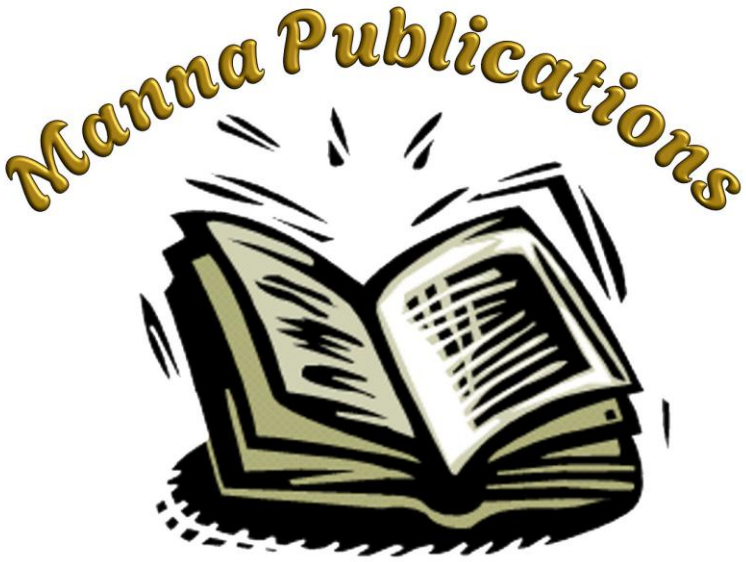
SAMUEL AND DAVID

Preparing for God's chosen king

A Bible Teaching Commentary
for personal or group study

Written by Fred Morris



MANNA FOR ALL

1 Samuel Part 2

Chapters 17 to 31

SAMUEL AND DAVID
1 Samuel Part 2, chapters 17 to 31

- **David slays Goliath the giant**
- **Saul becomes jealous of David**
- **Abigail stops David from doing wrong**
- **David spares Saul's life twice**
- **Saul asks help from a medium**
- **David wins but Saul loses the crown**

THIS BOOK reveals the amazing ways in which God prevails on good and evil. He established His purpose for His chosen people though His prophet Samuel. Under his guidance, Saul became the people's choice of King for Israel. But David was God's choice for the next King to prepare the way of Israel's Messiah. David had many lessons to learn as a former shepherd boy. Saul became jealous of David and his victories against the Philistines, especially Goliath the giant. Twice David was tested when he had the chance to kill Saul but spared his life. Eventually, Saul was defeated and died in battle. This left David free to complete God's will for him to raise a royal family which included Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS publish small Bible teaching commentaries written by the late Fred Morris to use on your own or to study in a group. Fred and his wife Lorna, originally from Australia, travelled round the world teaching and preaching before retiring to the USA. Their low-cost books are easy to read, understand and translate into other languages. The books explain basic New and Old Testament teaching of God's word and the new life found in Christ plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS will help you to come closer to Almighty God. He is worshipped by millions of Jews and Christians worldwide. These books will also help you to receive salvation and eternal life through God's Son, Jesus the Christ who is Israel's Messiah. They will help you to talk about your faith in God and to pray to Him. They will help to guide you from going the wrong way in life. They will help you to live a life that is pleasing to God through the love and power of His Holy Spirit. This was promised to all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, who suffered death for our sins before returning back to Heaven. These are important teachings for these last days before His return.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. Think about what Jesus taught and suffered 2000 years ago for our eternal salvation and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return.

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To the Reader or Leader

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Bible reading: Where you see this heading, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible verses first before reading this book.

Learn about this: Where you see this, the words help you to check the main things to know and to share with others to help everyone to grow in Bible knowledge and understanding of God's truth.

Talk about this: Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.

Think about this: Where you see this, the questions require more time for personal meditation.

Additional text boxes: Where you see these, the information gives extra teaching about life at the time the Bible passage was written and helps to apply the teaching for today.

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God has enabled us to print this title in the following countries:
Revised Worldwide English Edition first published in the UK in 2022
Reprinted 2022: Zambia (English)

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SAMUEL AND DAVID

1 Samuel Part 2, chapters 17 to 31

INTRODUCTION

This Bible teaching commentary is mainly about Samuel, Israel's first prophet, and David, Israel's second king. These Old Testament scriptures are important to Jews and Christians today because of the promises made by Yahweh, the LORD God Almighty, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These promises are about the purposes of God for Israel over a period of 2000 years before Christ and then for all of mankind after His death and resurrection.

God used Samuel to prepare the way for Israel's first king, Saul. Samuel was the son of Hannah. He was also Israel's priest and judge. You can read about his mother Hannah in the Manna Bible teaching commentary 'Ruth and Hannah'.

At the time of Samuel, the people of Israel were not happy with their twelve judges. Israel's judges did not always act fairly with each other because of their different tribal backgrounds and traditions. So the people asked Samuel for a king to lead them wisely to fight their enemies and use men chosen from all twelve tribes fighting together in unity. God told Samuel to let the people choose Saul as the first king of all Israel. You can read about this in the Manna Bible commentary 'Samuel and Saul'.

God knew this would not lead to success unless their king was obedient to Him. We read that God used Samuel to prepare the way for the second king of Israel, David. It was through David's family that God's promised Messiah, Jesus the Christ, was born to Mary in Bethlehem 2000 years ago.

In this commentary 'Samuel and David', we see how God taught Israel to trust spiritual leaders who knew His will. They suffered much when they and their chosen king Saul disobeyed Him. This commentary teaches us to learn from the past the horrors of disobeying God. If we fail to learn the truth of God from the Old Testament, we will repeat the same mistakes and hinder our New Testament life promised through faith in Jesus the Christ. His Hebrew name is Yeshua the Messiah. He is the Son of God and our Saviour.

It is always important for us to teach and learn from both the Old and New Testament parts of the Bible to see the purposes and promises of God fulfilled over the centuries. This encourages us to have faith and

hope in our eternal resting place with God through faith in Christ our Savour.

David was secretly anointed by Samuel under God's guidance as Israel's future king in place of Saul. David, a former shepherd boy, first served King Saul as an armour-bearer (1 Samuel 16:21). He also played the harp for Saul during times when an evil spirit tormented him (16:23).

This Bible commentary by Fred Morris begins with the famous story of David and Goliath. This led King Saul to become jealous of David for the next seven years until Saul died in battle. It happened around 500 years after the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land of Canaan, now called Israel. It was another 1000 years before Israel's Messiah, Jesus the Christ, entered Jerusalem to be crucified for the sins of the world before returning to Heaven as our resurrected Saviour whom we worship today.

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 17

Learn about this: *The Philistines meet the tribes of Israel for battle in the land allocated to Judah (verses 1-3). Goliath challenges Israel to fight, which David hears and offers to accept the challenge (v.4-31). David decline's Saul's offer of armour and slays the giant with just his shepherd's sling and stone (v.32-51). The Philistines are then defeated and David brings the head of Goliath back to Jerusalem (v.52-54). King Saul enquires about David and whose son he is (v.55-58).*

DAVID SEES GOLIATH THE GIANT

The tribal families of Israel were at war with the Philistines who lived to the west of the Promised Land of Canaan (now called Israel). The Philistines had settled there from the Mediterranean island of Crete.

At the beginning of this chapter, the two armies faced each other across a small valley west of Bethlehem, near to land belonging to the Israel tribe of Judah. The men of Israel were afraid of the huge Philistine soldier named Goliath. He was nearly three metres tall! If Goliath could be defeated, the Philistines would go back home and Israel would win the war. The false gods of the Philistines would also be defeated and prove they were powerless. This was an important part of God's plan for the Israelites to dwell in the land and prove to the nations that He alone was God Almighty.

Goliath's weapons were as big and terrible as he was, but it was his shouting that troubled Israel most. He mocked [blasphemed] Israel's

God. Each day he laughed at the men of Israel. His threats put fear into every man's heart (17:11).

David's older brothers had left the family farm near Bethlehem and gone to the battle front. They were gone more than forty days, so Jesse told David, "Find out how your brothers are doing. Bring me back some word about them" (17:18). David took with him fresh food for his brothers.

When he came into the camp of Israel, his brothers were not at their tent. They were up at the battle lines, so David left their food with the keeper of supplies and went to find them.

While he was talking with them, Goliath stepped out of the Philistine camp and shouted for someone to fight with him (17:23).

When Israel's army saw Goliath, all of them ran away from him. They said to each other, "Just look at how this man keeps stepping forward! Again and again he dares Israel to fight him. The king will make the man who kills him very wealthy. He will also give him his daughter to be his wife. He will not require anyone in his family to pay any taxes in Israel" (17:24-25).

The shepherd boy David tells King Saul how God helped him to save his sheep from wild animals.

David saw the fear in the men of Israel. It hurt David to hear this heathen Philistine defy the armies of the Living God. "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel?" David asked (17:26). The men told him what reward would be given to the man who killed Goliath (17:27).

David's oldest brother Eliab heard him speaking with the men. He was angry with David. He asked him, "Why have you come down here? Who did you leave your sheep in the desert with? …The only reason you came down here was to watch the battle!" (17:28).

"What have I done now?" said David. "Can I not even speak?" Then he turned away to speak to some other men. Someone heard what David said and reported it to Saul. So Saul sent for him (17:29-31).

Saul did not recognise David. David said to the King, "Let no-one lose hope because of that Philistine. I will go out and fight him." Saul said, "You are too young" (17:32-33). He was afraid of Israel losing the battle if David was killed.

David told Saul how God had helped him care for his father's sheep. When a lion and a bear attacked the sheep, he killed them. "The LORD saved me from the lion and the bear. And He will save me from the powerful hand of this Philistine," he told the King (17:37).

DAVID PREPARES TO FIGHT GOLIATH

"Go, and the LORD be with you," Saul said to David, and Saul put his own armour on David. "I cannot go out there in all this armour," David said, "because I am not used to it." So he took it off (17:39).

David picked up his wooden staff. He went down to a stream and chose five smooth stones and put them into his shepherd's bag. He carried his leather sling in his hand and approached Goliath (17:40).

Saul trusted in his armour, but David trusted in the Living God. He knew this was a battle between the gods of the Philistines and the Almighty God of Israel.

Goliath was in front of the Philistines and came closer to David. Goliath looked David over. He saw how young he was and he mocked him. He said to David, "Why are you coming at me with sticks? Do you think I am only a dog?" The Philistine called down curses on David in the name of his god. "I will feed your body to the birds of the air!" (17:42-44).

David did not shout back. He stood his ground and witnessed to the victory of faith in the one true God Almighty. "You come to fight against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I come against you in the

name of Yahweh, the LORD God Almighty, who rules over all. He is the God of the armies of Israel… This very day the LORD will hand you over to me. I will strike you down. I will cut your head off." Then David added, "This very day I will feed the bodies of the Philistine army to the birds of the air. I will feed them to the wild animals. Then the whole world will know there is a God in Israel" (17:45-46).

David knew the LORD as his friend and protector. He wanted the whole world to know about the Almighty God of Israel. He spoke clearly, "All those gathered here will know it is not by the sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give all of you over to us" (17:47). David had faith to believe that God would give him victory over Goliath and he wanted God to have the honour, not Israel.

These are powerful words of faith from the Old Testament. Oh that men today knew this! God uses acts of faith to establish His purposes. This event established David as the next king of Israel. This eventually led to the fulfilment of God's plan in sending Jesus as Israel's Messiah through the family line of David.

DAVID FIGHTS GOLIATH

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran toward Goliath to meet him. He took a stone from his bag and fitted it into his sling. Then he hurled the stone at the giant. The stone hit him on the forehead and sank into it. He fell to the ground on his face. David ran and stood over him. David quickly took the giant's sword and killed him. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword (17:49,51).

So David won the fight against Goliath with a sling and a stone (17:50).

When the Philistine army saw that their hero was dead, they ran away. The men of Israel and Judah shouted victory and chased them. When night came, the dead Philistine bodies lay along the roads leading to their cities.

David picked up Goliath's head. He brought it to Jerusalem with Goliath's weapons. King Saul had been watching David as he went out to meet the Philistine. He still did not recognise David. He spoke to Abner, the commander of the army, and asked him to find the father of David. (17:54-56). This was to arrange for the marriage of one of his daughters to David.

David uses his sling and stone to knock down Goliath the giant.

General Abner brought David to Saul still holding Goliath's head (17:57). Goliath's weapons became a national treasure. At that time, David kept them in a tent. Some time later the giant's head was displayed in Jerusalem.

Talk about this:

1. What was David's question and what was the answer (17:25-27)?
2. What did Saul say to David and what was David's answer (17:33-36)?
3. Why could David answer with such confidence (17:37)?
4. What did David say in faith would happen to both Goliath and the Philistines (17:46-47)?
5. What reason does David give for victory over the Philistines (17:46)?
6. Discuss why the words of David show great faith in the power of God (17:45-47).
7. Who tried to discourage David (17:28,33,43-44)?

Think about this: Why was it important for Israel to defeat Goliath? Why was it important to God? Why is it always important for us to see God's bigger plan in our lives when we are in trouble? How do we stop fear and discouragement from destroying our faith in God? Think about how God delights to use the faith of just one obedient person for His purposes for His glory.

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 18-20

Learn about this: *David is welcomed by Saul's son and servants and the women praise his victory over Goliath, which angers Saul (18:1-16). Saul seeks to control David by arranging his daughter to marry him (v.17-27) but Saul's envy and anger increases (v.28). Saul plots to kill David (19:1-17). David tells the prophet Samuel and they went to Naioth with Saul following after them (v.18-24). Saul's son Jonathan seeks to protect David which made Saul threaten both of them (20:1-40). David leaves Jonathan (v.41).*

DAVID'S COVENANT WITH JONATHAN

Saul's eldest son, Jonathan, listened as David and Saul talked. Jonathan and David became close friends. Jonathan loved the brave young David more than any other man he had met (18:1). Jonathan was 27 years older than David. They loved each other as humble and obedient servants of God. Jonathan often interceded with his father King Saul on behalf of David.

From that time on, Saul kept David with him. He did not let him return to his father's home (18:2).

Jonathan made a covenant with David (18:3). A covenant was an agreement made between two people. When Jonathan made the covenant with David, he promised to stand by him in suffering and in death. Their families would always keep these promises, even after David and Jonathan died. Jonathan sealed the covenant by giving David his robe and belt, his tunic, his sword and bow and his word of promise (18:4).

Jonathan knew the will of God for David to be king. He was prepared to give up his own role as son and heir of King Saul to prepare the way for David to be king. Johnathan was more interested in honouring God than being king. He was even prepared to sacrifice his life so that God's purpose would be fulfilled in David. Jesus also sacrificed his life so that God's purpose might be fulfilled in US!

David and Jonathan's covenant

- Each showed unfailing kindness to the other as the LORD does.
- Their covenant of friendship would last for life.
- It would guarantee protection for Jonathan and his family.
- It would pass to Jonathan's family after David's death.

SAUL BECOMES JEALOUS OF DAVID

David did everything so well that Saul gave him a high position in the army (18:5). This pleased all the people. Saul's army and their officers liked David and saw that he loved God.

After David had killed Goliath, King Saul led the men of Israel home from defeating the Philistines. As the Israeli army passed through the towns, women and children were dancing and singing and playing musical instruments. People continued to sing about David's victory when they met at feasts and at worship times. Even the children remembered the words of the song. The victory song they sang included the words "Saul has killed thousands, and David has killed tens of thousands" (18:6-7).

Deep down in his heart, Saul was very angry with David. He was jealous because everyone liked David and all Israel honoured him for killing the giant Goliath. What angered Saul most was Israel's victory song. He thought, "The only thing left for him to get is the kingdom itself." From that time on, Saul became more and more jealous of David. Saul watched him closely (18:8-9).

David's 'second battle' after defeating Goliath was against Saul. But God's anointing was on David for God had withdrawn His anointing on Saul. Saul trusted in himself for his own glory but David trusted in God for God's glory.

AN EVIL SPIRIT COMES UPON SAUL TO DESTROY DAVID

The next day, an evil spirit was allowed by God to come powerfully on Saul (18:10). Saul began to prophesy in his house and David began to play the harp, just as he usually did. But Saul was listening to evil thoughts, so David continued to play the harp to soothe Saul's troubled spirit.

King Saul tries to kill David.

The King sat holding a spear in his hand. Suddenly, he threw it at David. 'He threw it at David. As he did, he said to himself, "I will pin David to the wall." But David got away from him twice.' Each time, David moved quickly away. Twice God spared his life (18:11).

Despite this, David remained faithful to Saul and was not provoked or angry with him. Nor did he fear Saul or the evil of Satan at work in him. Instead, God gave peace and much success to David in all he did.

The next thing Saul did was to send David away. He put him in command of 1000 men. David led the troops in battle. Saul hoped that David would die in battle on the front line. However, in everything David did, he continued to be very successful. He survived without injury and was popular with the army. That is because the LORD God of Israel was with him (18:12-14).

SAUL TRIES TO CONTROL DAVID MORE AND MORE

So Saul then thought of a way to have more control over David. He said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab, I will give her to you to be your wife. Just serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD." Saul said to himself, "I will not have to lift my hand to strike him down. The Philistines will do that!" (18:17).

David was surprised by the King's offer. He told the King he was a humble servant not a prince. He could not be the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave Merab to someone else.

Saul did not stop trying to gain control over David. His second daughter, Michal, loved David (18:20). So he said to David, "Now you have a second chance to become my son-in-law!"

The more David thought about it the more impossible it seemed. How could he, an ordinary soldier, be given a princess for a bride? "I am only a poor man and not well known," he told the king's servants.

When the king heard this, he sent word to David to say he wanted him to kill 100 Philistines. Then he wanted David to circumcise them and bring their skins back to the king (18:25). This would earn David the right to marry his daughter. 'Saul hoped that the powerful hand of the Philistines would strike David down.'

David took up the King's challenge. He loved Michal and he also wanted to kill the LORD's enemies. So David and his men killed not 100 but 200 Philistines without harm to themselves and brought the 200 skins to the King. Michal became his wife (18:28).

Saul realised that the LORD was with David. He also realised how much Michal loved him. However, he continued to be an enemy of David because of his fear that David would become more popular than him (18:29). Meanwhile, David remained successful in battle against the Philistines. 'So his name became well known' (18:30).

These things happened because of the eternal purpose of God for David. He did not stop the evil plans of Satan at work in Saul. Instead, God used evil for good. From David's family line, Jesus was born as Israel's Messiah. Jesus the Messiah or Christ lived and died for our sins on the cross so that we all might be saved eternally if we believe in Him.

SAUL TRIES AGAIN TO KILL DAVID

'Saul told his son Jonathan and all of the attendants to kill David… So Jonathan warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be very careful'" (19:1-2).

Jonathan also told his father, "Let the king not do wrong to his servant David for he has not wronged you. What he has done has helped you a lot. He put his own life in danger when he killed Goliath" (19:4-5).

Saul listened to all that Jonathan said. Then he took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death" (19:6).

As soon as Saul left, Jonathan told David what his father had said. Jonathan took David to his father and David served him as he had done before (19:7).

But one day, while David played the harp, Saul tried again to spear him. David escaped to his house. Soon, Saul's guards were at his door. They had been told by Saul to kill David. Michal warned David to escape through the window and run away (19:9-12).

David ran to Samuel's house in Ramah and they went on to Naioth, a part of the city where God's prophets lived. 'He told Samuel everything Saul had done to him' (19:18).

When Saul found out where David was, he sent men to take him. In Ramah, they met Samuel. The Spirit of God came upon Saul's men. Instead of seizing David, they began to prophesy! Saul sent other men, but these prophesied also! (19:20-21).

Then Saul set out for Ramah himself. 'But the Spirit of God even came upon him… He took off his royal robes and prophesied in front of Samuel' (19:24).

The 'School of the Prophets' was at Naioth in Ramah. It was God's special place. This place was 'alive' with God's Spirit and no evil spirit could stand against God's Spirit. Even King Saul could not resist the power of God's Spirit!

JONATHAN SUPPORTS DAVID

David ran away to Jonathan. He asked, "What have I done wrong? What is my crime? Why is he trying to kill me?" (20:1).

Jonathan replied, "You are not going to die!" But David told Jonathan, "I am very close to being killed!" (20:3).

David asked for Jonathan's help and he said, "Go to the place where you hid when this trouble began and wait." He told David he would shoot three arrows from his bow and then send a boy to find them. If he sent the boy one way, David would know he was safe. If he sent the boy the other way, David must hide. (20:19-21).

David hid near the field while Jonathan went to the New Moon feast. The king became angry when David did not attend the feast for two days. The reason for his anger was that he did not have control over David and feared that David would inherit the kingdom instead of his son Jonathan (20:31). 'Then Jonathan believed that his father wanted to kill David… Jonathan was very sad that his father was treating David so badly' (20:33-34).

Next morning, Jonathan went into the field and shot three arrows from his bow. Then Jonathan gave David the sign. After the boy took the arrows, Jonathan told David the sad news. "Go in peace," he said, "for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD" (20:42).

Then David left Jonathan. After that, he stayed away from Saul.

Talk about this:

1. Why was David so popular with the people (18:5-7)?
2. How and why did Saul try to destroy David (18:15-17)?
3. How did Jonathan try to help David (19:4-7)?
4. How did Saul learn that God was in control (19:23-24)?
5. What was Jonathan's plan to protect David (20:12-13)?
6. What did Jonathan's sign tell David to do (20:42)?

Think about this: What Saul feared (20:31) came true. Are we fearful or faithful? We harvest what we plant (Galatians 6:7-8). Compare how Jonathan interceded for David with how Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven with His Father.

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 21 and 22

Learn about this: *David continues to flee from Saul and pretends to be mad (Chapter 21). David provides protection for his parents in Moab before moving back to Israel (Chapter 22).*

DAVID GOES TO THE HIGH PRIEST

David was saddened by all that had happened. All he had were the clothes he wore, and he and his men were hungry. He lived in caves with men who were very poor. Some were faithful warriors from the times they fought together against the Philistines.

David went to the place of worship at Nob, a town northeast of Jerusalem. Ahimelech, the high priest, trembled when he saw David. Ahimelech told David he had no food except the special bread made without yeast. It was against the law to give David the bread, but the priest agreed to do this, if David's men were 'clean'. David knew the law, so he told the high priest that the men's bodies were holy (21:5).

David continued, "I have not brought my sword or any other weapon… Do you have a spear or sword here?" (21:8)

"Goliath's sword is here," he told David. "It is wrapped in a cloth behind the holy ephod. If you want it, take it" (21:9).

"There is none like it. Give it to me," David said.

DAVID RUNS AWAY

While David was speaking to Ahimelech, he saw a man standing in the shadows. Doeg, the Edomite, was a servant of King Saul. Doeg was there to spy for Saul. David fled from there and went to Gath.

Gath was a Philistine city ruled by King Achish. The King seemed friendly, but his servants were doubtful. Israel's song of victory still remembered: "Saul has slain his thousands. David his tens of thousands" (18:7; 21:10-11).

When they said this, David was afraid. He did not want to listen to man's praise! So he pretended to be out of his mind (21:13). David escaped, unharmed, to the city of Gath.

When David hid in the cave of Adullam, many people began to come to him. They were outcasts. Some had been treated badly; others had run from the law. Others fled from people they owed money to. They were all disappointed with life. David became their leader (22:2). About 400 men were now with him at this time. He helped them with their problems. He comforted them.

David's own family members joined them because of the king's anger. His brothers and the household of his father Jesse all came to him at the cave. They could not live peacefully and care for their sheep because of King Saul.

DAVID CARES FOR HIS FATHER AND MOTHER

David loved his father and mother. He hoped they would live full lives, and in peace. He feared Saul would find him and they would all be killed. So he went to Moab and asked the King, "Please let my father and mother come and stay here with you. Let them stay until I learn what God will do for me" (22:3).

The King of Moab did not like Israel because Saul had fought against him (14:47). But as an outlaw in Israel, David could be a friend to Israel's enemies. So David left his parents with the King of Moab.

At that time, Israel's prophet Gad came to David with a special message. He said, "Do not stay in your usual place of safety. Go into the land of Judah" (22:5).

David was quick to obey God's word through Gad. He moved from his stronghold to the forest of Hereth.

David's faith and boldness became an encouragement to the New Testament believers 900 years later. His faith remains an encouragement to us today (Matthew 22:43-44; Hebrews 11:32-34).

SAUL BECOMES MORE WORRIED

Saul heard that David and his men were now hiding in Israel not far away. He was now afraid to stay at his palace.

'Saul was sitting under a tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah. He was holding his spear. All of his officials were standing around him' (22:6). Many had worked against him, he believed, to help David escape.

Saul said to them, "Listen to me! Do you think Jesse's son will give all of you fields and vineyards? Do you think he will make some of you commanders of thousands of men? Do you think he will make the rest of you commanders of hundreds? Is that why all of you have joined together against me? …No-one tells me that my son has stirred up Jesse's son to hide and wait to attack me" (22:7-8).

One of Saul's spies told the King, "I saw Jesse's son David… Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine" (22:9-10).

The moment Saul heard this, he sent for Ahimelech and his family. When Ahimelech came before Saul, he told the truth. The King ordered, "Go and kill the priests of the Lord. They too are on David's side."

The King's order shocked even his guards. They killed enemies of God in battle, but not priests of the Lord God Almighty. 'But the king's officials would not raise a hand to strike down the priests of the Lord. So the King ordered Doeg to do it' and that day Doeg from Edom killed eighty-five men who wore the priest's linen ephod [apron] (22:18). This showed how far a wicked heart will go in turning away from the living God (Jeremiah 17:9). Satan stops at nothing to kill righteous men (John 8:44).

Abiathar, son of the high priest Ahimelech, escaped and fled to David. He told David the sad news. David's worst fears about Doeg's hatred of him were fulfilled.

"I am responsible," David cried, "for the death of your father's whole family." So David kept Abiathar with him. "You will be safe with me" he said (22:22-23).

Talk about this:

1. What did David do with his parents and why (22:3)?
2. Why did David feel guilty over the deaths of the priests (22:22)?

Think about this: What do you think when you read about men who believe in God yet do evil things? Do you believe that God is always in control and can use evil for good in the end? Why is it important to seek the LORD before we do anything?

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 23 and 24

Learn about this: *David attacks the Philistines but Saul learns of this and David escapes to Ziph then to En Gedi (Chapter 23). David cuts off a piece of Saul's clothing whilst hidden in a cave and uses it as proof of his innocence (Chapter 24:1-15). Saul admits his wrong and acknowledges David will be king after him; he asks for David not to destroy his name or his family, then departs (v.16-22).*

DAVID SAVES THE TOWN OF KEILAH

David was told, "The Philistines are fighting against the town of Keilah. They are stealing grain from the threshing floors" (23:1). David felt helpless. The Philistines were raiding Israel again, but he could not go and help the people. He feared Saul.

However, David asked the LORD if he should go and attack the Philistines (23:2). The LORD answered, "Go and attack them. Save Keilah." But David's men were afraid of Saul. They were also afraid of the Philistines, who had weapons of iron.

Again David asked the LORD what he should do. God's answer was the same: "Go down to Keilah. I am going to give the Philistines over to you" (23:4).

So David's men went to Keilah with God's promise in their hearts. God helped them drive off the Philistines and they carried away their animals.

Saul heard that David was in Keilah. Saul believed the gates and bars of that city would become his prison (23:7).

When David heard Saul's plan, he said to Abiathar, "Bring me the priest's linen apron" (23:9). He put it on and asked the LORD God Almighty for wisdom. "Will the citizens of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?" (23:11-12). God answered that David would be in danger if he stayed. So David left the city with his 600 men. They kept moving from place to place (23:13).

'Day after day Saul looked for him. But God did not hand David over to him… Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh. He told David that God would make him strong' (23:14,16).

Soon after, friends of Saul told him where to find David. He went to find him. 'Saul and his army were closing in on David and his men. They

were about to capture them. Just then a messenger came to Saul. He said, "Come quickly! The Philistines are attacking the land." So Saul stopped chasing David. He went to fight against the Philistines' (23:26-28).

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

Later, Saul's spies reported, "David is in the desert of En Gedi" (24:1). So Saul chose 3000 men to capture him.

One night David had a chance to kill Saul, but he refused to do it. David and his men were hiding in a cave. Saul went into the same cave as David. David's men encouraged him to kill Saul. Instead, he crept up without being noticed. He silently cut off a piece of the King's robe (24:4).

He knew God did not want him to harm Saul. David crept back to his men and said, "I promise that I will never lift my hand to strike him down. The LORD God has anointed him" (24:6). Saul was King until God removed him. David would wait for God's time.

When Saul left the cave, David called out to Saul, "King Saul, my lord and master!" David bowed down and said, "Why do you listen to what men say that David is trying to harm you? This very day … some of my men begged me to kill you. But I spared you. I said, 'I will never lift my hand to strike my master down. He is the LORD's anointed King'." (24:8-10).

Then David showed Saul the piece of his robe he cut off in the cave (24:11). "May the LORD be our judge… May He save me from your powerful hand" (24:15).

Saul cried loudly (24:16). "May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today," he told David. Then David gave his oath that he would not destroy Saul's family. Saul went home and David and his men went to their usual place of safety (24:22).

Talk about this:

1. Why did David not kill Saul?
2. How did David escape from Saul?

Think about this: Compare David's mercy for Saul with God's mercy. Are we ready to show mercy to those who are against us?

Avoid and overcome evil

Saul quoted a familiar saying to David, "Evil acts come from those who do evil" (24:13). In those days Israel was surrounded by people who worshipped evil spirits.

God told Moses: "Let no-one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium" (Deuteronomy 18:10-11). Worship and practice of evil spirits still happens in many places today. Beware! Seek wisdom and protection through the resurrection power of Jesus living within all believers and His promised Holy Spirit. Trust in God's protection and mercy.

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 25

Learn about this: *Samuel dies and all Israel laments (verse 1). Saul begins to chase David again, who moves away. He hears of Nabal and his wife Abigail and plans to talk with them but is turned away (v.2-12). David becomes angry and takes 400 armed men with him to meet Nabal but Abigail stops David and offers gifts and seeks pardon for her husband (v.13-31). David calms down and praises God. Nabal dies so David ends up marrying Abigail (v.32-38). Saul gives his daughter Michal away to Phalti (v.39).*

SAMUEL, THE PROPHET AND PRIEST OF GOD, DIES

Samuel was over 100 years old when he died. His mother, Hannah, dedicated him to serve the LORD God Almighty at the tabernacle in Shiloh (1:24-28). (This was the place at that time for the Ark of God which contained the Ten Commandments.) Samuel lived and grew up in the tabernacle. He was trained by Eli the High Priest. God appointed Samuel as Priest in place of Eli and his two sons. Samuel also became the first prophet of God in Israel and was greatly respected. He was the last judge of Israel. God used him to anoint first Saul then David as Israel's king.

At the time of Samuel's death, David was still waiting God's promise to the throne of Israel. (No-one, not even Samuel, knew then that when David became king he would become an ancestor of the King of Kings through Mary the mother of Israel's future Messiah.)

Samuel's death is recorded in one verse. His long life of service to Israel ended quietly, and all Israel came together to mourn and bury him. 'The whole nation of Israel gathered together. They were filled with

sorrow because he was dead. They buried his body at his home in Ramah' (25:1).

DAVID AND THE WEALTHY LANDOWNER

Meanwhile, Saul began hunting David again to kill him, so David moved down to the Desert of Maon. A certain man there, Nabal, was very wealthy. He had a beautiful wife called Abigail. He owned many sheep and his servants were shearing them.

When David learned of this, he sent ten men to Nabal to ask for food supplies for himself and his men. After a greeting, they wished Nabal peace and long life. They told him how they had cared for his flocks while they were in the desert. Then they asked Nabal for food for David's fighting men.

Nabal was in a bad mood and was drunk. He shouted at them: "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water… and give it to men coming from who knows where" (25:10-11)?

The men went back and told David what had happened. David was angry. "Put on your swords," he ordered, and he led four hundred men and went up to Carmel, each man with his sword strapped to his side.

At the same time, a servant ran to Nabal's wife Abigail and told her what the master had done. "Think it over," he said to her, "and see what you can do. Terrible trouble will soon come to our master and his whole family" (25:17).

Abigail called her house servants and quickly gave them orders. "Get corn, cakes, pressed figs and load them onto donkeys. Get two hundred loaves of bread, wine, sheep… Go on ahead; I will follow you," she told them. But she did not tell her husband about it (25:18).

David and his men were marching toward Carmel. David was still very angry with Nabal (25:21-22). Suddenly, donkeys came into view and a woman got off one of the donkeys. When David came up, she fell at his feet. It was Abigail.

ABIGAIL SPEAKS WISE WORDS TO DAVID

"My lord," she said, "let the blame be on me alone… pay no attention to that man Nabal. He is just like his name which means fool."

Then Abigail said many good things from God to David. "When the LORD has done all these good things, please remember me" (25:30-31).

Her words touched David's heart. "The LORD bless you for your good advice]. You have kept me from killing Nabal and his men. Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel," he said. "He has sent you today to meet me" (25:32-33). Then David accepted Abigail's gifts, "Go home in peace," he told her.

At the big house, Abigail found Nabal having a party. He was drunk, so she waited until next morning to tell him what she had done.

When she told him, his heart began to fail. Ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died (25:38).

David heard this and said, "Give praise to the LORD. Nabal made fun of me. But the LORD … kept me from doing wrong" (25:39). May we too have wisdom to pray for repentance or even punishment but leave the

God's salvation for David through Abigail (1 Samuel 25:23-31)

Notice how God guided Abigail to change the anger of David and save him from doing wrong:

- She humbled herself and bowed down in front of David (v.23).
- She pleaded with him to listen to her (v.24).
- She was ready to take the blame for her husband's behaviour (v.24).
- She apologised to David for Nabal's foolish refusal to feed his men (v.25).
- She declared her belief that Almighty God had stopped David from punishing Nabal (v.26).
- She asked God instead to punish Nabal and "everyone who wants to harm you" (v.26).
- She brought her gift of food for David's men (v.27).
- She again asked David to forgive her for not stopping her husband's foolish behaviour (v.28).
- She prophesied her belief that God would "give you and your family line a Kingdom that will last" (v.28).
- She warned David, "Do not do anything wrong as long as you live" (v.28).
- She declared her belief that "God Almighty will keep you safe" (v.29).
- She believed that God would "do every good thing He promised to do and make you leader over Israel" (v.30).
- She told David he should no longer feel guilty for getting angry over wanting revenge (v.31).

outcome to God. Then David sent men to ask Abigail to be his second wife. She agreed and went with her maids to meet him. David had earlier married Ahinoam of Jezreel (25:43). Saul had stopped the marriage of David to Michal, Saul's daughter (25:39).

Talk about this:

1. Why did David feel Nabal was not being fair to him?
2. How did Abigail persuade David not to fight with Nabal (25:27-29)?
3. How was David blessed in marriage to Abigail instead of marriage to Michal (25:42,44)?

Think about this: Do we trust God for His provision and wise judgement during conflict with people who reject us or even anger us? Pray for faith, peace and understanding at all times and be quick to give the glory to God.

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 26

Learn about this: *Saul locates David but whilst Saul and his servants are sleep, David spares Saul's life again (verses 1-12). David secures a further apology from Saul and they depart in peace (v 13-25).*

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE AGAIN

Saul began to drive David out of the Promised Land and into the arms of his heathen neighbours. Saul and 3,000 chosen men searched for David in the Desert of Ziph (26:1-2).

At night, Saul slept in his camp with his army around him. General Abner was sleeping close to the King. David and his commander, Abishai, (his step-brother) crept into Saul's camp. They got close to Saul without anyone hearing them. 'They found Saul lying asleep inside the camp. His spear was stuck in the ground near his head' (26:5-7).

Abishai said to David, "Today God has handed your enemy over to you. So let me pin him to the ground. I can do it with one jab of my spear" (26:8).

David held his arm. "Do not destroy him," he said to Abishai. "No-one can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed king and not be guilty. You can be sure that the LORD lives. And you can be just as sure that the LORD Himself will strike Saul down. Perhaps he will die a natural death. Or perhaps he will go into battle and be killed" (26:9-10).

David spares Saul's life a second time.

So David took Saul's spear and water jug and left the camp. No-one saw David and Abishai, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

Next morning David stood on the top of the hill and shouted to Abner, the commander of Saul's army, "You and your men are worthy of death. You did not guard your master. He is the LORD's anointed king. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?" (26:16).

Then Saul said, "I have sinned. My son David, come back. Today you thought my life was very special …May the LORD bless you. You will do great things. You will also have great success." So David went on his way. And Saul returned home (26:21,25).

Talk about this:

1. Why did Saul go on chasing David (26:2)?
2. Why did David say Abner deserved to die (26:16)?
3. Why did David spare King Saul's life (26:9-11)?

Think about this: Seek forgiveness for the times you have taken vengeance on those who persecute you. Learn to trust in God's judgement and answers to the problems of life.

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 27 and 28

Learn about this: *David goes to war against the enemies of Israel (Chapter 27). Saul seeks guidance from God without success, so seeks help from a witch. When she raises up the spirit of Samuel, Saul faints after being told his life is in ruins (Chapter 28).*

DAVID LIVES AWAY FROM SAUL AMONG THE PHILISTINES

David lived in safety away from Saul in the Philistine country for a year and four months. Saul then stopped looking for David, which encouraged David to rid the Promised Land of more of the Canaanite tribes at this time (v.8-9). He led his men out to raid the Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites in the south who were all enemies of Israel.

Achish, king of the Philistines, did not know why David stayed in his country so long. When the Philistines gathered to fight Israel at Aphek, King Achish told David and his fighting men they must march out with them (28:2). Saul and his army gathered to fight the Philistines.

SAUL SEEKS HELP FROM THE WITCH OF ENDOR

When Saul saw the large Philistine army, terror filled his heart. Saul asked the LORD for a battle plan to fight King Achish, but the LORD did not answer him, not by a dream, nor by the priest's ephod, nor by sending a prophet (28:6).

He was desperate. "Find me a woman who is a spirit medium," he told his servant (28:7). This was Saul's final act of disobedience to God. He already knew that he had disobeyed God which had resulted in the loss of communication with the Almighty (28:15). God had also warned His people not to talk to witches. "Do not use fortune telling or witchcraft" (Leviticus 19:26,31).

Almost all witches had been put to death or chased out of Israel. "There is one at Endor," Saul's servants told him. The witch of Endor worked with evil spirits. Evil spirits are real; they are spirits led by Satan.

Saul put on different clothes so that the witch would not know who he was. He told the witch, "I want you to talk to a spirit for me." But she was afraid (1 Sam 28:8-10). She said, "By now you must know what Saul has done. He has removed everyone who gets messages from those who have died. He has also cut off everyone who talks to the spirits of the dead. He has thrown all of them out of the land. Why are you trying to trap me? Why do you want to have me put to death?"

Saul told her, "Bring up the spirit of Samuel." So the woman went into another room. When the woman saw Samuel, she let out a loud scream. She said to Saul, "Why have you tricked me? You are King Saul! " (28:11-12).

Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you troubled me by bringing me up from the dead?"

"I am having big problems," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me. God has turned away from me. He does not answer me anymore" (28:15).

God's message to Saul was the same as before. "The LORD God Almighty has turned away from you… So why are you asking me what you should do? The LORD has spoken through me and has done what He said He would do. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands. He has given it to David" (28:17; 15:28).

'Immediately Saul fell flat on the ground. What Samuel had said filled Saul with fear. His strength was gone' (28:20).

We, too, may be tempted to go to the wrong places for divine help. Some go to ungodly people for help. Others let friends read the palms of their hands, or use special cards to find advice for the future. They also read horoscopes based on the date of their birth, or signs in the stars. However, God's Spirit overruled and established His purpose for Saul, the Philistines and for David. God says that the Holy Spirit will be our counsellor and guide. He is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17). Saul's greatest enemy was not the Philistines nor David but himself. He had failed to trust in God but trusted in himself and unwisely used a witch to help him.

The witch provided food for Saul and his men before they departed (28:21-25).

Talk about this:

1. What did David achieve by living in Philistine for a time (27:1,8; 28:1,5)?
2. Why did King Saul go to the witch of Endor (18:5-7,16)?
3. What judgement did Saul get from the witch (28:17)?

Think about this: Who can help us know the difference between believing and obeying God and believing yet disobeying Him?

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 29 and 30

Learn about this: *The Philistines complain about David following their men into battle and their leader pleads for him to depart (Chapter 29). David discovers the Amalekites had invaded the south of Israel and fights them. He regains their stolen supplies and orders that each man should have an equal share of the supplies (Chapter 30).*

GOD TELLS DAVID TO DEFEAT AN ENEMY OF ISRAEL

King Achish's commanders did not like having David and his men with them, so Achish sent them back to their own city (29:3-7). God did not let David carry out his plan. If he had fought with the Philistines he might have fought against his wife's clan for they lived in Jezreel, Judah.

David and his men had marched for three days and they were almost home. When David looked toward Ziklag, he saw smoke rising in the distance. Every man looked toward this city, also belonging to the tribe of Judah. Then they ran forward. The Amalekites had raided Ziklag, taken their families, and burned their houses.

David and his men wept before the LORD. 'They sobbed until they could not sob any more.' David's two wives had also been captured. (30:4). Then they turned against David, 'bitter in spirit [grieved, KJV] because of their sons and daughters'. The men talked of killing David, but he 'was made strong [encouraged, KJV] by the LORD his God' (30:6).

David's hope was fixed in his LORD. Unlike Saul, in the hardest times, he knew where to turn. David asked God to show him what to do. "Bring me the ephod," he said to Abiathar. The ephod was a linen apron normally worn by the High Priest.

God answered David. "Chase after them" the LORD answered. "You will certainly catch up with them. You will succeed in saving those who were captured" (30:8).

So David took his 600 men and went after the Amalekites. At the Besor Ravine two hundred of his men were too tired to cross over, so he took 400 and continued on.

On the side of the path, his men found a slave boy who had been left by the enemy as they ran. "Can you lead us to this raiding party?" David asked him. David promised the boy that he would not be harmed, or given back to his master.

Soon they came to the Amalekites. 'They were eating and drinking and dancing wildly. That is because they had taken a large amount of goods from… the Philistines and from the people of Judah' (30:16)

David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day and recovered everything the Amalekites had taken. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, and their goods; David brought everything and everyone back (30:17-19). This shows God's mercy in putting right what has gone wrong for His people, either through personal sin or the sins of others.

As David and his men marched back, they came to the Besor Ravine and their two hundred brothers guarding the supplies (30:21). Some trouble-makers said, "The 200 men did not go out into battle with us. So we will not share with them the goods we brought back. But each man can take his wife and children and go home."

David replied, "No, my friends. You must not hold back their share of what the LORD has given us. He has kept us safe. He has handed over to us the men who attacked Ziklag. So no-one will pay any attention to what you are saying. Each man who stayed with the supplies will receive the same share as each man who went down to the battle. Everyone's share will be the same." David made that a law and a rule for Israel (30:23-25).

Talk about this:

1. Compare how David sought God's guidance with how Saul sought guidance.

David's success that led to Saul's failure. 1 Samuel 30.

- David progressed from failure (v.4) and fear of those who criticised him (v.6) to faith and trust in God (v.6).
- This required prayer (v.8), guidance (v.8), reassurance (v.8), fighting and winning and reclaiming lost ground (v.17-18).
- Also compassion and righteousness in victory (v.24), and caring for the needy (v.26).

This victory soon marked the end of Saul's aggressive and rebellious reign in Israel (1 Samuel 31) and the fulfilment of David's part to establish a God-fearing and compassionate kingdom on Earth. Saul's disobedience and fear of losing control in Israel lost him his crown and the kingdom. What Saul failed to do was achieved by David through God's blessing and purpose at work for Israel's needs in the short and long term. David's example of faith and obedience provided us with a worldwide blessing through his family line in Israel's Messiah, Jesus the Christ (Matthew 1:6-16).

Think about this: Seek forgiveness for trusting in your own wisdom or worse, trusting in mediums or horoscopes. Think about the mercy of David on those who were needy but too weak to fight. What did this lead to regarding the worldwide purpose of God?

Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 31

Learn about this: *Saul fights and loses his last battle against the Philistines. He is injured and takes his own life. Saul's men recover his body and the bodies of his three sons to give them a proper burial in Jabesh and then fasted seven days.*

SAUL IS DEFEATED IN BATTLE AND KILLS HIMSELF

King Saul fought his last battle on Mount Gilboa. 'The Philistines kept chasing Saul and his sons. The fighting was heavy around Saul.' An arrow hit Saul and he was badly wounded. Then he said to his armour bearer, "Pull out your sword. Stick it through me."

'But the man was terrified. He would not do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. The man saw that Saul was dead. So he fell on his own sword and died with him. Saul and his three sons died together that same day' (31:3-6).

The Philistines found Saul's body and cut off his head. An enemy messenger carried it through the land. At each town, he told of the Philistine victory over Israel. Then they put Saul's armour in their temple and hung his body on the wall of Beth Shan.

Brave men of Israel from Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to their King. They travelled through the night to Beth Shan and took down Saul's body and the bodies of his sons. Then they honoured their King with a proper burial. They fasted (did not eat) for seven days (31:12-13). They remembered the good things Saul did and trusted in God's mercy for all who disobey Him.

Talk about this:

1. Why were the Amalekites enemies of Israel (Exodus 17:8)?
2. Who was with Saul when he died in battle (31:2)?
3. What did the men of Jabesh Gilead do for Saul (31:12-13)?

FROM SIN TO SALVATION THROUGH GOD'S ETERNAL LOVE

The path of sin always leads down, down, to a sad end. Saul did not honour God in his later life and he was killed by God's enemies along with his sons.

David was not perfect, but he always repented of his sin and went on following God. His life teaches us a great lesson: when you fall into sin, do not stay down. Get up, confess your sin to God and He will forgive you. Then go on your way rejoicing.

At the time of Samuel and Saul, God was laying a foundation for the future of Israel. At the time of Samuel and David, He used David to defeat the Philistines who were later destroyed for ever by King Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BC. At the time of Samuel and David, God was laying a foundation not only for the future of Israel but for Israel's Messiah. Through David's family line, Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit to the virgin Mary. In this way, God's chosen king prepared the way for God's chosen Messiah, the Saviour of the world!

A prayer. Thank You Father God that You created life in Your image in the womb of the virgin Mary through Your Holy Spirit. Thank you that this helpless baby was born as the Son of God and in the likeness of the Son of Man, as promised in the Old Testament writings. Thank You that Israel's promised Messiah, Jesus the Christ, came to take the punishment for our sins. Thank you that You planned from the beginning that the personal sacrifice of Your Son's blood was more perfect than all the animal blood sacrificed from the time of Noah. Thank you for Your forgiveness and the change in our lives when Christ's resurrection power works in us through His promised Holy Spirit. Thank you that Jesus came to save Gentiles as well as Jews. Thank You that His passion and power are at work in those who believe He is the Son of God. Thank you also for the compassion of Jesus at work in us to forgive and care for others, so that they too may come to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Seek now faith and eternal salvation in Christ alone!

CONCLUSION

These chapters cover the final years of King Saul's life including the years he rebelled against God. David had to wait seven years until God removed Saul from the throne. During that time David learned to be patient for the LORD God Almighty to act. God reveals some of the plans He has for us but we must avoid hindering those plans by trying to go ahead of God. We must also avoid delaying His plans for us by failing to seek His guidance or obeying in faith. We must therefore listen and act when prompted by the Holy Spirit. Any hindrance or delay will affect His provision for others as well as for ourselves. This is why it is important to spend a quiet time before God every day to listen to His voice.

Whilst David waited for the time when he became king, he had to learn to respect God's purpose for Saul and for others whom God brought into his life such as Abigail and Jonathan. He had to learn to trust in God who had plans that would have a world-wide impact through the role of David's descendants and the birth of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

We read how Saul lost and how David won the kingdom of Israel and also the crown of life mentioned later by Jesus in Revelation 3:11-12.

Published by:
Manna Publications (UK)

Typeset by:
MissionAssist (UK)

Distributed by:

Printed by:

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