognised or accepted by God. They also intruded into the most Holy Place, into which none but the High Priest was permitted to enter and then not without the shedding of blood (see Heb.9:7) false messengers of God indeed. God was able to slay Nadab and Abihu because He was dwelling in power in the camp, and was obeyed and worshipped by Israel. In Eli's day God had withdrawn Himself because of Israel's apostasy, Israel had rejected their God so God had left them to their own devices. The Priests, Eli's sons, were in such a sinful way the nation was corrupt from the top down. Sin even affects the work of God; He cannot look upon sin, if we don't clean ourselves up He will remove Himself from us leaving us wondering why our church is not like it used to be, and why the Spirit is absent, why souls are not saved or bodies healed.

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogances, and the evil way, and the forward mouth do I hate.

We all know what the list in the above verse mean and no excuse can be made for them, God hates them and if we name the name of Christ and want to live a life pleasing to Him we must hate them too and have nothing to do with them. A man may depart from evil but still love it in his heart, but to hate them requires divine wisdom. By nature men love evil see Mat.7:17. John 2:19. Rom. 3:10-18. Eph. 2:2-12. If we have these hindrances in our hearts, we must change before we can have fellowship with the Father. That is why God calls Israel to turn to Him *with all of their hearts* as we shall see a little later He does not want 'lip service'. Our fear of the Lord must not be born out of the dread of being hurt, but out of our reverence for Him and of respect and love.

Samuel's parents

Elkanah was the father of Samuel and he was a Levite from the family of the Kohathites, the most honourable house of that tribe. (1 Chr. 6:33/34.) He lived at Ramah which it is thought to have supported a school of the prophets, which were called watchmen. Judges 6:8 says there was no mention of a prophet of the Lord from Moses to Samuel and this is confirmed in Samuel chapter 3:1. This verse tells us the Word of the Lord was precious (or rare) in those days; and there was no open vision; the leadership had neglected their responsibilities to the nation in pursuit of their own. With

corrupt Priests and no Prophet in the land the Word of God was valuable to the remnant who still, with very little encouragement from the leadership worshipped God. The office of a prophet had not been established yet; Samuel would be the last judge of Israel and first to occupy the position of prophet. Elkanah was a Religious man, he went up to Shiloh where the Tabernacle was, every year to worship and offer a sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts. God told Israel He wanted a permanent dwelling place where the nation could meet Him and that the tabernacle was only a temporary dwelling.

2 Samuel Chapters 7:6.

Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but walked in a tent and a Tabernacle.

Haggai explains; when the children of Israel came to the Promised Land the first thing they did was build themselves fine houses of cedar wood and some years later they had still not built a house for the Lord. It was not until David's son Solomon came on the scene that he built a Temple for the Lord that was so beautiful it was the envy of all the nations.

Elkanah and his wife Hannah went to Shiloh where the Tabernacle of God was and which might have been for the last time before the preparations of Solomon's Temple began. Elkanah had two wives, which is a transgression of the original institution of marriage but tolerated in the Old Testament see Exodus 21:10, 2 Chronicles 24:3 and is forbidden in the New Testament (Mat. 17:30). Such marriages have always caused trouble in the family. (See Gen, 16; 9-16; 30-34. 1. Sam1:4-7) after the death of Jesus on the cross, new light, new understanding and greater knowledge of God were given under the New Covenant.

One of Elkanah's wives was named Peninnah and the other was named Hannah. Hannah had no children, which, in those days was considered a disgrace. She was the favourite wife of her husband (v5) but her adversary, Elkanah's second wife Peninnah, provoked her continually because of her condition. Peninnah had sons and daughters which led to domestic misery for Hannah. Peninnah was very spiteful to Hannah and instead of sympathy and understanding she provoked her to the point of great distress. She wept and did not eat, the Lord allowed it to happen because He had shut up her womb. It was a test for Hannah and Peninnah, Hannah took her problem to the Lord crying out to Him in tears while Peninnah failed miserably and when the Lord answered Hannah's prayer and gave her a son Peninnah was not heard of again.

This situation led Hannah to fast and pray before the Lord in tears year after year in the Tabernacle without an answer from the Lord. I guess many of us have been there, praying and seeking God but with no answer, leaving us wondering if God is even listening! Well He is, and has the whole thing under control but like Hannah He keeps us waiting sometimes years and for His own reason, but answer He will, and again like Hannah we must keep our faith, keep praying and petitioning the Lord. While Hannah was enduring the test God was working on her behalf preparing her a son whose words of wisdom would bless and teach the nations from then until the Lords return to earth. You and I don't know what God is doing behind the trials we are going through or how He is using those trials. He tells us to be overcomers, we say what for, I don't see any future but pain, loss or hardship.

If only we could see the future as God sees it we would be pleased to endure and overcome hardship to receive a crown of life. If we escaped our difficulties we would not know what faith is, how do we learn patience if He doesn't allow us something to be patience about? There is a saying that says "Lord give me patience and give it to me now!" That won't work will it? Before he was a Christian Paul was very antichristian and he did all he could to make life miserable for the believers of his day, working hard to have them put to death or in prison (Acts 7:54). After his dramatic conversion to the Lord Jesus Paul endured all sorts of persecution and suffering as he proclaimed the gospel (2

Cor. 4:7-12; 6:1-10). In Phil.3:10 he even tells us that his suffering helped to make him more like Christ.

Why do we need to trust in Him, why do we need to fight the fight of faith? God is using our trials not only to build us up and make us stronger in Him but to help and encourage others?

I had absolutely no idea the young people's leader in our church was often encouraging the boys and girls to pray for me as they had seen me walking and running and playing with them in the past, but they have gradually seen me unable to walk, or run and end up on crutches and in a wheel chair and see the pain in my face. I didn't know I was being watched by them and the teacher showing them my faithfulness and endurance in getting to church on Sundays. I thank God the Lord has used these studies that have gone round the world and been a blessing to many even though I have been in pain most of the time. (Please excuse the personal reference).

We all know sickness comes from Satan but we also know that God uses what Satan puts upon us to make us stronger and mightier examples of His grace and love. God wants us to work with Him, to overcome and to give God the glory in the midst of our trials like Paul did so God can tell Satan he was wasting his time when He gives us a Crown of Life!

Hannah's husband sought to comfort her he even gave her double portions from the Tabernacle altar (Chapter 1:3). This had happened before with Abraham and Sarah, they could not have children so they agreed together that Abraham should take Hagar, the maid servant to have a child with. This led to domestic misery with Hagar mocking and laughing at Sarah being childless and the union, which was not God's will, has led to wars and disruption between Jew and Arab ever since.

Probably for the same reason Elkanah took a second wife because his first wife Hannah did not bare him any children. It appears the two women were very different. Peninnah, pleased not be in disgrace and a shame among the people displayed her children for all to see. Hannah on the other hand had the burden that her womb was shut up by the Lord. She went to the Tabernacle every year and no doubt many times in-between or to some quiet place to cry to the Lord for a child. The suffering of Hannah which she called an affliction appeared to lead her closer to the Lord, would she pray in the Tabernacle and cry to God for a child if she and Peninnah had children together, watch them grow and play together. Of course we don't know, but God may not have had the chance to answer her petition and she get to know her God and Samuel may not have been given to the Lord and Israel may not have had a Prophet of their own. God was working things out in spite of their ignorance.

Samuel 1:10/11.

And Hannah was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts if you will indeed look on the affliction of your handmaid and remember me and not forget your handmaid but give unto your handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

Hannah continued praying to the Lord in her heart moving her lips but not out loud which was noticed by Eli the Priest. He thought she was drunk and told her off for being drunk in the House of God.

Verse 14

And Eli said unto her, how long will you be drunk? Put away your wine from you.

This must have been another blow to Hannah's feelings, not only did she carry this burden alone she turned her face to the Lord's representative for help, encouragement and perhaps prayer, only to be told she should not be drunk in the House of God. This shows the spiritual condition of the Leadership at that time; it would appear that drunkenness even among women could be found in the Tabernacle. Also this verse shows the lack of spiritual sensitivity in the leader Eli. He must have known of Hannah's problem and if he didn't, as her spiritual leader he should have, but when he sees her praying silently before God and her lips moving silently he thought she was drunk, thank God He doesn't make mistakes like that, He not only looks at our lips but reads our hearts too.

1. Samuel 1:17/18

Then Eli answered and said, go in peace and the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of Him. And she said, let your handmaiden find grace in your sight. So the woman went her way, did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Although Eli was not in a good spiritual position God still used him to give Hannah this great word of prophecy, God's word is greater than the channel through which it comes. Hannah had witness in her spirit that the Word was from the Lord, her prayer had been answered she went her way with no more sadness knowing she would have the son she had prayed for. In fact the child she loaned to the Lord was repaid with interest, she went on to have five children. The first thing they did was to worship and give thanks to the Lord at the start of the day which is the proper thing for all believers to do.

Nine months later a baby was born to Hannah and she called him Samuel, in the Hebrew Shemuel which means 'asked of God'.

Chapter 1.21/22

The birth of Samuel

And the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow. But Hannah went not up; for she said to her husband, I will not go up until the child is weaned, and then I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and there abide for ever.

It was an Eastern custom when a woman has only one child and thinks it probable she will have no other children, that she does not wean the child she has until the child is seven or eight years old. It is their belief that the later the child is weaned the stronger the child will be afterwards, this particularly applies to a man. Can you imagine how difficult it was for Hannah to part with her child whatever age he was, after years of praying and asking and going to the Tabernacle year in year out? Now was the time to keep her vow to the Lord and surrender him who was her heart's desire all along. Samuel was given to serve the Lord under the Priest Eli and his sons and the Bible says "*and they knew not the Lord*" in fact God noticed that they "*kicked at His Sacrifice*". When we consider the meaning of the items in the tabernacle, which all point to the Saviour of the World which was to come, and how Eli's sons trampled God's offering of His Son under foot, by misbehaving with prostitutes, stealing the best parts of the nation's sacrifices, they were in effect trampling the Son of God under foot. As with the sons of Aaron God had to deal with their sin so He took away their Priesthood and killed them. (see below).

1.Samuel 2:18

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen Ephod.

One might think that such dress was out of order for a one so young. This seems to be a very special favour and an honour which Eli granted Samuel. Samuel had the grace of God bestowed on him in a wonderful manner, because he was brought up in the tabernacle as a holy person, he was dedicated a Nazarite and his birth foretold. He was chosen of God and it would seem that in spite of Eli's failings he recognised the man of God Samuel was to become.

Samuel 2: 19

Moreover his mother made him a little coat and bought it to him from year to year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

Hannah was still investing in the Lord's work by providing Samuel with a new coat every year which shows the giving heart of Hannah and the contrast between the two wives of Elkanah. This was the last reference to Hannah who was blessed with an increased family, verse 21 says "*and the Lord visited Hannah*" I wonder what happened to the other wife!

Verse 23/25

In these verses Eli, at last took his sons aside and called them to account for their wickedness. He had seen the miraculous and rose up in authority and told them they had led Israel astray, and made the people transgress; He told them they had sinned against the Lord and there was no hope unless they repented. But they didn't repent, they were persistent in their sinful pursuits, they took no notice of their father's advice so God determined to destroy them (verse 25).

And there came a man of God to Eli

1Samuel 2:27-30

And there came a man of God unto Eli and said to him, Thus says the Lord did I plainly appear unto the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him (Aaron) out of all the tribes of Israel to be my Priest, to offer upon my altar, to burn incense, to wear an Ephod before me? And did I give unto the house of your father all the Offerings made by fire of the Children of Israel? Wherefore kick you at my Sacrifice and at my Offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honour your sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all Offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel said, I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord says be it far from me; for them who honour me I will honour, and they who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

The Holy Spirit did not tell us who this man was but it is believed to be God. His message was very important, he certainly knew what was going on and he also knew of Israel's history. He steps up to Eli and says "*Thus says the Lord*" establishing his authority, He then reminds Eli of the time when God brought his family out of Egypt giving Aaron and his family the perpetual priesthood which He had to revoke because of their sons rebellion (see Exodus 29:9) Those who honour God He will honour those who reject Him and misuse His love and grace He has no time for. Eli's sons had ascended under the line of Ithamar, one of Aaron's sons, but now the Lord will diminish it.

Eli reproved his sons previously but much too gently which made no difference to their behaviour. God sent a man of God to him to reprove him sharply and to threaten him because by Eli's lack of commitment in rebuke to his sons he strengthened his son's hands in wickedness. We must not forget that Eli and his sons were Priests in Israel, spiritual leaders pointing Israel to God. Through this family (or house) came the Law, spiritual guidance, Godly instruction, the go between heaven and earth, the mediators between God and the people. But God was very disappointed that in

allowing his sons to profane God's house as they did, Eli honoured his sons above the Lord God. The sons were to supply the Golden Lampstand with oil morning and evening so that it never went out. The Lampstand represents Jesus the light of the world, as do all the elements of the tabernacle and it appears this Lamp, the only source of light in the tabernacle, pointing directly to Jesus, God's only son, had gone out for lack of attention. (1 Sam. 3:3.) I guess God was not pleased with that at all! Therefore God had to deal with Eli and his sons as He did Aaron's sons. What a warning to us all particularly those in leadership and responsible for the spiritual condition of those of his congregation.

Verse 30

Wherefore the Lord God of Israel said, I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord says, be it far from me, for them who honour me I will honour, and they who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

It is God's plan that when God appoints His Priests He appoints them for ever. The Priesthood is then passed on to the sons in that family, it is called 'a house' but in Aaron's case and again in Eli's, the sons rebelled against God and therefore the Priestly position and all its responsibilities to the temple and the people were taken away. God will keep His word regarding us, but when any of us rebel, turn our backs on Him or His Word without full repentance, He will disregard us, he said so. He did Eli and his sons, He killed them and today they are in hell awaiting God's judgement. It's a very bad decision to play fast and loose with God and His salvation.

Chapter 2:31

Behold the days come that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, that there shall not be an old man in your house.

This is a very unusual verse; the arm that was to be cut off was the metaphor for strength. A Priest had the blessing of the Lord and the power and authority of God to minister to, pray for and teach Israel the things of God. Priests were important to God as He wanted His people Israel to be a nation that would show other nations God's ways and He relied on these chosen, Godly men to fulfil that task. The Priest therefore had strength but it was the strength of the Lord which was above the strength of Israel's enemies. The strength of the Lord was able to part the Red Sea, produce water from a rock, and drown Israel's enemies and many more miracles to show His love, strength, care and protection to Israel. God said He would cut off that strength and furthermore there would no longer be an old man in Eli's house.

In our study of Joel (www.wordlightmypath.com) in the very first chapter verse 2 the Bible tells of the Prophet telling the 'old men' to give ear to the warning of the coming devastation caused by the enemy Babylon. The 'old men' were the first to be told because they were responsible to gather the children, and teach them the things of God. The children were then to pass that teaching on to the next generation and so on. The 'old men', full of wisdom and years of experience were always on hand to give advice and guidance. If all the fathers and old men did that the families would soon become strong in the Lord with a unity of spirit. The 'old men' were very important people in the community for this very reason, but in our study of Samuel Eli was told God will cut off the "old man" in his 'house' for ever, Israel will be blessed but his house will not have an 'old man', his teaching, wisdom, correction, encouragement would be gone.

Verse 33

... and all the increase of your house shall die in the flower of their age (Youth)

It is said that after research by eminent Jewish writers and long after this time that there was a family in Jerusalem none of which lived beyond 18 years old. Upon further research and investigation it was found they all descended from the 'house' of Eli.

Verse 34/35

This shall be a sign unto you that shall come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise Me up a faithful Priest who shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure "house"; and he shall walk before My anointed for ever.

The 'house' of Eli suffered hardship and humiliation and had to beg for food and money after the death of Eli's sons. This was the close of a very unhappy saga brought about by sin, greed and disobedience to the laws of God. But He said He would rise up a faithful Priest eluding to His son Jesus Christ our Great High Priest who will reign forever.

1 Samuel 3 Samuel's call

As we have seen Israel was without spiritual leadership, the Priesthood was corrupt and they were without the office of a Prophet. It was at this time that the Lord began to call Samuel for the very special task of calling Israel back to their God and restoring them into the favour of God once more.

Verse 2

Eli was laid down in his place, which was in the Temple next to the Holy of Holies. He was almost blind; in fact the Bible says he could not see. He had obviously relit the Golden Lampstand which was in the Holy Place which was in front of the Holy of Holies with a veil between them. Samuel also lay down to sleep close by, he was thought to be about 15 years old at this time.

Verse 7

Now Samuel did not know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.

Samuel was born of Godly parents; he was engaged in the Temple Service and occupied with the things of God all day long, but he did not know God. You may ask the question how this could be. Being surrounded with temple items all pointing to God, the books of Moses and the teaching of Eli, how could he not know God? Many today are ministers in the Church and yet are strangers to God. As this is being written a man being interviewed on television was asked his employment history he said "I was a postman for a while, and then I did a bit in the forces, then some time as a Priest, now I am unemployed". Whilst we are not to judge but do you really think this man knew God? Or did he treat being a Priest as he did the rest of his employment history? It is not until you have a personal experience with God like Samuel did can you say you know Him. Get on your knees before Him repent of your sin and say here I am Lord Reveal yourself to me. There can be no doubt that after God stood by Samuel's bed, woke him up, told him what He wanted Samuel to tell Eli and Israel to know, now having God's word in his heart direct from God Himself we cannot say Samuel did not now know God!

As Samuel lay asleep the *Lord called him.*

He spoke to Samuel in an audible voice strong enough to wake him from his sleep. It took three calls of the Lord for Samuel to gather himself together with the help of Eli who eventually realised it was God calling the lad.

Verse 10

And the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, speak; for your servant hears.

It was a dark time for Israel, the sins of the Priests were very great before the Lord, Eli was old and blind, there was no spiritual leadership, and the people were reluctant to worship God at the tabernacle. It was at this dark moment that God chose to reveal Himself, not to some influential being but to a young boy! This was a wonderful encounter and an experience with the Lord Jehovah that Samuel had that established him the next mouthpiece of heaven to a people in need of the call of God. Jesus when He walked the earth was a three part being – body soul and spirit. He had given up His deity at that point but when He ascended back to heaven He became a spirit again. He can walk, talk, stand, and go from place to place unlike other gods of stone or wood that many worship. After all when God and Jesus were talking together about the creation of the world, God said to His Son “*Let us make man in our own image*” so if we are in the image of God and we can walk, talk, stand, and go from place to place as directed by God knowing that as we do He will manifest His presence through us here on earth. And we, like Samuel can hold a conversation with the Godhead in prayer.

1 Samuel 3:11-14 Samuel’s first prophecy

And the Lord said to Samuel, behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knows; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

This prophecy from none other than God Himself, which was of such great importance and delivered personally to Samuel who was to deliver it to Eli and more so to the nation of Israel was first given to a young lad of about 15 years old. It was at this time God commissioned Samuel to the position of Prophet to Israel and his first duty was to judge Eli and his house. Bearing in mind Samuel had been trained under Eli and lived with him for many years this would not be an easy task, however God was with him and it was He who gave Samuel the very strong words to say.

This is the Prophecy from God through Samuel that would make all Israel astonished.

- *Verse 11. I will do a thing in Israel, at which all the ears will tingle. When Israel shall hear of it they shall be astounded and it shall continue to ring in the ears of all men.*
- *Verse 12. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house.*
- *Verse 12. When I begin, I will also make an end.* This began with the destruction of the tabernacle and the capture of the Ark.
- *Verse 14. The house of Eli shall not be purged with sacrifice and offering forever.*

This was to be a time of reckoning, Eli and his sons were a prominent ‘house’ in Israel. God chose them when they were in Egypt but they did not walk before the Lord as instructed in verses 29- 36. They did not represent God or His ways they *made themselves vile*; and they brought a curse and the wrath of God upon themselves. Man cannot go on “*kicking at God’s sacrifice*” and dishonouring God and all He has done for mankind, there must be a day of reckoning for all of us who spurn His grace. In Eli’s “house” this meant that no matter how much Eli regretted of his families iniquities, how much he said sorry his sacrifice and offerings would not be accepted, that was serious. Verse 36 explains that the whole family of the house of Eli had to beg for their food from then on. This was punishment for the selfish and wicked behaviour shown to the Israelites regarding the matter of their

sacrifices. It also shows the utter contrast between their temple life of plenty and the extreme poverty and begging that God had allowed them to fall to because of unrepentant sin and rebellion.

Verse 15

And Samuel lay until morning.

I guess he could not sleep for thinking about what God said to him, let alone having Jehovah stand next to him and giving him his first prophecy. This certainly was something that would make everyone's ears who hears of this in Israel tingle! Samuel respected Eli and was reluctant to tell him what the Lord had said regarding Eli's house.

Verse 16,17

Then Eli called Samuel and said Samuel my son. And he answered, here I am. And he said, what is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me God do so to you and more so if you hide anything that He said unto you. And Samuel told him every word and hid nothing from him.

Despite Eli hearing God's word particularly for him through the prophet Samuel we have no record that Eli repented, his sons were more precious to him than the Law of God. True repentance would have Eli remove his wicked sons publicly from the Priesthood, if he did that all Israel would see and know that they would have their spiritual leadership back. But he ignored the call of God. Eli is a type of many good men who fail to boldly rebuke evils in the church.

Verse 17

And he (Eli) said, what is the thing that the Lord has said unto you? I pray you hide it not from me: God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said unto you.

The Lord came and spoke to Samuel and told Samuel some serious things concerning Israel and in particular Eli and his house. Although Samuel and Eli slept close by each other Eli did not hear what the Lord said to Samuel but knew the Lord had been and spoken to him. Eli asked Samuel to tell him what God said and to hold nothing back. This was a blessing to Samuel because in verse 15 Samuel was fearful to tell Eli God's message, it was very personal. The Bible says that Samuel told Eli what God had said and told him every whit. Every whit is an Anglo-Saxon word that means "every bit" in Hebrew it means "all the words". Either way Eli was Godly enough to acknowledge that the message was from the Lord.

Verse 19

And Samuel grew and the Lord was with him, and did not let any of his words fall to the ground.

Samuel spoke only as God inspired him so that every prediction was literally fulfilled. He also gave only sound and divinely inspired advice to God's people Israel so that all his council was received as coming from Jehovah. (3:20.7:3 810).

Verse 21

And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of the Lord.

The Lord begins to speak to Samuel on a regular basis, Samuel receives the word of God and it was his mouth that spoke that word to Israel. With the problems of Eli's wicked sons and the poor spiritual condition of Eli the Priest, God had to deal with the 'house' of Eli and call Israel back to himself and He did it through the Prophet Samuel.

Whenever God reveals Himself the enemy's hostility is aroused. As soon as God reveals Himself in Shiloh (verse 21) the enemy in the form of the Philistines revealed themselves in Aphek. (Chapter 4:1)

God bless you,

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I am grateful to my friend Graham Towse for his valuable support and contribution to all my studies.

Chapter 4 At war with the Philistines

The word of Samuel came to all Israel, Samuel was a prophet of God and therefore this word was from God and all Israel heard it. It was not God's will to go into battle with the Philistines and most certainly not to take the Ark from the Holy of Holies and take it into battle. Israel did not consult the Lord about this proposed battle neither did they mention it to Samuel their new young Prophet. They may have ignored Samuel because of his young age, as we have said before; God's word is greater than the channel through which it comes, but Israel did not understand this.

Verse 2

Israel arrayed their army opposite the Philistines to do battle, had Israel asked the Lord if what they were doing was His will, they would have been guided by Almighty God and would already be the victors. As it was they said "let us" and went to battle without God and lost not only the battle but 4 thousand men as well a lesson for us all.

Israel was so astounded that God was not with them and instead the Philistine had gained the victory. So they had a 'deacons meeting' to find out why! God had promised them that one of them should chase a thousand, and 100 would put 10,000 to flight, what happened?

They still didn't ask the Lord why or what to do about the situation, and they didn't have much spiritual guidance, or leadership either, but they knew their God had blessed them in the past why wouldn't He do it now? They took Him for granted. They also blamed God for smiting them and for their loss, but forgot they came up with a solution of their own beginning with "let us" they didn't involve God at all!

Verse 3

Wherefore has the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us that when it comes among us it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

The Ark of God was in the Holy of Holies and was hidden from all but the high Priest who went into the Holy of Holies once every year after the shedding of the blood of a lamb. (Hebrews 9:7) He did this on behalf of all Israel asking God to forgive the sins of the people. God's presence was in and around the Ark, called the Shekinah Glory, indicating to Israel that their God was always with them. In the Ark was the stone tablets upon which were written the Ten Commandments, the pot of manna

to remind them of His provision and Aarons rod that budded showing God's choice of High Priest. This Ark was revered by Israel and was never to leave the Temple, however Israel had so backslidden they were now going to use it as some magical weapon against the Philistines, or so they thought!

Their plan was to bring the Ark of God into the battle assuming His presence would be with them but it wasn't, it had left the Tabernacle. There was sin and rebellion in the camp and although Israel was warned about this they would not repent and turn back to God. Israel would never have been defeated if she had obeyed God; *five men would have chased a hundred and 100 would have put 10,000 to flight* (Lev.26:8 Deut.32:30) was His promise. Now they took Him for granted, they thought He would be with them because He had been with them before. Many churches are like Israel, they assume God is with them. He may have been with them once, God had blessed them, souls had been saved, bodies had been healed, but gradually dry rot had set in! The life and presence of Almighty God has left and so we bring in all sorts of other clutter to fill the time and ask God to bless it, all the while thinking that God is with us because He said He would be if we put Him first! That's the point if we put Him first. But as we have seen in a number of our studies, sin and rebellion towards God will cause the Holy Spirit to remove Himself from the God's people and leave us to our entertainment.

So Israel sent for the Ark of God and brought it from Shiloh and what is even more frustrating to God they allowed Eli's wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas to accompany the Ark of God on the journey.

Verse 5

And when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout so that the earth rang again.

This is an example of empty religious noise-making, with the spiritual leadership in such poor condition and not knowing God, the people were in a backslidden state reflecting the lives of Eli's sons. Remember it is more often that the Spirit can be felt in the still small voice than the loud banging of the drum. Many is the time I have just stood with tears running down my cheeks in the presence of the Holy Spirit when there has been no music at all! Oh that the earth would ring out with a great shout of genuine heartfelt praise and worship to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I guess it will one day when He comes back for His own, but it would be wonderful if we could see and feel the power of almighty God in our churches again today.

Instead of violating the most Holy Place and bringing the Ark to them, they should have taken themselves to the Ark of God (the throne of God) and at the door of the congregation confessed their sins, broken their idols in front of Him and returned to God. This would have brought them victory.

Instead the Israelites brought the Ark to their camp and the enemy knew about it because they heard the shouting of Israel and the Philistines feared when they thought that God was in the camp of Israel. They had heard the stories told them by the Jews of their God overthrowing the Egyptian army and drowning them in the Red Sea setting Israel free from slavery. Now the Ark of God was close by but out of place, it would not be the wonderful testimony the Israelites thought it would be.

Verse 7/8/9.

And the Philistines were afraid for they said; God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us for there has not been such a thing before. Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? These are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

Both the Philistines and Israel were under the belief that God's glorious presence was manifest in the Ark; after all it was called the Ark of God. But we know that God had withdrawn Himself from

His Dwelling Place because of sinful apostasy resulting in a sinful nation. The Ark was but a symbol of the Divine Presence evident by the Shekinah Glory that shone between the Cherubim on the top of the Ark in the Holy of Holies where God said He wanted to dwell. The Israelites took God out of His place by carrying the Ark into battle. It was their own idea. They didn't seek God for His battle plan. They had no real relationship with Him. Instead they came up with what they thought was a good idea at the time and then asked God to bless it. We cannot manipulate God to do what we want Him to do or make use of Him as we see fit. Many people look for God where He is not, there is only one way to God and that is through His Son *Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Me.* (John 14:6) The further away we move ourselves from God and His Word the greater importance is attached to symbols and ceremonies which often result in a loud noise but no power. That is called dead religion.

Verse 10/11

And the Philistines fought and Israel was smitten and they fled every man to his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the Ark of God was taken: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were slain.

This was a terrible time for Israel, they believed in their God Jehovah but only when it suited them. They now believed they could manage without Him, they took matters into their own hands, they did not consult God or Samuel and now they were on their own against the army of the Philistines. *And the Ark of God was taken;* this was the first time in its history the Ark was stolen, a great victory for the Philistines, a great shame for Israel. During this battle Eli's two sons were killed as the Lord had said would happen in Chapter 2:34.

Increased rebellion of Israel

Psalms 78:56-61

Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God and kept not His testimonies: But turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this He was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel: So He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hand.

God forsakes His Temple.

The sins of Israel caused God to leave His dwelling place in the Temple on more than one occasion. It was the sin and the worshiping of other gods of the heathen, which God forbade, (Exodus 23:24) that caused God to call Himself "Jealous". The only place in the Bible that God says His name is Jealous is in connection with the worship of Asherah. (Exodus 34: 14). The Asherah was a pillar of wood or stone set erect together with the image of Baal, and worshipped by lascivious practices. It was carved from a tree with the top cut off and the whole tree was shaped in the likeness of the male reproductive organ. It was the worship of these images together with all sorts of sordid dance and activities ending with the sacrifice of their children that God called Himself 'Jealous'. The word Asher is rendered 'groves' elsewhere and the Children of Israel built 'high' places and 'groves' and set up these images all over their cities against the will of God. (Exodus 23:24).

2 Kings 17: 7-18

... things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, ...they set up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: and they burnt incense in all the high places as the heathen did... and provoked the Lord to anger.

Also, Ezekiel 16:8 to 23.

Please read these verses, they may be long but they show how the Lord loved His people, took them under His protection and made them a kingdom respected among the nations. But Israel gave all that God blessed them with to these idols and images, they even dressed them in fine clothes, the meat and fine flour, the oil and honey, all of God's bountiful provision were offered to these strange wooden gods! And then, we are told in verse 21 that Israel offered their own children as sacrifice to these dead, lifeless, dumb, stone cold manmade images. No wonder the Lord God was jealous!

Ezekiel 10: 4.

Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherubim (that Shekinah Glory) and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.

Even the heathen nations roundabout were shocked at Israel's behaviour. God could not look on their sin anymore so He left His place in the Temple from between the cherubim on the top of the Ark in the Holy of Holies and ended up on the roof. Israel took the Ark into battle believing that they were taking God with them but He had removed Himself from them and they went to battle under an illusion. Satan will blind us to this spiritual reality and off we go concentrating on *our* work for the Lord but God may not be with us. How dangerous, believing and trusting God to be with us when because of sin and rebellion we are on our own. Oh I know Jesus said "I will never leave you nor forsake you" He said that to Israel too! But if we decide to go to battle without God or like Israel say 'let us' because we are able or we have done it before, and we go without God. We assume He is with us because we prayed and asked Him to bless our meetings or anoint our healing service or our evangelical effort, or pray for the sick, we are going to be defeated if sin has not been dealt with first.

One more thought!

1. Corinthians 6:19.

What? Do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which you have of God and you are not your own.

Jesus fulfilled much of the Old Testament requirements at the cross. He made us all one in Christ Jesus there is no division between Jew and Gentile. We do not have to go to God via a Priest and the Priest pray on our behalf. We can go direct to Him in prayer and better still we can have a personal relationship with Him. God is not hidden in or on an Ark behind a curtain anymore or someone else has to visit God once a year on our behalf to get our sins forgiven. No! We have as followers of Christ, the responsibility to keep our hearts clean and pure before Him, so we do not need a Temple to find God, the Bible tells us we are the Temples of the Lord, the Lord dwells in us. All the meaning and importance that was in the Temple of the Old Testament is now in us we can find God in each one of us if we are born again and live a pure life unto God.

We have seen the reasons why God left the Temple in wrath and in disgust; it was because He hates sin. God has not changed, He still will not tolerate sin, and so if sin abides in us will He not leave us also?

1. Corinthians 6:15

Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.

Mathew 7:21

Not everyone who says unto Me Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Revelation 20:15

And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.

There will come a day called “the day of the Lord” when we all will stand before the Lord and He will call out our name which He will read from the Book of Life. One by one a name will be called out until it gets to you. You cannot call on your wife’s support or your husband or your Pastor’s recommendation, your passed efforts for your church will count for nothing, and you will stand before Christ alone. Make sure you have asked the Lord to forgive your sins, and to come into your heart and make you ready to meet Him when He comes back for His own.

And now Israel was worshipping in the high places, where many met and worshipped graven images of wood and stone and this made God jealous. After all He had done for them, He brought them out of 400 years of slavery, set them free and now they worshipped other gods.

Israel like a deceitful bow. Psalm78:57

The bow in the East was curved backward to produce greater strength; this is contrary to its natural bend. It must be recurved in stringing. If a person was unskilful in stringing the bow it could spring back and break the handlers arm. If the bow is not well made it might even fly back in discharging the arrow and do a lot more damage to the bowman. Israel is compared to a deceitful bow here and also in Hos. 7:16. The idea is that Israel when bent towards God where she belongs, she would suddenly spring back to her position of sinfulness and this displeased God greatly. They brought back graven images when visiting or marrying the heathen and put these idols in their homes and worshiped them. This provoked God to anger and moved Him to jealousy and He greatly abhorred Israel even though He is longsuffering and slow to anger (Joel 2:13).

As we read in Psalms 78: 60 tells us God forsook the tabernacle in Shiloh, and *the tent which He placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity and His glory into the enemy’s hand.* This is confirmation that God gave the Ark which is His strength into captivity and His glory into the hands of the enemy. Just as He gave His life at the cross to redeem mankind back to himself.

Isaiah 53:6 ***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***

We cannot point the finger at Israel and accuse them of wickedness towards God, we cannot blame them with our noses in the air and say how “thank God we are not like them”, or “how could they act this way towards God”. God says we are all the same, we all sin, God hates sin, God hates disobedience, so all of us provoke Him to jealousy, when we continue to sin He abhors the sin we commit but thankfully still loves us. Thank God there is a way out for us, the shed blood of Christ at the cross has opened a way back to God if we repent and give our lives to Him.

The death of Eli

A soldier ran to Shiloh where the Tabernacle was and his clothes were torn and he had earth on his head, a sign of tragedy and a sign of the bad news he was about to proclaim and he found Eli. Eli was a Judge and as such sat upon a seat which was placed at the gate of the city. The Judge sat on

this seat and those that required advice, council or help in any way would come and wait at the seat to be seen by the Judge. Many seats have been found by archaeologists, crafted out of stone with ornate carvings all around but most had no backs to them.

Verse 18

And it came to pass when he (the soldier) made mention of the Ark of God that he (Eli) fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck broke and he died for he was an old man and heavy. And he had Judged Israel forty years.

There was no doubt Eli had let himself go. Several commentaries say Eli was very overweight, in other words very fat and he was ninety eight years old. He had feasted on the best meats from the altar and he lived very well mostly at the expense of Israel. Although Eli was a doubtful Priest had he judged in fellowship with God and followed the scriptures the events of this fateful day would not have happened, remember Israel's words earlier in our study? "*Let us go and get the Ark of the Lord*". Someone sang a song about this not long ago but in our life time "I did it my way" he sang and very popular it was too, I wonder if his way was better than the Lord's, unless repentance was involved I doubt it very much.

So the outcome of rebellion towards God and when mankind takes events into their own hands the result is death and chaos. Verse 17 tells us, *and the messenger said Israel is fled before the Philistines and there has been also a great slaughter among the people and your two sons also Hophni and Phinehas are dead and the Ark of God is taken.* What a mess! This was too much for Eli and particularly at the news of the Ark being taken; he fell backwards off the seat of power and died. This need not happen to us because when we sin we have an advocate which is Jesus Christ the righteous one –who wants to clean up our act. All you have to do is ask Him, is there any evil way in me? He will show you and give you the opportunity to part with that habit, or mind set and in turn you will have a closer relationship with Jesus. You will feel His presence more acutely and will come to a place where you will never want to do anything that would displease Him.

Chapter 5 The Ark of God taken.

Ashdod was one of the main cities of Philistia and it housed the temple of Dagon. Dagon was the national god whose shape was like that of a man at the upper part and that of a fish at the lower part. It was this man-fish that the Philistines worshipped. Oh don't laugh, men and women do such things today, they worship the devil up on the South Downs close to our home from time to time. And according to the Newspapers they do all sorts of strange things and some of them to each other and they expect us to take them seriously! That's how sick Satan can get a man's heart and mind and warp it out of all reason. Then the next day they will put on their best clothes and continue their job as a Bank Manager or a Doctor or shop keeper!

The Ark of God had been put by the side of the Philistine's god Dagon in their Temple and they all went to bed. The next day they rose up early, all very keen, and went to the Temple to gloat and look at their prise, after all they had stolen Israel's Ark of God. The Philistines had heard how the God of Israel had led them out of Egypt, seen them through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, into the Land of milk and honey, and they had heard how God dwelt on top of the Ark and many other stories told by Israel. So they opened the door of their Temple only to find their god Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark of the Lord. Not yet knowing the significance of this action they promptly put it back in its position.

The next day they arose early again and went to the Temple to see their spoil and behold the god Dagon was flat on his face again. This time he had lost his head and his hands were cut off. All that was left of him was a stump. This was a serious fall, Dagon fell before the Ark in a bowing position giving honour to the God of Israel and its manipulated members laid out across the floor was public

proof that the idols of the heathen are but vanity. The kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the Kingdom of God. This was God's way of telling the Philistines that "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 14:11). With the head off and the hands gone it was also God's way of telling the enemy their god was powerless against Israel's God. What a silly thing to worship a god who when down and helpless, wanted help from its worshipers to set it up right again. Whereas the true God of Israel said *I lay down my life that I may take it up again* (John 10: 17). And He did that at the cross. The Philistines were not willing to become His people and Israel at this time was not a great testimony to their God, so God Himself had to intervene, and He did it in a miraculous way. He made a mockery of the thing the Philistines held in the highest esteem. He also brought upon each of them a very debilitating, embarrassing and painful plague.

Verse 6

But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod and He destroyed them, and smote them with emerods even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

Emerods is the old spelling of the modern condition called haemorrhoids. This was a plague so unnatural and unheard of that there was no other explanation or reason for it but the Ark and the God of Israel. And the men of Ashdod said it shall no longer abide with them.

The Philistines felt the best thing they could do was to be rid of this troublesome thing. This is the attitude of most of human society today. Morning prayers in schools are stopped. Prayers in Parliament are stopped. Street preaching is stopped. Christians offering to pray for the sick in Hospital is stopped, and nurses doing this lose their jobs. Do away with the words "Christmas" and replace it with "Winter Season" And a whole lot more is going on to stop the spread of the gospel in public places. The authorities are saying just like the Philistines, **let's get rid of Him.**

Hebrews 10:31

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Chapter 5: 7 The Ark of God or the Philistine's god Dagon.

And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so they said, The Ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

"It is not at all a pleasant thing for the people of this world to have God in their midst. He keeps up a perpetual controversy with their sins and their idolatries; and as the Philistines were not willing to become His people, they determined that the best thing they could do was to get rid of Him".

(Williams)

This started at the cross and He has been rejected ever since.

Verse 8.

And they sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them and said "what shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel? And they answered Let the Ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath". And they carried the Ark of the God of Israel about thither.

The Philistines did not want to return the Ark of God to Israel that would be a public acknowledgement of defeat. In taking it to their city and giving it the highest position in the pagan Temple next to their god they found that this Ark was much more than they could handle. After all, their own god didn't move or respond in any way. The God of Israel has shown its power over Dagon twice and brought Dagon broken in pieces to the floor, yes we must get rid of Him.

It is interesting to note that it is not recorded that the Philistines broke the Ark open, did not try to look into the Ark but rather they gave it great respect. And yet it was the command of the Lord that Israel was not to mingle with the heathen, not bring back their heathen idols and if they did they were to break them up into little pieces, much like God did to Dagon.

Once again the Philistines had another meeting to determine what to do with this 'troublesome' Ark. It was decided that a bunch of men would carry the Ark to Gath. The Bible records in verse 8 that they *carried the Ark of the God of Israel about thither*. There is no doubt that much like the world today they are at a loss to know what to do with Jesus and the Philistines were the same. They carried the Ark about all over the place not knowing where to put it. And then God smote the city of Gath, the birthplace of Goliath, with a very great destruction, and He smote the men of that city with haemorrhoids as well.

The Leaders of Gath got together in yet another meeting feeling very uncomfortable indeed with their embarrassing, painful and shameful condition and decided to send the Ark of God to Ekron. As the Ark was brought into Ekron the people cried out in despair that the Ark would slay the people of Ekron and they wanted it out of the way and away from them. News had spread what this Ark of God had done in Ashdod and in Gath and now it had come to Ekron. They had another very big meeting with the heads of the towns, the officials from all around and with the Lords of the Philistines and while they are talking about it God's hand was still at work against the Philistines. Many dropped dead from among them and many more were raging ill with the pain of haemorrhoids. *The hand of God was very heavy upon them.*

Those that contend with God, His Ark or His Israel will infallibly be ruined in the end.

1. Samuel Chapter 6 verse 1.

And the Ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners saying, what shall we do to the Ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

I am sure you can read into the last few verses that there is a degree of panic setting in as they walk the Ark round and round the towns and cities, having all sorts of meetings with all sorts of dignities, getting all sorts of advice from people ignorant of God. It's amazing that people today, some who want to have peace in their heart will go anywhere, talk to anyone except kneel at the foot of the cross and ask forgiveness of the very person who will forgive our sins and can give eternal life, that's Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world.

The Philistines sought advice from their Priests and from diviners of all people asking, what shall we do with this Ark? God had already shown His power and authority in their Temple by causing Dagon their divine one to bow down to the God of Israel. They had to repair and replace Dagon, the god they worshipped back on its stand. They were in pain and much discomfort from the plague, which they acknowledge was caused by the God of Israel. They had had the presence of God in their midst for seven months, and it must have been seven months of hell! But it needn't have been, had they repented and bowed to the one true God who had shown His power and presence to them, instead of the stone hand carved image of Dagon, they would have been blessed of God.

Verse 3

And they said if you send away the Ark of the God of Israel, send it away not empty; but in any wise return Him a trespass offering: then you will be healed, and it shall be known to you why His hand is not removed from you.

So these dignitaries of Philistia, at the end of yet another meeting said they were to make golden images of the plague that has caused the public so much pain and discomfort to their bodies, and of mice that had marred their land and ruined their crops.

Verse 5

Wherefore you shall make images of your haemorrhoids and images of your mice that ruined the land and you shall give glory to the God of Israel: peradventure He will lighten His hand from off you, and from off your land.

This smug advice was no doubt given by the top brass of Philistia as though they knew what they were saying. But they too were embarrassingly writhing in pain, twisting and turning, scratching and doing their best to sit still in front of the people of a town that was doing the same!

They were so accustomed to making offerings to their deities that they thought it best to do the same to the God of Israel to atone for their trespass. God had shown them how to approach Him; He had made their god bow the knee before Him twice. God had caused them to patch up, repair and nail Dagon to his stand with the help of his worshipers. The Philistines thought they could buy their forgiveness and healing with little golden trinkets. As far as the uncircumcised Leaders that they had their faith in were concerned, all you had to do was give Glory to God, make an offering and He will lighten His hand from you.

Jesus has done all the work required to bring man back to God. He came from the glories of heaven as a baby, died on the cross as a man and Saviour, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven where He sits next to His Father God and He didn't need any help from His followers. So it is through God's Son Jesus Christ that we can have our sins forgiven and obtain the free gift of eternal life, it is to the one true God we must bow the knee.

2 Chronicles 7:14

God's way is *"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

The series of plagues that followed Egypt and Pharaoh's rejection to the God of the Children of Israel should have shown the Philistines that to fight against the true all powerful God is a very dangerous thing. There is no question about it this plague was very great upon the land as well as the people. The Septuagint and the original texts wrote that the country was swarming with mice as the people were suffering with swelling tumours.

Imagine the pain that the Philistines suffered because they couldn't do anything about it and their spiritual leaders were at a loss to help because they too were dead in trespasses and sin (Eph.2:1). So they decided to give a trespass offering of five golden mice and five images of their haemorrhoids, the Bible does not say how glory to God was to be given, that might be very difficult if you don't know Him.

Now the Priests of Dagon ordered a new cart to be made, no doubt with good intentions, but this was again contrary to the Law of Moses. The Ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the Priests and carried only by those Priests who were consecrated and qualified to do so. (Num. 4:15; 7:9 ;),

Philistia had no such Priests qualified for such a task. The Ark was therefore laid on the cart and the golden trinkets lay in a box next to the Ark.

They were to tie two cows to the cart who had just given birth, to pull the cart and they were to lock their calves up at home, and the test was if the cows, having their calves shut up at home would go of their own accord with no one to lead them direct to Israel then that would be a sign that the hand of God was against them. This test was of their own making so they could not dispute the outcome. The cows did exactly that, lowing for their calves every step of the way, of their own accord for about 20 miles they went straight to Israel. The power of God was so much greater in overruling one of the strongest instincts of nature.

The two cows stopped at the field of Joshua and stood by a great stone that was in his field. They called the stone Abel believed to be because of the many deaths that surrounded the Ark, and also because Abel was the first man to be slain because of religion and disobeying the word of God. (Gen.4 :).

What of Israel?

We know Israel was in a backslidden state due to the lack of Spiritual instruction given by its leaders, and this was born out by what they were doing as the Ark approached. Israel was going about their worldly business of reaping the wheat harvest, and had no care about the Ark. After all, the Ark of God should have meant more to Israel than it meant the Philistines. To Israel the Ark represented the divine presence of the Lord surely they should be looking out for it. They made no enquires as to its whereabouts, if they had they may have had private intelligence of its coming and gone out to meet it. They could have made preparation for its return, such as clean and make ready its resting place in the Holy of Holies and prepare their hearts for the presence of the Lord. But no they were about their worldly business and only saw the Ark when they looked up from their worldly distractions then it was too late and they were not prepared.

Luke18:8

Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

When Jesus comes again, and He will, will He find you going about your worldly business? Which of course is a good thing to do, but in our hearts there must be a deep desire to see the Lord, a constant looking and expectancy to greet our Saviour on His return. The world in which we all must live but not be a part of, is getting increasingly more wicked and rebellious toward God, just like Israel, and God in the form of the Ark turned up and surprised them, they were not expecting Him, their minds were on other things, many missed Him. The five Lords of the Philistines saw the wonder of the Lord directing the cows home they were convinced that God had been the cause of their trouble and that it was not by chance so they went back home! They did not stop to find out more about this God. It was established that it was this God who floored Dagon and broke it into pieces. No such miracle could be performed but by the God of Israel. But they too were busy with their worldly interests to entertain God.

No doubt Israel was very curious when the Ark came to rest in the field of Joshua, was it damaged? Was it broken in any way? The Ark had never been seen by the people of Israel, their curiosity matched that of the Philistines. So they looked inside! Even the Philistines had regard for the presence of the Lord and did not open the Ark. Israel, with all the knowledge they had of their God together with knowledge of His instructions they disobeyed and lifted the lid of the Ark and looked inside.

1Samuel 15:22

Behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to harken than the fat of rams.

God knows best, He knows the whole picture and for us to obey Him is the best thing possible. Here the Lord smote, not only those that looked into the Ark but many others in the area. Remember Eli? His disobedience to the word of the Lord resulted in his offerings and sacrifices for his family not being accepted by God for the rest of his life. God says obedience to His word is very important indeed. If we treat the Lord with contempt we will lose the blessing and suffer the consequences. God cannot look upon sin and Satan makes sure sin is ever present to keep us away from God. If sin persists the Lord removes Himself from us. Some don't believe this but the Lord removed Himself from the Temple in Ezekiel chapter 10 because of Israel's worship of other gods and ignored the one true God. His action affected all Israel. And again in our study of Samuel in chapter 4:21 the glory of the Lord departed from Israel when the Ark was stolen. We will read more of this later.

Wickedness is great indeed when the most notorious sinners are men of renown among us. Men and women of position found in sin disappoint us more because more is expected of them, God feels the same way unless true repentance is shown. He gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us keep on the narrow path but the choice is ours to listen to or go our own way. Didn't He say that His Spirit would not always strive with man?

The Ark of God was not only a symbol of the Throne of God but it was also as revealed in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, a beautiful symbol of Christ in His essential Deity and sinless Humanity.

(Williams)

Nevertheless there is evidence that the Ark was neglected by the people and not respected as God demanded. It was kept at Kirjath Jearim for about 20 years; in that time Samuel grew in age and he had grown in relationship with the Lord.

Chapter 7:3

And Samuel spoke unto all the house of Israel, saying, if you return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Ashtaroth is the moon goddess of the Phoenicians their principle female deity associated with the name of Baal, the sun-god and their chief-male deity. There was a Temple of the god Dagon among the Philistines at Beth-Dagon of Asher (Joshua 19:27), and in Gaza (Judges 16:23). He was the god of fertility and crops, and also believed to be the legendary inventor of the plough!!

Israel's Apostasy

Judges:10:6

And the Children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord and served Him not.

It is obvious Israel had sunk to an all-time low, maybe the lowest point in their history. Verse 7 continues. *And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the children of Ammon.*

We just cannot play fast and loose with Almighty God without reaping the consequences. God said "You shall have no other gods before me" yet here they were serving seven pagan gods and not serving Jehovah at all. None of these pagan gods had reduced Dagon the Philistine god to broken pieces and laid them out all over the floor. And none of them had died on a cross, shed its blood and rose again for the Salvation of those that followed Him. Israel was in such spiritual decline being contaminated by many strange gods.

A lesson for each one of us, are we contaminated by what we read in magazines, our newspapers, our conversations at work, by what we see on our televisions? What we see and hear gets right into our spirit and the fight between spirit and the flesh begins.

1 Corinthians 2:12

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Israel had neglected the presence of the Lord

The Ark of God was neglected for over 50 years when it was found in a forest at Ephratah by King David (Ps. 132:6). Remember this was the Ark of God who had spent many years in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of the most High God who had dwelt in the Shekinah glory within the seraphim on the top of the Ark.

David made a vow or a promise to the Lord that he will not sleep until he has brought the Ark back to Jerusalem, he knew of the importance of the presence of God. He heard that the Ark was at Ephratah and he and his men found the Ark of the Lord in a field in the woods no doubt muddy, dirty and overgrown with grass and weeds. This is what Israel thought of the presence of the Lord!

1 Samuel 7:3 Israel repents

And Samuel spoke unto all the house of Israel saying, if you return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

This is the first reference to Samuel in about 20 years since the days of Eli and Israel had lived in defeat to the Philistines all that time.

Five conditions of deliverance.

Return to the Lord your God with all your heart. What did ‘with all your heart’ mean?

For years Israel had been living under the influence of ungodly pagan people, people who did not know the Lord God Jehovah. People who worshipped idols made of wood or stone unable to talk, breathe, or answer the prayers offered to it. Smaller idols made of this large image standing in the pagan Temple were bought and placed in the homes of the Israelites and worshipped in place of the true God. They worshipped Dagon with all their hearts and not God.

Put away all strange gods. When these idols were worshipped Israel gave their hearts, minds, thoughts, and their very beings to these pieces of stone. And don't forget Israel served 7 other gods, their homes must have been full of stone or wooden idols just think of all the dusting! When we truly worship the Lord in our churches we should be thinking about what Jesus has done for us and thanking Him for them. Things such as the death of Jesus, His resurrection, His love for us, His help, His Word, and His personal relationship with us. Israel had given their all in the worship of the Philistine's god Dagon and the other gods in the area. When God brought Israel out of the Red Sea and brought them to Cannon He told them not to mingle and befriend the heathen nations round about. He knew Israel would bring back to their homes all manner of false gods and images and worship them, which they did and God wanted their hearts and that relationship back. One of these strange gods was the god Molech which means king or god of all gods. This was the god of Ammon and worshipped by the Ammonites. It was made in the shape of a calf, it was sitting on a pedestal or throne and his head was crowned with a golden crown,

his arms extended as if to embrace all who came near to it. Children were his victims. The statue was heated red hot by a fire made inside the belly and when very hot, children were shaken and dangled over the flames or passed through the red hot arms in dedication to receive the favour of Molech. Very many children died in these horrifying acts of cruelty and perversion. 2. Kings 3:26 *and when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then the king of Moab took his oldest son who should have reigned in his stead and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall.*

Do we, in the 21st century think this behaviour is senseless? Do we think Israel was heartless in treating children like that? What are we doing with our children today? We are cursed with abortion on demand. Any female of any age has the right to rid themselves of a sexual mistake by going to a doctor or clinic and get rid of her baby! Very little thought is given to the tiny life that has begun inside the womb of that woman. "It is too inconvenient to include a baby in my career, in our courtship, my parents will disown me!" It is said "You can't spank your child but you can kill it before it is born... who on earth is making these laws"

In 4 years the Guttmacher Institute estimates that 56 million abortions occurred worldwide, the United Kingdom is one of the highest! We a Christian country, come under the same condemnation of God as Israel did. We should know better, we did know better once but we have rebelled against God and we now live in a godless society and paying very dearly for our rebellion towards God.

We can blame our church leaders for not knowing and teaching the Word of God as Israel did in Eli's day, but that won't wash with God, we stand before Him in answer to our own deeds done in the flesh and if we ignore God and His laws we pay the penalty on our own. We can all get a Bible, read God's commandments, obey them or ignore them at our peril.

Put away Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth was derived from Phoenician goddess Astarte, an equivalent of the Babylonian Ishtar. She was known as the queen of heaven to whom the Israelites burned offerings and poured out libations. Ashtaroth was the goddess of love and fertility and all sorts of perversion and wickedness was permitted in the worship of Ashtaroth and Israel was quick to give allegiance to this god. Ashtaroth was supposed to be the wife of God! Raphael Patai was the first historian to mention that the ancient Israelites worshipped both Yahweh and Asherah, a theory that has gained prominence because of research done by Francesca Stavrakopoulou working in Oxford and in University of Exeter.

Judges 2: 12/13

And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people who were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

Prepare your hearts unto the Lord.

Today we read the story of the exodus from Egypt in the Bible and enjoy it. We have written books about it, we have made films about it; we have dramatized it to show the wonder of the Almighty God and His love for His people the Jews. He had a plan for these people. He destroyed their enemies and turned a bunch of slaves into a nation. Of course they loved Him for it and worshiped Him, but soon their hearts grew cold and were given to other gods. These gods were unable to bring water out of a rock, heal their sicknesses, produce food from the

skies or part a great sea so that a nation can walk from one side to the other on dry land, this was impossible for an image carved out of stone. In spite of all that the one true God had done for Israel they had given their hearts to a block of stone. Samuel, the mouthpiece of God was about to call Israel together to tell them God's very important message.

Serve Him only.

Exodus 20:3

You shall have no other gods before me.

After all God had done for them Israel rebelled against God and worshipped strange images of stone and wood. Images that could not share their presence with anyone, could not answer prayer, could not perform miracles and so on. God was about to show the Children of Israel what the presence of the real God could do.

Verse 4-6

Then the Children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and they drew water and poured it out before the Lord and fasted on that day and said "We have sinned against the Lord". And Samuel judged the Children of Israel in Mizpeh.

When Samuel judged Israel I believe the convicting presence of the Lord was felt all over Israel and everyone felt it. God loved His people so much He used Samuel to show Israel the rebellious path they had taken and to show such love that Israel repented, drew water and poured it out on the ground which was a symbol of pouring out of the life blood of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world.

Here comes the enemy again

God judged Israel and they repented of their sin and rebellion against God, and whenever there is a move of God Satan will not like it. He is out to steal, kill and destroy; he will steal from us the joy, the happiness, and the blessings of God upon our lives, and desires to leave us in bondage again.

The Children of Israel said to Samuel "*Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us that He will save us out of the Hand of the Philistines.* All of a sudden it is 'the Lord our God' when a few days earlier they had turned their backs on Him. How fickle man is and how merciful God is, but the Lord heard Samuel's prayer for Israel and had mercy on them.

As the Philistines drew near to fight Israel verse 10 says the Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines and discomfited them and they were smitten before Israel, it looked as if Israel got the victory without going to fight showing them again that God was on their side if they worshipped Him. Samuel had taken a lamb (v9) and offered a sacrifice wholly unto the Lord. God knew that the lamb offered represented His son who was to die on the cross many years hence to redeem mankind from sin and the power of Satan. God cannot give victory to fallen man so He gives victory to His beloved Son Jesus so that His people can overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11).

As soon as Samuel, the man of God had reintroduced Israel to the true worship of God by offering a sacrifice God showed the Philistines just how powerful the God of Israel was.

Verse 11

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh and pursued the Philistines and smote them.

Verse 13

So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

Israel was free from their enemy for about 40 years right up to the time they asked for a king. *And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.* That is from when he was about 20 years old and began to judge Israel as mentioned in Chapter 7:1-8. Each year he judged in circuit from Bethel including Gilgal, Mizpeth and returned to Ramah his home town and where was born and he had built a house. Samuel built an altar and offered sacrifices unto the Lord in accordance with the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy 12:5-26.

Chapter 8 Samuel and his sons.

Verse 1/3.

And it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his first-born was Joel and the name of the second was Abiah, they were judges in Beer-sheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre and took bribes and perverted judgement.

Joel, his name means Jehovah is God; He is not the Prophet Joel, he lived about 225 years later. Abiah, his name means Jehovah is Father.

These two sons of Samuel, from a godly man, in the service of God gave names to his sons as new borne babes in the hope that they would follow after God when they were made judges after their father, and he gave them names that honoured God. But, just like the sons of Eli they were a great disappointment to Samuel and followed their own way.

Verse 4/5

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah. And said unto him, Behold you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the other nations.

Once again Israel got together and had a meeting, these “meetings” can be dangerous, and decided another ‘let us’ by taking things into their own hands again and asked Samuel to make a king over them. Apart from not seeking the will of God in this matter they became extremely rude by starting their demands with “behold thou art old” and threw Samuel’s family problems in his face by reminding Samuel of the sinful ways of his sons. The making of a king to judge them was displeasing to Samuel so he turned to the Lord in prayer which Israel should have done in the first place. God didn’t mind Israel having a king but it was to be God’s choice not theirs, He who knows the end from the beginning. He even knew the words Israel would use when demanding a king.

Deuteronomy 17:14

When you are come unto the land which the Lord your God gives you, and shall possess it, and shall dwell therein, shall say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are about me.

Samuel 1.verse 7

And the Lord said unto Samuel, when they said Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.

Israel had no idea what they were asking for. All they could think of was, on the face of it, other nations were doing much better with a king than they were. So Israel wanted to be like them. They were a stubborn people and were determined to have what they had set their hearts on. As we hinted at earlier God didn't mind them having a king but it was to be God's choice because He knew what they would ask for. He knew the type of king they would choose and it wasn't a Godly one. He also knew the consequences of having such a king. How gracious of Him to allow Israel to learn from experience first-hand, from the hardship and trial that this king was to bring! Take heart Pastor, church leader, man of God there will be times when your flock will want change, want something new even want a new Pastor and you will feel rejected. Take it to God in prayer, it's His work anyway, and remember, in the eyes of God they are not rejecting you, they are rejecting God's Son Jesus Christ and He will deal with it now or when He comes back, keep faithful to His word, keep humble before Him, as my Granddad used to say "right is right and wrong is no man's right" God will vindicate.

God rejected for an earthly king 1. Samuel 8:11

God told Samuel exactly the type of king that Israel would choose, and a long list of problems they would encounter.

Your king shall take your sons and appoint them as servants (v 11)

He shall use them for his chariots

To be his horsemen in the army

To run before his chariots

To be captains over thousands and over fifties (12)

To plant his crops

To reap his harvests

To make his instruments of war and instruments of his chariots

He shall take your daughters to be confectionaries (v 13)

To be cooks

To be bakers

He shall take the best of your fields, vineyards, and olive yards and give them to his servants (v14)

He shall take the 10th of your seed and vineyards and give them to his officers and other servants (v15)

He shall take your men servants, your maidservants, the goodliest of your sons and daughters, and your stock, and put them to work (16)

He shall take 10th of your sheep and other stock (v17)

You, yourselves will be his servants and shall cry out to God because of your king that you have chosen, and He will not hear you in that day (v18)

Israel was told by God Himself that the king they would choose would take and take and take, and you will cry out to Me, but I will not hear you.

Without a king at that time Israel was free from taxes and other costs that could be imposed upon them. If they wanted a king it would be necessary to create and support an army with officers, staff and the king's royal requirements. God said that a king would increase their burdens, but they would not listen they were determined to have their king.

Chapter 8:19-20

Never the less the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.

Israel had not learned any lessons from their resent history, they took no notice of the prophet Samuel and the words of Almighty God, this was yet another “let us and we will do it our way” moment. Sometimes God permits self-will to teach us a lesson. Israel thought the grass would be greener if they had their own king even though Samuel had warned them things would be very tough. You know, it is quite possible some of the difficulties we face today are because we have not listened to the voice of God. My wife and I listen to the news and are shocked to see the amount of murders every day; we are totally embarrassed at the way our members of parliament behave to one another let alone the Prime Minister. We find other countries are behaving the same way. With fighting and looting in the streets, setting fire to shops, cars and anything else that will burn. Complete dis-regard for Law and Order, respect and love and care. I wonder how long it will take before this world begins to cry to God if it does at all, Oh God we need you have mercy on us.

Chapter 9

Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel the son of Zeror.

Out of this tribe came a man called Saul. The outstanding thing about Saul was that he was head and shoulder above the rest of the people. He was tall, good looking, young and strong. *There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he.* As far as his spiritual attributes were concerned there were none. David who had charge of his father’s sheep “kept” them. Saul lost his father’s asses and could not find them! Would this reflect his management of Israel? His reign was a demonstration of how the flesh, i.e., the natural will of man is wholly a stranger to the springs of spiritual life. (Williams)

Chapter 9 verse 2

And Kish had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

Israel had lost faith in their God whom they could not see, they wanted a king whom they could see, “like other nations” but the man they chose was feeble, foolish and could not be trusted. God allowed Israel a king to satisfy their carnal demands and to show them that dependence on the world is futile. Many professing Christians today are in the same spiritual feebleness, not possessing a strong faith that depends upon God and nothing else. Take away their Priest or their Pastor whom they can see lean and sometimes depend on and they stand alone because they have no experience of real relationship with the God who truly loves them.

Kish, Saul’s father was a strong man physically and this may account for the physique of his son who was about 7 feet tall; he was the tallest man in Israel. This coupled with the fact that their hearts were set on a king of their own, blinded Israel to the fact that there was no spiritual attribute to this man at all.

Chapter 9:3

And the asses of Kish Saul’s father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, take now one of the servants with you and arise, go seek the asses.

Saul set out to find his father's asses and he visited 5 different towns covering a vast area but could not find them. But then he ended up at Ramah which is Samuel's home town. Saul was ready to give

up and go home and said to his servant *come let us return*. But it was his servant who reminded Saul that they were in the town of Samuel, and there was *a man of God* dwelling there, and *he is an honourable man, and all that he says comes to pass*. It wasn't Saul who knew of the attributes of Samuel, it was his servant!

In the next couple of verses we see it is the servant who has come prepared for any eventuality not the potential king. It was the custom to offer a present to any prominent person to secure an interview or get any information from them. Saul knew this but was unprepared so he would miss his opportunity to make progress in finding his father's asses. Again it is the servant who provides the answer. He had brought with him a fourth part of a shekel of silver, which today is reckoned to be about 0.21 of a pound, 0.24 of a euro, 0.27 of a United States Dollar, of course the exchange rates vary considerably although the money the servant had was very small at least he was much more prepared than the king!

In God's provision He uses all sorts of things and circumstances to bring about His will and here He uses a bunch of asses, a servant, some young maidens, and a fourth part of a shekel of silver to bring Saul to see Samuel the man of God. Many seek God to bless their natural needs but few come to God for the salvation of their souls and to obtain eternal life.

Verse 15/16

Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people because their cry is come unto me.

In all of God's instructions to Samuel God never used the word king in relation to Saul, only 'captain', God was very reluctant to give Israel a king, He knew the difficulties that would produce. In ignorance, some replace faith and trust with the need for signs and wonders to meet their needs but others, like Samuel can hear the audible voice of God speaking in his ear. This not only takes practice but also a special relationship and walk with God and the experience is open to all of us. Be careful whose voice you listen to! Also note that the Lord, in spite of their rejection of Him, called Israel *His people* 4 times in just 2 verses. Such love and compassion He had for a wayward nation. He also heard their cry and His eye was on them to save His people from their enemies.

Verse 17

And when Samuel saw Saul the Lord said unto him, behold the man whom I spoke to you of this same shall reign over my people.

Saul stopped at Samuel's gate and asked Samuel where the seer lived, not knowing that it was Samuel or that he was the seer. God had brought Saul right to Samuel's door, face to face with Samuel and confirmed to Samuel that this was the man he was told about the day earlier, there could be no doubt this was God's plan.

God had put things in place to put Saul at ease. Saul was invited to the feast that was to be held and a sacrifice to Jehovah was to be offered and blessed by Samuel. This feast was to be held in the high place this was against what God said some 40 years previously.

Deuteronomy 12:1-3

These are the statutes and judgments which you shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of your father's gives you to possess it, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly

destroy all the places, wherein the nations which you shall possess served their gods upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree. And you shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars and break their groves with fire; and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

The Lord was on the war path against all that was in opposition to Him and expected His people to obey His commands to introduce the one true God. His instruction was to destroy all the gods, their images and worship areas completely. Israel was to choose a place to worship, establish God's name there, and dwell nearby. Samuel and the local followers no doubt had cleared this high place, destroyed all that related to other gods and cleansed it for the worship of God.

1.Samuel 9:20-24

After Samuel had taken Saul to his house, he told Saul that his father's asses that had been lost for three days were found; he told that he was the desire of all Israel and was to be their king. All this was to convince Saul that developments that were unfolding were planned by God.

Saul was told he was to eat with the seer. He was told that he would leave the next day and would be told the secret things of his heart. Saul, knowing his family history and being a Benjamite, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, he reminded Samuel that because of the rebellion and self-righteousness of his tribe against God that some 65,000 men were lost by the edge of the sword. (Judges 20:43-48).

The tribe of Benjamin was reduced in numbers and became somewhat an insignificant tribe. Samuel knew from God that this was the man that God wanted as a captain over Israel so he ignored Saul's protesting and took him to the feast and Saul sat among the most distinguished guests of Samuel.

Verse 24

And the cook took up the right shoulder and set it before Saul as a mark of honour and respect, Samuel had saved this part for Saul although it was meant for him. In Leviticus chapter 3 is the instructions from God on how to offer the Peace Offering. It was a messy operation; the lamb was to be presented to the Priest and he took it to the altar and killed it, the blood was to be spread all round the altar and the fat of the offering was to be burnt by fire from the altar, this was then accepted by the Lord as a sacrifice and a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord.

Saul was to be Israel's first king and Saul and Samuel spent a long time up on the flat roof of Samuel's house talking about the past present and future of Israel, the need for stability, obedience to the laws of God, no doubt a spiritual improvement to be encouraged by the new king. The Bible gives us no clue if Saul recognised, or even understood what Samuel was talking about. Samuel asked Saul to bid his servant to leave them for a while and told Saul to stand still and he would be shown the Word of God. Right at the beginning of Saul's epic ministry he was to be shown the Word of God.

Pauline and I are walking through a tough time at the moment of writing and our faith is being stretched. I came down to breakfast a few days ago and Pauline told me and said she heard the Lord say "*be still and know that I am God*". How difficult it is for any of us to be still and leave things in the hand of God. We feel we must do it, we must organise it, we are like Israel who said lots of times "let us" and want to do things our way and not call on the Lord. That verse has not left Pauline since and she often recites it as she walks about the house. I remember my father preaching on that verse when I was a lad, the Lord has brought it back to me so we are doing our very best to trust God as we walk through another trial. Why don't you do the same.

Saul anointed king

1Samuel 10.1.

Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon his head and kissed him, and said is it not because the Lord has anointed you to be captain over his inheritance?

In the last few verse of the last chapter and the first verses of this chapter we note that Saul was taught by Samuel the principles and by what power he was to govern the nation of Israel but as we know he failed to lean these lessons.

Samuel anointed Saul with oil and kissed him. The oil was to confirm God's blessing on the process and the kiss is the mode of expressing homage to a sovereign. Saul was aware what these actions meant, in the East the face or the neck is kissed, in the West the back of the hand is kissed. The fulfilment of these signs was given to confirm in Saul's mind the conviction that Samuel was indeed the Prophet of God. It must be remembered that although Saul lived but a few miles from Samuel, chapter 9:6 tells us that Saul was a stranger to God and did not know of the existence of a man of God, who was a Prophet that lived up the road from his house.

Do you like I do; get the impression that Saul was completely ignorant of the natural and spiritual messages that surrounded him at this time confirming that all this was God's doing. I really think Samuel was doing his very best to show Saul that this was of God, although I believe God's heart was not in it completely either, He still called Saul a captain and not a king. It is difficult for a man living in the natural to understand things of the Spirit and God deals with man in the Spirit. Saul's entire future depended on his learning these lessons from the Prophet of God, up on the roof of Samuel's house and along the road as they spoke in private as they walked.

Verse 5

After that you shall come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when you are come to the city, that you shall meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them: and they shall prophesy.

We now are told that Saul was to go to the hill of God, where worship and signing with musical instruments was played, it was also believed to be close by Saul's house. The hill of God, the seat of God's authority, was in the power of the Philistines. Saul's house was also very near the garrison of the Philistines, the enemy of Israel. Worship of Almighty God, singing and playing of musical instruments was conducted by a faithful few with God inspired spiritual energy and not carnal, right in the face of the Philistine enemy. Saul was also told he would meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, also no doubt having worshipped with these musical instruments, and he was told they would prophesy.

Verse 6

And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you shall prophesy with them and shall be turned into another man.

So there are 4 signs that would show Saul that God was confirming that he was to be king albeit not His choice but the choice of Israel.

1. Finding 2 men at Rachel's sepulchre.
2. Meeting 3 men going up to Bethel.
3. He was to go up to the hill of God and meet the prophets playing instruments.
4. The spirit of the Lord would come upon him and he be turned into a new man.

Saul was a partaker of the Holy Spirit, verse 6, 10-13.
He prophesied verse 6, 10-13.
God turned him into another man verse 6.
God gave him another heart verse 9.

There can be no question about it Saul was genuinely converted, born again and made a new creature in Christ Jesus at this time.

Verse 8

And you shall go down before me to Gilgal and behold I will come down unto you, to offer Burnt Offerings, and to sacrifice Sacrifices of Peace Offerings: seven days shall you tarry, till I come to you, and show you what you should do.

Samuel was to show Saul that his success as Israel's king depended upon faith in God's law by the Burnt Offerings and the Peace Offerings which were a symbol of Christ and Him Crucified. Unfortunately Saul would never grasp this. Samuel told Saul to go to Gilgal and wait for him and he would meet him in seven days and to publicly confess to the people that this divine blessing was from God through His servant Samuel. But in all this there was nothing but failure. Saul's patients ran out, he wouldn't wait for Samuel just seven days. There are in the Christian life enemies who do not really test faith. But there is always one particular enemy – some moral Philistine – that will put faith to the test, and this battle will make clear if he is a real Christian or just a professing one, in the latter case defeat is assured.

Verse 9

And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

Here God shows His mercy to Israel, He could have let Saul walk away from his calling and gone back to his old ways. God could have said to Israel "there you are I told you so, this is the king you have chosen above Me he has walked away". But no, God gave Saul another heart which apparently stopped Saul from turning his back on Samuel and the Lord's will.

Verse 11

And it came to pass when all who knew him before time saw that, behold, he prophesied among the Prophets then the people said one to another, what is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the Prophets?

There is no doubt that when you let Jesus take away your sins, and He changes your heart, all who know you, all your friends and your workmates will see a difference in you, they will see Jesus. In Saul's case they noticed that Saul worshipped with the Prophets, he associated with the Prophets, he was not with the 'old crowd' he even prophesied and then went to the high place to worship. As Israel's new king he had a golden opportunity to win the town to the message of Samuel but would you believe it he went and hid!

Here are 14 steps that contributed towards Saul's downfall

1. He intruded into the priest's office. (Chapter 13:8-10)
2. He made excuses for the sin of breaking the commandment. (Chapter 13:11-12)
3. Again broke the commandments of God which called for the destruction of the Amalekites (Chapter 15:2-12)
4. Lied to Samuel about obeying God in destroying the Amalekites (Chapter 15:13-20)

5. He blamed the people for his failure (Chapter 15:20-21)
 6. Rejected the Word of God (Chapter 15:23)
 7. Half-heartedly repented but still blamed the people (Chapter 15:24)
 8. Lost the Holy Spirit and became possessed with a demon spirit (Chapter 16:14-23)
 9. He became jealous of David and made 21 attempts on his life (Chapter 18:6-29)
 10. Became bitter towards his son in his rage against David.(Chapter 20: 30-34)
 11. Drove David from his home and inheritance (Chapter 21:1-36)
 12. He sort the help of a witch (Chapter 28:7-19)
 13. Used the name of the Lord to protect the witch (Chapter 28:10)
- He took his own life (Chapter 31:4-5)

There is no doubt that this man who was chosen by a wayward backsliding nation and not the choice of Almighty God proved himself to be a total failure in the service of God and to the spiritual needs of Israel. Saul was mentored by a prophet of God, a partaker of the Holy Spirit, prophesied in the name of God, was turned into another man, he was given another heart, taught the principles of Temple worship and sacrifices all endorsed by Almighty God. You would think he would be an ideal man of God fit for the service of the King of Kings, but no, his own will took over, his own pride came to the surface and he was rejected of God. Not demoted, not given another chance but *rejected by God!* And after Saul was anointed king he was left to his own devices and Samuel had nothing more to do with him. What makes any of us think we would escape if we behaved in a similar way once we are saved?

I am very sorry to say, again because we have been here before, that those who think they can play fast and loose with the things of Almighty God, those who believe they can partake of heavenly things and think they will not attract the displeasure of God if they turn their back on Him, they will be rejected by God Himself just as Saul was. (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Verse 17-21

And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh; and said unto the children of Israel, Thus says the Lord God of Israel I brought up Israel out of Egypt and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all kingdoms and of them that oppressed you; And you have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said unto Him, No, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken, and when they sought him he could not be found.

At this time Israel was oppressed by the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Amalekites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and the Syrians. With all the Lord had done for them, from Egypt through the wilderness, fighting their battles to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey and now as they needed God more than ever you would think they would turn to Him, seek forgiveness, worship Him, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. But no, they wanted a man, no better than they were, except he was a lot taller to “*fight our battles for us*”

Verse 22

Therefore they enquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered Behold; he hath hid himself among the stuff.

“It will be noted how God answered all inquiries in those days and there was no delay in the answer (v22). Should New Testament believers expect less under the new covenant which is a better one based upon better promises and when each believer has direct access to the Holiest through the shed blood of Christ?”

There is something wrong somewhere and we all know the fault is not with God!

Maybe if God were to seek us he would find us among the stuff! The ‘stuff’ was the baggage, carts, wagons, tents and all the material things brought for the encampment of Israel (25:13). It is much easier to remain in the mundane and the material things of the world than to be on our knees seeking His face in repentance.

Verse 23

And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

We must not forget that Saul was the choice of Israel, they did not seek God’s face and ask Him, in fact a king was not God’s choice anyway. You can hear God’s disappointment in Israel’s choice in verse 18.

Verse 18

Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And you have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said unto Him, No, but set a king over us.

Israel was a disappointment to God, they had a wonderful, blessed history, and far better than any other nation on earth, all Israel knew their own history because as we saw in Joel Chapter 1 and earlier in our study the “old men” in the family were used by God to teach the family and particularly the young people, the things of God, their history, and God’s ways, so that the nation would continue to live as God intended. Now they rejected God and wanted to be like all the other nations who worshiped stone images like the Philistine’s god Dagon who was now in the workshop being glued together by its worshipers! But God still loved Israel, still had plans for her and still has today.

Verse 25

Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

A great deal had expired in recent days so now that a king had been established, and after the bad examples of Eli and his sons, leading to a spiritual famine in the land, Samuel had to re-establish the principles of the kingdom that God wanted for Israel. So there could be no mistake Samuel wrote it all down in a book and set it before the Lord, he blessed the people and sent them home. Saul also went home and God touched the hearts of a remnant that submitted to Saul and followed him. The Lord not only equipped Saul for this new task of being king but also surrounded him with men whose hearts were touched by God, every effort was being made to bring about success even though God would prefer Israel to follow Him. But there were others who despised Saul and asked “how shall this man save us?” Perhaps they could see with a more spiritual eye that this man was not committed and they did not have faith in him from the start. On the other hand they were called children of Belial which means ‘worthless’, and the Holy Spirit called them worthless because at the time Israel had opportunity to make good and return to the call of God but these people caused dissention, this type of person is everywhere in Christian circles.

Chapter 11 Saul rescues Jabesh

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us and we will serve you.

The Ammonites were old enemies of Israel and Nahash was their king. He was a very proud man and a very bitter enemy of Israel, he had a grudge against Israel because Israel had taken possession under God, of the land east of Jordan which belonged to them (Judges 11:13). Israel had been subject to the Ammonites for some 18 years before their defeat by Jephthah, the Ammonites were so demoralised they allowed very many years to pass before they ventured to reclaim the land that was taken. Jabesh-gilead was a city on the eastern side of Jordan in the tribe of Manasseh.

The name Nahash means “bright shining serpent” The name Jabesh-gilead means “hill of witness.” Isn’t it strange how bad will always follow good in the spiritual kingdom to undo the witness and the message of Salvation. And the bad will often come as a bright shining light. Satan will camp against us, look all bright and beautiful but his aim is to bring us down, using all sorts of tactics to destroy our faith in Jesus. We must be strong in the Lord and reject him and not give into him. Look at his next mind blowing act against God’s people!

Nahash wanted to take an eye from each man of Israel!

Nahash encamped next to Jabesh-gilead and that was enough to frighten them. Numbers 21 explains how God helped Israel to take the cities of the Amorites and settle in the villages’ roundabout. Nahash wanted these lands back so he encamped against Jabesh and threatened them which caused Jabesh to demand a king that would fight for them; they soon forgot that God was on their side. Israel would rather rely on a mortal king they could see than upon an unseen King that was Almighty.

Again Israel did not pray and ask God to help them, they no doubt had a ‘deacons meeting’ (v3) and they decided to give in to Nahash right at the beginning. *“Make a covenant with us and we will serve you”* they said. They were supposed to serve God! To make a covenant with the enemy is certain to bring defeat. With the God of the Universe on their side why didn’t they stand up for righteousness and truth, but then why don’t we as modern Christians backed by the cross, the Blood of Christ and so many promises from the Lord hold back the darkness that is covering our lands and not be so weak?

Of course the enemy jumped at the offer, now knowing Israel’s weakness Nahash made a condition that was in the natural way beyond reason. *“I will make a covenant with you on condition that I thrust out all your right eyes”*

The fighting men of those days fought behind a shield, the top of the shield covered the head and face with the exception of the right eye so the enemy could be seen. It was with the right eye the archers would take aim along the arrow to hit the target, the fighting men would be useless with their right eye missing. Nahash even told the men of Jabesh why he wanted to disarm Israel; he said *so to bring disgrace on all Israel.*

Verse 3

The elders of Jabesh said to him (Nahash) “give us seven days so that we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no-one comes to rescue us we will surrender to you”

I find it hard to believe what I read! How can men and women who have once known God’s absolute authority over kings in Egypt, His total power over nature with the parting of the red sea, His control over the elements by giving water from a rock, and by sending food from the sky, can reduce themselves to slaves again. Didn’t He tell them they were His chosen people, give them laws to follow so as to live victoriously, didn’t He fight their battles and give them land? But then

Christian people who live a life half in the world and half in the Kingdom are the slaves of the 'Ammonite' they have defective spiritual vision and are useless in the wars of the Lord.

Verse 4

Then came messengers to Gibeah to Saul and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices and wept. Not prayed...wept!

Saul at this time was ploughing in his field and when he came home he saw all the people weeping so he asked why this was so. And they told him what Nahash planned to do.

Verse 6,7

And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul when he heard those tidings and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying whosoever comes not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people and they came out with one consent.

Saul took a yoke of oxen and chopped it into pieces to show Israel what Nahash would do if not defeated. This spurred them into unity and action behind Saul their leader.

It is amazing that sometimes all the people want is a good leader, one who commands respect and then they will follow. That is why the people of the UK have given up looking to our leaders in Parliament who were voted for to speak and think on the nation's behalf, particularly over the very important issue of Brexit. All the people see and hear is their very bad behaviour, and the way they abuse one another in the House of Commons and having no respect for the leader.

We need to pray that the Spirit of the Lord to fall on our Leaders and for God to shut the mouths of the 'lions', they all think they have the answer but they haven't and they obviously do not know God or His ways.

Samuel, a man of faith in Almighty God and having spiritual instincts recognised the true character of Saul and knew that his way would not stand the test with such a domestic foe as the Ammonites backed by Satan. So Samuel asked Saul to accompany him to Gilgal and to have fellowship with God at the cross of Jesus as typified by the Peace Offering. Gilgal symbolized the cross and crucifixion with Christ, the putting to death of self-will and relying on the cross of Christ. Saul knew nothing of this, he could physically join Samuel at the cross and according to verse 15 rejoice, yet remain a stranger to the significance of where he was. Many in the church today can be in the presence of the cross and the shed blood of Christ every Sunday but fail to see Jesus or be moved by His presence.

Verse 8

And when he numbered them in Bezek the children of Israel were three hundred thousand and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

This was about half the number that came out of Egypt some 490 years earlier but then God can give us the victory without vast numbers of soldiers. He can get victory over 1000 fighting men with one man and the jaw bone of an ass! Saul, with the Spirit of the Lord upon him had confidence to tell the people of Jabesh they would have the help they needed by sun-up the next day, this made the people very glad but still looking to man and not God.

Verse 10

Therefore the men of Jabesh said to the Ammonites, tomorrow we will come out to you and you shall do with us all that seem good to you.

The men of Jabesh gave the impression they were surrendering to the Ammonites to conceal the army of Saul approaching and so surprise the enemy and at the morning watch, they attacked the Ammonites taking them by surprise. The battle went on until noon until they were all destroyed and the few that did remain were scattered, *so that two of them were not left together.*

This great victory by Saul, under the anointing of God confirming the fact that Saul was the king that Israel wanted. The people said to Samuel “*who said shall Saul reign over us, bring them here that we may put them to death*” Saul acted wisely and forgave them not permitting anyone in Israel to be killed on his behalf giving thanks and honour to the Lord.

Gilgal

Verse 14

Then Samuel said to the people, come let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.

Gilgal was the first place the children of Israel landed after entering into Canaan after crossing the Red Sea (Joshua 4:19). It was here Israel made their first camp in Canaan, 12 memorial stones taken from the bed of the Red Sea were set up by Joshua and they called the place Gilgal. It was here that all those that came out of Egypt or who were born in the wilderness during the 40 year wandering, were circumcised (Joshua 5:2-9). Circumcision began with Abraham as a token of an everlasting covenant with God for all generations (Genesis 17:9-14). Circumcision was a command of God and was to be taken very seriously because it separates man unto God from all others.

A man could not partake of the Passover unless he was circumcised; a stranger passing through had to prove his circumcision before partaking of the Passover. By doing so God accepted him as born in the land. (Exodus 12:48). The Passover was a feast to commemorate the death angel passing over the house of the Israel slaves who had painted their lintels and door frames with the blood of a lamb that was killed by that household. The death angel saw the blood and passed over that house but destroyed those who had not recognised the Blood of Jesus. Circumcision has its shadow in the cross, without coming to the cross of Christ with our sins and all that would separate us from Christ we cannot have fellowship with Him and enjoy the blessings of the Father or have eternal life. Circumcision is observed by Israel and a few of the Islam faith. The name Gilgal means ‘the reproach has rolled away’ and is mentioned 39 times in the Bible, in Joshua chapter 5 verse 9 God confirms the name of the place Gilgal by saying to Joshua,

Joshua chapter 5 verse 9

This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.

All the stigma, the humility and the reproach of slavery of some 430 years, all the taunts by the Egyptians that Jehovah could not set them free and bring them to a Promised Land, the jibes, the mocking laughter and the spiritual ‘death smell’ of the sin of Egypt that got right into the whole being of the Jews was removed by God, not by man, not by Saul the new king, not even by Samuel but by Almighty God.

Israel started with a clean slate as they entered Gilgal and Samuel said they were to renew the kingdom there. Gilgal is first mentioned in Deuteronomy 11:30 but its significance is found in the book of Joshua. As we have said the first place the Israelites made camp in Canaan they called Gilgal. This served as a base of operations during the initial conquest of the Holy Land, they would go out and fight and come back as conquerors to Gilgal. As Israel conquered more and more of Canaan the children of Israel called more and more places Gilgal.

Bible scholars agree there are at least five different ‘Gilgal’s’ in and around the Holy Land. At each of these ‘Gilgal’s’ archaeologists have found very large stones either set upright in a circle like

Stonehenge in the South of England or laid down into the ground either way they were made into a very large circle used as a meeting point or gathering point, even a point where prayer or worship is made. These stone circles were set up by Israel to commemorate a victory or a new beginning.

Samuel told the people to gather at Gilgal where they would together renew the kingdom. Now Samuel took this occasion of great victory to anoint Saul in public, in actual fact this would be the second time Saul had been anointed but what is meant by the words to “renew the kingdom”? Josephus also confirms that “Saul was anointed the second time at this convocation” he continues “they made Saul king before the Lord” and they fully accepted him as their king by offering Peace Offerings and holding great feasts in his honour. All this took place at Gilgal the place of new beginnings.

Every born again committed Christian has a “Gilgal” in their life, a place where they met the Saviour and started their journey with Him. A place where they were baptised in the Spirit, or a place where the Lord healed them, that special place we call our Gilgal. We need to remember where that was because when we fail or disappoint Him, and we often do, in our spirit we go back to our “Gilgal” and *renew the kingdom* and continue our way forgiven. I know some believe we should get up dust ourselves down and continue on our way. Onward and upward sort of thing!

But do we want to continue ‘building our life in Christ’ on the top of old rubble and shaky foundations or do we clear the rubbish from our path and renew the kingdom like Israel did. It would do no harm at all when our walk with the Lord gets out of step with Him to go back to our ‘Gilgal’ and renew the kingdom.

I well remember the time I gave my life to Jesus. It was at the Peculiar Peoples Chapel Neverden Road Wickford Essex in the UK on the 8th April 1945 aged 10. A day indelibly imprinted in my mind, at about 9.45 o’clock that Sunday night the place ringing out with big strong farmers with muscle bound arms in the air singing praise to God at the top of their voices, their wives joining them singing in harmony, walking up and down the aisle and tears running down their cheeks lost in total worship of our Lord. There were no musical instruments in those days! Oh for those genuine real times back again! That was my Gilgal where I came out of ‘Egypt’ and stepped into my ‘Canaan’ as it were. I often picture those times again and again and that sometimes brings a tear to my eye.

Another “Gilgal” of mine of course is the cross, maybe the cross is the “Gilgal” of many of you because it was at the cross Jesus paid a terrible price at the hands of the Romans to take away my sin yes that is a big “Gilgal” for me. I hope it is for you as well.

Samuel chapter 11:15

It was appropriate for all Israel to renew the kingdom at Gilgal because this was the first place of entrance into Canaan. All the “old” from Egypt, from the slavery of Pharaoh, worshiping God without a Tabernacle or Temple, not celebrating the feasts because of the oppression of the slave masters, going through the wilderness with all sorts of trials and problems, right up to the land of Canaan (Joshua 5:2-10).

Verse 15

All the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Saul and all Israel could have rejoiced for many years had it not been for pride, selfishness and jealousy that dominated the life of Saul. He may be head and shoulders above the rest of Israel but

his physical appearance was tiny compared to the smallness of character in seeking the life of David his friend, a friend who could have done more to help advance his kingdom than any other man. The singing and rejoicing was short lived because of such childish acts. You may remember David was anointed to be king three times.

Chapter 12 1-2

Samuel retires

And Samuel said to all Israel, behold I have harkened unto your voice in all that you have said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2. And now, behold, the king walks before you: and I am old and grey headed and behold my sons are with you and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

Samuel was about 60 years old at this time, and in resigning as leader of Israel he charged them in their responsibility to their new king, their commitment to the renewed kingdom (at Gilgal) and of course to God. In this statement regarding his sons it appears Samuel did what Eli should have done long before and demoted his sons from office because of their sin and they were now among the people as common men. They had not walked in the ways of their godly father but had turned aside seeking after money, taking bribes and perverting justice.

Israel remembered being ruled by such wickedness before under Eli and his sons and they didn't want any more of it, so they said they wanted a king to rule over them. Samuel not only obeyed Israel but also did the right thing by God and changed the leadership.

Samuel spends a long time asking Israel if he owes them anything and if he did he would repay it. We do not read of this happening so we conclude Samuel lived an exemplary life before Israel and his God. Leviticus 19: shows the extent of the various Laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel, it is these Laws that Samuel refers to that he has kept before the Lord, quite a list but if only half of them were kept by people today the whole world would be a much better place. Having exonerated himself and separated himself from the passed wicked leadership of Eli, his sons and Samuel's sons, in verse 5 we read that Israel confirms that what Samuel says is true and God is their witness. Having got Israel to agree that God is witness to his innocence of any false doing Samuel now charges Israel with forgetting their history and what God had done for them.

Verse 12:7

Now therefore stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which He did to you and to your fathers.

Samuel tells the people to stand still and listen! In all that was going on in the lives of Israel they needed to stand still, to stop and take note of Samuel who was going to recount their lives from slavery and bondage up to the time they asked for a king. Samuel reminded them that when they forgot the Lord their God He sold them into the hands of their enemies (verse 9) namely-. They were Sisera, the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Ammonites.

Israel had disobeyed God who told them not to make friends with the heathen, not to enter into marriage with them, not to take the idols of the heathen and put them into their homes and worship them. Israel disobeyed and did all that in rebellion to the God who brought them out of Egypt. And when their enemies gave them a hard time and won the battles, Israel cried unto the Lord. "We have sinned" they said "We have forsaken the Lord and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies and we will serve you" This is exactly the pattern of behaviour we see among God's people in the Book of Judges. There was a 'sin-repent-sin' cycle time and time again. And such a pattern of behaviour should not be the pattern of life anyone who has truly made Jesus Lord.

If the believer rebels against the Lord, the Lord will 'sell' that Believer into the hand of the enemy; the only cure is repentance at the Cross.

God answered their cries and sent no less than 4 armies to fight for them namely Jerub-baal, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel to deliver them from their enemies. When Nahash the king of Ammon came and camped close by they were so frightened they asked for a king to fight for them! The Lord God Almighty was their King, not a weak willed nobody who when it got rough went and hid in a corner. God must have been so disappointed with Israel. But then I expect He is with us today when we go our own way.

God tells them through Samuel in verse 14 that they must fear the Lord, serve Him and obey Him and not rebel against His commandments. This applied to Israel and the king they had chosen. God also reminded them of the alternative, if they did not obey then the hand of the Lord would be against them. Israel had already seen the hand of their enemies against them which made them cry out for help, and to feel the hand of a frustrated, disappointed God against them could be much worse. God also reminds Israel of the rebellion of their fathers against God and the consequences they suffered, so they knew what they were to endure for their disobedience.

When I was a child I was taught to pray at night the words "Gentle Jesus meek and mild, look upon this little child". As I grew up I found that this gentle Jesus could be strong, strict, and correcting, but with great love and understanding. God could have given up on Israel way back at Mount Sinai when Israel made a golden calf to worship because Moses was a long time in the mountain talking to God. He called them stiff-necked, He said they have *corrupted themselves* and in effect gave them back to Moses and disowned them. (Exodus 32:7-11). But His great love for them prevailed and He repented of the thoughts He had against His people. (Exodus 32:14).

Samuel chapter 12: verse 16/17

Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes, is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord and He shall send thunder and rain that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking for a king.

God said to Samuel "*they have not rejected you they have rejected me*" We have reminded ourselves many times in the course of our studies we cannot play fast and loose with God. Didn't He tell us He would rather us be hot towards Him or cold towards Him, *if we are lukewarm that makes Him sick and He will spit us out of His mouth.*

That day Israel were to start the wheat harvest, you can imagine all the men, women and children gathering to help after all it was important to get the harvest in and they must have started early in the morning.

Chapter 12 verse 16

Now therefore stand still and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes.

In the middle of all the organising and planning for a day of work of harvesting, feasting and play for the children Samuel says stand still. I wonder how many kicked up a fuss about that. "*We've organised one day to collect the harvest and you tell us to stand still! We cannot stand still*" "*It's my job to play and look after the kids do you think they will stand still?*" All manner of excuses were shouted at Samuel, and in the middle of their complaining there was a sudden drop of rain fall from the sky, a clear deep blue sky just like it always was. No they were not mistaken there was another drop, and another and then a clap of thunder like no other they had ever heard. Children rushed to find their mothers, fathers hurried to make up shelters. This thunder was from God Himself and He was very displeased and He wanted to show His displeasure to all Israel particularly those who

didn't want to stand still and listen! It rained and thundered so much we are told the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

You know, God sometimes wants to speak to us and it might not be of correction it might be of leading or encouragement, but He has great difficulty sometimes because we won't stand still.

Stand still

Exodus 14:13 Moses tells Israel to *stand still* and see the salvation of the Lord.

Numbers 9:8 Moses tells Israel to *stand still* while he hears from the Lord.

Joshua 3:8 Joshua commanded the Priests *stand still* at the waters edge and wait for the command to tread in the water and the water will part.

Joshua 10:12 Joshua told to *stand still* and the sun would stand still too.

2. Chronicles 20:17 Judah exalted to *stand still*, see the salvation of the Lord so they need not fight.

Job 37:14. God tells Job to listen to this, *stand still* and consider the wonderful works of God.

Stand still refers to the ceasing of our own personal efforts, the flesh and trusting in our own abilities but rather trust in the Lord and the Cross completely.

The great thunder storm from God upon Israel made them realise 3 things. 1. The people greatly feared the Lord. (Verse 18). 2. They begged Samuel to intercede for them that they would not die. (It must have been some thunder storm!) (Verse 19) 3. They acknowledged their sin in asking for a king and not rely on the God who brought them out of the slavery of Egypt. God warned Israel at the beginning when they asked for a king, that it was not His will to be replaced by an earthly king. He told them things would not be the same, and what they would lose and what their new king would take from them. On the face of it Saul could not be blamed personally for the giant thunder storm or the fear that Israel felt as a result. It was their disobedience and rejection of God that God had to deal with and on a much more spiritual level.

Is God using vast forest fires, frightening tsunamis and floods that are taking out whole towns and cities, people's homes, businesses and livelihoods of millions? Is He using earthquakes, volcanoes and other natural disasters to shake us into repentance? Not to mention men buying machine guns and killing dozens in schools, colleges, churches, mosques, seaside resorts, or driving great trucks or even their own cars into crowds of innocent people and causing untold misery for those left to mourn. Does God want our attention; shouldn't we stand still and ask Him?

These things are some of the signs that Jesus mentioned in Matt 24 indicating that the age of grace is coming to an end. These events are symptoms of the ungodly age in which we live. And in these closing years God is using these events to get people to stop, to standstill, and consider their future destiny. Because they will be followed by an era in which Jesus will come with fire in His eyes and a sword in His hand to Judge the living and the dead.

By the way does anyone over the age of 50 or 60 years remember happenings like this in our young days? Do you remember killings, knife crimes, self-harm, children killing themselves and their friends? Where whole week-ends spent in destructive protest over something they disagree with causing disruption to thousands? No nor do I, but then our churches were well attended, sports was played during the week not on Sunday which was kept holy as instructed in the Bible. We had prayers in schools and in Parliament. Most people were honest; treat others with respect, most believed in God and even the church had respect for their Saviour.

Verse 21

God tells Israel

And turn not aside: for then should you go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.

We have seen Israel repeatedly go after other nations and their gods when God told them not to. He knows the heart of every man and woman, He knows the temptation that calls to the heart and spirit of even His followers and pulls that person away from the love of God. That is another of Satan's ploys, if he can get the believer's mind distracted from the things of God he has succeeded.

Isaiah 26:3

You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him; because he trusts in Him.

We all want peace in our hearts, more so in the world we now live in, it's never been so troubled. Where is the peace we all crave for? The peace we want is in Jesus but nobody believes it! Jesus came as a baby some 2000 years ago and died on a cross to bring us that peace we crave, but in our rebellion we have turned that event into a happy holiday so the children can hang up a stocking and get toys and trinkets, and Mums and Dads can eat and drink themselves silly!

Israel had to be brought to their senses time and again by wars, plagues and now a giant thunderstorm and for a few days they repented and asked God's forgiveness. But it wasn't long before they were rebelling again, and again God had to intervene and not only save them but forgive them again. Don't you think God is calling us all to repentance today? Oh I know that word repent is not used anymore; to repent means stop turn round and go the other way. If God spoke to Israel through the invasion of their enemies or by no water to drink in the wilderness or by His Prophet or a great thunderstorm when they were bringing in the harvest don't you think He is saying something to us by these massive fires and floods that are now developing all over the world wiping out vast areas of land along with homes, offices and factories. Don't you think He is prompting us to consider our eternal destiny? Or are you saying "No it's not God its climate change!"

I am in my 80's and can remember my younger days when my friend and I cycled 8 miles through London to the Woolwich Ferry and travelled back and forth most of the day on the Ferry across the River Thames! We never thought of guns in our school, or Lorries crashing into us, or being caught out by fires or floods these were unheard of. I also lived through the World War Two, I have lain on the grass in our garden and watched the planes in the Battle of Britain high above me, but somehow we have allowed things to get much worse today. Guns, bombs, murder, knife crime and a whole lot more are now in our own back yards every day. We live in this modern sinful world so we must be spiritually minded, think Godly thoughts, pray all the time, all this sin cannot be put down to the excuse of climate change! Keep your hearts pure before the Lord.

1.Samuel 12:20.

And Samuel said unto the people, fear not: you have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

Israel continues to sin. Time and time again. So do those who live in Germany and France, Russia the USA and England, in fact the Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the amazing part of the above scripture is that although we may have sinned even to the extreme, there is still forgiveness for us if we genuinely repent. We are encouraged not to turn aside from following the Lord. But if we do He will forgive us if we ask Him.

We are exhorted not to turn aside from following the Lord; it is a fact of life that if people do not follow after truth and the ways of God, they will soon slip into ways that are motivated by Satan. But you know what Satan offers don't you, sinful, false and vain ways which profit nothing, ways that cannot save the soul but only brings destruction. (Read our study on the Corinthian church.)

1.Samuel 12: verse 21

And turn not aside for then should you go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver: for they are vain.

The NIV Bible translates 'vain things' as 'useless idols'. We looked at the Philistines god earlier and their worship of a stone image carved by human hands which fell to the ground and smashed into pieces when the Ark of God showed up. We poked fun at the Philistines praying to an image that broke into pieces and had to be glued together by those who relied on it to deliver them in battle, answer their prayers or provide for them. And yet any one of us would, without thinking clean our cars on a Sunday, decorate the kitchen, take the family to a fun park or to the supermarket, go to the children's sports day all on a Sunday when God said we should keep Sunday holy because Sunday is His day. We have got so used to rebellion towards God we think nothing of ignoring God's commands and going our own way. And when someone writes about it and reminds us what God said, shouts of "old fashioned" "get into the 21 century Bill" and the like is heard from everywhere. An idol is anything put in place of or put before God. It wasn't until thunder and rain fell in such magnitude that all Israel *stood in awe of the Lord and of Samuel* and asked forgiveness for their sins. Samuel said to the people 'do not turn away after useless idols'.

Verse 25

But if you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king.

God wants us to turn round, turn completely away from wilful sin because He knows that it will let the enemy get a foothold in our lives. If we are truly born again we feel uncomfortable on the inside if we sin and we will immediately want to come to Jesus and ask forgiveness so that our relationship is fully restored. If we wilfully go on sinning and it does not bother us then perhaps we need to have a real encounter with Jesus for the first time!

God is not against you enjoying yourself, having fun with your family but He wants you to put Him first in all things. One of my sayings is "work first and play afterwards" in other words get your priorities right. It's the same with God; He must be first in our lives. Although Israel had sinned Samuel made it clear that now repentance had been made, forgiveness had been given so they were to serve the Lord with all their hearts (v 20). We read that *the Lord will not forsake His people for His great names sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people*. Yes I know He was talking to the Children of Israel, but the cross has made us all one in Christ Jesus. All the promises God gave to Israel are now ours as well. It has pleased the Lord to make us gentiles His people too.

Chapter 13:v3

And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land saying let the Hebrews hear.

Although Jonathan smote the Philistines garrison which was near Saul's home town, it was Saul who blew the trumpet and spread the news of victory to Israel, resulting in the people gathering after Saul at Gilgal.

Verse 5/6

And the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horseman and people as the sand on the sea shore in multitude. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait for the people were distressed, they did hide themselves in caves in thickets and in rocks and in high places and in pits.

Some even went over into Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul went to Gilgal and those that followed him were very fearful. Israel had nothing to fight with; they had no chariots, no trained fighting men, no swords or spears so all they could do was run and hide. When God brought Israel out of Egypt and led them to Cannon He defeated all their enemies for them, now, without weapons, no fighting men, without chariots, they ran and hid in any place where they could not be seen by the enemy. With only slings to throw stones and bows and arrows looking at things from a natural point of view they could not hope to win. But God was still on their side, He loved His wayward people.

Saul loses patients with Samuel

Samuel made arrangements with Saul to meet at Gilgal in 7 days but Samuel was a little late. Saul grew impatient and assumed the office of the priest and sacrificed a burnt offering. When he had finished Samuel appeared and rebuked him for his impudence. (V10-15) Samuel's lateness was no doubt designed by God to test Saul as to whether he would obey God or to act on his own will. He failed! Saul was clearly in a backslidden state. The law clearly stated that sacrifices were to be offered by the priest only and those who were appointed by God. Saul was neither a priest or appointed by God to represent Israel in such a way. Saul showed he thought of these sacrifices as just a ceremony or a ritual. Unfortunately millions in church today treat the cross in the same manor, mainly because they have not been to the foot of the cross and met the Saviour or established a personal relationship with Him.

1 Samuel 13 13/14

For this disobedience and presumption Saul was to lose his kingdom and the line as king with Saul would not continue, not because of the Philistines but because of his own disobedience and that his heart was not totally towards God. Samuel left Saul to his own devises and went to Gibeah and Saul was left to fight with about 600 men. At the beginning of the chapter there were 3,000 men of Saul's personal bodyguard, these were now reduced to 600. These 600 men were to oppose the might of the Philistines, just think of it! 600 to oppose 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen, and innumerable foot soldiers, it seemed to be very one sided except Israel had God to help them so the outcome was certain.

Now the Philistines had captured all the blacksmiths of Israel so they could not make weapons of war. All Israel were allowed to use were files to sharpen the farm implements but in the main they had to go to Philistia to service their farming machinery. Under these circumstances it seemed impossible for Israel to be victorious and free from the bondage of the Philistines.

Chapter 13 verse 22

So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul or Jonathan. Only Saul and Jonathan were armed.

Chapter 14

Let's go and see the enemy!

God was with Jonathan and God was with his armour bearer and He honoured their faith, just the two of them trusting in God to see what they could do to defeat the Philistines. Jonathan allowed God time (v 6) and space to direct proceedings which He did and as Jonathan showed himself to the enemy God caused a trembling in the host, in the fields, among the people, in the garrison, the spoilers and there was an earthquake that shook the place. The Philistines were so confused they started making such uproar that they frightened each other and they started killing each other. When strong, well trained fighting men began to destroy each other with no earthly reason it could only be supernatural and orchestrated by God.

Chapter 14 verse 19

And it came to pass while Saul talked unto the Priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased and Saul said to the Priest withdraw your hand.

It would appear that Saul was in the process of seeking advice from the Lord with the help of the Priest; when the noise from the camp of the Philistines increased and interrupted them. Saul broke off his conversation with God asking if he should go into battle. Saul could not wait until the will of God was made known to him. Saul also ordered the Ark to be brought so he could seek God's will before entering the battle. The Ark was not meant to be used for this purpose. The Urim and Thummim was given for times like this and it may well have been that the Priest was about to get an answer when he was interrupted by Saul and told to remove his hand from the bag. (Exodus 28:30). Saul was so close to getting an answer from the Lord, the Priest's hand was in the bag and he was about to pull his hand out with the word of God in answer to Saul's question. And Saul missed it! There are times when we need an answer to our prayers from the Lord urgently. Sometimes the desperation of our circumstances requires an immediate reply or so we think. Saul wanted an immediate answer; he wanted to go into battle so he sent for the Ark of God which was going to take time to arrive. So he then asked the Priest who cooperated with the use of the Urim and Thummim but just as the Lord was about to answer, Saul cut Him off and he did not hear what the will of the Lord was.

Habakkuk was another whose heart was heavy for the vision he had. So he prayed about it, he believed that a man could pray and God would answer so he said he would stand at his watch like a man on guard at a tower expecting some response. The Lord did reply and said to Habakkuk write the message down, make it plain so the herald or whoever reads it may run with it. That message or that prayer may well be the prayer of many of like minds, and those who are charged with the spreading of the Gospel they need encouragement too. The Bible says *though it linger, wait for it, it will certainly come and will not delay*. The answer is on the way have patience, wait before the Lord. Saul didn't and he lost it!

Up pops the flesh again!

The flesh certainly was at work through Saul. He forbids the people to eat any food until evening under an oath until he is avenged of his enemies. Now he has made this battle a personal vendetta at the cost of all his men. As king binding the army under strict oath was a most serious matter because an oath directly invoked God's involvement (Gen 21:23). What a thing to do there seems to be no rhyme or reason for this curse and it will only serve to weaken the soldiers anyway, with well-fed men there could have been a greater slaughter among the Philistines.

Verse 25/26

The entire army entered the woods and there was honey upon the ground and when the people were come into the wood behold the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth for the people feared the oath.

The tired worn out army came to a wood and the honeycombs were so full they overflowed onto the ground, a provision of the Lord indeed hindered by the fleshly curse of Saul. Jonathan had not heard of his father's command when he came upon the wood where all this honey was. He was as tired and as faint as the rest of them so he ate some of this honey and the Bible says his eyes were enlightened, or his strength was renewed. A taste of any kind of food would have renewed their strength when as weary as these men were. How foolish of Saul to put these men under such a curse v25 27-28. When Jonathan heard of his father's oath he was not pleased. Maybe that is why God supplied milk and honey in the land of Canaan for the children of Israel, honey is recognised as a natural medicine food and strength giver by our professionals today.

Verse 32

And the people flew upon the spoil and took sheep oxen and calves and slew them on the ground and the people did eat them with the blood.

The Israelites were not permitted to eat blood see (Gen 9:4 Dt 12:16 Dt 12:23 Acts 15:20). These men were starving, weak and exhausted and they had a right to the spoils of the enemy so they, in confusion created by Saul took the animals of the Philistines, cooked them and ate. They did not give time to drain the blood according to God's law. This sin was pointed out to Saul who did his best to rectify the situation, he ordered a large stone to be brought and set up. This no doubt was to raise the carcasses up so they would drain of blood. He then built an altar to the Lord, this was the first altar to the Lord he had built; he seemed to build it in a hurry because his mind was still on the battle. He was not asking forgiveness for leading his people astray and binding them up with an oath.

Chapter 14: verse 36

And Saul said Let us go down after the Philistines by night and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man among them. And they said do whatsoever seems good unto you. Then the Priest said let us draw near unto God. Saul then asked counsel of God; Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you deliver them into the hand of Israel? But He answered him not that day.

Saul was not getting any support from his fighting men, "do what you think best Oh king" "well it's up to you king" and the Lord was not answering either so it appeared to Saul that there was sin in the camp not thinking at all that the fault was with him. So out comes another rash vow "As the Lord lives thought it be in Johnathan my son, he shall surely die". Again no one said a word they all condemned him by their silence. With the use of the Urim and the Thummim by the Priest lots were cast between Saul and Jonathan and it was implied that Johnathan had sinned.

"All I did was taste a little honey and I must die for it" Jonathan said a little sarcastically but his father condemned him to death.

Verse 45

And the people said to Saul, shall Jonathan die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid as the Lord lives there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he has wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan that he died not.

The Lord did not answer Saul when he asked should he go up against the Philistines and the people chose not to support him so Saul decided to call off the war with the Philistines and the Philistines went home too.

Israel's enemies included Moab, the children of Amon, and the kings of Zobah, the Philistines, Philistia, and Amalek. Saul was victorious over them all no doubt God was with him for the sake of God's chosen people.

The Lord remembered when the Children of Israel came out of Egypt how the Amalek laid wait for them and attacked them. Now God tells Saul to smite Amalek and utterly destroy them and spare them not, both man and woman, infant and babies, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Chapter 15 v1/2/3

...now therefore harken you unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman infant and suckling, camel and ass.

This was in fulfilment of God's purpose stated about 500 years earlier in Exodus 17:14-16.

Exodus 17:14-16

And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

This has been fulfilled there are no people on the earth today called Amalekites.

So Saul gathered together fighting men and came to the city of Amalek and laid wait for them. Judges 1:16; 4:11 tells us that some of the Kenites settled in Judah others remained with the Amalekites and these were warned to leave by Saul so they would not be destroyed in the coming battle (v6). Some of the Kenites had accompanied the Israelites and showed kindness to them when they settled in Canaan, and Moses married a Kenite woman see Exodus 2:16, 21-22. So they had the favour of God upon them, so the Kenites left the Amalekites for safety.

Chapter 15 verse 7

And Saul smote the Amalekites but he took Agag the king alive but destroyed all the people. He also took the best of the sheep, oxen, and lambs and killed all the worthless stock.

God changes His plans for Saul

Verse 11

It repents me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel and he cried unto the Lord all night.

Samuel knew what would happen to Saul if he rejected the Lord, he would be a lost soul, and he would not cry all night for Saul if this were not so. He cried unto the Lord but the responsibility was Saul's not the Lord's. Saul had a free will to obey God or not, he chose not to obey the Lord so he must take the consequences. Those of us who follow the Lord must be careful to obey the Lord and not go our own way or we will be rejected by the Lord as Saul was.

God said “It repents me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me.”

One would think the Lord made a mistake in agreeing to Israel’s request for a king, but no! Israel had to be tested and lessons learned as we all have to in our walk with God. At the beginning of our study in chapter 8: verse 11 the Lord told Israel through his prophet Samuel the kind of king they would get, one that would take and take and demand and not please the Lord. Israel was proving that the Lord was right and Saul was turning away from the Lord and not proving himself to lead them in the ways of God, it’s called backsliding!

6 things in which Saul failed God.

Saving Agag alive.
Sparing the best of the sheep.
Saving the best of the oxen.
Saving the best of the fatlings.
Saving the best of the lambs.
Saving all that was good.

This was in direct disobedience to the command of God, which was to utterly destroy all the Amalekites, man, woman and child and all they had. Saul was without excuse in disobeying God; but he took it upon himself to choose what was to be killed and what was to be saved. He also lied to Samuel by telling him “*I have performed the commandment of the Lord*”. (V 12-13). Samuel confronted Saul by asking then what was all the sheep bleating and the cattle lowing if he had obeyed the Lord? Saul blamed everybody else for taking the best animals for themselves and excused himself as blameless.

The whole problem with Saul was that he was man’s choice as a king and not God’s. Saul was chosen as king on the basis of his outward appearance, which hides a person’s true heart and true commitment to God. Saul successor King David was God’s choice and the Bible describes him as a *man after God’s own heart*. Today realise that God is looking at your heart. He wants to transform us all on the inside so that our hearts truly align with His.

Saul saved all the best animals from the Amalekites supposedly to sacrifice them to the Lord. He didn’t tell Samuel they were for sacrifice until he was found out to have disobeyed the Lord. Saul was so full of pride that not only did he do his own thing and disobeyed the Lord; he set up a monument in honour of his victory over the Amalekites. No wonder God repented that He set Saul up as king. It is in this setting that Samuel tells Saul one of the most important verses of scripture in the Bible.

1 Samuel 15: 22

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to harken than the fat rams.

There were many Amalekites spared and still in existence long after Saul according to chapter 27:8 2.Samuel 1:8 1Chronicles 4:43. But God said He would punish them for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came out from Egypt (15:1) So Saul disobeyed the Lord and lied to Samuel. That verse says God has great delight in burnt offerings but He much prefers you to obey Him and listen to Him which in today’s world is to stop what we are doing spend time in the quietness and listen for the voice of God, that is not an easy thing to do. God wants to see our determination and commitment, how long will we wait before Him? Will we control our wandering mind? Or will we cut our time with the Lord short just as Saul did when the priest consulted the Lord in Chapter 14:19 and did not hear God’s answer.

Verse 23

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Numbers 22:7; 23:23; 2Kings17:17; Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 13:23.

We have the Bible to guide us into all truth, Samuel had the word of the Lord direct and told Saul what the Lord's word was. The last part of verse 23 says, *because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.*

God gave Saul many opportunities to obey and live according to the commands of God but Saul could not control his self-will and 5 times it is said that God rejected him. Twice Saul said I have sinned, once he said I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and he also confessed he had transgressed Samuel's words. This man's heart had been hardened towards God and he gave excuses for the sins he had committed.

The rejection of Saul

Saul asks forgiveness of Samuel yet again and Samuel turned to go away but Saul grabbed Samuel's mantle and it ripped, which was a sign that God would rend the kingdom from him and give it to another man, a man who is better than Saul.

Saul just would not obey God, verse 30 is yet another plea for favour from Samuel but there is no repentance mentioned, he is more concerned about his standing with the elders, the people and to worship Samuels God, not his God, not the God of Israel he says *the Lord thy God*. Saul had lost his personal relationship with his God.

Verse 11

It repents me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel and he cried unto the Lord all night.

This scenario seems to crop up in most of our studies. I am fully aware of the popular teaching of once saved always saved and many in the church hold it close to their hearts. After all it is a convenient belief; I talked with a man doing some building work on our church one day. He was a committed catholic. I invited him to our meetings. After we talked some more he said "No I can go to my Priest and get absolution on Sunday and live how I want the rest of the week until next Sunday and I get absolution again, I can't do that in your church"...and he was serious, I'll say it again, you cannot play fast and loose with God He will not have it.

Samuel cried all night at the choice Saul made and his continual rejection of God. I felt a similar feeling over this builder. They both rejected God; surely they both know that at the great Judgement Seat God will reject them for unrepentant sin. This subject crops up as a warning somewhere in nearly every book in the Bible. I am aware that this is the personal view of many in the church, I am also aware that whole denominations believe and preach this dangerous doctrine to their congregations, I have sat among them. In this study of Samuel this subject has cropped up again, this time by God himself. Read this study again, carefully, and confirm in your own mind that Saul's heart was changed and he was changed into another man. Chapter 10: 6. He received the Holy Spirit (1 Sam, 16:12-23). The next verse says "For God is with you" God was with Saul all the time Saul was with God, but when Saul sinned and rejected God (13:8-14; 15:16-30) the Lord departed from him taking the Holy Spirit with Him.

Verse 26

And Samuel said unto Saul I will not return with you for you have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.

2 Corinthians: 14.

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has Righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion has light with darkness?

We must note that God, who cannot look upon sin, rejected Saul who lost his kingdom and Samuel who cried all night no doubt because he knew of the eternal destiny without God Saul had chosen and thereby loose his soul. Samuel was with Saul from the day Israel said they wanted a king. He talked with him, prayed with him, worshipped with him, spent time with him and became his friend. Many times Samuel helped Saul back on the straight path after making foolish mistakes and Saul repented of his ways. But in verse 26 Samuel tells Saul he would not go with him anymore because he had rejected the Lords word and the Lord had rejected Saul.

Sometimes we have to leave our friends because they hold us back with their behaviour and move on with God. We must be ever watchful that those we associate with do not hinder us from walking close to God. We are answerable to the Father and when Jesus, His Son returns to take those who follow Him to be with Him, it will be too late to change our ways and say sorry like Saul did many times, and Saul said sorry once too often. Like Samuel I have found it just as difficult to loose non-believer friends possibly to a lost eternally than those who profess Christ but have hindered my spirit with criticism and complaining.

Samuel completes Saul's commission of verse 3

Samuel executed Gods divine wrath on Agag for his treatment of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. Verse 33 tells us Agag was hewed in pieces because of the wickedness and cruelty to the Children of Israel. Samuel went to his home in Ramah and Saul went to his home in Gibeah. Samuel did not see Saul until his death and the Lord regretted the plans He made for Saul being king over Israel. A sad conclusion to what could have been a wonderful success story if only Saul had been obedient to God's word.

I want to thank my friend Graham Towse for his very valuable help on the study of Samuel. It is a complex book with so much for us as Christians to help us in our walk with God. Thank you Graham may God bless you and Viv.

Be blessed
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