



Good News  
**Bible Reading Program**

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, an *International Association*

**— November 2002 —**

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
1 Nov	David defeats Goliath	1 Samuel 17:31-58
2 Nov	Jonathan & David; Saul resents David; David marries Michal	1 Samuel 18
3 Nov	Saul still tries to have David killed; Judgment on the wicked	1 Samuel 19; Psalm 59
4 Nov	Jonathan's loyalty	1 Samuel 20
5 Nov	David and the showbread; Flees to Gath; Prays for relief	1 Samuel 21:1-12; Psalm 56
6 Nov	David feigns madness; Happiness from trusting in God	1 Samuel 21:13-15; Psalm 34
7 Nov	David escapes to the cave of Adullam; David's 400 men; Prayer for relief from persecutors	1 Samuel 22:1-5; Psalm 142; 1 Chronicles 12:8-18
8 Nov	Saul murders priests; End of wicked and peace for the godly	1 Samuel 22:6-23; Psalm 52
9 Nov	David saves Keilah; Into wilderness; Joy in God's fellowship	1 Samuel 23:1-14; Psalm 63
10 Nov	David in the wilderness; God answers prayer for deliverance	1 Samuel 23:15-29; Psalm 54
11 Nov	Prayer for safety from enemies; David spares Saul	Psalm 57; 1 Samuel 24
12 Nov	Death of Samuel; Nabal and Abigail; David marries Abigail	1 Samuel 25
13 Nov	David spares Saul again	1 Samuel 26
14 Nov	David joins the Philistines; David's army grows; Philistines reject David; Manassites defect to him	1 Samuel 27:1-28:2; 1 Chronicles 12:1-7; 1 Samuel 29; 1 Chronicles 12:19-22
15 Nov	David defeats the Amalekites	1 Samuel 30
16 Nov	Saul consults the medium of En Dor; Death of Saul and his sons	1 Samuel 28:3-25; 1 Samuel 31; 1 Chronicles 10
17 Nov	David laments Saul and Jonathan; David king of Judah; Ishbosheth king of Israel; War between them	2 Samuel 1:1-3:1
18 Nov	Family of David; Abner defects to David	1 Chronicles 3:1-4; 2 Samuel 3:2-21
19 Nov	Joab murders Abner; Murder of Ishbosheth	2 Samuel 3:22-4:12
20 Nov	David made king of all Israel; David's forces at Hebron	2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 11:1-3; 1 Chronicles 12:23-40
21 Nov	Conquest of Jerusalem; Chiefs of David's mighty men; Drink from the well of Bethlehem	2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-19; 2 Samuel 23:8-17

22 Nov	More deeds of David's mighty men	2 Samuel 23:18-39; 1 Chronicles 11:20-47
23 Nov	Attempt to move ark and Uzzah stricken	1 Chronicles 13; 2 Samuel 6:1-11
24 Nov	David established in Jerusalem; More sons; Philistines defeated; Praising answered prayer	1 Chronicles 14; 2 Samuel 5:11-25; 1 Chronicles 3:5-9; Psalm 30
25 Nov	Ark brought to Jerusalem	1 Chronicles 15:1-16:3; 2 Samuel 6:12-19
26 Nov	David's psalm of thanks for God's faithfulness; Praising God's righteous judgment and mercy	1 Chronicles 16:4-36; Psalm 105:1-15; Psalm 96; Psalm 106:1, 47-48
27 Nov	God keeps promises; Tabernacle ministry left to continue; David returns home to Michal's scorn	Psalm 105:16-45; 1 Chronicles 16:37-43; 2 Samuel 6:20-23
28 Nov	Davidic covenant; David gives thanks	1 Chronicles 17; 2 Samuel 7
29 Nov	David extends kingdom; Exalts Mephibosheth	1 Chronicles 18; 2 Samuel 8-9
30 Nov	Defeating enemy coalition; Prayer for national restoration; Plea for deliverance from coalition	2 Samuel 10; 1 Chronicles 19; Psalm 60; Psalm 108; Psalm 83

## Highlights to Think About from This Month's Reading

### **Slaying the Giant (1 Samuel 17:31-58)**

**November 1**

David had no doubt in his mind that it had been the Lord who had given him victory over the wild animals that attacked his flocks (verses 34-37). David had gained the confidence to face Goliath: "He [the Lord] will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." And: "The battle is the LORD's" (verse 47).

Besides, in his spare time while tending the sheep, David had probably sharpened his aim by practicing with his sling for hours on end, like boys today knocking tin cans off of fence posts, till he knew he wouldn't miss. "A sling was the typical equipment of a shepherd. It was a hollow pocket of leather attached to two cords. Putting a stone in the pouch, the slinger would whirl it around his head to build up momentum. Releasing one of the cords would hurl the stone at its target. Slingers were a regular part of armies in the ancient Middle East (see Judg. 20:16)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 17:40).

It didn't matter that Saul's armor didn't fit because David knew that the entire assembly of soldiers would be shown that the Almighty, All-Powerful Lord of Hosts saves not with sword and spear (verse 47). David exhibits a remarkable faith and courage for one so young.

When David slays Goliath, the Philistines flee (verse 51), breaking their original agreement that, if their champion were defeated, they would accept servitude to the Israelites (compare verse 9). We might wonder as to whether the Philistines had originally intended to be bound by this agreement. More likely, considering the stature of Goliath, they probably had not even considered the possibility that he could be defeated. In any case, we do not find the Philistines being subservient even after they get over the shock of losing. Instead, they remain as Israel's enemies. In the wake of David's victory, Saul asks whose son he is. *The Nelson Study Bible* comments: "How does this question fit with the fact that David had been serving as a musician in Saul's court (16:18-23)? Saul's unstable mental condition (16:14, 15) may have affected his memory. Saul may have recognized David as his court musician but forgotten the name of David's father. He would need to know it in order to reward David's family (v. 25). It is also possible that in his question, Saul's principle interest was not David's identity, but the possibility that David was a contender for the throne of Israel" (note on 17:55).

### **Saul Resents David (1 Samuel 18)**

**November 2**

Jonathan, the son of Saul, immediately recognized in David the qualities he most admired. For, indeed, Jonathan was as courageous as David was. (It would be helpful to go back and review the exploits of Jonathan in chapter 14, and compare them to the exploits of David, to better grasp the tremendous camaraderie that developed between them). Jonathan and David were "kindred spirits." They made a covenant pledge to always be loyal to one another (verse 3). Later, under adverse conditions, we will see them renew this friendship covenant.

David's victory over Goliath and his newfound popularity, especially with the women, would soon inflame Saul's immature jealousy. David's ongoing successes will further expose the deteriorating character of Saul (verses 6-9). The more Saul gives vent to his rage, the more unstable his mental state becomes—and the more susceptible he is to the evil spirit troubling him (16:14). Indeed, we open ourselves up to satanic influence if we do not control our anger (Ephesians 4:26-27). Saul becomes homicidal and twice tries to run David through with his spear, but David evades him. Realizing God was with David and not with him, Saul has a pathological fear of David. Not able to kill David, he gives him a responsibility that will keep him away (verses 12-13).

Samuel had anointed David to be king, but had not given David any kind of timetable. David knows to bide his time, conduct himself properly and wait on God. Even David's quiet conduct enrages Saul and causes him to fear David even more (verse 15). Saul then hatches a plot to have David killed. He stoops to using his daughter as bait to trap David, never expecting David to survive the seemingly impossible ordeal proposed to him (verse 21).

In his own eyes David considers himself to be "lightly esteemed" (verses 18-23). Though he is destined to be king of Israel, in his innate meekness David cannot see himself in Saul's royal circle. (Here is another lesson for us to emulate—to remain humble despite the awesome divine kingship to which God has destined us.)

Saul's plot fails with David surviving and succeeding twice over. Amazingly, though Saul acknowledges that God is with David, he becomes even more the enemy of David! (verses 28-30). We will continue to see how God works out every situation to fulfill His plan for David.

### **Assassination Attempt (1 Samuel 19; Psalm 59)**

**November 3**

As we study through the historical stories contained in these Bible readings, let's remember to look for the guidance to make our present lives more Christ-like. All of these passages of Scripture were given under inspiration of God's Holy Spirit for our edification, to teach us lessons and provide examples.

In the same foolish way that Satan tries to remove God from his throne, Saul, knowing that God is with David, launches an open conspiracy to destroy David. God has provided an ally in Jonathan, which affords David some needed protection. Jonathan gives his father some very sound advice, which is actually heeded by the easily persuaded Saul (verses 4-6). A good relationship between Saul and David is restored when Jonathan points out that what David had done was good for the whole country. But as soon as David wins another battle against the Philistines, Saul's jealous nature reappears. God allowed a willing evil spirit to agitate Saul's already volatile envy.

Michal, Saul's daughter, loves David and is protective of him (18:20; 19:11-17). David escapes and goes to Ramah to seek counsel of Samuel, whom we haven't read about for a while.

Samuel presides over a *group* of prophets (verse 20). Recall that when Saul was first anointed, he fell in with a group of prophets, who were also musicians, as Samuel said he would (10:5-11). In both cases, the original King James has "company of the prophets." Samuel had judged Israel in a circuit—from the towns of Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah yet always returning to Ramah (7:15-17). As noted in the highlights for 1 Samuel 10, the prophet Elijah later presides over an association known as "the sons of the prophets," located in Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho (see 2 Kings 2). These are often referred to by commentators as the schools of the prophets, training centers of prophetic ministry. It seems likely, as the commentators also surmise, that Samuel founded these schools and that his circuit was connected with them.

This is evidence that God's desire has always been that His ministry be well educated. While Christ's original 12 apostles were "uneducated and untrained men" according to the standards of the day (Acts 4:13), they were in fact educated through the instruction they received from Christ, the role model of His life, constant study of Scripture, their Spirit-guided discussions and regular thoughtful meditation.

With David in Samuel's care, God intervened in the situation so that all those who were sent against David were overcome and, surprisingly, began to do something completely incongruous to their intention—prophesy. Even Saul, when he came to see for himself, began to prophesy—provoking a similar reaction to the one he received when he prophesied when first anointed (1 Samuel 19:24; compare 10:11). "Naked," says *Barnes' Notes*, means without his robe and other outer robes, leaving only his shirt (1997, note on 19:24). The superscription of Psalm 59 says that it was written upon the occasion of Saul sending assassins to stake out David's house and kill him—the event recorded in 1 Samuel 19. There are times in an individual's life when emotionally and psychologically he is "on top of the world," and there are times when a person is in "survival mode," just trying to keep it all together. Both emotional states afford opportunities to draw closer to God. When times are wonderful and prosperous, we draw nearer in our relationship to God by giving Him the credit and thanks for all He has done in our lives. But when the days are dark and our strength fails and it seems as though we won't make it, we cry out to Almighty God for sorely needed help.

In Psalm 59, David is in "survival" mode. He isn't thinking, "God will make me king." Instead, he is wondering how he will survive another day. When David flees for his life, his prayer is for deliverance from his enemies. He remembers that God is our Savior and he prays in Psalm 59 to be saved. He knows the vast mercy and power of God.

When times seem darkest, Christians can be confident that God is yet working through circumstances for their good (Romans 8:28).

### **Jonathan's Loyalty (1 Samuel 20)**

**November 4**

David tries desperately to make peace with Saul. The Scriptures show that David carried himself with wisdom and the proper decorum (18:5, 30). Each month, on the occasion of the new moon, Saul held a feast at his court—apparently an important meeting to establish the agenda for the month. All the leading men were expected to be present. There had to be a very important reason to be excused.

In chapter 20 we see David leaving Samuel and going back to Saul's capital, but David fears coming into the king's presence. David's best friend, Jonathan, can't believe his father Saul intends any harm to David. But David knows better. He tells Jonathan to cover for his absence with what sounds like a reasonable excuse, explaining that Saul's reaction will reveal his intent.

King Saul sees through the explanation Jonathan gives him to excuse David. Saul becomes extremely angry at Jonathan, reviling him and disparaging his mother (verse 30)—a form of cursing that is sadly in common usage even today. Saul rages at Jonathan that he'll never be king as long as David lives (verse 31). When Jonathan attempts to reason with his father, asking what David has done to deserve death (verse 32), Saul explodes into fury and even tries to kill Jonathan—finally convincing Jonathan that there is no hope for David to reconcile with Saul (verse 33).

Jonathan carries out the predetermined method for alerting David of the threat on his life. The two meet for an emotional goodbye. Again they pledge their love and loyalty, and that of their families in perpetuity (verses 41-42).

As a note of interest, verse 26 gives internal validation of the fact that Old Testament laws were in general use at this time. (There are some who try to argue that such laws were invented much later, in the period of Ezra after the Jewish captivity in Babylon.)

### **David and the Showbread; Prayer for Relief (1 Samuel 21:1-12; Psalm 56) November 5**

David is too inexperienced in political matters to comprehend just how deep the subterfuge was running in Saul's regime. He makes a huge tactical error that will cost many innocent lives. This incident ushers in the beginning of a vast sea of anguish that would so characterize David's life, providing him with great depth of feeling for the inspiration of so many of his psalms that would prefigure the sufferings of the innocent Christ.

David is on the run. Innocently enough, he flees to Ahimelech, who is serving as high priest at Nob. Ahimelech is fearful, perhaps having heard rumors of the breach between Saul and David and does not want to put himself and the other priests in jeopardy by getting in the middle of any conflict. David, sensing this, lies to Ahimelech to expedite his and his men's need for sustenance and to immediately be on their way: "I'm on a secret mission for the king" (compare verse 2). The lie works for David, but this will, though unintended by him, result in terrible tragedy for the priests.

Here we also see the interesting occasion when David and his men eat the holy bread, elsewhere called showbread, which was a special grain offering to God intended only for the priests (verses 3-5; compare Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5-9). Ahimelech is willing to feed them with it only if they are ritually pure. Perhaps this hearkens back to God's original intent that the whole nation of Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6) who were to be pure in this way before their presentation before God (verse 15). David affirms the ritual purity of his men and, furthermore, argues that the bread is effectively common anyway because new bread had already replaced it before God.

Reassured, Ahimelech gives them the bread. While "the Talmud explains this apparent breach of the law on the basis that the preservation of life takes precedence over nearly all other commandments in the Law" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 21:6), this is not entirely correct—as we cannot lie, steal or commit adultery to protect human life. But preserving the lives of others clearly *is* part of the intent of God's law (compare Romans 13:10; Proverbs 24:11-12), and this *did* take precedence over the *ceremonial* laws God gave, which He intended to be observed for a limited time (compare Hebrews 9:9-10; Galatians 3:19-25). Christ explained on more than one occasion that saving life even took precedence over the general prohibition against work on the Sabbath. In its same note on David and the showbread, *The Nelson Study Bible* continues: "Jesus referred to this incident in Matt. 12:2-4; Mark 2:25, 26, in His discussion with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath. The spirit of the Law was kept by Ahimelech's compassionate act." That much certainly *is* true, for Christ *upheld* the feeding of David with the bread.

Doeg, an Edomite loyal to Saul, sees Ahimelech give David food and Goliath's sword (verses 7-9). The account says that Doeg is there "detained before the LORD," i.e., under a spiritual vow. Subsequent events will make his religious piety questionable, however, and it is entirely possible that he undertook the vow for a wrong reason, perhaps to act as a spy among the priests. In any case, his witnessing of these events will result in severe consequences when he later passes the information on to Saul.

Though it was acceptable for David to eat the showbread, it was certainly not right for him to lie. It is even worse when we later find out that David suspected Doeg would relay what happened to Saul (22:22). But David was operating out of fear. Goliath's sword should have been a reminder of

God's deliverance—but fear can cause a man to forget his priorities. (God's human servants can go from high points of strong faith to lows of fear and doubt.) David is so fearful of Saul that he flees the country into enemy Philistine territory, reasoning that he has a better chance of survival there even though he is still held in contempt by the Philistines because of his former victories over them (verses 10-11).

When captured by the Philistines in Gath, David composes Psalm 56 as a prayer for relief from tormentors, his experiences on the run providing its inspiration. We see some beautiful word pictures here. God remembering David's sacrifices in His book of remembrance is described as David's tears being put into God's bottle. The American national motto, "In God We Trust"—a shortened form of the longer Pilgrim motto, "In God We Trust, God with Us"—finds its origins in verse 11, "In God I have put my trust." And David touches on the ever-present biblical theme of "walking with God."

### **Feigning Insanity; Taste and See**

#### **That the Lord Is Good (1 Samuel 21:13-15; Psalm 34)**

**November 6**

David reasons that it would be safer with the enemy than with Saul. But he almost gets in over his head with the Philistines. They would probably have tortured him for useful military information against Israel. By pretending to be insane, however, David renders himself not only useless to the Philistine cause, but even offensive in the royal presence of Achish (verses 12-15). The superscription at the beginning of Psalm 34 tells us how this episode ends, with the king driving David away and him departing. In this same superscription, however, it should be noted that Achish is referred to as Abimelech—this being the dynastic title of Philistine rulers for centuries, meaning "My Father Is King" (compare Genesis 20:2; 26:1).

In Psalm 34, David writes of God setting His angels about him and saving him from Achish. His words are intended to encourage others to take inspiration from these events to look to God's deliverance in all seemingly impossible trials (verses 8-14). David is essentially saying to us today that just as God saved him, He will likewise save us too. Notice verse 6: "This poor man [David] cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Those who trust in God will find true and ultimate happiness, as David basically assures us. Indeed, we are to put God's way of life to the test (verse 8). However, some would take verse 9 ("There is no want to those who fear Him") and read into it a "prosperity gospel," thinking that God promises to shower us with the riches of this world. Yet the word "want" here really means "lack"—and clearly implies lack of any absolute need. Indeed, our spiritual needs and our physical wants are two separate things. Verse 9 is not promising uninterrupted comfort, but that God will meet every ultimate need.

The circumstances confronting David as he wrote these words confirm this truth. A refugee from his own country because of a death sentence from his king, he found himself far from comfort—in the land of his lifelong enemies! Yet God was with him.

Consider that our *spiritual* welfare is most important. And spiritual strength can be increased when we are in physical need. The apostle Paul put it this way: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Of course, God is faithful to meet even our physical needs until He decides that it is time for our physical life to come to an end.

For a bit more insight into this matter, read and consider Proverbs 30:7-9.

#### **David Gathers a Following (1 Samuel 22:1-5; Psalm 142; 1 Chronicles 12:8-18) November**

**7**

David flees from the Philistine city of Gath to a cave near the city of Adullam, "about ten miles southeast of Gath and sixteen miles southwest of Jerusalem" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 1 Samuel 22:1). At first, he is a man who feels all alone with no one to help him. In that forlorn condition, David cries out to God for help and deliverance. It is with these thoughts that David composes Psalm 142.

But God answers David's prayer. His family and followers soon gather to him (1 Samuel 22:1-2). Indeed, an ever-charismatic, inspiring leader, David puts together a militia of fighting men from the tribes of Gad, Benjamin and Judah with powerful captains. We read in 1 Chronicles 12 about the makeup of this force and how God through the Holy Spirit inspires these men to accept David as their leader (verse 18). In 1 Samuel 22:2, we see that this group of men is not some noble knighthood. Rather, they are malcontents, the dregs of society, men on the run like David himself.

And yet, they form a rather formidable force of about 400 men that grows to 600—the cave of Adullam being referred to in 1 Chronicles 12 as a stronghold.

Realizing that his parents are in imminent danger from King Saul, David asks the King of Moab to provide refuge for them, which is granted (verses 3-4). It is to Moab's advantage that Israel be weakened through an internal power struggle. Furthermore, David's family has Moabite connections, as his father Jesse's grandmother or earlier ancestor was Ruth, a Moabitess (Ruth 1:4; 4:21-22; Matthew 1:5).

### **Saul Murders the Priests of God (1 Samuel 22:6-23; Psalm 52)**

**November 8**

Saul has become a coercive, wrathful man full of curses for his son and his soldiers—essentially calling them a bunch of dirty double-crossers (verses 7-8). His paranoia indicates that he is losing his grip on reality. Such paranoia often accompanies demonic influence. His jealous and unreasonable anger toward those in his high command reminds one of the aberrations of Hitler and other corrupt rulers of history.

Doeg the Edomite, seeking to ingratiate himself with Saul, tells the king what he had witnessed—that the high priest Ahimelech had helped David (verses 9; 21:7).

Ahimelech explains that he considered David to be a faithful servant of Saul (verse 14). Nevertheless, Saul orders that Ahimelech be put to death along with all of the priests! It is such a heinous order that, to their credit, Saul's men refuse to carry it out (verse 17). But Doeg is up to the gruesome task. He puts to the sword 85 priests, their wives, children and animals.

It is interesting to consider here that, although Doeg's actions were inexcusable, God apparently used him to carry out part of the curse He had placed on Eli (compare 1 Samuel 2:27-36). These priests and their families were probably all Eli's descendants. Only Abiathar escapes—and he will eventually be deposed by Solomon. God often uses unrighteous men and circumstances in carrying out His will (see our article "Twist of Fate" at [www.ucg.org/brp/materials](http://www.ucg.org/brp/materials)).

Still, Saul proves himself an evil tyrant by this wholesale slaughter. He has done in anger to the many priests of God and their families what he was unwilling to do, at God's command, to Israel's enemy King Agag of the Edomite Amalekites (see 1 Samuel 15). And Saul has committed this atrocity by the *hand* of an Edomite. He is clearly becoming more and more deranged.

But it is David who will feel the burden of responsibility in the matter and suffer the pain of guilt. He laments to Abiathar, the one escapee of Saul's carnage, "It's all my fault. I've caused the death of all your relatives" (compare verse 22). In Psalm 52 we see how David brings this unbearable burden to God in prayer, asking God's vengeance on Doeg along with all those who love evil, and to avenge those who love righteousness. David ends his Psalm with the sure faith that God will come through—we have only to wait on Him.

### **David Saves Keilah;**

#### **In the Shadow of God's Wings (1 Samuel 23:1-14; Psalm 63)**

**November 9**

As we study the life of David, we see some similarities between his life and the life of Jesus Christ. In chapter 23, we see David as "savior." Furthermore, David does not act on his own initiative. Instead, he inquires of the Lord whether or not to fight the Philistines, who are assailing the city of Keilah, a city about 15 miles southwest of Jerusalem belonging to Judah (see Joshua 15:44) and just south of David's stronghold at the cave of Adullam. Likewise, all of Christ's saving work is subject to and in harmony with the will of God the Father.

Moreover, David renews his inquiry as conditions warrant, the condition in this case being the fear David's men naturally have in facing such a formidable foe. Though not fearful himself, David is understanding of his men's fears and goes back to God for their reassurance. Jesus is the same way with us. He knows our frame (Psalm 103:8-14), sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15) and intercedes for us with the Father. (The Father, of course, knows our frame too—yet He has appointed Christ, who has actually walked in our shoes, as intercessor.)

David then *saves* the inhabitants of Keilah (verse 5). But in doing so, he puts himself in jeopardy by giving away his position to Saul. In Christ's saving work, He divested himself of divine glory to die an ignominious death in human flesh (Philippians 2:5-8). Part of Christ's saving work, which we must all learn to emulate, was laying down His life for others (compare John 15:13). While David did not literally die for others in this case, it is clear that he was willing to. He certainly endangered himself.

Saul, in 1 Samuel 23, makes a classic mistake in the way he deludes himself and takes God's name in vain—crediting God for his own evil plan seeming to work out (verse 7). Sadly, people sometimes

use God's name this way to lend credibility to their clearly *ungodly* wrong motivations or actions. In verses 6 and 9, we find out how David was able to inquire of the Lord—through the use of the ephod, to which was attached the Urim and Thummim. Abiathar had managed to take it when he escaped from the scene of Saul's massacre (22:20).

With the ephod, David learns very distressing news—the people of Keilah will betray him to Saul. In this world, loyalty is too often only one-sided. David has been loyal to the Keilahites, but they do not reciprocate. How often Jesus Christ has experienced this with mankind. He has laid down his life for us but even the whole professing Christian world, though considering Him Savior, betrays Him time and again through failing to always honor and obey Him.

God saves David by revealing to him that the ungrateful Keilahites are about to betray his presence (verses 10-12). God's plan is sure. Our prayers are always answered when they are in accordance with His will. David and his men depart to the Wilderness of Ziph (verses 13-14), "about four miles southeast of Hebron [in Judah]. This region had many ravines and caves in which David's men could hide" (*Nelson*, note on 23:13-14).

Psalm 63 is introduced as being written by David "when he was in the wilderness of Judah," so it was likely written around this time. Though still pursued by Saul, things are going somewhat better for David as God continues to give him victories. David remains humble and gives God all the credit. As we read this psalm, we sense that David is more secure, realizing that God is working out His plan. David, enjoying true fellowship with God, knows he has God's protection: "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice" (verse 7).

When David mentions "the king" in verse 11, he is referring to himself. Despite present conditions, He knows that he is the rightful king—anoointed of God by Samuel. And he knows that God will yet fulfill this purpose in him. As Christians, we too can be confident in God's promise to make us kings and priests in His coming Kingdom (see Revelation 1:6).

### **Jonathan's Encouragement;**

#### **David Betrayed Again (1 Samuel 23:15-29; Psalm 54)**

**November 10**

Jonathan understands and believes that David is destined to be king of Israel and that nothing can upset God's plan. Incredibly, Jonathan reveals that, deep down, Saul realizes it too (1 Samuel 23:17). David and Jonathan, so much alike, renew their covenant pledge to one another (verses 18; 18:3; 20:8).

Notice these particular words of Jonathan: "You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you" (23:17). Jonathan, heir to Saul's throne, is content to take second place beside David. However, this is not to be, as Jonathan will soon die.

Yet who knows what God has in store? We know that David, when resurrected at Christ's return, will again reign as king over Israel (Ezekiel 37:24). And it appears that Jonathan, by the amazing character he displays and the deep closeness and fellowship he shares with the spiritually-minded David, may himself have been one of the few in the Old Testament period who, like David, received God's Spirit before it was more generally given in New Testament times. If so, then Jonathan too will be in the first resurrection with David. Then, might he not at last stand next to David, assisting him in ruling over Israel? That would, perhaps, give Jonathan's words a prophetic sense. Whether or not his words were inspired, this scenario as fulfillment of them remains an intriguing possibility.

But God's Kingdom is yet far away as we read these verses. David is here betrayed again. First the Keilahites and this time the Ziphites betray him to Saul (verses 19-20). Saul then takes God's name in vain as before by crediting God with the Ziphites' evil betrayal of David (verses 7, 21).

Saul's forces surround David (verses 22-26). Betrayed and seemingly facing imminent death, David goes to God with the words recorded in Psalm 54. In cases like this, when all seems lost, deliverance arises in unseen ways. This time a Philistine invasion diverts Saul's attention so that David and his men are saved once again. Here is a lesson for us to look to when it seems that things just aren't going to work out.

#### **Prayer for Safety from Enemies; David Spares Saul (Psalm 57; 1 Samuel 24) November**

**11**

David and his men are hiding out in En Gedi, a lush oasis with rugged cliffs, canyons and caves near the Dead Sea. As soon as Saul finishes with the Philistines, he receives word that David is hiding out here and returns to seek him. David and his men are taking refuge in a particular cave (1 Samuel 24:3). What must have been going through David's mind as he once again appears hopelessly trapped? The answer is Psalm 57. David pleads with God to be protected from his enemies.

In answering David's plea, God must have been driving the point home to him: "I will protect you and save you—I will always be there for you." And what an answer it is! While hidden deep within their cave, David and his men are astounded to see Saul choose this particular cave for a restroom. David's men tell him, "This is the day we've been waiting for—God has delivered your enemy for you to do whatever you like" (compare 1 Samuel 24:4). Indeed, David could have easily killed Saul and assumed the royal throne—particularly since it was clear that this must have been from God. But David's heart isn't like that. Instead, he evidently sees what God is doing here as a test. David has the faith to realize that since God had established Saul, only God should remove him. David trusted God to handle the problem in His own time and way. Again, David sets an example of godly leadership, resisting bad advice.

However, David can't resist the temptation to cut a piece from Saul's robe, demonstrating that he could have easily killed him. Some even see the cutting of the hem as symbolic of taking the emblem of royalty. But David would not be the one to take Saul out. He immediately regrets shaming the king in the eyes of his 3,000 soldiers (verse 5). The men with David would take matters into their own hands so David has to restrain them from killing Saul (verse 7). David explains to his men, and then to Saul, that he will not lift his hand to harm God's anointed king (verses 6, 10). "Isn't this proof that I've never sought, nor ever will seek, to harm you or take your throne?" David asks Saul (compare verses 8-14).

Verse 15 explains what has been going on since Saul set out to destroy David. God had already delivered David out of Saul's hand time and again. Indeed, what has just happened in the opportunity to spare Saul is itself an amazing deliverance—as Saul responds gratefully to it, even acknowledging David as the successor to the throne (verse 20). But even with Saul's public display of remorse and sorrow, David knows that he can't count on Saul keeping his word, so he continues to keep his distance from the unstable king (verse 22).

### **Death of Samuel; Nabal and Abigail (1 Samuel 25)**

**November 12**

Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, dies. Greatly respected by all Israel, people gathered from all over the nation to honor him at his burial. As his death comes during the short-lived truce between Saul and David, it is possible, though not directly stated, that David was able to attend this memorial. Afterward, David ventures south into the wilderness of Paran.

Then follows the story of Nabal and Abigail. Nabal, a descendant of Caleb of the house of Judah, lived in Maon with his great flocks in nearby Carmel. Carmel is a town in the general area of Ziph and Maon in Judah (see Joshua 15:55-57), some 20-30 miles south of Jerusalem. (It is not to be confused with the northern Mount Carmel by the sea, which figures later into the lives of Elijah and Elisha.) Saul had set up a monument to himself in Carmel following his war with Amalek and before his final rejection by God (see 1 Samuel 15:12).

David and his men acting as a protective militia had protected Nabal's property from marauding bands of thieves. Nabal's name means fool, and he was true to his name. Even his own wife Abigail remarks, "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him" (verse 25)—or, in modern parlance, "Fool is his name and folly is his game." Abigail, on the other hand, was a woman of understanding who deserved better than Nabal (verse 3). Apart from a world of arranged marriages, it would be hard to imagine two such people ever getting together.

It was expected that those who were being protected would contribute to the support of those who made it possible for them to prosper—and Nabal is prosperous (verse 2). Yet Nabal, in his foolishness, denies any support to David's men (verses 4-11). His impulsive anger aroused in righteous indignation, David fully intends to wipe Nabal from the face of the earth (verse 22).

As the King James Version shows, the literal Hebrew of verse 22 says David will kill everyone who urinates against the wall. Most modern translations render this as simply meaning all the males. However, verse 16 mentions David's protection as a "wall" and David's reference may be to all those who were treating his help and protection with contempt (see "David's Threat to Nabal," *Bible Review*, October 2002, pp. 18-23, 59).

Abigail comes to the rescue of her husband and her household. She is wise enough to realize that Nabal's foolish rejection of David's men will bring a terrible and swift reprisal. So she brings generous supplies, part in payment of what is due and part to appease David's wrath. She explains Nabal's nature to David, but, as his wife, takes the blame and asks forgiveness, declaring herself David's servant, as her husband should have done (verses 25, 28). Abigail is well aware of David's reputation.

Abigail gives David some insightful counsel. She realizes that his life is fully interwoven with the plan of God and points out that this insult by Nabal is nothing compared to the glory David will one

day have—particularly since God Himself will deal with David’s enemies. But, she goes on to say, if David were to react to what is now a small matter, it would then become a *huge* matter for him, as it would be a horrible mistake he would regret for the rest of his life.

David accepts her good advice (verse 33). And note this: He gives God the credit for Abigail’s intervention! He fully realizes how close he has come to making a disastrous mistake. He accepts and appreciates the intent with which Abigail has given her gifts (verse 35).

After Nabal recovers from a drunken stupor, Abigail tells him what she had done for David and his men. Apparently, Nabal’s rage is so violent at this news that he has a massive stroke and dies about 10 days later (verses 36-38). Again, David gives God all the credit for keeping him from making a terrible mistake and for avenging him.

Abigail’s request to be remembered (verse 31) brings her to David’s side in marriage (verses 39-42).

### David Spares Saul Again (1 Samuel 26)

November 13

This is the second time the Ziphites attempt to deliver David into the hands of Saul. Saul’s respect for David’s knowledge of battle is evident as he takes 3,000 soldiers with him in his pursuit of David and his 600 men. After a 25-mile march south, from Gibeah to the wilderness of Ziph, where David is hiding, Saul and his troops make camp. It is here that God directly intervenes for David. Abishai, David’s nephew (1 Chronicles 2:16), volunteers for what seems an extremely dangerous plan. In any given troop deployment, there are always sentinels who stand watch over an encampment. From 1 Samuel 26:12, we find that God causes a deep sleep to come on Saul and his troops, allowing David and Abishai unrestricted access to the campsite. As David has constantly been on the run from Saul, fearing for his life, this miracle no doubt greatly encourages David. But we should also observe that he resists the natural inclination to read it as license to take matters into his own hands.

As these scriptures are intended for examples (1 Corinthians 10:11), let’s pause here for a *self*-evaluation of this incident. Would we have acted as *Abishai*, and assumed that the intent of God was to have Saul killed? Or would we have thought like *David*, a man who made many mistakes yet who is referred to as “a man after God’s own heart”? It is important for us to ask the question in light of any given situation, What is God’s will? David knows that Saul is king over Israel by God’s direct decree, and he feels strongly that it will be God’s hand that will remove him.

Indeed, Acts 13 says: “And afterward they asked for a king; so *GOD gave them Saul* the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when *HE had removed him, HE raised up for them David as king*, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own *heart*, who will do all My *will*’” (verses 21-22).

So David does not take Saul’s life, but he does take his spear and his canteen—symbolic of Saul’s strength and sustenance—as proof of his venture. After returning safely from the campsite, David chastises Abner (captain of the guard and the one ultimately responsible for Saul’s safety). This embarrassment may be instrumental in Abner’s temporary refusal to acknowledge David as king after Saul’s death.

But David’s humility (“...for the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea,” 1 Samuel 26:20) causes Saul to acknowledge his foolishness, at least for the time being. David still keeps his distance as he knows that Saul has a habit of quickly changing his mind and attitude. Though not yet written, we find here, in principle, Christ’s admonition of Matthew 10:16 in use: “Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

After this incident, it appears that David and Saul never see each other again.

### David Joins the Philistines (1 Samuel 27:1–28:2;

### 1 Chronicles 12:1-7; 1 Samuel 29; 1 Chronicles 12:19-22)

November 14

As 1 Samuel 27 opens, we see an example of one who was instrumental in God’s hands apparently at a point of weakness in his faith and perhaps fallen into depression. As is clear from other biblical examples, such as Elijah (1 Kings 19:4) and Jonah (Jonah 4:3), servants of God sometimes suffered *terrible* depression. With evidence to the contrary, David here imagines that Saul will one day succeed in killing him (verse 1). One would think that with God having already had David anointed as king (16:13) and having delivered him on so many occasions, there would be no reason to be depressed. In this chapter, we can understand David’s weaknesses as much as we can acknowledge our own. The Bible reveals both the *ups*...AND the *downs* of God’s servants.

So David, ironically, seeks refuge in Gath, one of the royal cities of the Philistines, home of Achish the king. Accompanying David are his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail (remember that David's first wife, Michal, had been given to another man by Saul in contempt for David, 1 Samuel 25:44). Also with him were his 600 men with their wives and children. So the total number of people would, no doubt, exceed 1,000. Being under the constant watchful scrutiny of the enemy of Israel probably proved to be rather strenuous for David and his company. After a time, David is given his own city, called Ziklag, about 20 miles south of Gath, as a city of refuge from Saul. When Israel first entered the Promised Land under Joshua, Ziklag belonged to Judah but was eventually ceded to Simeon (Joshua 19:1-9). Using Ziklag as his fortress, David now has the freedom to attack neighboring nations. However, he is not forthright in his explanation to Achish of his attacks on these nations. Even though David is accomplishing what the Israelites have previously failed to do in driving out the Canaanites (Numbers 33:51-53), he gives Achish the impression that he is warring against his own people. Therefore Achish says, "He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him" (1 Samuel 27:12). We are skipping over the remainder of chapter 28 at this point, and will return to it just before the death of Saul.

In 1 Samuel 29, we find the Philistines gathering for battle at Aphek, about 30 miles north of Gath and "about 13 miles northeast of Joppa" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 29:1-2)—close to modern Tel Aviv. The Israelites under Saul are approximately 40 miles further to the north in Jezreel. David has evidently gathered his forces and marched behind Achish and his troops as they come together at Aphek. Whether David sincerely intends to fight against Saul and his own people is not made evident. It certainly would not be consistent with David's established pattern, however, as he has previously refused to fight against Saul.

But we do know this: God gives David a way of escaping this volatile situation (compare 1 Corinthians 10:13). The Philistine generals do not have the confidence in David that Achish does and strongly persuade the king to send him back to Ziklag. Thus, David will not have to fight against Saul in the upcoming battle—but neither will he be there to *help* Saul in defense of his own country against the Philistines. And this battle, as we will shortly learn, will be Saul's last.

### **David Defeats the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30)**

**November 15**

Having left the gathering of Philistine forces at Aphek, David and his troops march the 50 miles back south to Ziklag—about a two-day march, and they arrive the third day (verse 1). Upon returning, they find that the city has been invaded by the Amalekites. Why God has allowed this to happen is not revealed. Perhaps it is to bring further destruction upon the Amalekites. Perhaps it is to keep David from returning north to aid the Israelites against the Philistines. Whatever the case, God does allow it to happen and once again shows His mercy and power to David. Here's what we do know: 1) Instead of acting out of vengeance and anger, David appeals to God for an answer. 2) God delivers *everything* back to David—plus enough spoils to share with more than a dozen cities that David has frequented. 3) David's mercy is also evident as the spoils are shared with the men who were willing but not able to continue the journey to fight the Amalekites, to the dismay of others referred to as "wicked men" or, literally, "men of Belial."

Don't forget, when David was anointed to be the next king of Israel by Samuel, the Spirit of God came on him "from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13). As long as David stays close to God and appeals to Him, the fruit of that Spirit is evident. But there are also times, as with all of us, when David uses his own carnal reasoning (compare Romans 8:7). And as is also the case with all of us, he and many others suffer pain and futility due to such reasoning and the wrong actions that flow from it.

Through the ups and downs, good and evil, blessing and curses that we read of David, we can conclude David's ultimate destiny, *not* by *our* reasoning alone but through the inspired Word of God. It reveals that after the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, the people of Israel will once again be united as *one* nation, and David will be their king (Ezekiel 37:22-24).

### **Saul Consults a Medium and**

### **Pays the Price (1 Samuel 28:3-25; 31; 1 Chronicles 10)**

**November 16**

The Philistines move from Aphek, where they had dismissed David (1 Samuel 29), to Jezreel (29:11) to confront Saul and the Israelites. They gather at the town of Shunem, a place we will again read about in the days of the prophet Elisha (see 2 Kings 4:8ff), while Saul pitches his camp at Mount Gilboa, about four miles south (1 Samuel 23:4).

David had previously stated regarding Saul, “As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish” (26:10). Saul’s time to die is now at hand. It is a very gloomy and depressing time for him. Samuel has died and any appeal to God goes unanswered. God explains to us, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He *will not hear*” (Isaiah 59:2). Saul does not have the confidence he possessed when God’s Spirit was working with him (compare 1 Samuel 11:6; 16:14). The day before the battle (28:19), he becomes fearful and desperate and, instead of true repentance, once again turns away from God—this time by essentially turning to Satan for an answer.

God’s instructions to Israel are quite clear in this matter:

“Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31).

“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people” (20:6).

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). The original King James Version renders “medium” as “consulter with familiar spirits.”

Saul in fact, during his reign, did obey God’s instruction in this matter by removing these “abominations” from the land (1 Samuel 28:3). Evidently, though, there is at least one who evaded detection, a woman of the town of En Dor.

Now we come to a two-part question that many, including many biblical scholars, do not know how to answer: Does the woman really conjure up a spirit? And is that spirit actually the prophet Samuel? Let’s look at some facts:

Some would argue that there is no entity really brought up here because Saul does not actually see one himself—he only reasons that Samuel is present from the woman’s description. But whether or not the woman is a fraud and trickster, what happens surprises even her (verse 12). And even though Saul does not see anyone, the account says that “the woman saw Samuel” (verse 12). Moreover, there is clearly spoken communication from this “Samuel” (verses 15-16). But is this truly Samuel, the deceased prophet of God? It would not *have* to be from the wording here. For instance, a person on a hallucinogenic drug might say he saw something that was not really there, and we would consider that he did “see” it—seeing in this context being a matter of perception rather than sensory input from light actually entering the eye. Since the Bible says the entity spoke, something was definitely present. But what the woman sees is not actually visible to the naked eye—or Saul would be able to see it too. This means that the image the woman sees must be projected into her mind through supernatural means. So we ask: Is the prophet Samuel the one doing this?

First of all, the Bible very clearly points to a future *resurrection* of the dead. Many “orthodox” believers, however, maintain that this is simply the rejoining of a conscious, disembodied soul with a new body. Yet the Bible repeatedly describes the current state of the dead as one of “sleep” (Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15; 2 Peter 3:4). Ecclesiastes makes it even more clear: “For the living know that they will die; but *the dead know nothing.... for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going*” (9:5, 10). Thus, a dead person is completely unconscious. The resurrection is an awakening—a return to consciousness.

What this means is that there is no such thing as ghosts, as they are commonly defined—the spirits of the dead still wandering the earth. But there certainly *are* spirit beings who, unable to materialize, can appear as ghostly apparitions (compare Luke 24:39—where Christ shows His disciples that He is *not* one of these). The Bible elsewhere calls these beings unclean spirits—or demons. They are fallen angels, spirit beings who have rebelled against God under the arch-demon, Satan the Devil.

Now, the woman of En Dor is a medium, consulting with, as already noted, “familiar *spirits*” (1 Samuel 28:7 KJV). Are these dead people? No. For we have already seen that there is no consciousness in death. Consider also: Why would God impose the death penalty for communicating with dead friends and relatives if that were really possible? One scholar explains: “The reason the death penalty was inflicted for consulting ‘familiar spirits’ is that these were ‘evil spirits,’ or fallen angels impersonating the dead.... God hardly could have prescribed the death penalty for communicating with the spirits of deceased loved ones if such spirits existed and if such a

communication were possible. There is no moral reason for God to outlaw, on pain of death, the human desire to communicate with deceased loved ones. The problem is that such communication is impossible, because the dead are unconscious and do not communicate with the living. Any communication that occurs is not with the spirit of the dead, but with evil spirits” (Samuele Bacchicchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?*, 1997, p. 168).

Furthermore, it would be quite odd for God to send a message to Saul through the prophet Samuel when the account very clearly states that God will not answer Saul’s inquiries “either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets” (verse 6). And consider that this is because of Saul’s disobedience (compare Isaiah 59:2). So why would God now go ahead and answer him in the face of even *greater* disobedience on Saul’s part in the use of a medium? That just does not seem reasonable.

Thus, the being the medium sees ascending out of the earth (1 Samuel 28:13) is nothing more than a demon. Even “the church fathers [early Catholic theologians] believed that a demon impersonated Samuel and appeared to Saul” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 28:12). Saul only *perceives* that it must be Samuel. He certainly *wants* it to be Samuel! The apostle Paul is inspired to write: “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into [or disguises himself as] an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into [or disguise themselves as] *ministers of righteousness*, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). So it would not be unusual for a demon to appear as Samuel. And we know from all other scriptures that pertain to this subject that this is *not* the prophet Samuel speaking.

Let’s look at the conclusion of Saul’s deed. He certainly doesn’t come away with *anything* profitable. In fact, he is so disheartened that he can barely eat! These scriptures should once again remind us of God’s instructions *against* consulting with the evil spirit realm.

Continuing on, in 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10, we arrive at the very sad conclusion to Saul’s reign as king over Israel. Severely wounded, he commits suicide. Yet not only Saul, but also three of his sons, including David’s close friend Jonathan, die in this battle. Afterward, in a particularly heinous incident, the Philistines cut off Saul’s head and put it on display in the temple of Dagon while his body and those of his sons are fastened to the wall of Beth Shan, at the junction of the Jezreel and Jordan valleys, to advertise their victory.

In a daring move, the men of Jabesh Gilead snoop in under cover of darkness and recover the bodies of Saul and his sons. In our highlights on 1 Samuel 11, we mentioned that Saul may have had ancestral roots in Jabesh Gilead in relation to Judges 21. Furthermore, this was the city that had been rescued from the Ammonites by Saul in his first act as king, and the Jabesh Gileadites apparently had a very fond remembrance and debt of gratitude to him, which they repaid in their recovery and burial of his and his sons’ bones and a week of fasting. The bodies they burned—quite unusual among the ancient Israelites and perhaps done because these bodies had been mutilated by the Philistines. Years later, David will have the bones of Saul and Jonathan exhumed and reburied in Benjamin, in the tomb of Saul’s father Kish (2 Samuel 21:11-14).

The account in 1 Chronicles 10 describes the reason for the death of Saul: “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness [or ‘transgressions’ KJV] which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him [by the circumstances He directed], and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (verses 13-14).

One may ask, Did not David also commit transgressions before God?

Yes, *all* have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). The *difference* is in the *heart*. When David sins, he has a pattern—a habit—of acknowledging his sins before God and repenting. By contrast, Saul took no responsibility for his actions, seeking to deny his sins or reverse their consequences instead of repenting of them. Moreover, Saul’s habit was that of continually *seeking his own will*. Remember that when Saul did not follow God’s instruction, Samuel said, “But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart [David], and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, *because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you*” (1 Samuel 13:14).

As for Jonathan’s death, we don’t know why God allowed it. Perhaps his presence would not have fit into God’s continuing plan for David’s life. In the same way, we might wonder why God allowed Herod to put James the brother of John to death early in the New Testament era, while Peter was miraculously *delivered* from Herod. God has not revealed His reasons, but we can always be confident that His decisions are for the ultimate good of His servants (see Romans 8:28).

**David Laments Saul and Jonathan;****Anointed King of Judah (2 Samuel 1:1–3:1)****November 17**

The book of 2 Samuel spans the 40-year reign of King David, which begins as the book opens.

An Amalekite delivers the shocking news of Saul and Jonathan's death, even reporting that he was the one who had killed Saul at Saul's request. Yet "the Amalekite's report of Saul's death is different from the account in 1 Sam. 31:4, which states that Saul died by falling on his own sword. It appears that the Amalekite's story is a fabrication. Perhaps he sought recognition or reward from David by claiming to have slain Saul" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 1:6-10; compare 2 Samuel 4:10). But having just had a run-in with a band of Amalekites (1 Samuel 30), and aware of God's judgment on them (Deuteronomy 25:19), David was in no mood to consider the merits of the story and whether or not some sort of mercy killing had been in order. The Amalekite is thus rewarded with execution—on the basis of his own testimony.

Furthermore, "David's execution of the Amalekite was a strong statement to those under his command that he had no part in Saul's death and did not reward it in any way. Thus he exemplified respect for authority and distanced himself from the charge of being a usurper" (note on 2 Samuel 1:15).

After being chased and persecuted by Saul for so long, we read that David's reaction to Saul's death is not that of a carnal-minded human being. It is rather the reaction of one who lives according to the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ Himself taught this attitude, as revealed in Matthew 5:44: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." The type of eulogy given in this chapter is just another testimony of David's respect, mercy, love and compassion for Saul and his sons.

David's greatest mourning is, of course, for his best friend Jonathan. Recall how Jonathan deeply loved David, and David evidently loved Jonathan nearly as much in return: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1; see also 18:3; 20:17; 19:1).

Sad to say, there are those who have perversely twisted Jonathan's love for David expressed in 2 Samuel 1:26—"surpassing the love of women"—to be what God would consider an abomination. But let's look at the facts:

David's sexual interest was toward women, as evidenced by his many wives and concubines—and his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. And Jonathan evidently married because he had at least one child—Mephibosheth (see 2 Samuel 4:4).

God had specific instructions regarding sexual relationships. "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: *they shall surely be put to death*. Their blood shall be upon them" (20:13).

Immediately before in 2 Samuel 1:26, the very same verse in question, David focuses on Jonathan being like a *brother* to him—and yet, *more* than a brother. David's son, Solomon, used this proverb to denote a close relationship, saying, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). What David and Jonathan shared was deep and true friendship—and perhaps even spiritual fellowship if Jonathan had God's Spirit.

In chapter 2, David's decade or more on the run is finally over. It is time for him to begin his succession to the throne. But instead of presumptuously *taking* the responsibility, David *first* asks *God* where he should go from Ziklag. (Ziklag was clearly not a place from which to rule, located as it was in the remote southern area of Judah.) After moving to Hebron, David is ceremonially anointed king of Judah, even though he was already officially anointed king over *all* of Israel by Samuel years earlier (1 Samuel 16:13).

But division ensues as Abner, Saul's uncle and captain over Saul's troops, presumptuously appoints Saul's son Ishbosheth as king over Israel. So there are now, for the first time, two kingdoms in the land—Israel (led by the tribe of Benjamin) and Judah (by itself). There may have been several reasons for Abner's actions: 1) To keep the crown in the family. 2) An attempt to hold onto power, as Abner has great influence in the affairs of state. 3) Remember that David rebuked and embarrassed Abner after sneaking into Saul's camp.

In a confrontation between Abner and Joab (captain of David's troops), what begins as a contest of strength between 12 young men from each side turns into a bloodbath. Abner, under Ishbosheth, loses 360 men, mostly of the tribe of Benjamin. David, however, loses only 20 men, including

Asahel, Joab's brother. It should be noted that the brothers Joab, Abishai and Asahel were David's nephews, all sons of his sister Zeruiah (2 Samuel 2:18; 1 Chronicles 2:13-16).

For years the tribes of Israel remained engaged in civil war, during which time the "house of David" grew stronger and the "house of Saul" grew weaker.

### **David's Harem; Abner's Defection (1 Chronicles 3:1-4; 2 Samuel 3:2-21) November 18**

Clearly one of David's weaknesses is his passion for women. And in the ancient Middle East, kings were often judged by the size of their harems. The larger the harem, the more powerful the king was considered to be. But Israel was supposed to be different. One of God's instructions for Israel's king was written in Deuteronomy 17:17: "*Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away.*" Sadly, David succumbed to this temptation, which would cause hardship in his family and his own life and set a terrible example for his son Solomon. Listed here are David's wives and the sons he fathered by them while he lived and reigned in Hebron:

Ahinoam (Jezreelitess) bore Amnon (later killed by his half-brother Absalom)

Abigail bore Chileab (Daniel)

Maacah (Geshurite) bore Absalom (who later betrayed David and was killed by Joab)

Haggith bore Adonijah (later executed by Solomon for betrayal)

Abatal bore Shephatiah

Eglah bore Ithream

That's at least six children by six different women in seven years—not a very good way to start a family. And his former wife Michal is about to be thrown into this mix. What a terrible mess!

After a power struggle between Ishbosheth and Abner over one of Saul's concubines, Abner, probably seeing the handwriting on the wall, is now ready to pledge his loyalty to David. David tests that loyalty by demanding that his first wife, Michal, be returned to him. Ishbosheth (who fears Abner, 2 Samuel 3:11) carries out the demand. Though David seems satisfied with Abner's pledge of support, it is not so with Joab, who will not forget that his brother died by Abner's hand.

### **Joab Murders Abner; Murder of Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 3:22-4:12) November 19**

Joab seeks revenge for his brother Asahel's death by murdering Abner. Yet it's not a tit for tat. For while Abner killed Joab's brother during the course of battle and in self-defense—after repeatedly warning Asahel to call off his pursuit and even offering him the opportunity to fully arm himself for a fair fight (2:18-23)—Joab kills Abner in a deceitful plot. Under false pretenses, Joab stabs him in the stomach—where Asahel was pierced by Abner's spear. Moreover, this treacherous act occurs at Hebron, a city of refuge, wherein an avenger of blood is not permitted to kill a murderer without a trial (Numbers 35:22-25). However, it may be that the act actually occurs in a suburb just outside the Levitical city itself (compare Joshua 21:11-12; 2 Samuel 2:3).

Wisely, David makes it a point to let the Israelites know that it was not *his* intention to kill Abner. These are already very delicate times, as David and Abner had just begun an important peace process in the unification of all of Israel. So it is no wonder that David speaks so strongly against his nephew Joab, pronouncing a curse on him and his descendants. David declares a fast and personally follows Abner's coffin to the gravesite in an outward show of honor and respect. He refers to Abner as "a prince and a great man." David's skills in statesmanship prove successful in gaining the hearts of the people.

In 2 Samuel 4, we learn of a son of Saul's son Jonathan, Mephibosheth, who was five years old at the time of Israel's defeat by the Philistines. It was characteristic for the victor of a battle to wipe out the entire family of a defeated king, especially the sons, thus preventing any succession to the throne and any eventual revenge. So, after hearing the news of Saul's defeat and death, Mephibosheth's nurse picked him up and fled for their lives. In the course of her escape, she evidently stumbled, dropping the young child and causing a serious enough injury (possibly spinal) that he became paralyzed in the legs and was unable to walk.

Saul's kingdom, under Ishbosheth, continues to grow weaker. So now we find another assassination plot under way. This time it is Ishbosheth who becomes the victim of those of his own Benjamite tribe. For the second time we find David's "reward" for those who feel they are doing him a favor. Once again we see David's valiant intention of allowing God to be the one to take action. After all of the battles David has fought, he feels it to be thoroughly dishonorable to murder someone in this way. As he lamented concerning Abner: "Should Abner die as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound nor your feet put into fetters; as a man falls before wicked men, so you fell" (3:33-34).

Ishbosheth meets the same fate, but there is no rejoicing from David over this heinous crime. Actually, David fulfills the requirement of the law in this matter as found in Exodus 21:14: “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar [showing no mercy in such a case], that he may die.” Once again, David makes it publicly known that he did not support this assassination. The executed men are hung in a public place with their hands and feet cut off, for all to see.

One may ask why this same sentence was not carried out upon Joab. He had the excuse that he was acting as a kinsman avenger of blood (2 Samuel 3:27; compare Numbers 35:16-21). Although there evidently were problems with the reason for which, and the manner in which, Joab carried out his vengeance, perhaps it was too difficult to prove that his actions were not justifiable. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Joab was a member of David’s family. Still, it is interesting that many years later, this matter with Abner is a factor in David ordering his son Solomon to execute Joab once David is dead (1 Kings 2:1-6).

### **The United Kingdom (2 Samuel 5:1-5; 1 Chronicles 11:1-3; 12:23-40) November 20**

After years of civil unrest, all of Israel is finally ready to accept David as king. As all of the tribes agree: “We are your bone and your flesh.” This basically means, “We are your relatives.” Centuries earlier, Laban said the same thing to his nephew Jacob (Genesis 29:14) and Gideon’s son Abimelech said it to his mother’s family (Judges 9:1-2). But, if people would really think about it, that goes beyond our immediate next of kin—or, at least, it should.

No matter what color or nationality, we are all human beings, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). No matter what race we belong to today, our roots all trace back to Noah, and back to our ancestral parents, Adam and Eve (“the mother of all living,” 3:20). Indeed, God “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Thus, we are all blood relatives. We are all one family. But men have always found reasons to fight each other, whether geographically, economically or racially motivated. From the beginning, man has always found reasons, however unjustified, to kill his brother (compare Genesis 4:1-15).

Back to the story of David’s kingdom, the Israelites are now ready for unity and peace among each other after years of killing.

From the account in 1 Chronicles 12, we can see the numbers of troops from each tribe who come to Hebron to declare loyalty to David. Commentaries disagree on whether the actual troops assembled or only their commanders. If the troops actually presented themselves, their numbers approached 350,000! Regardless of whether the full battle-hardened army amassed before David, their unanimous support for David’s kingship is dramatically conveyed. After years of strife, troops that were fighting and killing each other are now celebrating this momentous event with food and drink being brought in by the neighboring tribes. For a time, there is truly joy in Israel! David reigned for 7 1/2 years from Hebron as king over Judah. It is now time to reign for the next 33 years from the city of peace, Jerusalem.

Interestingly, it should be remembered that Israel was actually divided into two kingdoms—Israel and Judah—when Ishbosheth was proclaimed king over Israel and David was made king of Judah. But a distinction between Israel and Judah existed even in Saul’s day (compare 1 Samuel 11:8; 17:52; 18:16). Perhaps it goes all the way back to the initial conquest of the land under Joshua, when the south went to Judah and the lands of the northern conquest went to the other tribes. Following Ishbosheth, even when David replaces him as king of Israel, there are still two distinct kingdoms—albeit with both under the same king. David is now king of Israel *and* king of Judah, a distinction maintained during his reign. Indeed, much later in David’s reign, we find a military census reporting, “Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. There were in *Israel* eight hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and the men of *Judah* were five hundred thousand men” (2 Samuel 24:9). The creation of this United Monarchy is very similar to what happened in Britain. When King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England, he was still king of Scotland. Indeed, he became King James I of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Israel’s two kingdoms under one ruler will continue through Solomon’s reign, with Judah and Israel still being mentioned under him as distinct nations (1 Kings 4:20, 25).

The Divided Monarchy will reemerge when Israel proclaims a non-Davidic ruler after Solomon’s death. Judah will continue to be ruled by the line of David. Ironically, though, the tribe of Benjamin, instead of leading the Kingdom of Israel as in the days of Ishbosheth, will, in the later split, become part of the Kingdom of Judah. (We will explore this in more detail when we come to it in our reading.)

**City of David; Mighty Men****(2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-19; 2 Samuel 23:8-17)****November 21**

At the time of David's siege, Jerusalem is called Jebus, which, interestingly, means "Trodden Underfoot" (*New Open Bible*, Topical Index, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990). Upon Israel's entrance into the Promised Land, it was allotted to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. But these tribes only briefly defeated the Canaanite inhabitants of Jebus (Judges 1:8), for the Jebusites were soon back in their fortress city (see 19:10-12).

"The city itself was strategically located in the hill country near the border of Judah and Benjamin, making it a foreign wedge between the northern and southern tribes" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 2 Samuel 5:6-9). Jerusalem was originally a fortress built on a high hill between two valleys that converged in a V formation. The steep sides of the hill, combined with the city's walls, made it seemingly impossible to penetrate. The Jebusites are so confident in the safety of their walls that they mock David, possibly placing the blind and lame in positions that are in full view of the Israelite troops.

But considering what is written concerning the skill, wisdom and bravery of the men who are now united under David's leadership, it is not so surprising that Jerusalem is conquered. David challenges his men to enter the city "by way of the water shaft" (verse 8). This shaft "extended about 230 feet up from the Gihon spring to the top of the hill where the Jebusite fortress was situated (2 Chr. 32:30). The tunnel gave the city a secure water supply in the event of a siege" (note on verse 8). The account in Chronicles reveals that it is Joab who runs with David's challenge and leads the first invasion of the city, earning him the position of captain over all of Israel's army. David then makes this fortress city of such great strategic value his own new capital, calling it the City of David.

David also exercised considerable diplomatic wisdom here. Rather than choosing as his capital a city held by one of the 12 tribes of Israel (or one of the two kingdoms) and thus being perceived as favoring that one, David chose a city that belonged to none of the tribes and was thus viewed as neutral. In similar manner, the government of the United States early on placed its national capital, Washington, in the District of Columbia, a territory bordering two states but that did not belong to any state, so as not to be seen as favoring one state over another.

Continuing, we then read about the "mighty men" of David. An elite group of three of these warriors is listed first with their individual claims to fame. As we will see in our next reading, another elite group of three is also mentioned, which includes Joab. However, this other trio, we are told, does not compare with the "first three" (1 Chronicles 11:20-21)—and neither does another group (verses 22-25). One member of the first group is not mentioned by name in 1 Chronicles 11, but his name is given in 2 Samuel 23 as Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite (verse 11). Another is mentioned in both passages as Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite (1 Chronicles 11:12; 2 Samuel 23:9). The other, mentioned first, is listed in 1 Chronicles 11 as Jashobeam the son of a Hachmonite (verse 11) and in 2 Samuel 23 as Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite (verse 8). This name is probably a play on the words of his real name. For *Tachmonite* denotes "wise" (*New Open Bible*, Topical Index). And *Josheb-Basshebeth*, which sounds similar to Jashobeam, literally means "One Who Sits in the Seat" (*Nelson Study Bible*, margin). This could denote his exalted position as "chief of the captains" (1 Chronicles 11:11)—in exploits, not rank, as Joab was chief over the others in authority (verse 6).

Another apparent discrepancy is that 1 Chronicles 11:11 says Jashobeam killed 300 men at one time while 2 Samuel 23:8 says he killed 800 at one time. Yet, while it is uncertain just how to reconcile these verses, that does not make them irreconcilable. One possibility is that a particular military engagement went on for a few days with 300 killed in one day and 500 others killed on the other days. Another possibility is that these were two separate occasions, and that he was known for both.

We also see here the amazing account of the obtaining of water from the well of Bethlehem. It is not entirely clear whether this was done by the group of three just mentioned or another unnamed group of three. Since individuals are named throughout the account, and since 2 Samuel 23:17 says "these things"—rather than just the one act of getting the drink—were done by "the three mighty men," and since the named individuals in verses 8-39 add up to the total of 37 in verse 39, it is most likely that the three who got the water are the same men first listed, Jashobeam, Eleazar and Shammah. Regardless, these scriptures show us the strength and loyalty of the men who served under David. These three were willing to give their lives just to get David, their commander-in-chief, a drink of water.

But David refuses to drink it, calling it “blood” because it was brought to him at tremendous risk of life, and he pours it out in offering to God (verses 16-17). “Ordinarily, wine was used for a drink offering (Lev. 23:13, 18, 37); here, water more costly than the finest wine was poured in celebration before the Lord” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 16).

This is an outstanding example of godly leadership. Such respect for his men and such personal humility must have inspired even greater loyalty.

### **More Deeds of David’s Mighty Men**

#### **(2 Samuel 23:18-39; 1 Chronicles 11:20-47)**

**November 22**

In these sections the rest of David’s mighty men are listed. One person of real interest here is Benaiah, with whom Solomon will later replace Joab. It may be surprising to find this man fighting “on a snowy day” (2 Samuel 23:20), but “a light snowfall is not unusual in the Judean hill country during the winter” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 20-23). We read, furthermore, that David put Benaiah over “his guard,” a term literally meaning “‘his obedience’—that is, those who were bound to obey and protect David” (same note). Elsewhere, we see that Benaiah was made commander of the Cherethites and Pelethites (2 Samuel 8:18)—an elite force of David’s army made up of foreign mercenaries from Crete and Philistia who will later prove extremely loyal to David (2 Samuel 15:18-22). It appears that this group, which will eventually swell to 600 men, is synonymous with David’s personal guard—like the Praetorian guard of the Roman emperors.

Take note also of these two names: Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite (2 Samuel 23:34) and Uriah the Hittite (verse 38). We’ll see more about them later.

#### **Attempt to Move the Ark (1 Chronicles 13; 2 Samuel 6:1-11)**

**November 23**

With Jerusalem now the royal city of Israel, it is finally time to bring “church and state” together in this centralized location. So David calls for the Ark of the Covenant to be moved to Jerusalem from Kirjath Jearim, approximately 10 miles west of Jerusalem. The ark has been situated here since the Philistines relinquished it to the Israelites (1 Samuel 6:21).

Now we come to a very important lesson that David and all Israel had to relearn. Let’s review some of the specific instructions that God previously gave for Israel to follow.

The ark of God was an extremely holy object, representing His presence (see Exodus 25:21-22). It had to be handled with the utmost regard to strict regulation in the Law of Moses, which mandated that the care of the most holy things was entrusted to the Levitical sons of Kohath (Numbers 3:29-31). Yet even these caretakers were not to touch the holy articles or so much as look casually upon them “lest they die” (4:15, 20). The Kohathites were instructed to carry the ark on their shoulders by poles passing through rings on the ark’s corners to keep them from touching it (4:1-16; Exodus 25:14-15). It was not to be transported by cart or any other vehicle (Numbers 7:6-9). David, however, was using the same transport method the Philistines had used (compare 1 Samuel 6:7-8).

Yet God says, “Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:32). And: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (4:2). Also: “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (12:32).

We are never to reason against, or attempt to change, God’s commands. A king was not to be ignorant of God’s instruction: “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that *he shall write for himself a copy of this law* in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and *he shall read it all the days of his life*, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and *be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes*, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel” (17:18-20). Thus, God requires *much* of a leader He chooses.

Though Uzzah’s violation is apparently unintentional, God makes a powerful example of him. It is possible, of course, that Uzzah was more involved in what happened than we know. As one given the great honor of walking so closely to the ark, it may be that he was instrumental in the decision to use the cart. Perhaps it was his cart or oxen being employed. And, in any case, he is the one who actually touched the ark. Still, it appears he meant well.

When Uzzah is struck down, then, David becomes angry—and not, it should be pointed out, at his own carelessness. Evidently, David still doesn’t understand important aspects of what has gone wrong. That he has either forgotten or is ignorant of God’s specific instructions regarding the

transport of the ark is apparent from 1 Chronicles 13:12: “David was afraid of God that day; saying, ‘How can I bring the ark of God to me?’” (compare 2 Samuel 6:9). He doesn’t know.

So his anger, then, is at God—for what He has done to Uzzah. His death seems so unjust and unnecessarily harsh, as it does, no doubt, to many today. After all, Uzzah was trying to protect the ark, and David, who had made the decision about transporting it, was zealous to restore God’s prescribed tabernacle worship to the nation. But he should have looked more closely at exactly what God had prescribed.

Moreover, there were other Levites who probably knew of God’s instructions and should have made His will known to David. Ignorance and forgetfulness do not negate God’s specific commands. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” God will later proclaim (Hosea 4:6). In other words, what you don’t know *can* hurt you! Because of such neglect, Uzzah was killed by God. So what began as a joyous time of celebration has turned into a very sad and sobering moment.

God is sending a warning signal here to all people of all times that He is not a God to be trifled with. We must approach Him with the proper awe and respect. And David does receive a dose of healthy fear of God, which undoubtedly sends him to the Scriptures or to the priests to determine what ought to be done—as should have been done in the first place. Let this, then, serve as a lesson for all of us too. From the point of view of leadership, the decisions a leader makes brings consequences—either good or bad—on the lives of those he leads.

As for Uzzah, he will stand in the general resurrection of the dead after Christ’s millennial reign (compare Revelation 20:5, 11-12) with all those of mankind who have not yet been given an opportunity for salvation—and he will then be able to choose whether to truly serve the Lord. God is ultimately fair. Indeed, Uzzah will awake in a world far better than the one he has left behind.

For the next three months, the ark is left at the home of Obed-Edom, a Levite of the line of Korah who will later be one of the doorkeepers for the ark (1 Chronicles 15:18, 24; 26:4-8). He is also called a Gittite (2 Samuel 6:11) because he is from the Levitical city of Gath Rimmon (compare Joshua 21:24).

### **David’s Harem Grows; Alliance with Phoenicia and a Royal Palace**

**(1 Chronicles 14; 2 Samuel 5:11-25; 1 Chronicles 3:5-9; Psalm 30)**

**November 24**

As time draws on, David’s kingdom increases in fame throughout the region due to God’s blessing and unification of all Israel. But again, one of David’s weaknesses is exposed in that he takes to himself yet more wives. The account in 1 Chronicles 3:5-9 lists the children born to David in Jerusalem. Four sons are born by Bathsheba (including Solomon). Nine sons are born to his other wives. There are also other sons and daughters born to David’s concubines.

Hiram, King of Tyre, a powerful city-state on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel and center of the Phoenician Empire, shows great respect by sending builders and materials to help build a palace for David at Jerusalem. This demonstrates David’s growing prominence—that the ruler of the Phoenician Empire, which dominated ancient maritime commerce, would seek to cement an alliance with Israel through such projects. The Philistines, on the other hand, regarded David’s strength as a threat to their nation. Here, David’s *real* strength is shown as he once again *seeks God first* for instruction in regard to the Philistines. After defeating the Philistines, David burns the idols that are left behind. Once again, God is with him in defeating his enemies.

Psalm 30 is written by David in his dedication of the palace built for him in Jerusalem. In these verses, David recounts both the dark times and the bright times. This chapter can be a testimony for us today. All of us have experienced troubling times in our lives in which we cried out to God for His intervention. Though we never deserve it, and cannot earn it, God has constantly shown us His endless grace and mercy. Individually, it would be helpful to record some of our *own* trials and *remember* how God has always delivered us when we have sought Him, as David did, with all our heart. Can God look upon each of us and say, “I have found \_\_\_\_\_ a man/woman after My own heart, who will do all My will”? We have a great advantage today, as we can strive to emulate the positive qualities of a man like King David and also learn not to repeat his mistakes.

Let’s follow the example of David and give thanks to God forever!

### **Ark Carried Properly; Michal’s Contempt**

**(1 Chronicles 15:1–16:3; 2 Samuel 6:12-19)**

**November 25**

When David hears that those of the house of Obed-Edom have been blessed due to their possession of the ark, he is once again encouraged to bring it to Jerusalem. The account in 1 Chronicles 15 reveals that David is now aware that the ark had not been transported according to

God's instructions: "Then David said, 'No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever'" (verse 2). And to them he says in verse 13, "For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order" (Hebrew *mishpat*, "judgment, law, decree, charge").

Again, God's law, charge or decree concerning the transport of the ark can be found in Exodus 25:14-15 and Numbers (4:5, 15; 7:9; 10:21). The ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites, through the use of poles that were inserted through rings. That is now done "as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD" (1 Chronicles 15:15).

The account in 2 Samuel 6 reveals the deep respect and care that David takes in carrying out God's instructions concerning transportation of the ark. Sacrifices are offered to God after those bearing the ark have "gone six paces" (verse 13). It is unclear whether this means just once, after the first approximately 18 feet traveled, or if it implies once every 18 feet that the ark is carried, all the way to Jerusalem.

David once again rejoices with shouting, music and dancing as the ark is carried into Jerusalem. This is not just loud "noise," because those appointed to perform are skilled musicians and singers. David is a skilled musician and composer himself. His manner of celebration, however, earns the contempt of his wife Michal. We will see more about the specifics of her derision in this instance when we read soon of David's return home, but it is apparent that Michal despised him for much more than his actions on this occasion.

Michal's is a terribly tragic story. She was very much in love with the young heroic David in his earlier years (1 Samuel 18:20, 28). And when he bravely killed 200 Philistines to marry her (verse 27), she must have loved him even more. But her love for David estranged this young princess from her father King Saul. Indeed, when Saul sought to kill David, Michal put her own life on the line to help her husband escape (19:11-18). But his escape only resulted in her separation from him as David spent at least 10 years fleeing from Saul. In fact, Saul annulled her marriage to David and had Michal wed to another man named Palti (25:44). While in this new marriage, her father and Jonathan, her brother, died in battle.

David, now recently established with the full regal power of Israel, had demanded that Michal be restored to him. So she was forcibly taken from her husband, Palti. As he wept uncontrollably (2 Samuel 3:15-16), it is apparent that he sincerely loved her—and perhaps she had come to love him in return. Yet here she was back with David—no longer the young hero but king in her father's stead (a position no longer disputed since the assassination of her brother Ishbosheth shortly after her return to David). Worse, she could expect no monogamous devotion from her husband. David now had a harem—and she had to compete with at least six other women for whatever attention she might receive from him.

As *The Nelson Study Bible* concludes: "It is not likely that these mere actions of David, as he celebrated before the Lord at the return of the ark, brought about Michal's hatred of him (6:16). Her hatred had probably grown over the years. Her sarcastic words [which we'll soon read] on David's great day of religious and spiritual joy came from a lifetime of pain (6:20). Unlike her brother Jonathan, Michal did not accept her God-given lot and trust God for her future happiness (1 Sam. 23:16-18). Instead, she became bitter not only at David, but also toward God [which appears evident in that she was not joyful over the return of the ark and the restoration of tabernacle worship—even staying home instead of participating in the celebration]. Tragically, Scripture gives no indication that there was any healing for Michal. She died childless ([2 Samuel] 6:23)" ("A Love That Turned to Hate," p. 517).

## **Oh, Give Thanks to the Eternal**

**(1 Chronicles 16:4-36; Psalm 105:1-15; 96; 106:1, 47-48)**

**November 26**

The festivities surrounding the ark being brought to Jerusalem continue. In 1 Chronicles 16, David gives certain of the Levites the responsibility of offering to God thanks and praise on a continual basis before the ark of the Lord. The appointments in the previous chapter concerned the immediate task of moving the ark to Jerusalem, but the ones here are more permanent in nature though involving some of the same people (compare 15:1-24; 16:5-6). This continual offering of praise is reminiscent of the apostle John's vision in the book of Revelation, wherein angelic choirs are seen offering continual praise before the throne of God in heaven.

Appointed chief of this ongoing special music is Asaph, leader of the Gershonite Levites (1 Chronicles 6:39, 43). Asaph and his sons will serve mainly as singers (25:1-2; 2 Chronicles 20:14) and composers, as the superscriptions of their psalms attest (see Psalm 50; 73–83).

Verses 8-36 of 1 Chronicles 16 constitute a song written by David offering thanks and praise to God, which David gives to Asaph to be performed on this occasion. In it we are all admonished to: a) give thanks to God for all that He has done for Israel and for mankind; b) declare these things to all; c) tell of His glory; d) fear Him; and e) give back to Him of the abundance He has given us. These things should be reflected in the lives of those who trust in Him.

The lyrics of the first part of David's psalm (verses 8-22) are repeated in the first part of Psalm 105 (verses 1-15). Again we are admonished to continually seek God. Christ tells us in Matthew 7:7 that if we do, we will find Him. Perhaps the key idea of the psalm is found in the word "remember" (1 Chronicles 16:12; Psalm 105:5). We are to *remember* God's goodness to His people. Yet even if the people forget, God does not. "He *remembers* His covenant forever" (Psalm 105:8)—that is, the very basis for His special relationship with His people. We will read the remainder of Psalm 105 tomorrow.

The lyrics of the second part of David's psalm of 1 Chronicles 16 are repeated in Psalm 96. Again, we are to praise God, to sing of Him, to proclaim Him to others, and to worship Him in our lives and with our offerings. In verse 11-12 (or 1 Chronicles 16:31-33), trees and other inanimate elements of creation are pictured as rejoicing at the Lord's coming to judge the earth. This personification is a literary device; it does not mean that trees actually have thinking minds and emotions. The point is that creation will only be restored to its intended condition when humanity in general is brought back in line with the laws of God. This will commence with the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the saints (compare Revelation 11:18; Romans 8:19-22). Psalm 96 adds the additional point that Christ "shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth" (verse 13).

The concluding lyrics of David's psalm of thanks in 1 Chronicles 16 (verses 34-36) are repeated in Psalm 106 (verses 1, 47-48). Verse 1 (1 Chronicles 16:34) is another call to give thanks to God for all He has done. On this occasion of unifying Israel under one king and one worship system, David asks God to truly gather the people together and to deliver them from the power of the gentile nations around them (verse 35; compare Psalm 106:47). The spiritual parallel with those in God's Church today should be obvious. The final verse (1 Chronicles 16:36) will later be used as the concluding verse of book 4 of the Psalms (Psalm 106:48). The later verse tells the people of God to say *Amen*, or "So be it," as they actually do in 1 Chronicles 16:36.

## **Two Worship Places; Michal's Scorn**

**(Psalm 105:16-45; 1 Chronicles 16:37-43; 2 Samuel 6:20-23)**

**November 27**

We wrap up our reading of Psalm 105, the first part of which is taken from David's psalm of 1 Chronicles 16. Whereas the first part concentrated on God's covenant with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the second part continues beyond them with the story of Joseph, the enslavement of Israel in Egypt and God's deliverance of His people from there—all a testament to His faithfulness to the covenant He made. Interestingly, God's stated purpose for delivering His people and giving them a homeland was "that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws" (verse 45). That is also His purpose for us today.

In 1 Chronicles 16:37-43, further details are given of the service required in carrying out the tabernacle worship of that time. But here we learn something surprising. For bringing the ark to Jerusalem, as we saw in 1 Chronicles 15:11, David had summoned the high priest Abiathar, descendant of Eli of the line of Aaron's son Ithamar, as well as another leading priest, Zadok, of the line of Aaron's son Eleazar. It is apparent that David would leave the high priest, Abiathar, in charge at Jerusalem to preside over the rites of the tabernacle raised up here to house the Ark of the Covenant (compare 16:1). His son Ahimelech, or Abimelech, will be of major assistance in this (compare 18:16; 2 Samuel 8:17). Yet in this passage we find David assigning Zadok and his sons to officiate "before the tabernacle of the Lord at the high place that was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the Law of the Lord which He commanded Israel" (1 Chronicles 16:39-40).

This is easier to understand when we compare it with an event years later at the beginning of the reign of David's son Solomon recorded in 2 Chronicles 1: "Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there,

which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. But David had brought the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim to the place David had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. Now the bronze altar that Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD [which is now in Gibeon]; Solomon and the assembly sought Him there. And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it” (verses 3-6). And this is completely acceptable to God, as He blesses Solomon at Gibeon on the night that follows this offering (verses 7-12; 1 Kings 3:4-13).

Evidently, after Saul murdered the priests at Nob (1 Samuel 22:19), the tabernacle—that is, the original Mosaic tabernacle from the wilderness with its great bronze altar—had been moved to a hilltop at Gibeon, a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. Thus, David’s restoration of tabernacle worship for the ark at Jerusalem does not include bringing the original tabernacle to house it. Instead, we see that he has had a *new* tabernacle built. As for why this is, or why he didn’t have the ark returned to the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon instead, we are not told. Knowing that the dwellings of the ark would be blessed and holy (compare 2 Samuel 6:9-12; 2 Chronicles 8:11), perhaps he wanted it next to him simply for that reason—to bless him and his kingdom. Whatever the reason, it is evident that until Solomon’s temple is built in Jerusalem, there are *two* legitimate places for national worship—the new tabernacle at Jerusalem with the ark, where Abiathar and his son Ahimelech officiate, and the original tabernacle at Gibeon, where Zadok and his sons perform the priestly duties.

When David returns home after the festivities, Michal, her bitterness inflamed (see highlights on 1 Chronicles 15:1–16:3 and 2 Samuel 6:12-19), disdainfully mocks her husband (2 Samuel 6:20). “The scornful remark about David’s uncovering himself no doubt refers to the priestly attire worn by the king instead of his royal robes (v. 14). Dancing about in this short garment, David had exposed more of himself than Michal [who had been raised a princess] thought appropriate” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 20). Indeed, in comparing him to “base fellows,” perhaps she even considers him unworthy of kingship for having no royal sensibilities. It may also be that her particular circumstances of now having to compete with the rest of David’s harem has made her focus in on this fault of his—and that she has convinced herself that it was actually his goal in the celebration to attract the attention of women.

David rebukes her, reminding her that God has chosen him in place of her father—perhaps implying that the royal ideas her father raised her with are incorrect. He goes on to say that he will be even more undignified if the situation calls for it, that he refuses to look upon himself as all high and mighty, and that this approach will be understood and respected by the women of the land—unlike her. According to Scripture, this episode is the reason Michal never has children—but whether this is due to a resultant estrangement from David or a direct punishment of barrenness from God is not made clear. In any case, there will be no possible successor to David’s throne from the line of Saul.

### **The Davidic Covenant (1 Chronicles 17; 2 Samuel 7)**

**November 28**

These chapters tell of David’s desire to build a house for God—a temple, a more permanent structure than the tabernacle. God’s answer, through the prophet Nathan, is *No*. David later sheds additional light on this pronouncement. Notice that the material in these chapters is “*according to all*” that Nathan told David (1 Chronicles 17:15; 2 Samuel 7:17)—i.e., they don’t contain everything Nathan said. We can find more elsewhere. David explains in 1 Chronicles 22:8 and 28:3 that God told him that he is not permitted to build Him a permanent dwelling because he has been a warrior who has shed blood. Indeed, his entire reign is virtually one battle after another. This would not be fitting symbolism. The transfer of the ark from a tabernacle to the more permanent temple is to represent the Lord moving to this earth as an enduring dwelling—which will commence with the coming reign of Jesus Christ over all nations. This future reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace, will be over a peaceful world (see Isaiah 9:6-7). So, instead of David, God will have the temple built by David’s son Solomon, his name meaning “Peaceful,” who will, appropriately, reign over a period of peace. This is not to say that Solomon would not fight under certain circumstances. Rather, it will not be necessary because, by the end of David’s reign, God will at last give the Israelites rest from their enemies—which, again, is representative of God’s coming Kingdom.

God then speaks through Nathan of His plan to establish *David’s* house. David’s “house,” his royal dynasty, will be established forever. How will God go about this? In 2 Samuel 7, God tells David what will happen after his death: “I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom” (verse 12). This, of course, refers to Solomon. Notice verse 13: “He

shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” We must be careful here, however, as the Hebrew word translated “forever,” *olam*, does not always carry the same meaning as “forever” does in the English language. Occasionally it means *unending as long as certain conditions apply* (compare Exodus 21:6; Jonah 2:6). Recorded elsewhere, there are definite conditions attached to the endurance of Solomon’s throne. Looking at 1 Chronicles 28 again, David expresses the condition God gives: “Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, *if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments*, as it is this day” (verse 7). This condition is later reiterated by God to Solomon himself (2 Chronicles 7:17-18, compare verses 19-22). So if Solomon lives in disobedience to God, his dynasty will not go on without end. Sadly, this will come to pass, as Solomon will eventually have his heart turned to following other gods (see 1 Kings 11:4).

So what is meant by 2 Samuel 7:14-15, where God says he will not remove his mercy from Solomon as he did with Saul, who disobeyed? As we’ve seen, it cannot mean that Solomon’s dynasty would never be cut off. Rather, it must mean that, in the event Solomon disobeys, he will not be killed by God as Saul was. Instead, he will be allowed to live out his life. Furthermore, though the kingdom will be torn from him and given to a neighbor as Saul’s was—this will not happen to Solomon himself. As God later tells Solomon: “Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David” (1 Kings 11:12).

Though Solomon’s dynasty is not prophesied to continue forever, that of David himself is. God says, “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: ‘Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to *all generations*’” (Psalm 89:3-4). In 2 Chronicles 13:5, we are told that “the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt.” Salt is a preservative against corruption and decay. It was required in offerings (Leviticus 2:13), which were often part of covenants. In using the phrase “covenant of salt,” then, God is denoting a permanent alliance, an inviolable covenant, established for “all generations.”

What this tells us is that this throne must be in existence in *our* generation. Some might suggest that Christ sits upon it now. After all, He is of the line of David—not through Solomon but through David’s son Nathan. Furthermore, Jesus is actually prophesied to sit on David’s throne. An angel tells Mary: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:31-33; compare Isaiah 9:6-7). But Christ never took over a throne in his human life. And since His death and resurrection, He has been in heaven, sharing His Father’s throne (compare Revelation 3:21). Yet He is coming back to rule Israel and all nations, as the book of Revelation goes on to show. It is at that time that He will fulfill the prophecy of at last assuming the throne of David.

So where is that throne, which must exist in “all generations,” in our day? Fascinatingly, we can trace the line of David through Solomon beyond ancient Israel and Judah all the way to the British monarchy today (see “The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future” at [www.ucg.org/brp/materials](http://www.ucg.org/brp/materials)). When Christ returns, the rule of the Solomonic line will finally cease, and Christ, of the line of Nathan (another of David’s sons), will take over the throne.

## **The Israelite Empire; Mephibosheth Exalted (1 Chronicles 18; 2 Samuel 8–9) November**

### **29**

Here we see David extending the dominion of Israel. God’s covenant with him included the promise that he would be victor over his enemies. Furthermore, in conjunction with his movement north, his purpose is directly stated: “to establish his power by the River Euphrates” (1 Chronicles 18:3). All of this expansion was, no doubt, carried out with God’s promise to Abraham firmly in mind—that the land God was giving him would extend “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18). Perhaps he also had direct instructions from God that Scripture does not reveal.

Of defeated nations, the accounts explain that they became David’s “servants,” bringing tribute—that is, vassal states indirectly ruled by David. The conquest of one of these, Moab, may have been undertaken with mixed feelings—David’s great-grandmother Ruth having come from there (Ruth 4:13-17) and him having sent his own parents there to Moab’s king for protection while he hid from Saul (1 Samuel 22:3-4). Perhaps Moab had a new ruler at this time. Nevertheless, Moab was a pagan nation that had posed a serious danger to Israel in the past (see Numbers 25:1-3; Judges 3:12-30) and would do so repeatedly throughout Israel’s history.

In 2 Samuel 9, we read of David wanting to show the “kindness of God” (verse 3) to a son of Saul’s son Jonathan in fulfillment of David and Jonathan’s covenant of friendship (compare 1 Samuel 20:14-15). In learning of Jonathan’s crippled son (2 Samuel 4:4), David sends for him immediately. Mephibosheth has good reason to be afraid at this point, as the founders of new dynasties in ancient times often killed the children of former rulers to eliminate contenders for the throne. But David reassures him, promising to restore his family estate and that he will be like an adopted son, eating at the king’s table for the rest of his life.

Perhaps we can see in the story of Mephibosheth an illustration of our lives under God’s grace—going from nothing, undeserving of blessing, living under threat of danger, to complete security with royal treatment at the table of the King of the universe.

### **Chariots of Mesopotamia**

**(2 Samuel 10; 1 Chronicles 19; Psalm 60; Psalm 108; Psalm 83)**

**November 30**

This section of Scripture is quite interesting. Focus here is often placed on the fight against Aram, i.e., Syria, which stretched northeast to the Euphrates River. Yet across the Euphrates from Syria was the empire of Assyria—not yet risen to the major superpower it would ultimately become, but still a great force to be reckoned with. And, though Assyria is not directly mentioned here, we do see that there were forces arrayed against David from Mesopotamia (1 Chronicles 19:6), the land between the Tigris and Euphrates, which included Assyria. Indeed, it also included Babylon to the south. Some try to argue that the words translated “Mesopotamia,” *Aram Naharaim*, denoted just a minor district on the upper Euphrates. But this is negated by the mention of 32,000 chariots (verse 7)—a huge number in any ancient context and unimaginably so if the traditional view of Israel fighting against just a few small neighboring powers is correct. At the height of his power, King Solomon had only 1,400 chariots (1 Kings 10:24-26). In addition to this, we know of 33,000 soldiers from the Aramaean, i.e., Syrian, states (2 Samuel 10:6), but there were probably untold thousands more in conjunction with the chariots sent from Mesopotamia.

While some might argue that the figure of 32,000 chariots is a copyist error, such an error seems highly unlikely since such a number of chariots would have screamed out at ancient readers and scribes as a mistake—unless it were known to be true. (While the Philistines were said to have had 30,000 chariots in 1 Samuel 13:5, it should be noted that these foremost of the Sea Peoples, who almost defeated Egypt shortly before the time of Saul, were a much greater force in the Mediterranean world than they are often reckoned to have been. The fact that Israel overcame them was itself miraculous.)

Surprisingly, then, it appears that what we may be looking at in our current reading is a massive Middle Eastern coalition that included the entire national armies of Assyria and Babylon—all engaged against David. The figure of 32,000 chariots is probably a combined total from all the armies fighting Israel.

What, then, of the instigation of this conflict by the disgracing of David’s messengers by the Ammonites? Author Stephen Collins gives some intriguing insights in this lengthy quote from his book, *The “Lost” Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!*: “The Ammonites were a small tributary nation subject to David and were no doubt aware that David had executed two-thirds of the Moabites who had rebelled against him. Why then would they dare to take the apparently suicidal action of humiliating David’s ambassadors and provoking David into a warlike response (1 Chronicles 19:1-5)? The only logical explanation is that the Ammonites were acting as agents for someone else who wanted to challenge David, and that the Ammonites knew they would be backed by powerful friends who supported their hostile action. The rest of the account supports that conclusion.

“1 Chronicles 19:6-9 states the Ammonites ‘hired’ a force of 32,000 chariots and an uncounted number of Syrian and Mesopotamian warriors to fight King David’s army on their behalf.... Since Ammon was paying gold and silver as tribute to Israel already (1 Chronicles 18:11), it hardly had the resources to hire virtually the entire national armies of the nations in Mesopotamia. Indeed, verse 6 indicates the Ammonites had no gold left with which to ‘hire’ mercenaries and could pay only in silver. Apparently, *the other nations wanted to challenge Israel in considerable force, and Ammon’s revolt was the pretext to arrange such a conflict....* That this huge Mesopotamian army would allow itself to be ‘hired’ without receiving any gold at all indicates that their presence was a national policy of Assyria’s king! A force of 32,000 chariots could only have been mustered with the approval of the Assyrian Empire, the dominant power of Mesopotamia.

“The Bible’s use of the term ‘Mesopotamia’ to describe the homeland of this vast force of foreign troops [rather than a specific country] indicates that it was a *joint expeditionary force of*

many Mesopotamian nations (*Assyria, Babylon, etc.*). Verses 6-7 state that many Syrian troops were also 'hired' by the Ammonites to join the Mesopotamian armies in fighting King David. Since David had already conquered portions of Syria, the Syrians were eager to join a large alliance to fight against David. *This battle then was an effort by the king of Assyria to defeat the growing power of King David.* He arranged for virtually his entire army, along with other Mesopotamian allies and various Syrian kings to be 'hired' (for a pittance) by one of David's subject nations (Ammon) to get rid of the threat posed by King David's power.

"Interestingly, these Mesopotamian nations and Syria had enough respect for King David and Israel that they did not declare war openly, but allowed their national armies to fight as 'mercenaries' of a small nation. In this manner, if things went badly, they could go home and say that they were not technically at war with Israel on a national level. However, as evidence that these nations were actually arranging a war with King David, *the Bible states that 'the kings' of the mercenary armies (the Mesopotamian nations and Syrians) came with their armies to personally watch the battle (I Chronicles 19:9)....*

"This battle for supremacy of the ancient world was fought in two stages. The initial stage of the battle is described in I Chronicles 19:8-15. Israel's army met the combined forces of Ammon, Syria, and the Mesopotamian nations, and defeated them in a two-front battle. The fact that Israel had to split its forces and fight in two separate directions indicates that Israel's army was not expecting to fight so large a force and found itself surrounded by a numerically superior army. Israel's army likely expected to fight only the upstart Ammonites, and was surprised by the presence of so many enemies. Nevertheless, *Israel's army won the battle*, and the Mesopotamian army (i.e. the Assyrian army) apparently retreated to its own territory as they are not mentioned in the second stage of the battle.

"David quickly realized that this conflict involved far more than a revolt by the little nation of Ammon. It was actually an attempt to destroy Israel's army and national power, and to prevent it from supplanting Assyria as the preeminent nation in the ancient world" (1995, pp. 8-10).

The superscription of Psalm 60 shows that it refers to these events. David speaks here of having drunk the wine of astonishment or confusion. He speaks of trembling. David must have been overwhelmed at what was happening. But incredibly, the ultimate victory in this apparently titanic struggle was given by the Almighty Lord of Hosts to him and the men of Israel. As David notes in verse 12, it is "through God" that "we will do valiantly." David later uses much of this psalm to write the second part of Psalm 108 (verses 6-13—the first part of Psalm 108, verses 1-5, being taken from Psalm 57, written while David and his men hid from Saul in the cave at En Gedi, compare verses 7-11). Interestingly, Psalm 83, which seems to be a prophecy of end-time events, may also refer to this monumental battle we've been reading about. A psalm composed by the Levitical chief musician Asaph, it concerns a huge Middle Eastern confederacy whose goal is to wipe out Israel—to which Assyria is joined. Perhaps a coming end-time fulfillment of the apparent prophecy here had a prototype in David's time. If so, the episode we've just read about would seem to be the only one that would fit. If Psalm 83 does refer on some level to this episode, we may regard the "inhabitants of Tyre" mentioned in the coalition as rogue elements in that city rather than King Hiram and those loyal to him, as he was a close ally to David and later to Solomon.

"In the second stage of the battle recorded in I Chronicles 19:16-19, the Israelites and the Syrians mobilized their entire national military resources and clashed anew. This time there was no more pretense that the Syrians were Ammonite mercenaries. Also, the Assyrians were apparently no longer engaged, but had retreated after being soundly defeated by the Israelite army. The account states that David 'gathered all Israel' and Syria 'drew forth the Syrians that were beyond the River' (meaning reinforcements from east of the Euphrates River). The second battle of this war involved King David and his fully-mobilized army marching eastward from the Jordan River to fight everyone the Syrians could muster. After suffering 47,000 dead, including their commander, the Syrians yielded to King David and 'became his servants,' meaning they became vassal nations of Israel who paid tribute to King David...."

"What began as an effort on the part of Assyria and its Mesopotamian allies to crush Israel's military power resulted in Israel becoming sovereign over all the engaged Syrians, and the Mesopotamian powers being put to flight. The Assyrians and their allies learned firsthand that they could not successfully stand against Israel's power" (pp. 11-12). Indeed, Collins goes on to quote secular history as explaining that after this point, Aramaean invaders invade Mesopotamia and exhaust Babylonia and Assyria—and he points out that this is while the Aramaeans are vassals to

David, indeed that the Israelites might be referred to by the Assyrians as one and the same with these Aramaeans. “After David made the Aramaeans his vassals and (probably in concert with those vassals) subjugated Assyria and Mesopotamia, David was not just king of Israel and Judah, he was emperor over nations. He was the dominant ruler of the known world, and Israel had become an ancient ‘superpower’” (p. 19).

David’s faith in God to grant victory is expressed in Psalm 20: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright” (verses 7-8).

With the forces to the north defeated, there remains only a mopping-up operation to finish this whole episode. The terrified Ammonites, their help gone, flee to their capital city of Rabbah to hide behind its city walls. We will see the fight against them in our next reading.

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