

## READING NOTES – MAY

### The One Year Bible (ESV)

#### MAY 1

Although they are not linked in our reading, both Samson and Samuel lived during the same time and both are listed as judges in Israel. I mention this because both of these judges share some common elements and two very strong similarities. They both have unusual birth stories that God takes a lot of time to describe. I wonder why. Also, both were Nazirites from birth. There is an obvious comparison being made, yet it isn't obvious unless you are reading year after year.

I'm including these again at the end of this document, in case you need them.

“Chart of the Judges” - The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 375.

“Canaan in the Days of the Judges” - The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 377.

“The Judges and the Oppressors” - The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 385.

#### **Judges 13-14**

##### Judges 13

V. 1 This entire chapter is the birth story of Samson. That really interests and surprises me. I've never noticed this before. There are some unknowns here. It seems that the Philistines oppressed Israel for 40 years before Samson came on the scene. No other enemy ruled over Israel that long. It seems then that the births of Samson and Samuel, both of whom fought to break the Philistine domination, must have occurred during this time of domination. If you look at the other judges, their victories ended the enemy's rule; but with Samson, his main victory was at his death. And even then, Samuel was still fighting against the Philistines.

Vs. 2-7 Notice who the angel is who makes this announcement to Samson's mother.

Vs. 4-5 Notice that the mother is told to *drink no wine or strong drink* and to *eat nothing unclean*. The only Nazirite condition given to the child is that his hair wouldn't be cut. Samson will violate every Nazirite condition except the cutting of his hair until, well, you know the story. What is interesting is that the only other person in the Bible whose Nazirite birth is spelled out this clearly is John the Baptist.

Vs. 8-14 This is the confirmation of Samson's coming birth. The Word of God was rare in those days. What is interesting is the faith of both of Samson's parents. Apparently the parents obeyed everything *the angel of the Lord* said to them.

Vs. 15-20 This seems just like what Abraham did when the angel of the Lord visited him. Here, the Lord was only interested in sacrifice and devotion, which only the Lord can receive. It is interesting that the Lord allowed the offering to be made in Zorah instead of Shiloh where the tabernacle was. When we see the situation at Shiloh when we get to 1 Samuel it will make sense. Eli's sons were desecrating every sacrifice and were turning the tabernacle into their private brothel.

Vs. 21-23 The result of Samson's parents having had this kind of interaction with the Lord was that it strengthened their faith. Verse 23 probably sums up what the Lord wanted to accomplish.

Vs. 24-25 The Lord blessed Samson. That's amazing. It is hard to understand what this stirring of the Spirit was, since among other things, Samson was not a moral man or a devoted follower of God. It looks like the Lord used Samson in spite of himself. This is not a good role model for kids, even if he had "superhero" strength.

I think the lesson I would see here, for me or us, is that God's blessing and privilege do not determine obedience or gratefulness. These parents were blessed and they obeyed, but Samson will not obey. He is listed in Hebrews 11 for his faith, and God used him, but his faith was mingled with deep rebellion, selfishness and debauchery. Oddly enough, these are the same things Paul warns Christians against in his letters. I think the lesson for us following Christ in the harvest, during this very dangerous time on earth, is to be very careful about our devotion to the Lord and to be alert to what physical and emotional things are tugging at us. We need to understand the tug and take care of it the right, God-honoring way. Like Paul says in Ephesians 5:15, *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

It is instructive to see how both great faith and great disobedience can exist in the same heart. It is scary to see how this caused Samson's own downfall and limited the impact he had in serving God and the nation. David's life will be an even bigger and more profound lesson in this area. And we have popular people and preachers in the church who have fallen. Again, quoting Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:12, *Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

#### Judges 14

Vs. 1-4 Samson's parents seem godly and were right in what they said to their son. Samson was disobedient to them and unconcerned for what would honor God. God didn't sanction this behavior; but in a case like this, God accomplished His own purposes, using a rebellious, immoral, disobedient servant.

Vs. 5-9 Samson's parents exercised their parental duty in overseeing the legal arrangements for the marriage. Maybe they saw Samson go off into the vineyard, thinking he was going there to pray and come to his right mind. That didn't happen, but a strange intersection of divine providence took place. Both in killing the lion and in getting the honey, Samson defiled himself by touching something dead. There is more here than meets the eye. It isn't just that Samson had super strength, God must have given him tough skin and amazing quickness and reflexes not to have been cut or stung.

Vs. 10-18 I'm always amazed by the creativity of Samson. In a way, he was an artist. He was emotional, creative and fun-loving. Also, I'm struck by his raw confidence. He experienced all sorts of very aggressive, hostile situations and remained without apparent fear. It appears he enjoyed the psychological warfare.

Just for some perspective here, The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 405, mentions that the word for feast is "drinking party." Samson was violating the Nazirite vow here too.

V. 17 This is our "hero's" fatal flaw. This is the same thing that will finally break him with Delilah. It isn't just that he gave in to whining women, but that he didn't choose faithful women who loved the Lord.

V. 18 This is really hard to wrap one's head around. This situation represented a defeat and humiliation for Samson. It appears that God designed this entire event to get Samson riled up and to move him to action. It seems to me that if Samson had had a heart for his people and a desire to honor God, he could have found some Philistine injustice to have motivated him to righteous wrath. It seems to me that Samson was indifferent to the plight of Israel or the promise to Abraham. And he definitely liked Philistine women. That God had to do this to get Samson motivated does not speak highly for our superhero.

I think it's interesting that even as Samson expresses his hurt and anger, he makes a very picturesque rhyme.

Vs. 19-20 It is interesting to see that when the Spirit rushes upon Samson, there is a spirit of judgment and anger. Samson isn't the only one this happened to. We've also seen this with Othniel and Gideon and will see it again with King Saul.

This uncontrolled and undefeatable strength is what will keep the Philistines so terrorized, that they will not extend their rule over Israel for the 20 years that Samson is a judge. Samson becomes the unstoppable "terminator" to the Philistines.

None of the judges in the book of Judges took an interest in directing the people to the Lord and encouraging the nation to be unified around their worship. Samuel will begin to do that, yet Samuel's judgeship will be one of conflict with the Philistines too. Here, a guy like Samson with all this potential is used, though very sadly, in spite of his selfishness and arrogance. Here and elsewhere, God will use his appetites and pride to put him in places to strike fear into the enemy. As followers of Christ, this story teaches us that God can use us in spite of our disobedience. As disciples in the harvest, that is the last thing we want. We want to be trained in every way to follow Christ, carrying our crosses as obedient servants in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples into the next generations. I wouldn't mind the strength and creativity, but I'll settle for obedience and humility, seeing fruit that gives glory to the Father and pleasure to our Lord.

### **John 1:29-51**

Vs. 29-34 This testimony is the fulfillment of John the Baptist's ministry. Notice that this was the day after his interrogation by the guys sent from Jerusalem. They probably had left for Jerusalem to report.

John the Baptist has two things to say. Verses 29-31 declare that Jesus is *the Lamb of God*. Verses 32-34 declare that Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Spirit and life. Jesus was baptized with the Spirit and baptizes with the Spirit.

Vs. 35-42 This is how it all began. What is amazing to me is that many of John's disciples did not follow Jesus. Even here listening to John, it took faith and obedience to leave John and follow Jesus. These two disciples of John the Baptist understood that John was sending them to Jesus. These two guys never stopped following Jesus.

Since John, the writer of this Gospel, never refers to himself directly, I suspect that John was the other disciple.

V. 38 According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 275, the word for "stay" is used a lot by the writer and is translated elsewhere in John as "abide." So there is a double meaning here.

We don't hear much from Andrew, yet it was his faith in following that brought Peter to Jesus. The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 275, makes the observation that in the three times we see Andrew in the Gospel of John, he is always bringing someone to Jesus. As you read, look for these.

V. 42 I wonder, at this point, if Jesus had some supernatural insight into Peter's future when He said, *So you are Simon, the son of John*. I've heard people wax eloquent regarding Jesus "taking authority" over Simon by "naming" him. That may be, but I worked with a guy in Germany, Dieter Michel, who always gave nicknames to younger workers he was training and they loved him and followed. It was fun and built a team. We'll see that Jesus had nicknames for some of the other guys too.

We see in v. 28 that this happened *in Bethany across the Jordan* (near Jericho). So this means that Andrew, Peter and John, who lived near Capernaum on the top of the Sea of Galilee, had

traveled a long way (aprox. 90-100 miles) and had left their business to hear and follow John the Baptist. In that sense, they had a very deep spiritual interest to begin with. Jesus was looking for people with this kind of faith to build upon. That is good for us to remember as we are asking the Lord to show us who is ready to be brought into a disciple-making group. Jesus didn't select just anybody.

Vs. 43-51 Within two days of John's testimony, Jesus had three disciples. Now Jesus left this area and went straight up the Jordan River to the north side of the Sea of Galilee and gained two more disciples. We can assume that these guys were ready because of the ministry of John the Baptist. They were all extremely spiritually minded. These guys were more than warm bodies.

Notice that Jesus must have known Phillip and that Phillip probably knew Simon and Andrew. These were not huge cities. Phillip was another man of faith, waiting for the Messiah and he sought out a similar man, a friend named Nathanael. Nathanael is referred to as Bartholomew in other Gospels.

Vs. 47-48 There has to be more to this statement by Jesus than meets the eye. It might have involved a nickname or even something deep in Nathanael's heart that only Nathanael knew he was seeking. Nate's reply, *How do you know me*, would seem sort of insincere unless, in fact, Jesus hit on something that was important to Nathanael.

V. 49 This is interesting. You wonder what the average Jew (assuming Nathaniel was average) thought about the Messiah. Here it is. The Messiah was both the divine *Son of God* and the human *King of Israel*. Understanding that this was how Israel viewed the Christ, you wonder at the unbelief of the religious leaders. Jesus told them He was the Son of God and the Son of Man and they simply refused to believe. For the Messiah to claim these titles would not have been blasphemy. Everyone expected the Messiah to say He was the Son of God.

Vs. 50-51 might allude to what Nathanael was reading or thinking about *under the fig tree*. The image is Jacob resting at Bethel and seeing angels *ascending and descending* from heaven. It might illustrate Nathanael's own seeking to be close to God and His desire to interact with God. If that's the case, Jesus is telling Nathanael that he's about to get his desire and then some.

Not that we fully make use of our privilege, but having the Spirit living in us gives us exactly what Jacob saw and Nathanael desired, full and open communication with God.

It is interesting here that the apostle John is giving us a view of how Jesus first began to build His group of disciples. I think I've already learned a couple things.

## **Psalm 102**

With this psalm, I find I'm back to psalms I can deeply identify with, calling out to God for His answer and help. It is a long psalm with different parts which you'll notice if you use a pencil to mark where the thought changes.

Vs. 1-2 This is the initial, urgent cry for help.

Vs. 3-7 This seems to be the emotional state of the writer. He is suffering both physically and emotionally.

Vs. 8-11 This is the reason he feels like this. His enemies have been able to taunt and harm him and God has let it happen. This is like what happened to David when he had to run from Absalom as God was punishing David for his acts against Bathsheba and Uriah.

Vs. 12-17 It seems that the writer is appealing to God's love for Jerusalem, His promises to Israel and His plan to use this city to draw the nations of the world to Himself.

Vs. 18-22 Zion will be the place from which the Lord shows mercy to the needy, and it will be the place where the needy (including the writer) will praise God as the nations gather there to worship.

Vs. 23-24 This is another appeal of the writer for God to restore him.

Vs. 25-28 God made the earth and He made promises of faithfulness to His servants. The earth will end, but God's promises will be fulfilled. Therefore, our hope is secure because we set our hope on God who remains, and remains faithful.

### **Proverbs 14:15-16**

We talk about simple faith and the faith of the simple. Apparently simple faith is prudent and careful, full of growing discernment regarding God's will. The faith of the fool (simple) seems based on feeling and is reckless and careless. This doesn't answer all the questions, but it does provide some guidelines for the wise.

## **MAY 2**

### **Judges 15-16**

When you read all this about Samson today, you have to wonder what he would have been like if he had been fully devoted to God.

#### Judges 15

Vs. 1-8 According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 406, Samson was actually married to her. What had ensued while he was away was a divorce and remarriage to the best man. Notice in v. 6 she is called his wife. He actually thought he was still married to her.

V. 1 Although Samson, like all men, was driven by the need for oneness, like most men, he only saw this one way, *in the chamber*.

V. 3 This is another of those provoking moments God used to motivate Samson. Samson was driven by his passions and this was revenge for giving away his wife. Too bad he wasn't motivated by justice and love for God.

Vs. 4-5 Think about this. Not only is the destructive creativity pretty high-end, but what kind of skill, speed and strength was required to do this in such a short period of time? This is amazing. Foxes are not known for being slow, stupid or being found in crowds. And they bite (I hear). And then, how do you collect them and tie their tails together with a torch in between? This guy was like Superman.

Vs. 6-7 This wasn't to punish Samson, but they thought to punish this man and his daughter. Now Samson lost his mind, and a mind is a terrible thing to lose.

V. 8 If Samson's intent above was "X" rated (actually, he still thought she was his wife), the violence here was "R" rated. The expression *hip and thigh* meant vicious, deadly violence. Samson was a one-man horror, like the Terminator. Given all of the evidence, I think he also had a sort of invulnerability. If bees couldn't sting him and foxes couldn't bite him, I'll bet spears, swords and arrows didn't do much either, adding to the terror of fighting him. Samson fought by hand. I'm sure someone got close enough to land a blow with a sword. Imagine how discouraging it would have been to slash him, to no other effect than to get him *really* mad.

Just a note here: Some of David's mighty men must have had similar fighting abilities, but Samson was in a class of his own.

Vs. 9-13 In a way you can understand the distress of the men of Judah. Samson wasn't a good guy. He was an egotistical loose cannon and not an encourager or leader of men. Samson could

have led these men against the Philistines. He could have led them in prayer. Instead, he had an idea. He just made them promise not to try to kill him themselves.

Vs. 14-17 The excitement of seeing the Philistines rush toward him and the Spirit rushing upon him sparked Samson into action. Apparently the men of Judah retreated.

V. 15 Obviously a fresh jawbone was preferred over an old, dry, brittle one. What is sort of interesting is that, in the course of human affairs, God had it right there at the right time.

According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary (BKC) there is a word play here, the word for *heap* being similar to the word for *donkey*. In essence, Samson the poet is saying he used the jawbone of a donkey to make donkey heaps. I wonder if he put that to some popular melody and hummed it as he killed these thousand guys.

V. 17 Where he threw the jawbone was thereafter called the "hill of the jawbone." I say this because in some translations it looks like the water comes out of the hollow place in the jawbone. Not so. The water came from the hill of the jawbone.

Vs. 18-20 Notice the faith and familiarity with God that Samson had. He knew that God was there with him. This guy is a complete contrast between faith and following the flesh. While this seems like a mystery, it really explains Christianity today. The Lord has called us to be devoted to Him, following Him in the harvest making disciples. To be doing anything else moves us closer to Samson's kind of faith than we think. Faith and devotion can exist right next to feeding our flesh, enjoying the good life and being virtually ineffective as disciples during our time on earth. This should frighten us.

#### Judges 16

Vs. 1-3 This is definitely not a story for your kids. What stands out to me is Samson's willingness to live in sin and conflict, and his confidence in the presence of the enemy. He walks into one of the Philistines' major cities, in plain view and then bides his time. Since these gates would have been huge, not to mention heavy, for Samson they must have been feather light. This is obviously supernatural and beyond what we can imagine.

Vs. 4-22 Samson was not seduced. He was just arrogantly stupid. He knew what she was after. There was no real trickery. He was the fool of Proverbs and magnificently over confident. He didn't imagine the Lord would leave him. Also, he didn't realize that the root of his need would betray him. What I mean is that Samson really wanted a "one-flesh" companion. We'd say, "a wife." But all of this would have to have been according to God's plan, and Samson wasn't really interested in God's plan. Unfortunately we don't follow God's plans very well either. Samson really wanted someone to trust, but breaking down and getting all vulnerable and honest with the object of his hormonal affections didn't make her the person he was seeking. God left Samson, and the Philistines put out his lights.

Vs. 23-31 This event gives you the sense of how great a relief it was for the Philistines to defeat Samson. It was like Christmas for them. In a final stroke of victory, God lured all of the leaders of the Philistines to Gaza to see what Dagon had done. Again, God used Samson in spite of himself, motivating Samson to ask to avenge the loss of his eyes rather than seeking God's glory.

In contrast to the movie, Samson doesn't tell the kid who shows him where the pillars are to run. You would have thought, with the way Samson asked for help identifying the pillars, that the *young man* would have been smarter.

It is sad to think what might have been if he had been a godly man. I think for any of us who feel that we've messed up "what could have been" by our own disobedience, the answer is in God's grace. Paul, a murderer, began to follow, and look what God did. Even King Manasseh began to

follow. Regardless of lost time and opportunities missed, we can still begin today to follow. Life can become full of regret and tangled like the Gordian knot, but the solution is disarmingly simple. The next decision we make, we decide to honor God, and the one after that and the one after that. Following Christ in the harvest, despite our past failures, gives us a future and brings glory to the Father as we labor to bear fruit for Christ. Satan focuses us on past failure. God focuses us on our Savior, who paid it all for us - past, present and future.

*Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)*

## **John 2**

Vs. 1-12 This is sort of a funny event in Jesus' life, but also His first miracle in front of His disciples. Since John was there for this, he mentions its impact on the disciples in v. 11.

The *third day* is not only a good name for a Christian band, but it is probably the time measured from the last event: The calling of Philip and Nathanael.

There is no way for us to know the family dynamics going on here. I think there was some sense in Mary's understanding that Jesus was sent by God. No one really understood, but you see Mary pressing the issue here for Him to reveal Himself and Jesus' brothers taunt Him later to declare Himself publicly. Whatever was happening, with Jesus talking to Mary like this, I think it is playfully meant and is building off of some of what was known about Jesus in the family. Besides, here Jesus was, this unmarried son without a job. He quit his job, stopped supporting the family (He had four brothers and at least two sisters to carry the load), He was bumming around teaching, and now He had these merry men. Maybe Mary just wanted Him to get the ball rolling.

V. 5 This is funny. In spite of what she just heard, she tells the servants to do what He says. She knew He could and would do something.

V. 7 We are so conditioned by what we know of Jesus, that it would be easy for us to miss what this would have looked like to the servants and to these brand new disciples, as Jesus did this. It would have looked like the world's worst practical joke gone bad. This wasn't a place for a joke. Even using those purification jars was not kosher. There was no way that this could be wine. And then why take water to the steward of the feast? Was this some sort of political statement against wine or weddings or something? No one would have understood what Jesus was doing until the servants drew the liquid out of the jars and saw and smelled that it was different.

V. 10 indicates that this was good, potent wine, not the diluted kind. It was the kind that one usually brought out first, dulling the senses of the guests so they would not notice the poor wine later.

V. 11 Jesus didn't just do a trick or a sign; He manifested His glory. He created. Remember the words in the first chapter of John. All things were made through Him.

V. 12 This seems like a side comment, but Jesus and his family would eventually take up residence at Peter's house in Capernaum.

Vs. 13-25 Jesus will appear at four Passovers during His three years of ministry. This is the first of those Passovers, kind of inaugurating the beginning of His ministry.

The selling of animals and changing of money could have been done in the city, away from the temple. There was a practical need since many Jews came from all over the Roman Empire. They needed animals and they needed to change their currency. This was all understandable.

However, the fact that they did it in the temple in the court of the nations (Mark 11:17), was not only racism (the hating of Gentiles which would invade the church in Acts), but it was in denial of God's plan of redemption for man, the promise to Abraham, and God's design for Israel. This wasn't just some little noise Jesus was making in protest to the corruption of the priesthood. He, as the Savior of all men, was coming to the place all nations were to gather to receive forgiveness from Him. Someday, all men of all nations will come to the temple in Jerusalem and meet Jesus. Jesus had a right to do what He did.

Notice that the order of oxen and sheep is inverted from v. 14 to v. 15. It would have been easier to get the oxen out of the temple by scaring the sheep. Then the oxen would have moved too. That makes you think about the importance of little details in reading. Speaking of which, notice that Jesus didn't throw over the tables of those selling pigeons. He told the sellers to take them away. No animals were hurt in the performing of this cleansing.

V. 17 The disciples thought of this verse. The Holy Spirit was helping out.

V. 18 This is Jesus' first confrontation. In this sense, Jesus was like Samson. He invited hostility and His reply was not only cryptic, but was an "in your face" reply. We don't understand the severity, in God's eyes, of stiff-arming the Gentiles and using their court as a farmers' market. Jesus cleansed the temple on His first visit and on His last visit to Jerusalem during the Passover. What He said to the Pharisees here was cryptic, but the disciples remembered it later and believed. Also, the priests and Pharisees eventually got the point too. That's why they demanded to have the garden tomb guarded. They believed something, but believed it in the way that sin and hate believe and still irrationally try to defeat the truth.

Vs. 23-25 Jesus understood the deep deadly sickness of sin in the people and understood not to entrust Himself to them. It is hard to know what the people actually had faith in. Whatever it was, Jesus didn't trust it. This mixture of faith and folly was in Samson, and it's in us, too. It is good for us as disciples to remember that we also have a deep irrationality because of sin. If not for the Spirit, I don't think we'd stand a chance of warding it off. Imagine what it is like for people who don't know Christ. We need to be wise, humble and understanding.

In John, Jesus will eventually define being a disciple as abiding in Him. It isn't just remaining in Him, but it is a kind of faith that redefines us. Paul probably described it best when he said in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

This is the kind of faith that makes a disciple in the harvest a fisher of men and a maker of disciples.

### **Psalm 103**

This seems like the psalm that launched a thousand songs. I found allusions to at least six songs in it. There is not only strength of hope for His people, but the confirmation of salvation for those who seek Him. You'll find plenty to underline, like the phrase *steadfast love*. David must have written this in his early days as King of Israel, having brought the ark to Jerusalem. It seems that all of his suffering and waiting on God had borne fruit in his confidence and praise to God.

Vs. 1-5 This is the call to worship, summarizing God's salvation and renewal of those who trust Him.

Vs. 6-13 This seems to praise God's justice, discipline, love and forgiveness. For David, this was like summing up all of the years of running from Saul into one declaration of God's wise and sovereign working.

Vs. 14-19 Not only is there love, personally, but it is faithful love over generations and connected to the promise to Abraham. Through David's kingship, God would finally bring the peace to Israel. All of the confusion of the book of Judges was gone and godly order would arrive. David saw that God was using him for the nation and to bring some fulfillment to the covenant with Abraham.

Vs. 20-22 All of creation was being called to bless the Lord.

### **Proverbs 14:17-19**

The thought of God's steadfast love makes a person prudent and slow to anger. Since He is in control, even to the place of making sure the fresh jawbone of a donkey is where it can be obtained when needed, we who are loved by Him can wait patiently as the storm rages around us and look for what the Lord is doing.

A *quick temper* is a denial of God's presence in the present. Being simple is ignorance of God's Word. God's Word is to make us prudent and alert and good, having the confidence to be godly in an evil world.

## **MAY 3**

### **Judges 17-18**

This is the first of two snapshots given to show the depth of the religious confusion that followed when Israel refused to love and obey the Lord. The first story deals with the religious apostasy and the second deals with the moral apostasy. You could title the stories "worse" and "worser." Looking at Romans 1:18-32, you see that religious confusion always precedes moral catastrophe.

We will get two more views into this time period in the book of Ruth and in the early history of 1 Samuel. Ruth will show some confusion, but overall, this book will show us people who followed God. 1 Samuel will show one family that seems fairly balanced, but it will also show a corrupt priesthood and the defiled worship at the tabernacle.

#### Judges 17

What stands out in this story is the sincerity of the mixing of the true and the false. These people were highly sincere, yet couldn't have been more lost.

The time when this takes place might be very important. Look at Judges 18:30. It identifies the Levite as *Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses*. A couple of considerations here. In most copies of the OT, Moses' name is found. It is thought that a well meaning scribe added an "n" to turn "Moses" into "Manasseh" and get Moses off the hook. They have so many copies of the OT that they can see that this is an error. Also, it is possible that Jonathan was not the son of Gershom, but a grandson or great grandson, etc. There are instances of a grandson being called the son of someone and the generations in between are skipped. I think he was the grandson. And to think that this guy was related to Moses.

However this works out, there are two terrible dynamics at work here. First, this shows that after Joshua's generation died (Joshua told the people in his farewell speech to put away their foreign gods), the nation sank into almost immediate spiritual confusion. Gershom, Moses' son, would have been that generation of elders who lived with Joshua. Jonathan would have been the next generation. Second, it means that even those closest to the truth, the family of Moses, became too busy with life to really know the law (Bible) well. The system God set up, and the nation He created, could only function if everyone obeyed. If the people didn't worship, they wouldn't support the Levites. If the Levites had to fend for their own living, they couldn't learn and teach

the law as they were supposed to. It was all very interconnected. Apparently very few obeyed and the nation fell apart immediately.

So what was the cause, besides sin? This reminds me of something Jesus repeatedly told His disciples, as in Matthew 6:25, *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”* What Jesus is warning against is not just anxiety, but allowing these things to take our attention away from serving Him on this earth. It was because of this preoccupation that Israel never celebrated a Sabbatical year or the Feast of Booths. Like Israel we forget that we are not here to live; we are here to serve. God says He’ll take care of the rest. That means as disciples we are free to devote our hearts to following our Lord in the harvest. Or as Jesus put it in Luke 12:33-36, *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.*

I know this seems hard to grasp and other worldly, but if we cannot grasp the spirit of what Jesus is saying, as disciples, we could end up like Samson, or the story we are about to read.

Vs. 1-6 Notice the editor's note in v. 6. That means this is written during the time when there was a king and order was taking root, looking back on this time of lawlessness.

V. 2 The mother praised God and then dedicated the money to God, to make an idol. They were sincere in their belief and service, and totally displeasing to God. How awful.

Some of what she did here was to remove the curse she put upon whoever stole the money.

V. 4 Either she made two images or it was simply one process, the wooden image, covered with silver.

V. 5 Micah's shrine is a little, eclectic temple, filled with something from all the gods of the land. Notice that he has an ephod. I think the ephod was a tool for discerning the will of the gods. In Israel, the ephod held the Urim and Thummim. In chapter 18, I think, it gets used.

God had put the ephod with the high priest at the tabernacle. One aspect of our need and our worship is to find answers to our questions. The key is really the relationship with God, on His terms, not ours. Still, God set up a way for answers to be found. All you had to do was go to the tabernacle. Well, if the tabernacle was far away, and if the priests and Levites couldn't be trusted, why not have your own ephod and your own Urim and Thummim? This got Gideon in trouble and we see here, in this story, it began years before Gideon, in fact, right after Joshua died.

Vs. 7-13 This brings the confusion to a stellar level. A Levite of the best upbringing is totally lost.

V. 13 is an incredibly ignorant and sincere statement.

## Judges 18

Vs. 1-6 Notice again that v. 1 is a commentary given at a later date to explain the sin and confusion of this particular time in Israel's history. You don't flaunt your ignorance in your national literature, unless this isn't national literature, but the record of God's redemptive working with humans, sick with sin.

The tribe of Dan never controlled the land of their inheritance and must have begun looking for a place to live very early.

Vs. 5-6 I think this is where the Levites used the Urim and Thummim to give them advice. Apparently you could get a pair of these at any convenience store.

Vs. 7-26 This story is very straightforward and spiritually dysfunctional. For the tribe of Dan to steal the idol and the ephod and take the Levite made perfect sense, since they were a tribe and these things were better in the service of a tribe of Israel, than for a single individual. The irrationality here is of epic proportions. What kind of god do you have if you can steal him?

Vs. 27-31 The significance of this story is not only the description of the spiritual ignorance and confusion, but it shows how Dan was the first tribe to go entirely apostate.

Vs. 30-31 Dan as a tribe set up official worship away from the tabernacle; after all, it would have been a long way to walk. Some of the tribe of Dan stayed in the south on the original homestead and were spared this apostasy: Samson's parents for example. Verse 30 is like a surprise unveiling in a movie. The Levite turns out to be the grandson of Moses. This shows that the Levitical system and the worship at the tabernacle must have gone to seed pretty soon after the death of Joshua. Again, remember that in Joshua's last address, he was warning people to put away their idols.

In Revelation 7:2-8, when the 144,000 are selected to give testimony during the Tribulation, there is no mention of the tribe of Dan. The presumed reason is that Dan was the first tribe to fall into total idolatry and apostasy. In other words, the punishment for what they did here is that they were removed as a tribe of Israel. Those who were true to the Lord would have been absorbed into the other tribes through intermarriage. After the exile, too, many people lost track of their genealogy and family tree.

It is obvious that our "need" for spiritual connection can be sincere and still be controlled by the power of sin in us. We cannot deny the need, but we can deny God and make "spirituality" what we define it to be. This is tragic and true. What is alarming in this story is that it only took one generation to fall into total confusion. That is very sobering, especially with our desire today not to be bored and to have our needs met. Our churches have been built, in previous generations, by men and women committed to the truth. They sat through boring sermons in very plain services being built on very strong teaching. I'm not confident that same emphasis exists today. As a result, and all the studies show it, our biblical literacy is plummeting. We have more resources than any generation that has ever lived, yet we insist that reading the Bible is just not "the way" we learn. And we don't sit through sermons that are full of teaching and content. Paul's command to Timothy was to preach the Word urgently, because people would turn from listening to the truth and seek teaching that tickled their ears. I think we need that same charge today, and leaders need not be ashamed to expect and exhort people to read their Bibles every day.

### **John 3:1-21**

Vs. 1-16 It seems that Nick sought Jesus out of his own interest, otherwise there would have been two or more witnesses with him from the Pharisees. Nicodemus will be mentioned a couple more times in a good way.

V. 3 Jesus' words were trying to force Nick away from his focus on the signs, to what was going on behind the signs. Even though Nick was a "spiritual leader," he was fixated on the physical.

*Born again* is the right interpretation as seen in Nick's question of crawling back in his mother's womb. He understood what Jesus meant, but the spiritual dimension was too deep for him.

V. 6 Jesus was trying to get Nick to see that before there is entrance into heaven, there has to be a spiritual birth. Like most religious people, Nick focused on behavior and rules. Sin is the most powerful force on the earth. Without a new spiritual life (the breaking of sin's power in

repentance, forgiveness and regeneration) and the help of the Holy Spirit (every minute, every day, leading us in the Word to obediently follow our Savior), we'd be toast.

V. 7 The wind illustration simply says there are things you can't see, but they are real. The spiritual is real and the spiritual life is real. The same word for wind also means spirit.

V. 14 So what is the point here? I think it is that the cure for those people was unseen and spiritual. It didn't come through medicine or cutting the wounds and sucking out the poison. It came transmitted invisibly and spiritually through faith. But, you had to believe and you had to look at the brass serpent. In the same way, salvation and rebirth come through faith and turning to the object of that faith, Jesus.

V. 16 This is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible for good reason. It is the gospel in a sentence, beginning with God's love and ending with our salvation in Christ.

Vs. 17-21 I memorized these verses the first year I gave my life to Christ. In fact, I think they were part of the Awana leader's memory verses, and not knowing any better, I thought I was supposed to memorize them because I was an Awana leader. I was overwhelmed by the timelessness and simplicity of this truth. This is exactly why people don't come to Christ.

### **Psalm 104:1-23**

What a beautiful psalm.

Vs. 1-4 This seems to express the grandeur of God being surrounded by what He created, framing Him and giving glory to Him.

Notice that v. 4 is quoted in Hebrews 1:7, where "winds" mean spirits. (See the note on John 3:7 above.)

Vs. 5-9 Here it shows God's control and power over the might and chaos of His creation.

Vs. 10-13 Through God's power, He uses the forces of nature to feed and water the creatures He made.

Vs. 14-15 Not only does God care for animals, but He cares for mankind, each day. I had to laugh because I looked in a commentary and it mentioned the oil and food, but skipped the "W" word. God made it, too, for a purpose, but like all the good things God made, there needs to be control.

Vs. 16-18 These animals are probably mentioned by David, because David saw these as he lived in the mountains. These animals are hidden from and forgotten by man, but never by God.

Vs. 19-23 Notice that the creation of the moon and sun is mentioned for the same purposes expressed in the creation account in Genesis. This means, especially given that the sun, moon, planets and stars were created on the fourth day, that their sole purpose was for us and the rest of His creation on earth to mark times and seasons, day and night. There was already light for three days before God made the sun.

Notice the mentions of power, provision, protection and control in this psalm.

So, what does this psalm say to you? How did God intend this psalm to strengthen our hearts?

### **Proverbs 14:20-21**

I think v. 21 is telling the rich guy in v. 20 to make friends with the poor, who is his neighbor in both verses. That sure sounds like, "Love your neighbor as yourself," to me. It's amazing where you find that command.

## MAY 4

Like most people, I love things in chronological order. In fact, I assume things are in chronological order. When I read the Chronicles of Narnia to my kids, I read book six to them first. Before I read the Lord of the Rings, I made myself read The Hobbit first, just to get the right order of things. People who don't write things in chronological order are "artsy," and will be tolerated if they do a good job and get stuff straightened out in the end and don't lose us in between.

In Judges, God is "artsy," in that the final two stories, chronologically, would have been placed toward the beginning. Apparently He felt this was a better idea. Interestingly, the two stories are in chronological order to each other. So, again, before we read Judges for today, it is good to know that this event happened within the decades immediately after Joshua's death. Look at Judges 20:28, Phinehas is the high priest. It is hard to give an exact time, but it is within the life time of Phinehas, who probably was in his 30's or 40's when Joshua died. This will make a few things we read today a little more understandable. It will make other things we read very alarming.

### Judges 19-20

#### Judges 19

Vs. 1-20 There are some similarities to the previous story in that this man was a Levite. This "wife" had been unfaithful to him, but he wanted her back, so all was well. Bethlehem is mentioned in both stories and Ephraim is mentioned in both stories. Both stories tragically involve an entire tribe departing from God.

I always wonder when I read this why 10 verses are devoted to the guy trying to get away from his father-in-law. I guess it might have to do with the sense of hospitality or the lack of purposefulness in life. Apparently the guys enjoyed each other's company.

V. 12 This verse is utterly ironic.

Vs. 14-15 In any event, once they arrive in the town square of Gibeah, you start getting that "Sodom and Gomorrah" feeling. No one offered them hospitality, making it necessary for them to remain exposed in the town square.

Vs. 16-21 This is exactly what happened when Lot found the two angels sitting in the square of Sodom.

Vs. 22-26 So here is a city of Israel, of Benjamin, that has gone "Sodom." How did that happen? Apparently it wasn't known far and wide, or this man would have stayed among the Gentiles in Jerusalem (Jebus).

No angels were there to save them so the man gave the mob his unfaithful wife rather than the virgin daughter of his host. Whatever happened to protecting the womenfolk? Apparently they didn't watch westerns back then. I find this repulsive all the way around.

Vs. 27-30 This Levite seems scared and heartless to me. Sending around "pieces" was a custom to call all the tribes together. It meant that if they didn't answer the call and show up, they would wind up like the animal. Later, King Saul will call Israel together using the pieces of an ox. That these were the pieces of his maid-wife, a human, made this shocking and alarming. It got everyone's attention.

Notice the mention of Egypt. This is another clue that this generation was still near to the Exodus and the generation of Joshua.

## Judges 20

Vs. 1-7 There are some interesting things here. First, notice the mention of *from Dan to Beersheba*. This means from north to south. Apparently the tribe of Dan (and yesterday's event) had already taken place and the tribe of Dan had migrated from the middle of Israel to the northernmost point. Just like in Romans 1:18ff, the defection from God took place before the moral defection.

If you look at the map you'll see that the people gathered before the Lord at Mizpah, south of Shiloh and just four miles north of Gibeah. This doesn't mean the tabernacle was there. It means that they gathered together to inquire of the Lord. Apparently the tabernacle was still eight miles north at Shiloh. Next to Mizpah was Bethel, and it seems that the ark of the covenant was in Bethel for some reason. You might think that Phinehas brought the ark to Bethel because it was closer to the battle, but v. 27 gives you the idea that the ark was there on a permanent basis. This was not normal.

Vs. 8-17 The repetition that caught my eye in this chapter was *as one man*. This is another one of those things that shows it was early in the history of Israel. Later, during the time of Samson and Samuel, it is hard for the nation to do anything unified. Samuel, in leading Israel, will bring unity to the nation in worship.

Just the mention of Israel having 400,000 men and Benjamin having only 26,000 gives you a funny feeling. It is almost a shock to see that Benjamin wouldn't hand over the men of Gibeah. I guess they had confidence in their 700 special forces guys.

Vs. 18-25 The people did the right things in assembling and questioning God (Phinehas and the Urim and Thummim) and seeking only to punish the guilty in Gibeah. So, a huge question is, "Why did God tell Israel to fight Benjamin twice, but allow them to lose twice?" In those two battles, Israel lost 40,000 men. Why did God allow them to lose twice?

Vs. 26-28 I think that God wanted to bring the people to a real place of desperate dependence and humility. Actually, it is probable that all of the tribes were sinning at this point. The offerings would have been to confess and cleanse their own sin. I think God allows us to meet disaster for the same reasons. It is often after a defeat, that we become desperate and honest in seeking God's will and mind, and we begin confessing our sins. The sacrifices should have come first. Having hearts cleansed should have been the first priority.

I get the feeling that the people were so desperate, they finally decided to try to do everything according to the book. Just for trivia, God didn't spare David either when David decided to transport the ark on a wagon. After he lost one man in that adventure, David went to the Bible and figured out how God wanted it done, with the Levites carrying it with poles and with sacrifices and offerings for sin and for thanks.

Notice that this is the first mention of Phinehas and notice that the people moved from Mizpah to Bethel where the ark was located. Something is not right here. When we get to Judges 21:4, the people will build an altar at Bethel to sacrifice. If the tabernacle was there, they would have had an altar. But apparently the altar they were using at Bethel was just stones, and after the sacrifices were finished, it needed to be rebuilt. This is all hard to grasp because Israel was forbidden to sacrifice anywhere but at the tabernacle and then only on one altar. And, only the priest could do the sacrificing. The feel of this whole thing is wrong.

Vs. 29-48 When everything was finished, Israel had lost 65,000 soldiers, plus Israel destroyed at least 20,000 people in the towns of Benjamin. Only 600 people of Benjamin were living. Just think, an entire tribe was reduced to 600 men. In Numbers 26:41, before the people crossed the

Jordan, Benjamin numbered 45,600 people. This means that Israel killed at least 45,000 men of Benjamin.

### **John 3:22-4:3**

This is another one of those rich sections of Scripture with the gospel in it.

Vs. 22-24 No one knows where this was, but it is supposed that it was directly east of Shechem (see the map for Judges) on the Jordan River. Many of John's disciples stayed with him and became "johnites," instead of followers of Jesus.

Vs. 25-30 This conflict led John the Baptist to set the record straight.

V. 27 This is a very interesting statement for church planters and for those who puzzle over church growth, especially for churches who are "right," but reaching no one, criticizing bigger churches who are "wrong," but ministering to people. Obviously, there are some standards for evaluation of truth and error, but within the believing church, this is a good statement to keep in mind before we blast our brother.

Jesus will use this "bride" imagery later, after Matthew's dinner for Jesus, to ease the tension with these disciples as the Pharisees try to pit John's followers against Jesus. Somehow this talk got back to Jesus and He used it.

V. 30 This is the famous statement that older church leaders need to be preparing to make. Making disciples means equipping and installing the next generation of leaders, now. For older leaders their joy should be complete, not in holding power until it is pried from their lifeless fingers, but from seeing those who they have trained go beyond them. In this case, John hadn't mentored Jesus; he had gone before Him and borne witness to Him.

Vs. 31-36 These verses seem to be a commentary by the writer, the apostle John. What a meaningful statement in such few words. Notice how true belief is defined in the context of these verses. To *believe* in, but not *obey* Jesus, is not to *believe*. Jesus will really expand on this on His next Passover visit in John 5.

Notice that not to *obey/believe* Jesus is equal to having never seen life. How ironic to have lived on earth for years, but never to have seen life.

### **John 4:1-3**

This is setting us up for tomorrow. This is why Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee. Tomorrow we will see that Jesus took the short-cut.

As disciples following our Lord in the harvest, our privilege is in seeing someone come to Christ and finally to know life. Nothing beats that. Then to see them become a disciple who makes disciples, who makes disciples in the harvest is what makes our joy full.

### **Psalm 104:24-35**

Continuing to expound on God's glory from yesterday.

Vs. 24-26 This is sort of like what God says in Job. His wisdom in all aspects of creation is beyond our understanding.

Vs. 27-30 Every creature on the earth is utterly dependent on God, regardless of their number or their obscurity. The same holds true for mankind.

Vs. 31-32 This shows that the joy of the Lord and the fear of the Lord can stand side by side.

Vs. 33-35 Verses 33, 34 and the end of 35 show the proper response of people to God. The sinners and the wicked are those who ignore God. You can understand why the psalmist thinks

they should be removed. When they are removed, then all of mankind will be totally free to give God the glory He is due.

Matthew 13:41-43 *The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

### **Proverbs 14:22-24**

In v. 24 I understand that wisdom is the wealth and crown of the wise. There are a lot of people who are wise in Christ and "rich," who are not rich in money; and many of them live in the third world making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples, hungering now for the sake of His kingdom.

## **MAY 5**

### **Judges 21**

Vs. 1-7 This event just keeps getting worse. What I find interesting in all of this is that Israel asks God about fighting, but they don't appear to ask God regarding a solution to the problem with Benjamin and where to get wives for them. They sought God for something difficult like fighting and then, when their lives weren't at stake, they said, "We can figure this out on our own." I've always wondered why there was no direct question to the Lord and why there was no answer.

It seems to me that things had fallen apart with the worship at the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant was easier to move, and possibly they moved the inner sanctuary (Holy of Holies) with it. In 1 Samuel we have the ark being moved and brought into battle, and afterward, the ark is separated from the tabernacle for years. It seems then, that Phinehas brought the ark to Bethel, but the tabernacle and altar and lampstand, etc., remained in Shiloh. So when they sacrificed at Bethel, they needed to build an altar.

Even in their worship and inquiry, there is something here that is not right. The Lord doesn't say anything. The verdict, *Everyone did what was right in his own eyes*, was spreading like a cancer in almost everything that happened in Israel. Keep in mind that this event and the event in chapters 17 and 18 happened within the first 60 years Israel was in the land.

V. 5 The oath they took doesn't seem to have been from the Lord, but rather, it was what the leaders thought was a good idea. This is reminiscent of Jephthah and the misguided vow he made. It made some sense that anyone who didn't send a representative to the battle was in some way saying they agreed with the men of Gibeah or didn't think cleansing the land was important.

Vs. 8-12 Somehow this doesn't strike me as just or smart or honorable. It just seemed good to them and they got 400 brides out of the deal. And the death toll that Benjamin is responsible for kept rising.

Vs. 19-24 The next big idea was to allow 200 men from Benjamin to kidnap the young women from Shiloh. Brilliant!?!?! I wonder how God would have weighed in on that idea if they had asked Him.

V. 25 This verse seems to give the commentary on all of this activity. They did not inquire of the Lord. They followed their own mind and "god" thoughts and feelings.

As disciples, we don't want to be wooden and rigid in seeking God's will, but we don't want to just live by good and godly feelings. I think it is good for us to consider God in every decision we make, just to stay in the habit. If we can just buy thing after thing, and watch show after

show, go where we want and do what we want, without really laying it before God, I think we might be kidding ourselves. Maybe we're not really following God and His Word at all, just our "god" thoughts.

*Ephesians 5:15-17 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

## **Ruth 1**

As Samuel is writing the history contained in Judges and in Ruth, God is also using him to help the nation accept the upcoming kingship of David. Although David would not become the king of Israel until after Samuel's death, Samuel had already anointed David as king years before he died.

We've noticed that Bethlehem appears in these last stories in Judges. Bethlehem is also the main stage of the story of Ruth. This last story about Benjamin will also be important as we enter 1 Samuel, since the first king of Israel, Saul, will be from Benjamin. In the 380 years after the near destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe grew. King Saul will be from this infamous area and in his first battle, the battle that brings him into prominence as a king, it will be to protect the people living in Jabesh-gilead. That city would have been near and dear to the tribe of Benjamin since that's where many of them have ancestry to that city through their great-great-great grandmothers. Unfortunately King Saul will become the mortal enemy of David, so God is showing the nation of Israel the importance of Bethlehem so they will welcome a couple of very important men who will be born there.

V. 1 This took place during the days of the judges. The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 415, suggests that this might have taken place during the judgeship of Gideon. Who knows? Since we know that Ruth's son will be Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of King David, these time references put this event a couple of generations before Samuel and Samson.

V. 2 Notice with this story, and in the last two stories in Judges, there is another mention of Bethlehem. This area of Israel was taking on dominance, and this story in particular points to God's selection of David as king. So then, even in all of this history, God's plan of redemption is working. A tribe, Judah, has been given a privileged standing and now the region around Bethlehem and Jerusalem is becoming, not just the geographical center of Israel, but the redemptive center as well.

Vs. 1-14 I don't know that Elimelech did anything bad in leaving. I don't read that it was somehow God's punishment that all these guys died. We have the advantage of seeing God's plan in this. They didn't. As disciples, we learn not to judge God because of chaos in our lives. God is working for good.

It looked like one of the boys married OPRAH, but alas, it is really ORPAH.

Vs. 15-18 Somewhere in this, there is not only loyalty, but also great faith on Ruth's part. She was literally turning her back on her previous way of life. Whatever this family was doing, even in dying and doubting their way, they were a testimony to these two women. Ruth couldn't find a home anymore apart from Naomi and her ways, and part of "her ways" was the worship of Yahweh. Apparently Ruth fully believed in Yahweh.

Vs. 19-22 One irony we see here that Naomi didn't see was that she came back bitter and empty in her own eyes, but we see Ruth with her. Bringing Ruth back was probably the point of the entire ten-year adventure. God had been in control and He was still in control.

V. 22 They returned around the time of the Passover. There is a lot of redemption going on here. The BKC also mentions the frequency of the forms of the word, *return*. This morning I was reading that the pairs of apostles Jesus sent out, preached the gospel "that men should repent" ...that is, the gospel says to turn from sin and turn toward God. I think that the image of turning or returning is part of the early story in Ruth.

### **John 4:4-42**

You know this story, and you'll make lots of great observations.

Vs. 4-6 Just for trivia, this place is probably Shechem from the OT (Joshua 24:32). A lot of history took place there, in particular, the blessings and curses and the renewal of the covenant in Joshua 8:33-34.

Vs. 7-15 I think the most instructive thing for me was that Jesus understood this situation as being laid before Him by His Father. I think this is one of those situations that shows us how Jesus abided in the Father and how we as disciples abide in Christ.

Vs. 16-18 This was the Spirit giving Jesus some insider information at a critical time.

Vs. 19-26 I've read this story several times and have never understood, as many preachers say, that she was trying to get Jesus off onto a side issue. It seems to me that when she realized that Jesus was a prophet, she asked a question that was important for her, and Jesus gave her a very direct and sensitive answer. Her response shows she had an open heart.

Vs. 27-30 Apparently you didn't talk to strange women. This was culturally stretching for the disciples. I always chuckle at the people going out to meet Jesus, especially since she told them that Jesus knew everything she had ever done. You might have had a lot of scared husbands and suspicious wives running out to speak to Jesus first.

Vs. 31-38 And then Jesus used this to teach His disciples what we are supposed to be doing on earth.

V. 34 Somehow I think this needs to be truer of me and all of us with each passing day.

V. 35 I believe this. Lord, help my unbelief.

Vs. 39-42 What an amazing story. The Father created the situation; the Spirit supplied the information and nudged the Son; and the Son saved the lost and trained His disciples. Somehow I think this has something to do with abiding in Christ.

### **Psalm 105:1-15**

This is the first of three days we'll be reading this psalm. It is probably written by David to unify the nation in worshiping in Jerusalem. David is confirming that the present events are God's blessing as promised in the promise to Abraham to save and bless Israel and draw all nations to Him through Israel.

Vs. 1-6 The peoples are the nations or Gentiles. Notice that Israel is always identified in Abraham. Notice the commands of celebration: call, make known, sing, tell, glory, rejoice, seek and remember. This would preach.

Vs. 7-11 Now notice the words, *He* and *His*. This is the God who makes covenants, and promises His love and faithfulness.

Vs. 12-15 And not only does He promise, He proves it with His power.

David is using God's faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham, to motivate the nation to follow God in the covenant with Moses. The covenant with Moses said that if they obeyed, God would bless them as a nation. The covenant with Abraham says that God will redeem Israel and use

them to offer redemption to all nations. Both covenants stood side by side, but faith in the promise to Abraham enabled the people to pursue God in obeying the covenant under Moses.

### **Proverbs 14:25**

The truth saves. Period. No amount of "foggy speak," even Christian "foggy speak," saves lives. Disciples should lovingly tell people what their master says and let Him take the heat.

### **MAY 6**

#### **Ruth 2-4**

As you read these chapters, notice how different the spiritual tone is here, compared to what we've read in Judges. One man like Boaz influenced a very small community. Notice that Boaz tells Ruth to stay in his fields and not to go to the fields of others. Naomi even warns Ruth against this. The danger of her being sexually molested was real. Boaz didn't have a huge influence that changed all the neighbors, but these fields and these servants were affected by this guy who loved God. One of the surprises is that Boaz is very kind to Ruth. Or is it that surprising? I think Boaz's family history shaped him in this story. There are some notable men and women in his background including Tamar and Rahab, two Gentile women.

#### **Ruth 2**

Vs. 1-3 It is interesting that suddenly everything began going the right way. There was this great guy named Boaz, and Ruth just happens to end up in his field. Regardless of how things go, God is always involved and we follow, but it is nice to see how He can smooth the way. Boaz and his kinship to Elimelech is mentioned a lot.

Vs. 4-7 Boaz seems like a good guy and he was very observant.

Vs. 8-13 In Boaz you see the wise man of Proverbs and lover of God in one glance. It was possible to follow God during the times of the judges. Remember too, that this story is describing the family background and spiritual heritage of David. And for that matter, this is the family background of Jesus.

Notice that Boaz mentions that Ruth has taken shelter under God's wings.

Vs. 14-16 In response to Ruth's humble answer, Boaz really gets kind. I wonder if he was having stirrings. ☺

Vs. 17-23 According to John Reed in the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), p. 423, this was quite a haul for one day's work, about 30 pounds of flour. During these weeks it could be that both Boaz and Ruth began getting the idea that God was bringing them together. I say this because Boaz had already looked into the legalities of who was the nearest kinsman. As we'll see in chapter 3, Naomi was also revived in spirit and was playing matchmaker.

#### **Ruth 3**

Vs. 1-5 Apparently the threshing floor was a public place used by everyone. It would have been reserved for this day by Boaz; then when they finished, they would have celebrated and Boaz would have slept there to guard the barley until it could be hauled away in the morning. This was a fairly private meeting place. Ruth was told to uncover Boaz's feet and lie down. I have heard some bizarre explanations of what this was. I think it is simply what it says. It was cold. She uncovered his feet and lay at his feet and when he woke up to cover them up again, holy moly, there was a woman! And that's all this was.

Vs. 6-13 Although Boaz was surprised, he understood what was happening and was honored. In what she was doing, Ruth was being obedient to Naomi and she was honoring God.

V. 12 Apparently Boaz had already given thought to taking responsibility for Elimelech's family. This was the real issue. It didn't have to do with a field; it had to do with preserving the name and inheritance of a dead brother or relative. It was no small matter and involved some risk. In essence, Boaz could have lost his name and all of this land would have gone into the dead man's name.

Vs. 14-18 They both kept the matter very quiet, but Boaz showed Ruth that he meant business by sending her away with more barley.

Ruth 4

Vs. 1-6 So, the other redeemer just happened to pass by. What a break. Notice v. 6. The risk was that the child would be called the son of Mahlon, who was the heir of Elimelech and husband of Ruth. This guy was afraid of having his name lost and his property belonging, not just to his son through Ruth in the name of Mahlon, but to those of another family. Boaz had no fear of this because he knew he was following the Lord.

Vs. 7-10 Here is the public ceremony of the one guy giving up his right as a redeemer. This is very significant and very symbolic that Boaz is now recognized as the redeemer.

Vs. 11-12 Notice that the people knew the family heritage of Boaz. Boaz's background was special in that two Gentile women were part of it, and Boaz was in the lineage of the Messiah.

Vs. 13-17 Don't you like a happy ending, finally? If Samuel was writing this, it was probably after he had anointed that teenage boy, David, to be the future king of Israel.

Vs. 18-22 Notice here that although Boaz had a son who should have been named for Ruth's first husband, Mahlon, God honored Boaz. Boaz is the named father of Obed in the line of David.

One slight tension in this text is that we can pinpoint the time when Boaz and Ruth lived, because of the lineage of David, from Boaz to David. But between Boaz and Salmon there are about 250-300 years. Now, people back then did live a little longer than today, but obviously some of the people in between are not mentioned. But this isn't a huge problem. It was common to call someone the "son" of a famous forefather. For example, Jesus is called "the son of David" meaning the descendant of David, not the immediate birth son of David.

#### **John 4:43-54**

Vs. 43-45 Although Jesus went to Galilee, He didn't go back to Nazareth. It is only in Nazareth, twice, that the words of v. 44 are quoted. Nazareth (in the territory of Zebulun) was His own country. Instead, Jesus went to live in Capernaum (in the territory of Naphtali).

Vs. 46-50 Jesus' sharp response to the official was to see how sincere he was. The man was humble and was not there to see a sign, but to save his son. The fact that he came to Jesus meant that he believed. That Jesus simply told him to go, and that his son would be well without Jesus going with him, is a great proof of the faith of this man.

Vs. 51-54 The impact of this man meeting his servants must have been known among the disciples. The apostle John knew, so the others must have known also.

The thing in this passage that speaks to me as a disciple is in vs. 50 and 53. The correspondence between hearing what Jesus said, believing His Word and doing it is what makes a disciple. Jesus never would have found this kind of faith in Nazareth. I think Jesus wants this kind of faith among His laborers in the harvest who make disciples, who also have this same kind of faith.

We forget in all of this proof of Jesus' identity, that as we work in the harvest we are introducing people to the only person who can make sense of this tragedy on earth. We obey, but we are compelled because of His amazing love and gentleness. He suffered so that we can be saved. We

follow out of love and give our lives so that others can know Him and be saved and follow Him. We spend our lives so that disciples can be made who will make disciples for Him into the generations to come, until He comes. And He is loving and compassionate. He is our source of hope and He hears when we cry out to Him.

### **Psalm 105:16-36**

We are in the middle of a psalm, probably written by David, celebrating the faithfulness of God to Abraham in saving Israel and giving them order through David. Underline or circle every occurrence of *He*, and see if that helps you get to the point of this psalm and what it means to us.

Vs. 16-24 Notice that God afflicted Joseph in order to save Israel. Joseph was then blessed so that the people could be blessed. This was what God did in faithfulness to His promise to Abraham.

Vs. 25-36 Notice that God is the cause of v. 25. Again, He brought affliction to make the people ready. Then He sent Moses and He showed His deliverance, as we will see, because of the promise to Abraham.

I think this psalm is going to end in a call to grateful obedience and praise to God. The argument of the psalm is that praise should be natural, and confidence in God's faithfulness should be overpowering. He loves His people and remembers His covenant with Abraham.

Do you remember how often in Deuteronomy God and Moses told the people to always be telling the story of Israel's deliverance to their children? I don't think they did that, but here David is putting the story into song. When the man healed of the legion wanted to follow Jesus, Jesus told him to go home and tell the story of his rescue; and he did. It was the wonder and fascination of Christ and being rescued by Him that gave the man his story and message. In the same way it is our love for our Lord because He saved us that gives us our message in the harvest.

### **Proverbs 14:26-27**

Amen, and I think this is exactly what Psalm 105 is getting to.

## **MAY 7**

### **1 Samuel 1:1-2:21**

#### 1 Samuel 1

So, just thinking out loud regarding this time in Israel's history, it is said that Samuel and Samson were alive at the same time. In this area of Israel, they were under Philistine dominance. Samson kept the Philistines at bay for 20 years and then destroyed the Philistine leadership at his death. No wars with the Philistines are mentioned during Samson's lifetime. No wars are mentioned during the early years of Samuel either. Later in Samuel's life, God used the wars with the Philistines to clear out the evil in the priesthood and to test the reign of King Saul. I would guess that Samson was older than Samuel and that Samuel became known in Israel during the later years of Samson's life, during which time Samuel became established as a leader in Israel, though under Eli. After Samson died, in the vacuum of power following the deaths of the Philistine leadership, Israel probably began breaking way from Philistine control and the Philistines fought Israel to regain that control. These wars would have been the occasion of Hophni and Phinehas dying in battle (in chapter 4) and losing the ark of the covenant to the Philistines. By this time Samuel was already well established as both a prophet and priest; and when the death of Eli (chapter 4) came immediately after the battle, Samuel was the only leader

in Israel and was probably in his 20's or 30's. Samuel then led Israel against the Philistines as a judge.

So, I would guess that at the time of Samuel's birth, Samson was in his teenage years and beginning to notice girls.

It is interesting that the final two stories in Judges, then Ruth, and now this story all take place in the area around Jerusalem. Also, three of the stories involve Levites. In 1 Chronicles 6:35 Elkanah is said to be a Levite, even though he is not identified here as a Levite. This would make it possible for Samuel to be a priest. Elkanah was an Ephrathite by virtue of where he lived.

Ramah, where Elkanah lived, was just north of Jerusalem and south of Shiloh.

Vs. 1-2 Elkanah apparently had two wives because of Hannah being barren. He thought he needed an heir. Otherwise, it looks like Hannah would have been his one and only.

V. 3 Eli and his two sons will figure into the dysfunctional part of this story.

Vs. 4-11 There are a lot of things here, but notice that this awful situation is from the Lord.

V. 11 Again, the similarity to Samson can't be missed in that this, too, is an unusual birth situation. Notice also that she is vowing that the son will be dedicated to the Lord as a Nazirite, just like Samson. The only stipulation she mentions, like with Samson, was the razor. How cool would it be as a boy to know that you never ever had to have a haircut?

All of what God led Hannah through was to produce this kind of intensity in her life. As disciples, this is why we need to keep our eyes on the Lord and bear up under trials. He is trying to produce something in us that cannot be produced any other way. If we become bitter over the "right and wrong" in a situation, or if we are defeated by our own sorrow, we miss the point. He is working, and very likely, to produce a kind of resolve or passion or dedication in us. There is no other way to burn certain things on our hearts apart from the blazing heat of failure, rejection and trial.

Vs. 12-18 Eli is included as a judge of Israel and he will be judged because of his failure to correct his sons. Still, his blessing here holds for Hannah. Notice, like Samson's mother, Hannah doesn't drink wine or strong drink.

Vs. 19-28 Ramah was about 15 miles south of Shiloh. This was not a distance that meant Hannah could only see him once a year, but they didn't have cars back then and 15 miles of hilly country was a trip you didn't make every day.

V. 22 This sounds like what David says in his psalms, dwelling in the presence of the Lord forever.

V. 28 This was an incredible thing for Hannah to do.

In this time of the judges, Elkanah, like Boaz, comes away as a godly man. Hannah was obviously a godly woman, pushed closer to God by her God-given trial. I know the story is about Hannah, but still, it was Elkanah who took his family up to worship at Shiloh every year.

## 1 Samuel 2

Like so many of The Psalms, and like the Third Day song, you must go through the valley (trials) to stand upon the mountain of God (praising). What do you understand from this praise from Hannah? From things I have experienced and in the situation I find myself now, I sense the strong confidence in God's sovereignty. God's control is something that we as disciples can never lose sight of, even in uncertainty and suffering.

If you have time, compare this song with Mary's song when she visited Elizabeth in Luke, chapter 1. There are some great similarities.

Vs. 1-2 This sounds just like Mary's song.

Vs. 3-8 This is how God will honor those who set their hope in Him.

Vs. 9-10 God is the judge who judges the proud but helps His people.

Vs. 11-17 This gets us back to the description of the time of the judges we are used to. It is amazing that anyone came to Shiloh to worship. When you read this, you can understand how this would have created bitterness and disappointment among the devout, and it would have given reasons to the rebellious to avoid Shiloh and to make God in their own image. Eli's sons were doing this to everyone and every sacrifice.

Note that what is mentioned here is how Eli's sons got food for themselves. That seems minor, but I think it is a big issue in this story, as we'll see later. Paul talks about guys like these and other false disciples and servants of the church, when he warns Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:5, *people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*

When our lives as disciples are about anything more than following Christ in the harvest to save the lost and make disciples, not only are we prone to error, but we can pervert the good that God has given to assist us in our service in the harvest.

Vs. 18-21 Samuel was becoming true to God, in contrast to Eli and his sons. That Hannah brought Samuel a robe each year means that's when she brought him the robe, not the only time when she saw him. Remember, they only lived 15 miles apart. I don't know about you, but if my kid only lived 15 miles away, I'd see them more than once a year. And besides, according to the law, all males had to appear before the Lord at the tabernacle three times a year.

God blessed Elkanah and Hannah. Hannah had five more kids and Elkanah had a happy wife, and both were in love with each other and with God. Oh yeah, and the hand of God was on Samuel.

### **John 5:1-23**

Commentators usually see this feast as Jesus' second Passover. That would mean John is giving us a very abbreviated history here, just touching major points. It would mean that between the end of chapter 3 and here, a complete year has passed by in John. During this time, Jesus' popularity has skyrocketed. Jesus has recently healed the paralytic carried by four friends and He has preached through all of Galilee. At this point, Jesus still has not chosen the Twelve.

When you think about what it means to abide in Christ, the best example of seeing what this means is to look at Jesus abiding in the Father. Jesus lived His life, conscious every moment that He was walking with the Father and therefore looking to see what the Father was doing. This chapter is like a lesson in abiding.

Vs. 1-9 Notice, that if Jesus had been to Jerusalem three times a year, He had seen this man often. This pool was very near to the temple. Verse 4 is an editorial note put into the Bible years later. According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary-NT, p. 298, this verse doesn't appear in any manuscripts until after 400 A.D.

Now, in v. 6, Jesus is led by the Spirit to notice this particular man. This is an example of Jesus abiding in the Father. Jesus was aware that the Father was pointing to this man to be healed, although Jesus had seen this man many times before.

V. 8 Jesus did this quickly and quietly so as not to draw attention to Himself (v. 13). What will overshadow this miracle is that it took place on the Sabbath.

Vs. 10-13 Now the remark of the Pharisees in v. 12 should shock you. Their problem was they couldn't conceive of God breaking His own law. But really, there were laws the Pharisees had made in addition to God's laws. But the situation is even deeper. Shortly before this, some of these Pharisees had been in Capernaum and heard Jesus say He was the Son of Man (the Messiah) and say He had the authority to forgive sins. He proved this by saying to the paralytic, *Get up, take up your bed, and walk* (v. 8). These guys were officially members of the "I don't like Jesus, regardless of who He is" fan club.

Vs. 14-18 This is the reason why John is including this event, to show why the Pharisees hated Jesus and why they wanted to kill Him. They understood that Jesus was calling Himself God's Son, and thus, God.

V. 17 You notice what Jesus said about abiding in the Father. The Father was always working. Jesus was always looking for the Father to show Him what to do. He noticed this man and noticed that the Father wanted this man to be healed on the Sabbath. The Son had to be obedient. If the Pharisees wanted to get mad at someone, it should have been at the Father.

Vs. 19-20 This entire chapter is a very tight, logical argument. It is worth looking at it, finding the transitions in what Jesus says and then trying to figure out why He went from one theme to the next. This is probably Jesus' most ambitious try to win over the Pharisees and save them. In the course of this chapter, Jesus will declare Himself to be both the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Vs. 21-23 The relationship is established between the Father and Son, and therefore, the signs are given to the Son to perform when the Father says to perform them, regardless of the day and time. The Father is working and Jesus sees that. Jesus moves on to describe why the Father has done this. The raising of the dead is seen here as authority to judge. The Son has been given that authority so that everyone may honor the Son as they do the Father. Jesus is saying here, that He is a pretty important person. You can't say you honor God, if you don't honor Jesus as the Son of God.

In the harvest, regardless of how good people seem, if they don't honor the Son (who, by the way, created all things), that becomes the ultimate sin. The good news isn't just about forgiveness or connecting with God. It is about Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

### **Psalm 105:37-45**

Keep underlining *he*. Notice that v. 45 appears to be the point of the psalm and of God's actions.

Vs. 37-38 This is the redemption of Israel out of the house of slavery.

Vs. 39-42 The miracles of God's provision in the wilderness came because of God's faithfulness to the promise to Abraham.

Vs. 43-45 Israel was blessed by God to obey Him and thereby be a witness and blessing to the world in accordance with the promise to Abraham.

### **Proverbs 14:28-29**

It looks like the success of v. 28 is determined by the character of v. 29. Someone with a hot head doesn't become a godly leader of people. Kind of cool, huh?

## MAY 8

### 1 Samuel 2:22-4:22

#### 1 Samuel 2:22-36

Vs. 22-25 The obvious question is why Eli didn't stop his sons. I have a theory, but here it is enough to say that if Eli knew they were wrong and he loved the Lord, he would have stopped them. Jesus said, *whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me* (Matt.10:37). I think that statement held true back then also. This would be strike one for him.

V. 25 This is a strange editorial note that the Lord wanted to put them to death. Sad as it seems, Eli should have been the one to bring them to trial. If Eli had acted now, things would have been different, but alas.

V. 26 This is another strange editorial note, but we know where it's leading. God is getting Samuel ready. This sentence indicates the passage of time. This also sounds like the comment regarding Jesus in Luke 2:52, *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.*

Vs. 27-36 It was bad enough that Eli personally allowed this, but God's own people suffered as a result. Eli did what was right in his own eyes too. Think of the contrast between this priest and Phinehas in the book of Numbers, who saw the plague on the camp, heard the cries of the people dying and then saw this guy take a Midianite woman into his tent. Phinehas raced into action to save the people. Eli allowed the people to die and sink into ignorance and spiritual adultery.

The punishment promised on Eli's family's lineage will begin soon. It will become almost fully fulfilled as David runs from Saul, and then, just before David's death, it will be complete. From that point on, no other Levites of this lineage will ever serve as priest. Just for some balance here: the sins of the fathers do not determine the fate of any who choose to follow the Lord. One famous son who comes from the family lineage of Eli will never serve as a priest, but did pretty well as a prophet: Jeremiah.

Notice the references here to food in vs. 29 and 36.

So, after receiving this condemnation from God, Eli does nothing. Time passes by and life goes on. Maybe God forgot.

#### 1 Samuel 3

V. 1 This is another "passage of time" verse. Actually, there is a kind of interchange going on between Eli and his sons, and Samuel.

Vs. 2-3 The idea here is that because of his eyes, Eli was using Samuel more and more. The lamp was the lampstand in the Holy Place. Samuel had to sleep in the Holy Place to trim the lamp before it went out. I don't get this, but apparently they were trying to conserve oil or something and so they only filled it just before the oil was gone. On the other side of the veil was the Holy of Holies, the ark of the covenant and the presence of God. That is where the voice came from.

Vs. 4-9 Funny. Eli finally got it.

Vs. 10-18 This was not only Samuel becoming a prophet, but it was a confirmation to Eli. It is funny how the Lord used this. Only Eli and the "man of God" would have known what God said to him. Now, those words and that condemnation came out of Samuel's mouth, and Eli knew without a doubt that it was the Lord who spoke to Samuel.

So why didn't Eli run out and remove his sons and send them both somewhere bad, into exile, like Hollywood, or Las Vegas or Australia? This is strike two. Don't say God doesn't give people chances to hear the Word and do it. Eli still could have honored God and found mercy.

Vs. 19-21 Who knows how old Samuel was and how much time had passed; but, no thanks to Eli, God was preparing Samuel for leadership and acceptance by the people. Obviously, 1 Samuel 4:1 belongs to this block of verses. It is interesting to see how the Lord gave Samuel his stature. His renown was that the Lord spoke to him, and the words that Samuel communicated were sure. 1 Samuel 4:1 belongs here, too.

It is probably during this time that Samson was roaming the earth, got dumb, got caught and died, taking the Philistine leadership with him. Israel would have seen this as an opportunity to rebel and break the Philistine dominance.

#### 1 Samuel 4

Vs. 2-4 Notice that no one asked the Lord if this battle was a good idea. After the defeat, it just seemed like a good idea to bring the ark. Now they would be invincible, right? I think this was the thinking behind "Raiders of the Lost Ark." The problem with this premise is that the ark was taken into battle due to disobedience and ignorance, and Israel lost the battle. Actually, it didn't work out any better for the bad guys in Raiders.

Thinking our thoughts are God's thoughts is crazy. If we have the Word, we know better. The Word warns us against presuming on God. Just before this, it mentioned that Samuel had established a supernatural track record of being right and speaking the Word of God. Why didn't they go to Samuel?

Vs. 5-11 The Philistines were bad guys and pagans but they did have some knowledge of Israel and their God. I'm impressed with the Philistines and their courage here, but really they express the reason they fought. This same God had allowed Israel to be their slaves. There wasn't anything wrong with God, but there was something awfully wrong with Israel.

Vs. 12-18 The only thing I want to draw your attention to is the death of Eli. Verse 18 says that Eli was a fat guy. The Lord doesn't go out of His way to mention size often. I think Eli was fat because he ate way too much. Where did Eli get his food? From his sons. This is just me, but I think Eli's god was his belly. The reason he didn't stop his sons was because that would have stopped the food, and the forbidden cuts of meat he received from them. And besides, God didn't seem to care. God's silence and those nice cuts of meat were the reason Eli never took direct action. Now God did something like Judo. He used Eli's own weight against him, to bring his death.

Vs. 19-22 Phinehas' wife died giving birth to a son at this awful time in Israel's history. She gave the boy an awful name, *the glory has departed*. Talk about being marked for life. I'm sure that was a hit in junior high school.

Humanly speaking, this seems like Israel's darkest hour. The high priest and his sons were dead, the ark was captured and the armies of Israel were defeated. Everything was bad, except for one young man who had been prepared for this moment.

After this reading today, I see two things that are important for us as disciples. First, we should never assume God has to bless us because we use His stuff. Israel used the ark, assuming God would bless because they dragged it into harm's way. Because we attend church or do something, "in the name of God," doesn't cause God to have to bless us. Nothing replaces understanding His Word and obedience to it.

Second, when the Lord grooms a person to follow and to lead, it has to do with knowing God and His Word, not just having "god thoughts" and "god feelings" based on our feeling of what God would do if we were Him. Our lives are separated from everything and made "holy" by the Word. John 17:17 *Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*

## John 5:24-47

Reading John is like reading a book subtitled, "The Story of the Word Made Flesh, Who Dwelt Among Us." There is a lot of "Word" going on here. It might be worth your while to read John 5:1-23 from yesterday to get the context here. If you read this whole chapter and are confused, that's good. Unless you are gifted or brilliant or something, it takes you more than one time through to really get the gist of what Jesus is saying. I've had to pray for help understanding this and I've had to read it through...so far, maybe 30-50 times. It really is a matter of how honestly you want to seek God to understand something.

As you read this, underline the personal pronouns, *me, I, my*.

V. 24 This is the grand conclusion to v. 23. Jesus, the Son, sent from the Father, gives eternal life by His Word.

Vs. 25-30 Jesus has said that the Father gave all judgment to the Son in v. 22. Jesus now explains this in a way the Pharisees would understand since they believed in the resurrection.

Notice that vs. 25 and 28 both refer to hearing the Son's voice. Jesus is saying that He is the responsible party.

V. 25 This verse talks about hearing *the voice of the Son of God*. Then it gets strange because it talks of the Father granting the Son the right to have life in Himself and giving Him authority. If the Son is the Son of God, God the Son, He already has that life. But, Jesus is the Word made flesh, and as a man, that authority has to be conferred upon Him as a human representative of God, the Son of Man. Jesus is the only human being to whom this ability and authority has ever been conferred.

V. 27 As the human representative of God, Jesus is the Son of Man, the coming eternal king from Daniel 7.

V. 28 The voice that the dead will hear is from the divine Son of God and the human Son of Man. The Pharisees would have understood the meaning of these titles and they would have understood Jesus claiming to be God. I'll bet as Jesus was talking, the chief priest and scribes and Pharisees could feel their hearts hardening.

Vs. 31-40 After such a mammoth claim, there had to be some confirming testimony. How would you know this was true? Jesus gives four sources of testimony.

Vs. 32-35 John bore testimony to Jesus. Jesus says that He didn't need John's testimony, but it was something that was easily familiar to these men, something they understood. Notice too why He used John as testimony to Himself in v. 34, that they would accept this and be saved. Jesus was hoping for some faith.

V. 36 The signs from the Father bore witness. This is what led Nicodemus to Jesus in John 3.

Vs. 37-38 The Father Himself bore testimony. Whether they believed it or not, the Father sent the Son. They could deny the testimony, but they couldn't deny that Jesus was with them. They just refused to see the connection. The testimony was still true. Verse 38 is a rebuke to their unbelief.

Vs. 38-40 The Scriptures bore testimony to Jesus. This would have been an insane claim if Jesus were not God the Son, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Savior of mankind. But He was and is.

Vs. 41-44 This is part of the summary of the chapter, a chapter which deals with Jesus being glorified by the Father by the signs He performed as He followed the Father. It is interesting that

Jesus says they did not seek for the glory that came from God. Their entire focus was to be held in esteem by one another.

Vs. 45-47 Jesus shocked them saying that their condemnation would come from Moses. This is interesting because this sounds just like what Abraham told the rich man who had died. *But he said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead."* (Luke 16:31)

What breaks the power of sin is welcoming God's Word of deliverance, turning from our sin and welcoming Christ into our lives as Savior and Lord. That is all conveyed through the Word. In some terribly small but important way, like a person lying in the throes of death, we raise our eyes in faith and acknowledgement of that Word...and life begins.

### **Psalm 106:1-12**

For the next few days we'll be in Psalm 106. It is interesting to me, that when Israel needed to remember the *steadfast love* of the Lord, they thought back to the Exodus and wandering through the wilderness.

For us, too, there are times when the Lord allows us to have to cling strongly, over weeks and months and years, to His steadfast love. So, what do you remember? What do you go back to? Many of us have one or more significant experiences, but one that I notice many people do not mention first is their own salvation.

Israel's confirmation of God's love was to have sprung out of their love and gratefulness for their rescue, their salvation, and their inclusion in God's plan of redemption. That is the same for us. And there are seasons when He allows us to go through hard times so we can redefine ourselves, our values and our lives to the one thing that is really the most important thing about us, Jesus.

It looks to me that this psalm could have been written during the time that David was building unity in Israel at the beginning of his reign. The psalm more or less ends with a reference to the confusion in Judges. God's faithfulness through Exodus to Judges is highlighted. Many lands had captured people from Israel, and David would have been asking for God's grace to rebuild the nation and to lead the people back to Israel.

On the other hand, this could have been written after the exile as a reminder to God to show that same grace in bringing the exiles back to Israel. I would vote for the time of David, but after the exile works too.

Vs. 1-3 The emphasis of the *steadfast love* of the Lord in this call to worship sounds like David. Also the call to praise is very familiar.

Vs. 4-5 This seems to come from the king of Israel, asking for help to rebuild the nation and to lead them into the promised blessing. After the exile there was no king.

Vs. 6-12 Built into the law was the command to pray to God, confessing one's own sins and then confessing the sins of their fathers.

### **Proverbs 14:30-31**

So, when the earth shakes around us and the nations rage and the thoughts of our hearts disquiet us, where do we learn to find tranquility? Our money? Our job? Our comfort in life? Our nationality? Those things anchor us to the earth and make our hearts thirst for more earth.

If He is our tranquility, we become pilgrims here on earth who are ready to share bread from the One who shared bread with us. I was just reading Jesus saying, *Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* (John 12:25)

## MAY 9

### 1 Samuel 5-7

It is interesting to note here that the Philistines could have and should have followed up this victory, but didn't. In this last battle with Israel, they slaughtered 30,000 men. We can't even grasp that kind of loss of life in a battle. Yet God had now accomplished His task and had no desire for the Philistines to go further, and He had no need of an army to stop them. As disciples, we need to develop a mature perspective of God's work in the world among nations: He allows and disallows. The real issues in play on this planet are above politics and human rights.

#### 1 Samuel 5

Vs. 1-5 I don't think Dagon fell down before the ark as in worship. I think if it was next to the ark, the image just fell down away from the ark. If the hands and head were over the threshold of the entrance of the temple, the statue couldn't have been facing the ark. Some preachers would have the statue bowing before the ark.

This little tradition of jumping over the threshold is interesting; because surprisingly, when you read through Malachi, years ahead in Israel's history and months ahead in your reading, you'll find it there too. Not many people link that reference back to this, only because they don't read their Bibles through like you are doing.

Vs. 6-12 Just as God had used Samson to terrify the Philistines into inactivity, God was now doing the same thing through the ark. Everywhere the ark was sent, men were dying and all the people were afflicted by tumors and by a massive mouse outbreak. This last thing was anything but "Disney." It would have been horrific, from devastating their food supply to keeping them awake at night, to keeping them on edge every minute of every day. What an ingenious thing for God to do.

On a funny note, for us, not for the Philistines, according to the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT \(BKC-OT\)](#), p. 437, the Hebrew indicates that the tumors were predominately in the rectal area. That would take the fight out of anyone.

#### 1 Samuel 6

Vs. 1-12 Notice in 6:6 how the Philistines believe in, and take to heart, what God did in Egypt 350 years earlier. They actually had some of the information correct too, knowing that Pharaoh had hardened his heart. Too bad Israel didn't have this kind of faith. But actually, this wasn't real faith. True faith would have led the Philistines and Israel to reject all impostors and worship and follow the only true God. This culture was very eclectic religiously.

Vs. 7-12 Using the two "milk" cows was a test to make sure that the Lord was behind this whole thing. The likelihood of them wandering away from their calves was not good. So in all of this, it was a mini-miracle because God was in it, and therefore, proof to the Philistines that they had done the right thing.

Vs. 13-21 Notice that there were Levites present, living among the people. Apparently the ark still had the carrying poles. I wonder about the sacrifice they sacrificed there. Why didn't they take the ark back to Shiloh and sacrifice there? It should have been forbidden to offer sacrifices any place other than the tabernacle.

Vs. 19-21 Joy turned to sadness. Finally, people could sneak a peek into the ark, forgetting of course that God was present and watching. That is the sadness in all of this. The personal love for God and understanding of His presence was gone. They didn't really respect or fear Him. Now they really feared God, but at the price of 70 men.

## 1 Samuel 7

V. 1 This will probably blow your mind. The ark will never return to Shiloh. According to the BKC-OT, p. 438, Shiloh was overrun sometime after the battle and the tabernacle was destroyed. The tabernacle "concept" must have fallen into disuse. The ark stayed at Kiriath-jearim (KJ) for 20 years, but this time is just a designation for how long it took the people to come to the place of wanting to worship and serve the Lord alone. It took 20 years of the ark being separated from the tabernacle, and 20 years of Samuel teaching, to make the people understand they needed to reunite under the Lord. According to the BKC-OT, p. 438, the ark was at KJ about 100 years, until David brought it to Jerusalem.

Vs. 2-4 Here is another shock. *Twenty years* pass between v. 1 and v. 2. We haven't yet heard of the ministry of Samuel, going from town to town in a circuit, teaching the people and leading them in worship. Apparently that was what Samuel had been doing in Israel, and it was probably one of the factors that finally brought the people to the place of returning to God.

Vs. 5-17 During this period of time the Philistines ruled, but they were afraid of the Lord and kept their distance. Finally, when it seemed to them that there was an "unlawful assembly" that could unite Israel, the Philistines decided to crush it and keep Israel docile.

Vs. 8-11 This shows that Samuel was no military strategist. This assembly was true in heart and the people confessed their sin, repented and pleaded with Samuel to intercede for them. During this assembly the Philistines must have suddenly appeared as an army and the people only had one place to turn, to God. So what does Samuel do? He sacrifices to the Lord. That isn't something they teach at West Point. And then God turned up the surround sound and blasted the Philistines away.

Vs. 12-14 Samuel set up a monument to commemorate this victory, and from this point on, Israel was never ruled by the Philistines again. During the judgeship of Samuel, they stayed out of Israel, and it says that God afflicted them.

Vs. 15-17 Samuel visited and offered sacrifices in these towns as main centers where he taught the people. Samuel took a sacrifice to Bethlehem when he anointed David. Ramah had been Samuel's family's hometown and now it became the center of worship for Israel, and he built this altar in Ramah. The tabernacle and everything in it had been destroyed. According to the way God set everything up, Israel could not be Israel without the tabernacle. It was the center point for the nation and their unity in Yahweh. Yet, through this kind of traveling ministry, the people in each region could be brought together in worship and God allowed it.

Looking at this last battle, it is interesting that when Israel was worshiping God, God did amazing things to confirm their faith and protect them. More of this would have happened if they would have worshiped God in spirit and in truth. For us in the harvest, we have some promises that we never take advantage of because we are busy. I was reading today where Jesus said, "If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." That is a real time promise, but it only holds for those who are actively following the Lord in the harvest. In the harvest we are with our Lord and He builds our faith by letting us see blessings that are only found in the harvest.

### **John 6:1-21**

Time-wise, if the event at the beginning of John 5 is a Passover, then a year has gone by. Verse 4 says that the Passover (another Passover) was at hand. This then would be the third Passover during Jesus' ministry, and so, about a year before he died and was raised.

During this year Jesus has healed the man with the withered right hand, chosen His disciples, given the Sermon on the Mount, healed the centurion's slave and raised the widow's son, been questioned by John the Baptist, been anointed by a sinful woman, freed Mary of Magdalene of

seven spirits, been accused of being possessed of Satan, taught many parables, stilled the sea, freed the man with the Legion, healed the woman with the hemorrhage, raised Jairus' daughter, healed two blind men, cast out a dumb demon, been rejected a second time in Nazareth, and sent out his Twelve to preach and heal. While the disciples were gone, John the Baptist was killed by Herod. Now the disciples have returned to Jesus, and have tried to go to a lonely place; but the crowds have pursued them. The disciples are emotionally exhausted and need rest, but they won't get it today.

Jesus will not be in Jerusalem for this Passover, that we know of. The multitudes are mobilized to go to Jerusalem, but this is the pinnacle of Jesus' popularity. Knowing what Jesus could do for the sick and needy, the crowd will make a detour on their way to Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-4 This is leading up to the only event that is in all four Gospels, the feeding of the 5000.

Vs. 5-9 Notice that it is Andrew who came with the boy and his lunch.

Vs. 10-14 This was actually training for the disciples for the future. Based on what Jesus was doing here, they would know what to do in Acts 2 when 3000 people would give their lives to Christ. This crowd, with women and children, numbered near 15,000. Along with what Jesus did here is the lesson to the disciples that they gathered up 12 baskets of fragments. They ended with more than they began. God's ability is unmatched and so our trust in Him should be very generous, even when He doesn't meet our expectations.

V. 15 Jesus is in "stealth" mode, avoiding the people. He sends the disciples out on the sea and goes back up on the mountain, so the people see they are separated.

Vs. 16-21 The people wait for Jesus; but at night, He walks down to the sea, slipping in and out of shadows and begins walking across the sea to meet up with the disciples. If you put all of the Gospels together you get a little more detail, including Peter walking on the water. This will be a very important event. None of the other writers tells us what happened immediately after this. The people were fooled, but not for long. When they catch up to Jesus, instead of making Him their king, they will begin to leave Him.

As disciples, we learn to serve God but not to trust ourselves, or to understand our service according to the praise of people. Sin is powerful, and even the people we serve and help can become indifferent or turn away. Our strength is in following our Lord and knowing His love. He is the One who gives us our direction and focus. Because of Him we can serve and love without needing the praise and acceptance of people.

### **Psalm 106:13-31**

Reading this makes me think of the faulty reasoning of "seeing is believing." It didn't work for Israel. There has to be the need for deliverance, repentance and believing and doing the Word.

Vs. 13-23 In spite of the great signs God did to show the people they could depend on Him and to show them He was to be awed, they still rebelled. Sin is powerful. Verse 21 seems to be the point in this section. The result was that Moses had to plead with God not to destroy them. How would you like to sing this in a worship service?

Vs. 24-27 Verse 24 of the song tells how they despised God's plan and the land He had promised Abraham.

Vs. 28-29 And as if that weren't enough, although they saw the daily death toll because of the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, they still decided to rebel at Baal-peor.

Vs. 30-31 This is the only bright spot in this part of the song. Phinehas intervened and his faith *was counted to him as righteousness*.

I think the point of singing this psalm was to make the people humble and repentant. We are all capable of the same things.

### **Proverbs 14:32-33**

I think the refuge that is found in the death of the wicked is "justice," knowing that God is just and that righteousness will win.

I like the idea of wisdom resting in the heart of a person. Wisdom is so much a part of a person that it naturally comes out in all situations.

## **MAY 10**

### **1 Samuel 8-9**

#### **1 Samuel 8**

Vs. 1-3 There are some bad and good things happening here. It is bad that the sons of Samuel are dishonest. I've heard Howard Hendricks preach this portion and mention that Samuel was a success in his profession but a failure as a father. Samuel, unfortunately, learned his fathering through Eli, another failed father.

Vs. 4-9 It is good that the people didn't want to slip back into the godless ways of the disunified Israel that existed before Samuel.

It is to be noted that God mentioned through Jacob in Genesis 49, and then through Moses, that Israel would someday have a king. I think the "demand" and the expression of the motives were wrong. The desire to be like the other nations was wrong. They should have taken time to search for God's will and heart as a nation.

Reading the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 439, this morning, it hit me that if they would have asked God for a king and His will, eventually they would have gotten David. But at this time, God couldn't give them David because David might not have been born yet. When Rebekah and Jacob stole the blessing, it was a family disaster for them. If they had waited on and trusted in a sovereign Lord, He would have made an honest way, in His time, to make sure Jacob had that blessing. Here, if they had sought God and been willing to wait, they could have spared Israel years of disaster under Saul and seven years of civil war before David became king. Somehow, God would have naturally made David the ruler of Israel.

Vs. 10-18 Death by taxes. This is the "overhead" they were about to add to their lives.

Vs. 19-22 The people had spoken. Notice how often God tells Samuel to *obey their voice*. There was definitely a sense of rejection of God going on here. They were rejecting Samuel in the sense of rejecting what he taught them of complete trust and obedience toward God.

#### **1 Samuel 9**

Vs. 1-2 Apparently the Lord was giving the people the kind of king they had in mind: A king in their own image and after their own heart.

Vs. 3-10 The Donkeys of Kish would make a good name for a rock band or murder mystery. Notice that it seems that Saul's servant is more in charge than he is. Since we already know that Saul will be a weak, vicious, tragic person, as you read this, notice his character.

Vs. 11-21 God definitely led in Samuel and Saul getting together. When Saul mentioned that his house in Benjamin was small, we can understand that. Years earlier Benjamin was reduced to 600 men. Apparently Saul's family came from Gibeah, that infamous city.

Vs. 22-24 The reason for all of this detail is to show that those people and Saul knew that Saul had been chosen for something. He was honored and was given Samuel's personal attention. This should have given Saul confidence and some faith in God's promise.

Vs. 25-27 More confirmation was promised and we'll see what it was tomorrow.

My thoughts here for us as disciples have to do with following the Lord, seeking Him for decisions and being confident in the things we know He has shown us. There are lots of lessons to be learned from this section. Waiting as servants for His will and His timing is one of those lessons.

### **John 6:22-42**

Vs. 22-24 It should be noted here, that the road from Bethsaida to Capernaum was well traveled. It is true that if you took a boat and had the right winds, you could cut off the top curve of the sea and you could save your legs. People had seen Jesus leave to go from Capernaum and Bethsaida and ran there on foot to get there ahead of Him. In v. 24, only some of the crowd took boats. The rest traveled by foot.

One more note needs to be kept in mind. On the boat trip, both Jesus and Peter had walked on water, and it says that they worshiped Jesus, in Matthew 14:33. That experience for the Twelve will come in handy.

Vs. 25-34 It wasn't unusual for Jesus to challenge motives. Look at John 4:48. Some of these people were the ones who wanted to take Him and make Him king by force. Once Jesus began to say that He was the Son of God, they wanted a sign. How funny. They had just seen Him feed thousands with five loaves. Much of what Jesus says here sounds like it is a reference to Isaiah 55.

Vs. 35-40 Not only is Jesus *the Bread of Life*, He claims that He will personally raise up His followers. That is a bold claim. Thankfully, we who know Christ have an insight into what Jesus is saying that those people did not. It seems to make sense to us because we have believed in Him. Imagine how hard it was for these people to hear these words and be looking at, possibly, a 5'6" hook-nosed, slightly ugly, balding, dark-skinned man with a Galilean accent. Doesn't this whole thing remind you of Jesus at the well with the woman? You don't find a clearer declaration of Jesus saying He is God and the Messiah.

Vs. 41-42 Usually when it says *the Jews*, it means the Jewish leaders, the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees. It was a special challenge to look at the man Jesus, knowing His family and background and listen to these words. Yet, they had all the Scriptures that said a descendant of David would reign forever as the Son of Man. This meant He would be human born but divine. Most of these people, including the leaders, had seen Jesus perform the signs the Father had given Him to do. In truth, many of these people just didn't like God.

As disciples in the harvest, notice how the Lord talks about those who come to Him, who understand that He is the Savior. They were drawn by the Father. This should give us a lot of security in our walk and a lot of confidence in our work in the harvest. If our coming to Christ was assisted and allowed by the Father, then our success in the harvest doesn't rest on the eloquence of our words, but on the power of His working. We try to strike up a conversation and tell others about Jesus. The Father does the rest.

### **Psalm 106:32-48**

The psalmist is appealing to the people to worship God, and to plead with God for mercy. This mercy is well seen in the long journey of rebellion Israel had walked with God.

Vs. 32-33 They made Moses so mad that He, too, rebelled against God. But, God still brought the nation into the land.

Vs. 34-46 Notice that this part of the psalm summarizes what we just read in Judges. Notice first that they mixed with the people. Then they sacrificed their children. The point of this psalm is that in spite of their disobedience, the Lord rescued them. Still, the people paid a tragic price for their disobedience. During the time of the judges, many in Israel were led away and made slaves of other nations.

Vs. 47-48 If the time here is after the exile, the people were pleading to the Lord to rescue them and re-gather them from the nations. I suspect this is written by David, showing the people that they need to beg God for mercy, because He is bringing them out of those days of the judges. They need to appeal to His mercy as shown in the past to give them blessing in the present and a hope for the future. They need to praise God and bless His name for His faithfulness.

### **Proverbs 14:34-35**

We've seen v. 34 on political posters. This righteousness is rightness before God. There will be plenty of well-meaning, morally righteous people in hell. What makes a servant deal wisely? Paul and the Spirit say it here. *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.* (Ephesians 6:5-8)

## **MAY 11**

### **1 Samuel 10-11**

#### 1 Samuel 10

V. 1 is probably an emotional moment for Samuel since he had judged and cared for Israel so long. If Saul was a man of faith, this would be a great confirmation for him to follow God boldly.

Vs. 2-8 These signs were meant to increase Saul's faith and give him the motivation to take personal ownership of the charge that was given to him. We have seen some meekness in Gideon, so what we'll see will look like no surprise, but then we'll be surprised later.

V. 6 The fact that Saul is turned into another man might mean the change was for that moment, or he was given some special gift for organizing and ruling Israel, the same way Solomon was given wisdom. I know I'd be overwhelmed if God told me to direct and lead a country, so the Lord must have given Saul a sense of understanding that made organizing Israel seem like a piece of cake.

Vs. 7-8 Notice that in all of the signs of confirmation, going to Gilgal was part of the charge God gave to Saul. It is as if to say, "Just as the other signs will be confirmed, go down to Gilgal and wait." Waiting can be the hardest thing to do, but the signs that preceded the waiting were to help Saul wait confidently. Remember, when Israel came through the Jordan with Joshua, they came to Gilgal and renewed the covenant with God. Since that place had been very important in Israel's history, God is telling Saul that this will be an important meeting.

Vs. 9-13 And it all took place. Notice that the Spirit rushed upon him. This is what the Spirit did to Samson too. Unfortunately, the next time Saul prophesies, it will be to keep him from attacking David. This same saying will be quoted.

Vs. 14-16 This seems like humility, but it will bear a nasty kind of fruit later. Saul didn't have "root" in himself and this deep insecurity will cause great problems later. God is going out of His way to make Saul feel confident.

Vs. 17-19 This is a solemn moment in Israel's history. The attempt for God to rule over the people on the basis of their faith has failed. Compare that to the church. The Lord somehow governs the church without a human king. He is the king. Now Israel will be given a king according to their craving.

Vs. 20-24 God wisely had Samuel use the Urim and Thummim to choose the king. This way no one could say that Kish paid Samuel under the table.

The only thing I would mention here is the attitude of Saul. In v. 16 his silence is noted. In v. 22 he is hiding where the baggage was stationed. How cute.

Vs. 25-27 Notice that Saul's home was in Gibeah, that infamous city. This is seen as negative in v. 27 as Saul allows the disrespect to go unanswered.

As people, we can identify with the awesome responsibility thrust upon Saul. We can imagine the weight and the desire to hide. But, Saul had God as a great resource. The kingship and leadership of Israel wasn't about him; it was about the nation and God. To allow these men to disrespect God was a serious problem. This shows Saul's focus. It wasn't on God or the nation, but on himself. This attitude about himself will eventually get him, Israel, and David into a lot of trouble.

As disciples, we face the same thoughts. But what we've been called to be and do is not about us; it is about Christ, the gospel and a lot of dying people. The easiest way for Satan to neutralize us is to get us thinking and worrying about ourselves. Jesus warned His disciples in Luke 8:14, *And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.*

#### 1 Samuel 11

Vs. 1-4 Notice that God brings about this "disaster," so that He can use it against the bad guys. Since Saul's selection ceremony seemed to lack full confidence in Saul, the Lord provided an occasion where Israel could be confident of the king God had chosen for them.

Did you notice the city that was threatened? It is also famous in the story of the near extermination of the tribe of Benjamin. Remember that there were only 600 men from Benjamin left. The people of Israel destroyed Jabesh-gilead, because they wouldn't fight against Benjamin. But they saved 400 young women to be married to 400 of the surviving men from Benjamin. It is thought that Saul may have had an emotional attachment to Jabesh-gilead, because most likely, his great-great-great-great grandmother was from there.

Vs. 6-11 I mentioned before with Samson, that when the Spirit "rushes" on someone, sometimes, it looks pretty angry. Suddenly, Saul was an inspired, organized and deadly guy. Notice there is a separation made regarding Israel and the men of Judah. I don't know if this means it was written after the kingdom was divided, but Judah, as a people and territory, must have had the character of Texas. They were part of the union, but there was something different about them. The king was supposed to have come from Judah according to Jacob in Genesis 49.

V. 11 I think this is that "other person" the Spirit made Saul. Saul knew how to form his army and fight.

Vs. 12-13 The people knew, and I think God did too, that the men who disrespected God and Saul needed to be punished. Saul still wasn't up to the task. Later in his reign, Saul will be direct, brutal and bloodthirsty, but against all the wrong people.

Vs. 14-15 Samuel immediately led the people to Gilgal and officiated a victory celebration where they officially made Saul king. But notice, Saul wasn't required to wait for Samuel for seven days. This is not the event that Samuel told Saul of when he first anointed him. That future meeting in Gilgal would be like a covenant renewal and confirm Saul's reign. That meeting will happen in chapter 13, but it will not go as planned. It seems to me that at *this* meeting in Gilgal, Samuel/God humbled the people because of their desire for a king (Ch. 12) and then told them to come together again for a full consecration of themselves and Saul (Ch. 13). Again, that future meeting in Gilgal will not go well.

I'll warn you in advance, that some of this early history with Saul is hard to understand time-wise.

For us as disciples in the harvest, we need to patiently follow, remembering every confirmation God has given us in His Word and in our labor. Our service is not about us. It is about the glory of the Father and the redemption found in our Lord. The minute this becomes about us, our work in the harvest is hindered.

### **John 6:43-71**

Looking at v. 59, we see that this talk took place in a synagogue. Notice that there is grumbling mentioned in two places. God is writing this in such a way as to remind us of the murmuring of Israel in the wilderness.

Vs. 43-51 There is a subtle rebuke here. The Father blocks the unbelieving from coming to His Son. Jesus is saying it is understandable that the Jews (Jewish leaders) couldn't grasp what He is saying. If they were taught by God (humble, open, submissive), they would understand. The rebuke is that the leaders thought they were the learned people of Israel who really knew God. Jesus is telling them they don't know God and haven't been taught by God. And, Jesus is declaring Himself to be the Savior in very graphic terms.

V. 51 We know that Jesus was talking about the sacrifice of His body. They were all struggling with this imagery.

Vs. 52-59 Notice that in v. 53 Jesus responds to their discussion by becoming even more graphic. I think He smiled and pressed them on purpose. Even so, notice that He says they had to eat the flesh of the Son of Man. He directed them to the concept of the Son of Man, to whom they knew they would owe absolute obedience. They were smart enough to understand that what He was saying had something to do with total dedication to the Messiah. This is like a parable, with Jesus' own body as the main object.

As disciples we get all balled up with our "expression" of the gospel, but notice that Jesus is being very cryptic and He's doing it to divide the serious followers from the superficial followers. He's doing it with full confidence that those who the Father is leading to Him cannot be scared away. We need to have confidence when we tell others about Christ. But the confidence isn't in us or our presentation. We simply need to share what the Lord has done. Some will hear and some won't, but we know that God will do His work. Their understanding and acceptance of the message doesn't rest on our shoulders.

Vs. 60-65 This passage is gold for our confidence as disciples. We are told to proclaim. He is the one who draws and redeems. It is interesting to me that this image of eating His flesh and blood and absolute ownership of the Son was too much for many of the disciples. The people couldn't stand it, but neither could His followers. This talk had done what the Father wanted to accomplish and the "chaff" was being blown away.

Notice v. 63. They still were not understanding on a spiritual level. This was like Nicodemus asking how a person could reenter their mother's womb and be born again. What Jesus said

wasn't grasped by the mind if the spirit would not surrender to the truth. His words were spirit and life and there had to be faith in His person, in order for the spirit and life to take effect.

Vs. 66-71 This was just as hard a test for the Twelve as for everyone else. For Peter & Co. there was no option. They knew who He was, even if His words were totally hidden and offensive to them. And remember, on the boat ride over, they had had another notable experience and had worshiped Jesus, acknowledging that He was the Son of God. That event had been fully planned by the Father for this very moment. Notice that, for some reason, Judas Iscariot hung on, and Jesus remarks about him.

From this point on, many of Jesus' disciples left and this marks the down turn in His popularity. That great sign, the feeding of the 5000, brought the people into conflict with Jesus. Jesus was more interested in saving their souls than feeding their bellies and meeting their needs.

### **Psalm 107**

Some psalms are broken into three days, but this long psalm is given in one whack. Go figure. We should be able to get some good Bible study 101 lessons here.

I think that the message of this psalm is found in the first three and last three verses. Can you see that? Look for recurring patterns of words. Hint: *Some.....then*. Last year as I read this I was having a bad day and it lifted my heart.

Vs. 1-3 This is the call to praise God for *His steadfast love*. Notice that it is the *redeemed* who are to praise Him. This could be the people gathered after the reign of Saul or the people gathered after the exile. The important thing here is that they realize that they have been redeemed. It makes a difference.

Vs. 4-9 This is the first cycle. To me, this sounds like David, who has finally stopped his wandering and is now at home in Zion, recounting the wandering of Israel since Abraham.

Vs. 10-16 Joseph was a prisoner. The entire nation was enslaved to Egypt. The people in the land became slaves to the people around them. You see how the same themes are recurring although the distress is different.

Vs. 17-22 I wonder if this was the loathing of the manna in the wilderness.

Vs. 23-32 I'm not sure what this is referring to, but it must have been scary.

In all of these verses and in all of God's faithfulness and deliverance, their responsibility was to worship and praise God publicly.

Vs. 33-38 God is the one who gives life and prosperity to the land.

Vs. 39-42 Regardless of how the people were afflicted and crushed, God helped His people.

V. 43 The wise will learn from Israel's history. They will be moved by *the steadfast love of the Lord*.

As we are reading all of this history, God wants us to be overwhelmed too, with His steadfast love and faithfulness.

### **Proverbs 15:1-3**

Wow! Talk about three big verses.

Going backwards:

V. 3 The person who fears God and knows that He's watching,

V. 2 keeps watch over his words and lives in the knowledge God has given him,

V. 1 which gives him wise control over his own emotions and, even in a hard place, he will give a soft answer.

But a fool forgets or doesn't care that God is watching. He lets his mouth run and stirs up all sorts of evil.

## **MAY 12**

### **1 Samuel 12:1-13:22**

“Israel Under Saul,” Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 444. (There is a copy of this map at the end of this document.)

#### 1 Samuel 12

After this victory over the Ammonites, Israel gathered at Gilgal, near the Jordan, and celebrated. Samuel used this occasion to confront the people with the choice they had made and to help them understand that a king was not the answer to all of their problems. They, together with their king, would still need to follow and obey the Lord.

Vs. 1-5 This sounds like Samuel revisiting their demand to him to give them a king. He mentions that he obeyed their voice and that he is old. The thing he does here, asking anyone to name a way he used his office for his own advantage, sounds like what Moses did when he gave his final address to the nation. I guess pastors should do this too.

Vs. 6-18 This address tells the people that they didn't need to demand a king. God had always looked out for them, even when they had disobeyed. When they had cried out, God had answered them, sent a judge whom the people had followed and obeyed. Demanding a king now, without the due diligence of seeking the Lord and asking for His favor, was a major break in God's working with them. In a way, it was showing that sin was so powerful that a “theocracy,” that is, God ruling over His people without a king, would not work. The people themselves were to have looked to the tabernacle, to the Levites and to their elders and men (who were all to have appeared at the tabernacle three times a year) to guide the people. Seeking the Lord as individuals and as a nation would have been all they needed, because God was present and caring for them. It hadn't worked, and it wasn't God's fault. Compare this to what the Lord is doing today through His church. So, 300 years after Joshua and Moses, what is happening here is a major change. Now the people's devotion and hope will be directed toward a king.

And to boot, having a king wouldn't relieve them of their personal responsibility to follow and love the Lord. The thunder was the Lord's "amen" to Samuel's words. This confirmed that their actions were very wrong.

Vs. 19-25 Samuel confirmed that God would always remain faithful to His people. We know that God would be faithful, because of the promise to Abraham, not because of their obedience to God through the law. Samuel continued ministering in Israel for the next (?) years, almost up to the time Saul died.

#### 1 Samuel 13

V. 1 This verse is a mess. A scribe might have spilled his coffee on the original manuscript here. In Acts 13:21, Paul says that Saul reigned for 40 years. That is a help, but not here. The real question is how old Saul was when he began. The best guess is that Saul was 40 when he became king. All of this is discussed in the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, pp. 443-445. This would explain Jonathan being old enough now to be a soldier (v. 3). If Saul had a son at 17, which was common in that culture, Jonathan would be 23.

The reference to *two years* could mean the time frame when this particular situation arose, in other words, "and after he reigned for two years, this happened."

Actually, the entire time frame takes some careful thought. Later when David is anointed, he appears to be a pre-teen; and he is still young (15-16?) when he kills Goliath. Saul will die when David is 30 years old. If Saul reigned for 40 years and was eighty when he died, it means that Saul reigned for 10 years before David was born.

Vs. 2-4 There was a lot of fighting with the Philistines with a substantial victory by Jonathan. Apparently Samuel told Saul to call the people together at Gilgal. This would be a sacrifice and consecration of the kingship of Saul. In the meantime, Israel had made some problems for the Philistines. Saul called the people there, but the Philistines are amassing an army.

Just for a comparison, remember in 1 Samuel 7:10 that on the eve of Samuel's first battle with the Philistines, they were ganging up on him as he was getting ready to sacrifice. Samuel was totally unprepared and leading the people in worship, but God honored him and completely routed the Philistines with noise.

Vs. 8-15 This was the event that Samuel had spoken of earlier, where Saul was to wait for Samuel for seven days. Waiting, when waiting is easy, is easy; but waiting when it stretches your faith to the breaking point is what makes real faith. The people were already afraid and Saul had no faith to bind them to the Lord. As the people were scattering and it was the seventh day, Saul offered the sacrifice. No non-Levite was allowed to sacrifice. Also, Saul was given a direct command. And wouldn't you know it, no sooner had he burned the bull, than Samuel showed up.

V. 14 This will burn in Saul's mind and blaze into an irrational hatred of David. This is the first mention of *a man after His own heart*. It is good to begin trying to understand what that means. David will be that man, but he will test our understanding of what it means to be a man after God's own heart.

My question for us as disciples is what did Saul teach or fail to teach the people by doing this? Saul did the thing anyone would have done. It seems excusable, reasonable, and human. This would be a good point to stop and ponder this story. It is easy to follow when everything is good, but waiting in faith separates the men from the boys. Also, it is easy to lead when everything is good; but in a situation like this, it shows what you really believe. If we are to be disciples, who make disciples, we ourselves need to be proven in the fire and found faithful.

Also, when you think of Saul, worried about the army coming against him and his people scattering, what stories of the recent past would you have used to remind him that he could still depend on God? Oh, by the way, do you remember that there was a command for what the king was supposed to do regarding the Word? I wonder if Saul ever did that.

Vs. 16-22 This is just setting us up for the adventures of Jonathan tomorrow. Although I have to say, if I had been a king, I would have been working to get my merry men armed.

### **John 7:1-29**

This section of John, from 7:1 to 10:21, is during the two-week festival around the Day of Atonement and the *Feast of Booths* (or Feast of Tabernacles). This took place six months before Jesus died and it is His presentation of Himself to the nation as their Messiah. John concludes chapter 10 with a situation that took place two months later during Hanukkah, in December, as Jesus' final teaching about Himself in Jerusalem, completing the presentation. These are very important chapters.

Vs. 1-2 The passage of time here is about six months. If the feeding of the 5000 was just before the Passover in April, this would be October. This was one of those three times of the year

(Passover, Pentecost, Day of Atonement/ Feast of Tabernacles) when all males had to appear before the Lord.

Vs. 3-9 Jesus was being taunted by His half-brothers.

V. 8 has the word "yet" in some manuscripts, but not in others. Jesus obviously didn't lie to them, so there are three theories as to what He meant here. First, there was a time element in the original language that was inherent to the words that we don't see in the English. Second, there was a "yet" in the original manuscript, or the time element was very plain in the original and some scribe added the "yet" to make it clearer. Or, third, at this moment, Jesus had been told not to go to the feast and after the brothers left, the Father told him to go to the feast. Jesus wasn't lying here regarding attending the feast, and it gives us a look at how He abided in and followed the Father.

Vs. 10-13 I can't imagine the intensity of being in Jerusalem during that time. In some respects, this visit to Jerusalem was the time of their visitation and they didn't realize it. In the next chapters we'll see how bold Jesus became. He made them an offer they couldn't refuse, but they did.

Vs. 14-19 Isn't it ironic that the leaders were amazed at Jesus' teaching but hated Him all the same. It is interesting that Jesus said that whoever wanted God's will would recognize the source of His teaching. Later, Jesus will tell the Pharisees that their will was to obey their father the devil.

Vs. 20-24 Apparently most of the visitors to Jerusalem were not familiar with the effort on the leaders' part to kill Jesus. Jesus is referring here to His healing of the man at the pool in John 5. Even a year and a half after that event, that confrontation was still stuck in the throats of the leaders.

Vs. 25-27 I like this. Suddenly some of the people from Jerusalem must have pushed forward and begun saying they knew about the plot of the leaders to kill Jesus. Their objection was that they thought the coming Messiah would be more mysterious and shrouded in mystery.

Vs. 28-29 Jesus will talk more and more about His being sent from the Father, and their problem of not knowing God at all. They knew Jesus was from Nazareth, but didn't grasp that He was the Son sent from the Father.

For us as disciples, it is instructional and motivating to see how much conflict Jesus was willing to endure to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to hear and respond to His message. We have been given that same Spirit for our work in the harvest.

### **Psalm 108**

I would guess that David is in his early years as king. The beginning of the psalm is in remembrance of what God had done. Based on that past faithfulness of God comes the dire request in vs. 10-12.

Vs. 1-4 This is David's personal devotion to God in gratefulness for all of His deliverance. We'll meet David in a few chapters in 1 Samuel and then we'll witness David's long, God-given education in crying to God for help and rescue. As a result, Israel was given a great king and the Spirit gave us some great psalms.

Notice the witness to the nations.

Vs. 5-6 David's prayer for God's exaltation means that He would be exalted in defeating Israel's enemies.

Vs. 7-9 God had shown His strength in defeating these countries because He promised to protect His people.

Vs. 10-13 Apparently Israel had suffered some minor attack from Edom, and David was asking the Lord to show His faithfulness and fulfill His promise again by defeating Edom.

By this time David was an experienced warrior-king and knew that real victory only came from the Lord.

As we work in the harvest, whether the work is hard or easy at any particular time, we always need to remember that our successes only come through the Lord; and in our difficulties, He is present and teaching us. Our strength comes as we abide in Him.

#### **Proverbs 15:4**

It is easy to be hard and biting, but Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. I think I'm more interested in my "abundance" being truthful, healing and encouraging, than truthful, correct and biting. I think this is something the Lord has worked on to change in me.

I remember a time I was preparing for a church interview, making notes, praying about what questions to ask. I know that all of us are under the weight of this life, the weight of sin, trying to go forward for Christ. I know that nothing is easy. Church isn't easy. I had a feeling about the situation, but wrote under all of my notes, "Be an encouragement." It was the world's shortest telephone interview; but for my part, even in the few words I was actually able to say, I did try to follow this verse.

#### **MAY 13**

##### **1 Samuel 13:23-14:52**

1 Samuel 14

Vs. 1-5 From the introduction you can see that the tabernacle had been rebuilt in some measure and was still at Shiloh. The priest was there, wearing the ephod with the Urim and Thummim (U&T). It doesn't appear that Saul was seeking direction from the Lord, but apparently he was ready for battle.

Notice that Ichabod is mentioned, not as being there, but as a relative of the priest. This gives us a sense for the passage of time and locating the time historically. Ichabod was named the day the ark was taken in battle and Eli and his sons died.

Vs. 6-15 Jonathan was apparently "ready" too, but because of his faith. Jonathan has already been introduced in 13:3. Now we see him for the great, unsung hero of faith and man of God that he was. He is sort of like a "Barnabas" to David. Here we see his faith and courage and how God provided a victory for Israel through him.

V. 15 God even provided some "music" to go with Jonathan's victory.

Vs. 16-23 There is a problem in the text as to whether or not this was the ark, or the priest's ephod which held the U&T. In the Greek translation of the OT and in the Luther translation, it says "ephod," instead of "ark." I'm not sure what Hebrew manuscript the Greek translators had, but they apparently were using a manuscript that said "ephod," and ephod is very different than ark. In the context, Saul asks for the "ark" to be brought to him so he can ask a question and receive an answer. Normally he would have asked for the ephod with the U&T. In v. 19 when Saul tells the priest to withdraw his hand, it sounds like Saul is saying not to use the U&T, in light of the fact that there is enough action going on and everyone knows what to do. It makes sense to me that it was the ephod, not the ark, which was always being brought with Saul. It

would have made sense to always have a priest with the ephod on hand who could ask questions of the Lord. My feeling, however, is that they didn't want to lose the ark again. They regarded the ark as valuable and holy and dangerous. I think that the Septuagint has it right and this was the ephod, not the ark. If the ark was there, it had been brought from Kiriath-jearim and was returned there.

It is interesting that until this point, Saul didn't seek guidance from the Lord. The result of this victory is that everybody became highly motivated and courageous.

Vs. 24-30 Why do you think the writer included this story? What does it tell you about the difference between Saul and Jonathan? Jonathan motivated the people by trusting the Lord and leading the battle. Saul motivated them by invoking a curse and personalizing this battle as having to do with his enemies, not the Lord's. Saul didn't seek the Lord first or even have the courage to lead the first attack.

Vs. 31-35 A picture of Saul's leadership? Good intentions, emotion, ego and "god words" lead people to dishonor the Lord. Since the priests were there I understand that they did the sacrificing.

Vs. 36-46 They were using the U&T. What is interesting to me is that either we're missing some of the input by the priests, or Saul did have some perception into the Lord and the Lord's silence. He knew enough to know that if the Lord wasn't answering, it was because someone had violated the vow.

What I don't understand is how Jonathan violated the vow when he hadn't heard it being made.

The people saved Jonathan simply by overpowering Saul's resolve, which wasn't hard. The word used is that the people *ransomed* Jonathan. This means they delivered or rescued him, not that they paid something for him or someone took his place like Christ took our place and was Himself our ransom and ransom price.

In the Greek translation of the OT, it says they prayed for Jonathan that he might not die.

Vs. 47-52 This summary describes Saul as a successful king over many years. He wasn't a failure as a king, but his failure at Gilgal showed that his heart didn't belong to the Lord. The Lord would seek a man after his own heart. We'll meet him tomorrow.

### **John 7:30-52**

V. 30 Jerusalem was not a large city. There were a lot of people there for this feast, but it wasn't impossible to find Jesus. The only explanation to them not arresting Jesus was that His time *had not yet come*. In a way, as disciples, that should give us a perspective of God's presence and sovereignty in our lives too. We don't have to be silly and run with the bulls, but if God calls us to do something, including running with the bulls, we know nothing can happen to us that isn't in God's plan and timing.

Interestingly, when Jesus' hour does come on the Tuesday before His death, the Father brings it to His awareness by a visit from some Greeks. When Jesus realizes this official notice from the Father, He is emotionally taken aback. If you're interested, it's in John 12.

V. 31 It is hard to understand what this "belief" meant. I'm sure some of it was saving faith, but the crowds turned pretty quickly. We'll see some of this in chapter 8, in a couple of days. It is interesting to see how one group would say Jesus couldn't be the Messiah, using some "biblical" knowledge, while the other group used the logic the Father wanted them to see. Jesus was doing the works of the Father.

Vs. 32-36 Jesus will use this warning on the leaders again; and then, the night before Jesus dies, He will say this same thing to the disciples and they won't understand it either. The difference was that the disciples believed in Him, and they eventually all did join Him, except for Judas, who wasn't there when Jesus said it later, but had left, selling Him out to these guys. (And you thought only the apostle Paul could write convoluted sentences.)

Vs. 37-39 It is interesting that what Jesus did here seems so small as you read it. This seems like it was just a little event. Jesus chose the most vital moment of the feast, and, SUDDENLY, did the equivalent of running on the football field with a loud speaker and stopping the entire game to get everyone to hear Him. Jesus completely disrupted this sacred day of the feast at the most crucial moment. Possibly more so than His entrance into Jerusalem on the donkey (which was a fulfillment of Scripture), this was His verbal presentation of Himself to Israel. Imagine being at a ballgame and suddenly having some guy stop everything and say something like this about Himself.

Vs. 40-44 Jesus risked a lot by doing this, but He was the Son of God and He really wanted these people to be saved if possible. Some people did respond positively, but notice again the "Bible study" group with the incomplete knowledge of the Scripture. The messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-3 was that a "light" would appear to those who sat in darkness in Zebulun and Naphtali. This showed that the Messiah would be in Galilee and it should have spoken to them. Also, according to the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11:1, the Messiah would be called "Branch," which is what "Nazareth" means.

Vs. 45-49 I like the officers. They were the mall cops of the temple. The Pharisees are just arrogant. The Pharisees referred to the common people as sinners since, in their minds, common people were born in sin and were too ignorant to really know the law. I think the Pharisees were now putting the officers into that category.

Vs. 50-52 Nick tries to go to bat for Jesus but they aim for his knee caps. This will continue tomorrow.

What speaks to me here is the effort on Jesus' part to keep giving people one more chance. I'll bet the disciples were shocked and humiliated when Jesus interrupted the ceremony and procession by His outburst. Later, after the Spirit was given, they would have the boldness of their Master. We can have that too, but we need to be walking close to Jesus in the harvest and abiding in Him.

### **Psalm 109**

This psalm might have been written while David was running from Saul and realized that some close friend of his had betrayed him. The Lord used that betrayal to inspire David to write these thoughts. What is interesting is that this psalm is quoted regarding Judas' betrayal of Jesus. David is prophetically expressing some of the emotions that Jesus would feel, knowing that Judas would be one of the Twelve, yet would still betray Him.

Knowing what David did to Uriah, if it were not for the prophetic nature of this psalm, this would be hard to accept from him. Still, it is the Spirit using David to show us that God understands our experiences of betrayal.

Notice that what saved David was his confidence in God's *steadfast love*. I find that very true and important for myself these days. I think it's always important, but we don't always value it as we should.

Vs. 1-5 This is the initial cry for help, the charge against this person and David's resolve to give himself to prayer. Great advice.

Vs. 6-15 This all seems hard, but notice the reference to Judas in v. 8. Jesus told the disciples, referring to Judas, that it would have been better for him to have never been born. That pretty well sums up what David says here. The expression here is from God's Spirit giving us an idea of what God Himself thinks about betrayal.

Vs. 16-20 This shows that this person also mistreated others. The way he treated others should be how he is treated. That's the golden rule of judgment, I guess. Verse 20 sounds like what Jesus endured on the cross.

Vs. 21-25 David resolved to rest in God's *steadfast love* and leave vengeance to the Lord. Verse 25 sounds very much like Jesus being nailed at by the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees.

Vs. 26-29 According to what we read in Samuel, David was honored. Jesus was also honored.

Vs. 30-31 God leads us through dark nights, so that we learn to rest only in Him and then give testimony to everyone of His amazing salvation.

It is interesting what the Lord uses to give us strength and hope in certain seasons of life. As disciples following Christ in the harvest, it is good to look at how the Lord has "wired" you and what He's given you that gives you strength and courage and inspires you to come back to His feet and dare again to do great things.

### **Proverbs 15:5-7**

So, I'm wondering if a wise man, who is spreading the knowledge of God, gets rich in the treasures of the knowledge of God as a result of heeding the instruction of his father, who loved the Lord?

## **MAY 14**

### **1 Samuel 15-16**

Just a note here on the passage of time. We don't have a lot of detail as to how old Saul was when certain things happened to him. We're not sure how old he was when he began to reign nor do we know when the following events happened. Here is a suggestion working backwards the beginning of David's rule as king of Judah in Hebron. David was 30 years old when he became king of Judah, also meaning that Saul had just died after 40 years of service. If Saul began to rule when he was 30 or 40, he died when he was 80. So at that point David was 30 and Saul was 80.

When David killed Goliath he was not in the army meaning he was younger than 20. He had two brothers in the army and five brothers who were not in the army (younger than 20) who were still older than David. If that oldest brother not in the army was 19 and if David's mother had had one child a year, David would have been about 14 (16 if she had some sons sooner) when he killed Goliath. David was probably anointed when he was 12 or 13 years old. At this point then, if Saul was 50 years older than David, Saul would have been about 62 years old and this would have been the 22nd year of his reign.

#### 1 Samuel 15

V. 1 These words should have been ringing in Saul's ears, *listen to the words of the Lord*.

Vs. 3-9 Admittedly, this would have been hard for us too, not to get caught up with an easy victory, feeling good and listening to the wishes of the people.

V. 6 The Kenites have links to the family of Moses and Judah, and are good people. Just don't hide in their tents or you're likely to get a tent stake in the head like in the book of Judges.

Vs. 10-11 This was not a good night. It is interesting to me that Samuel cried out to the Lord. Remember Moses crying out like this in the wilderness. It was never good for the people when

God was moved to anger. Samuel, like Moses before him, knew that this would cause Israel to suffer.

It should be noted that God's regret is not like our regret. God saw this coming, therefore the test. At this point when Saul did what God knew he would do, God was saddened because of Saul's disobedience. This makes me think about the verse in Romans 9:22, *What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.* Knowing that people will only scorn Him in their lives on earth is not easy for God.

In Saul making this monument to/for himself, it also shows why he kept Agag alive and saved the best stuff. It was for his self esteem and popularity. This stuff would have been a kind of victory parade. It should be noted that Saul was probably imitating Samuel from 1 Samuel 7:12 when Samuel made a monument and called it Ebenezer. It is clear from what follows that Saul was more concerned with his glory than with God's glory. This Carmel is not the one up by the Mediterranean Sea where Elijah had it out with the priests of Baal. This Carmel is in Judah.

Vs. 12-23 There is a lot in this section. Notice how Saul tries to schmooze Samuel in v. 15, *your God.*

Notice how Saul keeps putting blame on the people and trying to spin all this as obedience. In v. 20, Saul tried to twist reality into some kind of obedience.

Vs. 22-23 These are amazing verses and the force of them really slammed Saul. The issue is always our relationship first and then it is seen in a heartfelt obedience to His Word.

Vs. 24-35 Saul was finally honest, and yet in v. 25 he was only thinking about himself and how to save face with the people. He needed them to see Samuel return with him. What a powerful image of confused spirituality. I have seen this and it is something you can't fight. Its irrationality defies logic and argument. When a person's ego is placed before honesty with the Lord, everything becomes stained and confused.

Samuel relented and went with Saul, but this also seems like the beginning of Saul becoming dangerous and seriously defensive of his kingship.

## 1 Samuel 16

V. 1 I don't think that the Lord waited a long time before He spoke to Samuel. We know that God doesn't change His mind, but works according to His foreknowledge, election and purpose. Therefore, choosing a king, and particularly David as king, was not a new plan. If there had been no Saul, and if the people had patiently waited and sought God, David would have been king anyway.

It is another lesson in waiting. The people didn't wait, and God gave them what they wanted. Saul didn't wait at Gilgal, and the people stayed; but had he waited, God would have blessed him. As disciples, we don't want God to work in and around us in spite of ourselves. We want to follow Him, and that often means seeking Him continually over time and waiting for His clear leading.

V. 2 Notice that God took Samuel's concern seriously and gave Samuel a plan. Saul had become a dangerously insecure man.

V. 4 Who were they afraid of? Samuel or Saul? If it was Samuel, his judgeship must have been a very "Obey God and no fooling around" kind of ministry to the people. After all, he had just recently slashed Agag to pieces in 1 Samuel 15:33. On the other hand, you wonder if the people understood how deeply dangerous and insecure Saul was and that Saul was keeping his eye on Samuel.

Vs. 6-7 Even Samuel looked at the outward appearance when thinking about a king. Verse 7 is the great global equalizer. It may be that right now, the greatest disciple of Christ, following Him in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, works in the shadows of oppression and will die in obscurity, poverty and injustice. The Lord looks upon the heart and Jesus told His Twelve in Matthew 10:26, *So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.*

2 Chronicles 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.*

V. 13 Notice again that the Spirit *rushed upon David*. It was probably after this that David had his run-in with the lion and bear. In a way, it is weird to think that if the Spirit in us wanted to show His stuff, we could do almost anything. I think we see more of the Spirit when we are abiding in Christ and following Him in the harvest. And to think, our work in the harvest hardly ever involves hand-to-hand combat with wild animals.

V. 14 This was in fact *an evil spirit* sent to afflict Saul. To be fair, Saul still had recourse to go to God and ask for healing. The problem was that Saul had departed from God. We can't see yet how deeply dark Saul's heart was, but when we see it, it will be shocking.

Apparently God does this to all of His servants named Saul. The outcome depends on the heart of that particular Saul. The following Saul was in love with the Lord and had the burning heart of a disciple.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Vs. 18-23 I have to admit that this is confusing, unless Saul had some sort of dementia. When David comes to fight Goliath, Saul seems to have forgotten who David is. It could be that some of this is a summary editorial note, referring to David's entire service to Saul. Still, it makes sense to me that Saul was so brooding about his life and insecurity that he didn't take much notice of the young teen playing the music, upon whom the Spirit and the kingship rested. Interestingly, the Spirit working in David was soothing Saul.

A possible timeline here is that David is about 12-13 here. Saul will reign for about another 17 years. David served Saul off and on, returning to his home. Saul will get better and not need David as much. There will be some years of calm. The situation with Goliath will happen when David is 15-18. By the time David is 20 he will begin running from Saul. David will become king over Judah in Hebron when he is 30, and it is another 7.5 years before he becomes king of the entire nation. This means that David will have 10 years of running from Saul and living in Ziklag (16 months) to cry out to God, learn of God's constant faithfulness and steadfast love, and see God deliver him many, many times. And he'll write some great psalms.

For us as disciples we learn from Saul to obey the Word and love the Lord. Once the mission or a church or an outreach becomes about us, we begin to become like Saul. Loving the Lord keeps us safe and balanced.

As we see the story move on to David, we learn, as we have before, that God often trains His chosen servants through hardship and waiting as they follow.

## John 7:53-8:20

Now you probably see the note in your Bible that this well beloved story of Jesus is not included in the oldest and best manuscripts.

There is a time in seminary when you realize that there is another level of maturity that has to be reached in order not to lose your mind, because you understand, begrudgingly, that knowing the Greek and Hebrew doesn't really answer all the questions. In fact, studying the Bible, sometimes, creates more questions and contradicts some of a person's long held beliefs. This is an example thereof.

According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary-NT, pp. 346-347, and everyone else, these verses (7:53-8:11, the story of the woman caught in adultery) are an interruption in the text from John 7:52 to John 8:12. They differ in the quality of the Greek, meaning John didn't write these verses, and the oldest and most reliable manuscripts don't have this story. Apparently it was a story that John told, but never included in his writing. It means that as this story circulated among churches, some copyist, years later, decided to insert this story here. What does this mean for us?

First, it means that we have very reliable documents. Why? Because we have so many manuscripts and so many parts of the New Testament (many more than any other book from those times) that we can compare and know what the original Bible looked like. It isn't that we have 87% and have to guess what that missing 13% is. Rather, we have 120%, and with that, we can compare manuscripts and figure out not only when, but also where, an error might have come into the lineage of a text family.

Second, forgeries, even by the "well-meaning," were never tolerated because the men of old knew what was at risk in the copying and transmission of the Bible. The guy who wrote 3rd Corinthians was high up the food chain, but when he was discovered, he lost his job and pension. He was run out of town, and rumor has it that he worked at Walmart© as a greeter for the rest of his life.

Third, without getting too wishy-washy, it might be that God did allow the story to be included for a reason. The story is true to Jesus' character and doesn't contradict anything. I wouldn't base the gospel on this story, and knowing there is doubt about the story, I wouldn't base a lot of argument upon it. I would recognize in a mature fashion that godly men, and some of the brightest and best Greek scholars, say that it doesn't fit here. Yet, no one denies that it fits to Jesus and the conflict He was having in Jerusalem. I would still use it, but carefully.

Vs. 1-11 Notice that they brought the woman, but not the man. This suggests it was a trap for the woman so that this situation would become a trap for Jesus. According to the law, in the case of adultery, there were always two deaths. The Jews were forbidden by Rome to put anyone to death.

No one knows what Jesus wrote, but whatever happened here, the older and more mature responded first.

Vs. 12-20 After the morning session of teaching, Jesus came into the Treasury or the Court of Women. Jesus' first outburst had come as a procession brought water for cleansing into the temple. Then, He had screamed out that He was the living water. The outburst that takes place here was during the lighting of the giant lamps that hung in this court. Appropriately, Jesus presents Himself to Israel as *the light of the world*. Jesus was very direct. I'll bet His disciples were very embarrassed.

Vs. 13-18 This argument with the Pharisees sounds like what happened back in John 5. The leaders were still stuck on the same petty arguments. But Jesus' testimony was based on both His

words and on the signs the Father had given Him to do. Both His word and His signs were clearly from God.

V. 19 You get the feeling here that the leaders were grasping at any irrational straw that appeared. Jesus' Father could only be God, but they were in denial.

V. 20 Notice, that even though Jesus was in close quarters where even a ninja would have had a hard time escaping, no one laid a hand on Him, *because His hour had not yet come.*

As disciples, we can take courage at Jesus' courage. He risked this to present the truth to save any who would come to Him.

### **Psalm 110**

This is a prophetic psalm pointing to Jesus and it is quoted in Hebrews. Can you see the verses that are quoted by Paul (or whoever wrote Hebrews)? David was very likely the king of the entire nation, having received the promise of his offspring leading Israel. David may have understood that God's promise meant that the Messiah, and therefore, the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and the promise to Adam and Eve, would come through him. And then, the Holy Spirit rushed upon David and he wrote.

Vs. 1-3 This king will be the King of kings. You see that v. 1 is quoted of Jesus and that all of these verses refer to Him.

Notice here that Jesus was commanded to sit at the right hand of the Father. This had to happen to fulfill prophecy. Jesus, the human king, the Son of Man, was to take this position of victory and authority. I think it was then, and only then, that He could "give gifts to men," that is, send the Holy Spirit.

V. 4 This is the Spirit speaking through David. David had shown enthusiasm and power in leading the people in coming to worship God. When David brought the ark to Jerusalem, it wasn't just smart politics, but David passionately loved God. David knew the nation had to be focused and unified in their worship of God. David had to, and did, lead them to worship, but David couldn't sacrifice. David did foresee that this "Son," would lead Israel in being both a king and a priest. This verse is mentioned in Hebrews.

Vs. 5-7 As both king and priest, the Messiah will execute judgment on the earth.

### **Proverbs 15:8-10**

This sounds like it was written to King Saul, but it eventually also applied to Solomon. As disciples, we cut to the very core of the matter when we remember that we have been saved and now are alive only in Christ. Now as His servants, we serve Him as we pray and pursue Him, following in this harvest.

*Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

## **MAY 15**

### **1 Samuel 17:1-18:4**

1 Samuel 17

Vs. 1-11 It is possible that four to five years have passed by since the last chapter. The boy, David, was no longer playing the harp for the king. Saul had serious matters with the Philistines to tend to.

V. 4 A cubit is about 18 inches, so a foot and a half. This would have made Goliath about nine and a half feet tall: almost as high as a basketball rim. The reading of four cubits would have made him only six feet tall. It should be remembered that the people back then were short by our standards. Even in Europe when you visit a castle and they show you a bed, your first reaction is that you're in the kid's room and then you find out the king slept in that bed. They obviously didn't have enough junk food back then. The people were usually in the range of four to five feet tall. Saul himself might have been six feet tall, head and shoulders above the others. Still, who'd be afraid of a six-foot-tall man? Would that be a giant? Goliath was clearly in another category. Nine and a half feet tall would stand out even today and he'd be making millions in the NBA.

Vs. 12-16 Remember that Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth. David would have been their great grandson. There is something interesting in this trivia. Under Moses, you couldn't fight unless you were twenty years old. Let's assume this was the same here. Of the eight sons of Jesse, David was the youngest, and then came four more brothers under twenty and then there were three brothers over twenty. This means that with four other brothers under twenty, David couldn't have been more than fifteen years old. This means that David would have been 10-11 when he was anointed by Samuel and played the harp for Saul. But, when he was anointed at 10, the Spirit rushed upon him and began making him bold, courageous and deadly. Even as a 10- or 11-year-old he was observed being fearless and deadly. And, the faith to follow the Lord was already there.

Vs. 17-23 This is setting the stage for David to be on the battle line. The particulars are interesting, but what catches my attention is the last sentence in this section, *And David heard him*. Remember how the Lord allowed Samson to be provoked and how the Spirit came upon him? That is what is happening here. The Spirit is getting David worked up.

Vs. 24-30 You can already sense the Spirit shaking David up, getting him ready for action. David asks at least three different people to verify what the reward was for killing Goliath. I think this is the adolescent in David coming out. I think it's cute to see his scared older brother go after him. These are very real and humorous family dynamics and David sasses him back.

Vs. 31-37 David may have been an adolescent, but his faith was full grown and energetic. In contrast to Samson, notice how David is jealous for the glory of the God of Israel. David had the Spirit with him, and God Himself had prepared David for this moment. I would imagine that once you got good at fighting quick aggressive animals like lions and bears, fighting this big guy would be like swatting one of those big dopey flies out of the air with a newspaper. For men like Caleb, and now David, giants were just big, slow moving targets.

For us as disciples, it is good to think about God's presence in our lives and how He might be preparing us for the future. He is definitely working in us now. I'm sure David had no clue how God was preparing him for this battle and the ones that would follow. All those years of being the youngest, getting the dirty jobs, having to live out in the fields with the sheep, protecting them against predators, were used to mold David into a fighter and a king.

Vs. 38-40 This is a small section with a huge lesson. The Lord who prepares us gives us the unique tools and weapons we need to do His work in the harvest.

Vs. 41-47 I was reading this morning about Jesus telling His disciples that in the hour we are dragged before councils to give testimony to Him, the Spirit will teach us in that hour what to say. This is David talking but fully inspired by the Spirit. Wow!

V. 42 This is the editor's note. I doubt that Goliath stood there thinking, "what a handsome little boy."

Vs. 48-49 Just like we've seen before, if we step out in faith, the working of the Lord is such that it points back to His guidance and grace. This is David's story, but as we follow in the harvest, God gives us our own stories of how He brings down giants and saves the seeking.

Vs. 50-54 As soon as Goliath fell, everything broke loose. David was able to draw Goliath's sword, finish him off and cut off his head; the Philistines ran and Israel pursued. Verse 54 is a summary sentence describing what happened later. First, there was a battle and ongoing fighting. In David taking the head to Jerusalem, it would have fired up the celebration and shown the people God's victory. In a way, that had been Saul's thinking in keeping Agag alive; but in that case, God had said that no one should be spared.

Vs. 55-58 Back to the Battle. After David killed Goliath and as the soldiers were chasing the Philistines, David was brought in to talk to Saul. Now, it could be that if years had passed and David had grown and looked different, you could understand Saul not recognizing David. If Saul had been self-absorbed in his dark mood, he wouldn't have remembered much of David. But notice that David's identity is never the question; it is his family. According to the promise to the killer of Goliath, David's family would be freed from having to fight in the army and this fifteen-year-old could marry Saul's daughter. (Saul's older daughter was in her twenties. I'll bet she was really happy about marrying a fifteen-year-old boy. David might have been excited, but I doubt she was happy. It didn't happen anyway. David eventually married Saul's younger daughter Michal.)

1 Samuel 18:1-4

One very significant part of this story is the way Jonathan embraced David. It was almost as if Jonathan recognized the Lord working in David and, in the Spirit, gave David his own claim to the throne. That is certainly how the Lord made it look, and Jonathan was a very spiritually perceptive man.

### **John 8:21-30**

Vs. 21-22 All of this hinged on them accepting that Jesus had come from the Father, from God. Then, they would have known where He would be going and would have been terrified that they couldn't go there too. It is fair to say that Jesus was being a little cryptic, but it is also true that the leaders asked none of the right questions. They showed that they wanted to fight Jesus, not understand Him.

Vs. 23-24 Verse 23 couldn't be clearer, unless your spirit was bent on not wanting to accept who Jesus said He was. Verse 24 is the only unforgiveable sin, to die in your sins without coming to Christ and receiving forgiveness.

Vs. 25-27 Again, this couldn't be a clearer declaration that Jesus was the Son come from the Father.

V. 28 This was Jesus saying that there would also be an opportunity after His crucifixion for them to know that He was the Son of God and the Messiah. In Acts, it says that many of the Pharisees came to Christ. One note here is that the words, *lifted up*, seem to be slang for crucifixion. Later in John 12 when Jesus says, *lifted up*, the crowd immediately understood that He meant crucifixion. That means here too, the people and Pharisees understood what He was saying when he used this expression.

V. 29 Humanly speaking, what gave Jesus the toughness to thrive in these situations is that He did what the Father wanted Him to do and, abiding in the Father, knew that the Father was always with Him.

V. 30 The truth and rationality of Jesus' Word was cutting through the darkness. This is why Jesus never stopped teaching, so that the last person would have a chance to understand and turn to Him. This is also why Paul told Timothy to preach the Word. It is one of those things we do in the harvest as the night approaches.

### **Psalm 111**

This is one of those anonymous psalms. Still, I hear the voice of David in here.

V. 1 The part of this psalm that speaks to me today is the first sentence, *I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation*. David felt that his obligation to the Lord for His grace and deliverance was to proclaim to everyone what God had done.

Vs. 2-9 You notice that in almost every verse there is a separate thing for which to praise God. Because we have read so much, we can almost pick out events in Israel's history as the writer names each thing. Notice that vs. 7-8 sound very much like Psalm 119. That is another clue that David might be the writer.

V. 10 This is an encouragement to the worshipers to submit to the Word and to pursue the Lord.

With all the things that press upon us, it seems like everything sinks its claws in us and takes a piece of us. Here it talks about giving thanks to the Lord with our whole hearts. I guess that means being so overwhelmed by His grace and goodness, that nothing gets a piece of us or steals our peace. Abiding in Christ and being His servant means that where He is, there is His servant also. If we are serving Christ and we're in a mess, there is still peace in the mess, because Jesus is there too.

### **Proverbs 15:11**

This is a good warning and a comfort if our hearts are submitted to the Lord.

## **MAY 16**

### **1 Samuel 18:5-19:24**

1 Samuel 18:5-30

Vs. 5-9 This fighting lasted weeks, if not months. During this time Saul promoted David. The kid was a natural and apparently people followed him. When the fighting was over they came back to Gibeah, the birthplace of Saul and now his royal residence. You also know of Gibeah from the last chapters of Judges. Very ironic that this rebellious king, from the tribe of Benjamin, made this the capital, or royal city, of Israel.

On the way back from the battle, they would have gone near Jerusalem, David with Goliath's head in hand, and then up to Gibeah. In this procession, with crowds lining the road along the way, the women broke out in song. The fact that this was their song indicates that there were weeks between Goliath and this victory march. News had circulated; the new hero's name was known and now it had become part of an irritating little song.

V. 9 From this day on Saul began to hate David and the evil spirit began to return. It is possible that 4-5 years pass by from the killing of Goliath to David fleeing for his life from Saul.

This is the grungy history of Israel. It is also the grungy history of redemption. You would think that since the world and its people are going to hell, we Christians could all be friends, be of the same spirit and get the job done. Not so. Growing as a mature disciple means witnessing this kind of "in fighting," but still keeping your passion for Christ and His/our mission burning

brightly. There can be a lot of jealousy and ego in the church and in the harvest. Paul, himself, mentioned the jealousy aimed at him in Philippians 1.

Vs. 10-11 Apparently, during the time of the fighting, Saul and David became reacquainted. When they returned, Saul was having more difficulty with that evil spirit; and David took up his old job of playing the harp as he had done years earlier. I'm not sure if it means that David evaded him twice on this occasion, or if it means that in all of David's dealings with Saul there were two times he tried to kill David. There will be one more narrow escape just around the corner.

Vs. 12-16 It is interesting that Saul got to the place of not being able to stand David's presence. As an ordinary commander, David would fall into obscurity; but unlike Saul, the Spirit was with David and David was bold, taking the initiative. Notice the mention in v. 16 of *Israel and Judah*. This will become more important later.

Vs. 17-19 One of Saul's daughters had been promised to the man who killed Goliath. Saul was making David wait, hoping the Philistines would kill David. When that didn't work, Saul broke his own vow and didn't give Merab to David.

This vow put Saul in a hard situation. Saul knew that God's hand was on David, so he wanted David dead. Plus, if David married one of Saul's daughters, David would be in the family and would have some right to the throne. That would be horrible.

Vs. 20-29 Michal was not a consolation prize. She loved David and was probably closer to David's age. With Merab, it would have been like making your 30-year-old daughter marry a 19-year-old. David would have been her "Boy Toy." In the case with Michal, it would have looked better. But the same problem existed here; David had to die and he couldn't become part of the family.

V. 27 It's good that this story doesn't make it into children's Sunday school lessons. It is interesting to wonder if they took the time to really circumcise the dead soldiers. Some think that David just castrated them, but it says he brought the foreskins. Circumcision would have been less macabre, and it would have added a psychological fear factor to fighting Israel. Of course, death was bad enough, especially the real reality of death - stepping before a judge you're not ready to meet.

Because of Saul's insane jealousy and bitterness, I'm sure this ruined every day of his life. It finally drove him to very violent and insane acts.

V. 30 This is giving us the passage of time. In this verse David goes from a 15-year-old to an 18- or 19-year-old.

1 Samuel 19

Vs. 1-7 Apparently Saul resolved to kill David and goodhearted Jonathan tried to help David. There may not have been any big battles, so that David's achievements were a minor but constant irritant. Jonathan wasn't yet aware how deeply his father's ego and insecurity had been roused. It often happens with us. We try to speak peace to someone and it seems to work, only to discover that the issue is much deeper than we realized.

Vs. 8-10 Another battle with the Philistines, another victory for David, and incurable brooding and jealousy for Saul. Oh yeah, David, "Watch out for that spear."

Vs. 11-24 From this point on, David will be running from Saul. It will be about 17 years before David becomes king of the entire nation. During these next ten years, for eight and a half of them he'll be on the run, living in caves, living in the open country, hiding from Saul. Things will settle down, and then David will simply be hiding from Saul. Finally Saul will make another run

at David and David will keep from killing Saul. David will realize that Saul will never change and never give up. Then he'll go to the territory of the Philistines and live in Ziklag for a year and a half. After these ten years Saul will die in battle and David will be made king of Judah in Hebron while a seven-year civil war rages with the followers of Saul. Finally, when David is 37 he will become king of the entire nation. David is now about 20 years old. This will be a very intense time in David's life, and God will develop his heart in this trial. We've seen God do this with Joseph and Moses. David will become great and we'll get some good psalms.

V. 13 Some translations say, "idol," but this was just some decorative statue, like a replica of that statue by Michelangelo, "David." Apparently they had "yard art" back in those days too.

V. 17 This lie was unnecessary and who knows how it was used to spread a false report about David. Eventually, Saul would give Michal to another man. Why didn't she just say she loved David and that her father was wrong?

Vs. 18-24 This was a strange way to stop Saul, but really, it was an attempt to give Saul another chance to repent. It was a sign to show that God would never allow Saul to kill David. The insanity here is that even though Saul knew he was powerless, he persisted even when he knew that God was opposing him.

As disciples, we should realize that we are reading redemptive history. It is sad and tragic, but it is God's working to save and redeem lost people. So, we shouldn't feel too badly if our journey looks something like this. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12-13, *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Even in Paul's day there was a certain amount of resistance from Jerusalem and there were pharisaical Christians who followed him, disrupted his work, persecuted him, confused those new to faith and who tore churches apart. Paul had to deal with a lot of "friendly fire." Following the Lord in the harvest and making disciples for Him is worth it all.

### **John 8:31-59**

Vs. 31-33 So what does it mean that these Jews (Jewish leaders) believed in Jesus? Satan believes in Jesus, too. Judas Iscariot must have believed in Jesus to have stayed with Him. John 2:23-25 says, *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*

This is a good question to ask, because it is obvious that belief doesn't mean you are saved. After Jesus reigns 1000 years on earth, people will still reject Him. It's insane, but true. King Saul knew and believed a lot. He believed in God and he knew David would be the next king, but he fought against it and became a madman. Belief doesn't mean saving faith. Submission, following, obeying, and doing are in the true definition of what it means to be saved. "He who hears my word and does it," is the real formula. Jesus said many would come to Him on seeing Him in heaven and claim they belonged to Him, but He will say that HE NEVER knew them. In Matthew 9, Jesus healed two blind men, saying, *Do you believe I am able to do this?* They said, *Yes Lord.* Then He sternly charged them, *See that no one knows about it. But they went away and spread His fame through all that district.* They believed, but didn't obey.

In v. 31 Jesus said it, *If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.*

V. 33 And they not only argued with Jesus, but they were wrong. In reality, Israel belonged to Rome. But what they didn't grasp was their bondage to sin. The leaders knew of Isaiah 53. If they hadn't had an irrational hatred for Jesus, they might have been able to think this through.

Vs. 34-38 This is a very important passage of Scripture. Like Paul in Romans 7, Jesus is describing sin as a force within us. Only the Son can make a person free. There are no exceptions.

The allusion to the slave and the son in v. 35 could be looking at the difference between Ishmael and Isaac, or between the law and grace. One was the son of the promise and the other was the son of the slave woman. Apparently this symbol must have been a part of Jewish teaching, because Paul will pick up on it in Galatians.

V. 38 But Jesus picks up on the idea of *father* and presses the point home.

Vs. 39-40 If Abraham were their father, they would have received the truth as Abraham had. This is very interesting. Jesus was the angel of the Lord who visited Abraham and told him that he and Sarah would have a child. Abraham received that truth. So here is Jesus, who had talked with Abraham, being treated like a liar for telling the truth. This is a very ironic moment. When Jesus presented Abraham with the truth, Abe listened.

They still hadn't figured out who their father was.

Vs. 41-43 The irony only went deeper. In claiming God was their Father they were sadly wrong. I'll bet Jesus smiled sadly when He said this. If they had loved God, they would have been in love with Jesus.

V. 43 This verse is not only an explanation of the rebellion of man and result of sin, but it makes you wonder if Satan can bear to hear God's Word.

V. 44 This is an amazing description of the leaders who hated Jesus. They never thought that their desire to kill Jesus and lie about Him came from the devil. They proved they were his followers and children by so completely imitating and obeying his desires.

Vs. 45-47 Anyone who does not hear and follow Jesus is not of God, regardless of how moral he acts or how much "god speak" he utters. Jesus is the one and only.

Vs. 48-51 Now *the Jews*, usually meaning the Pharisees and leaders, take the lead in the confrontation. Notice the contrast in what is said here. They accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed and He still offers them eternal life. Verse 51 is discipleship, true belief and saving faith all rolled into one sentence.

Vs. 52-59 Now we are back to Abraham. It really is amazing, that when these leaders wanted to be perceptive, they could do it. They understood the logic of what Jesus just said. They thought they had trapped Him, but they were about to get their hearts challenged.

V. 58 Jesus called Himself "Yahweh," when He said, *I AM*. We miss this because of the language construction, but they got the point. This will be revisited in chapter 10 where they say they wanted to kill Jesus; because, He, being a man, made Himself (declared that He was) God.

## **Psalm 112**

A wonderful psalm.

Vs. 1-4 In keeping with both the OT and NT readings, note that this blessed person *fears the Lord* and *greatly delights in His commandments*. Loving/fearing the Lord and following His Word are connected. This man is known or blessed with what follows in vs. 2-4.

Vs. 5-9 Verse 5 describes the outward life of this person who loves the Lord as mentioned in v. 1. It is his relationship with God that allows him to be generous with others. He has stability and a firm foundation in the affairs of life because of his trust in the Lord.

V. 10 Doesn't this remind you of Saul or even the Pharisees? If you are for yourself, then seeing God blessing others and removing His blessing from you makes you mad. It can even ruin your teeth.

### **Proverbs 15:12-14**

So apparently a wise person accepts reproof, takes courage in all things because of God's love which makes him glad, and then he seeks even more to understand God and to follow Him better.

There are many things that the Lord uses to reprove or humble us, but if our hearts belong to Jesus and we are following Him in the harvest, we would call that "pruning." That sorrow doesn't last long since we are living for the Father's glory, to bear much fruit. We know why we're here and what this life is about. The sorrow of life doesn't affect us the same way if we are abiding in our Lord.

## **MAY 17**

### **1 Samuel 20-21**

Tales of woe in the history of redemption.

#### **1 Samuel 20**

Vs. 1-11 I think David came back to Jonathan because Jonathan had helped in the past, and also because David hoped, like we all would have, that this broken situation could be fixed. This is something that we all need to learn, and the quicker the better. The kind of objectivity to think clearly only comes from being absolutely secure in the Lord. Also, sometimes the Lord allows broken relationships to stay broken to separate us from harm (Joseph from his brothers and Canaan) and to work in our hearts in hard circumstances and isolation (again, Joseph at Potiphar's and in prison). David's curriculum had already begun, but it would still be years of suffering and running before he would graduate.

Vs. 12-17 The very powerful thing that comes out of this event is the covenant they make. Jonathan initiates this and that is significant. He realized that God was exalting David. It was common in kingdoms to kill all the heirs of the throne from the previous ruler. Jonathan realized that God would make David the king and therefore wanted to hear David say that he would promise to protect his family.

V. 14 This seems to be Jonathan saying that if he is still alive when David becomes king, that David would not harm him.

V. 16 Jonathan blessed David before the Lord. What an awesome spiritual man and model of a disciple.

V. 17 These were two spiritual men who had a deep love and loyalty to one another.

Vs. 18-23 The reason for the boy and the arrows, I think, was that if Saul was really mad enough to kill David, he would have had Jonathan followed, assuming that Jonathan was going to David. Going out for target practice would be close to home and apparently it was something Jonathan did often, so, no need to follow him.

Vs. 24-29 Apparently everything looked good for the first day.

Vs. 30-34 Saul lost his mind, and a mind is a terrible thing to lose. He actually tried to kill Jonathan. It is interesting that Saul knew that God wanted to make David king. What an awful way to live, fighting against God.

Vs. 35-42 Jonathan and David renewed their covenant and parted. We'll see Jonathan again, being an encouragement to David. What a contrast between father and son. Saul had the irrational hatred and Jonathan had the supernatural love of God.

1 Samuel 21

Vs. 1-6 This is actually a famous situation in the NT. Jesus uses this story to show that mercy and saving life are allowable reasons to "break" the Sabbath.

V. 2 I see this as a very unfortunate "hole" in David's character. I know he was afraid, but he lied and didn't need to. David will continue to lie like a trooper. Without realizing it (God knew) he was putting Ahimelech's entire family / clan in danger. Remember God's curse on Eli and his branch of the priestly family? That branch is this family and it's about to get broken.

V. 3 This doesn't mean anything, but I find it interesting that when Jesus fed the 5000, he had five loaves.

V. 5 This appears to be another lie. It might have been David's practice to get his men focused for a coming expedition, but this flight from fear was no ordinary or planned mission.

V. 6 These loaves had already been replaced for the day with new loaves. Normally only the priests could eat these. Also, this means that the tabernacle and the Holy Place were at Nob. The ark was still in Kiriath-jearim.

Vs. 7-9 So why does it say that Doeg was there? Never trust a guy named Doeg.

V. 8 Another lie, and one that made no sense.

V. 9 It's interesting that the ephod was there and David didn't think to use the Urim and Thummim. David will learn to seek the Lord.

Vs. 10-15 Apparently David had the right idea, but the wrong timing. Later he would live among the Philistines and this king will be his good buddy, but at this point it was a bad idea. Just think: He had this "killer" reputation and he was carrying the sword of Goliath, who was from Gath; and he was standing before the king of Gath and surrounded by Philistines. What made him think this was a good idea?

Notice in v. 11 that they refer to David as a king, because he was given more honor in the song than Saul. Even the Philistines understood the rebuke to Saul and the exalting of David. Remember, David had been given honor for slaying Philistines.

This was a funny way to get himself out of this jam and Achish lands a great line in v. 15. This not only shows David's desperation, but it shows his lack of closeness to the Lord. He'll need time in the wilderness. We all need time in the wilderness to become the kinds of disciples who seek only God and follow Christ in the harvest through trials and suffering, making disciples who will do the same.

## John 9

Jesus is still in Jerusalem for the week of the Feast of Tabernacles, which followed the week after the Day of Atonement. These symbols are rich in what has happened here. During the feast, as the cleansing water was being brought into the temple, Jesus had stopped the ceremony by crying out that He was the living water. During the lighting of the great lanterns in the treasury / Court of Women, Jesus had disrupted this ceremony saying He was the Light of the world. Six months before His crucifixion, Jesus was making His claim to be Messiah.

Now, to prove that Jesus is the Light of the world, the Father leads Jesus and the disciples to notice a man. The disciples ask a question and Jesus realizes that the Father has put this man there to give proof that Jesus is literally the light that gives light to men. And to boot, it was the Sabbath. What was the Father thinking?

Vs. 1-7 In order for this man to have been punished for his own sin, he would have had to have sinned in the womb since he was born blind. The people were very confused about sin and the Pharisees helped the people feel sinful. Jesus said this disability had been given in order to give God glory. That ought to make us think too.

Notice what Jesus says about works and light. I think this applies to us too. While it is still light in the harvest, we need to make hay.

So, why did Jesus make the clay? I think there were two reasons. First, it was to challenge the leaders. This was a class "A" miracle and an obvious sign that Jesus was the Christ, but making clay was forbidden on the Sabbath and it was probably some violation of something to use spit. Second, it was for the faith of the blind man. Jesus often tested faith in people He met. Going to the pool and washing this off made the blind man have to show that he believed Jesus.

Vs. 8-17 This is the first round of testimony given by the formerly blind man. This all played out so naturally and innocently that it is actually profound. The people didn't want to believe it, but they couldn't argue with the man. I like what he said, "I am the man."

The point of what Jesus did is shown in the conflict among the Pharisees in v. 16. The work that the Father had given Jesus to do was amazing and they knew it. Some of them couldn't deny it.

Vs. 18-23 This is the testimony of the parents. Their fear is understandable, but later John will mention this same threat of being put out of the synagogue and fearing to confess Jesus by saying, "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Vs. 24-34 Even the blind man could see the blindness of the Pharisees. What he says here is totally honest and inspired by the Spirit. Could anything be more out of the mouth of God? This is sort of like what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 10, when He sent them out, *When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Vs. 35-38 Finally, Jesus sought out this man to comfort him; the man, desiring to see Jesus, worshiped Him.

Vs. 39-41 The Pharisees apparently didn't know the old saying, "Never miss a good chance to shut up." Jesus declared judgment and they stepped right into it.

As Jesus said to His disciples, if He was treated like this, and we disciples are no better than He, we should expect the same treatment. Yet when we acknowledge His name before men, He also acknowledges us before the Father and sends the comfort we need. Also, this situation reminds us that we can't neglect the harvest because of Pharisees or others who resist. Somewhere, there is someone waiting in the darkness for the Word of light. And they will respond to the light and follow.

## **Psalms 113**

I know, you're wondering what to get out of The Psalms, if all The Psalms are beginning to sound the same.

First, you have to gird up the loins of your mind; because believe it or not, you'll finish The Psalms in June and begin again in July.

Second, just observe repetitions and find the heart of the psalm; the reason for the praise.

V. 1 This is calling the servants of the Lord to praise Him. Every person was to see himself as a servant living for the glory of the Lord on earth. This was the purpose of Israel.

Vs. 2-3 God's praise is for all of time and for all of the earth, all generations and all peoples.

Vs. 4-6 God is over all of the nations and looks over every person.

Vs. 7-8 He has His eye on the poor.

V. 9 He also has His eye on those without hope, symbolized by a barren woman. He cheers their hearts.

Get this stuff under your belt and you'll always have something for a devotional. Not only that, as a disciple making disciples, if this stuff lights a fire in you, you'll light a fire in those you are discipling. Discipleship is more often "caught," than taught. And, you'll praise the Lord.

### **Psalm 114**

Vs. 1-2 This summarized God's plan in bringing up Israel from Egypt. God ruled over Israel through Judah. Not only did the king come from Judah, but the ark and the temple were in Jerusalem.

Vs. 3-4 This is what happened as God came into the land.

Vs. 5-8 This is the call to the earth to submit to God's power.

If God can control all that and cause all powers to bend to Him, how much more can we depend on God for all the cares and challenges of our lives as we follow Christ in the harvest?

### **Proverbs 15:15-17**

Can you think of three verses that hang together so well, that say so much?

For us as disciples, what I think of when I read these is, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied* (Matt. 5:6). *For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you* (Luke 12:30-31).

## **MAY 18**

### **1 Samuel 22-23**

Here are some dark days in the history of redemption.

#### 1 Samuel 22

Vs. 1-5 First, David escaped from Gath and regrouped in the cave at Adullam. Notice the people who came to David. This cave was between Gath and Jerusalem and is thought to be the place or near the place where David killed Goliath.

In taking his family to Moab for safety, David could claim that his great grandmother, Ruth, was also from Moab.

I don't know if Gad the prophet traveled with David, but this was good advice, and David began to ask the Lord more and more about what he should do.

Vs. 6-19 This is Saul at his worst. Saul had no qualms or conscience about killing the priests, but he had to appeal to a foreigner, Doeg, the Edomite, to kill the priests. Never trust a guy named Doeg.

Notice that when Saul was commanded to kill everything that belonged to the Amalekites, he didn't do it. Here, regarding the city of Nob, a defenseless city of the priests, He declared "holy war" by killing everyone and everything, using a non-Israelite to do his dirty work.

The reason Saul did this will be clear when you later read that though David helped cities, they turned against him. The cities were afraid of Saul because of this heartless destruction. If Saul would destroy a city of priests and their families, it was clear that he had no respect for God or anyone else. He was totally ruthless.

It is interesting that later Saul will seek the Lord, and God will not answer. Go figure.

It should be noted that this was in fulfillment of the curse that God put on the priestly lineage of Eli (from Aaron's son Ithamar). After this, two priests would emerge, Abiathar, the last priest who would ever serve God from Eli's lineage, and Zadok, from the other priestly family originating in Aaron's son Eleazar. Abiathar will be retired (with his life spared because of his rebellion), when Solomon becomes king. From that point on, the only priests come from the family and lineage of Zadok. God is often very patient, even in His judgments.

Vs. 20-23 It seems that David understood that his lying had played a part in the slaughtering of Abiathar's family. Saul would have killed them anyway because they helped David, but at least they would have known what was going on and could have protected their families. One good thing David got out of this deal was that Abiathar brought the ephod with the Urim and Thummim (U&T).

1 Samuel 23

Vs. 1-5 David had been a shepherd and was anointed as a boy to be the future king. Although David would run for the next 10 years, God had a plan for him. God would use David to protect Israel and to know not to put his trust in people, but rather wholly in the Lord. Notice that David's men were afraid because they would be going closer to Saul if they saved Keilah.

This is the first mention of David inquiring of the Lord. Very cool. Verse 6 explains what made this "inquiring" possible. When you see the ephod, you think of the U&T, right? These things were the best kept secret in Israel and seldom used, but David was wearing them out now.

Vs. 6-14 What I find interesting in all of these adventures in Keilah is that as David was seeking the Lord, asking Him the questions that were on everyone's mind, David was also teaching his motley crew to seek the Lord and depend on Him. This is how David really became their leader, and it was under pressure and in dangerous times.

Notice that in v. 13, David's little army had grown since 1 Samuel 22:2, from 400 to 600.

V. 14 It is hard to know how much time is passing, but the danger was present every day for a while. Yet it was through this danger and stress that David could see daily how the Lord was protecting him.

Vs. 15-18 Did you know this was here? It touches my heart to read this. So little is said about Jonathan, but what a heroic man of God he was. Supposedly the name means "Yahweh has given." Well Jonathan submitted to both God and David in giving up his right to rule. And in Jonathan, God gave David a friend that he really didn't deserve. More about this when we see how David treats Jonathan's son.

Notice that Jonathan strengthened David's hand *in the Lord*. This was no ordinary pep talk. The German says that Jonathan strengthened David's trust in God. What a model of Barnabas and a selfless disciple maker.

Vs. 19-29 I'm sure this treachery hurt David but the Lord kept David safe.

V. 21 These are incredible, contradictory words.

Vs. 25-29 This is David's closest call. They were separated only by the space of a few minutes. David not only had 600 men, but the men also had families, and families have babies, highchairs, strollers (all-terrain) and potty chairs and tents and plasmas and computers and cappuccino makers, and, and, and.... That's all to say that this was not easy. The text here doesn't talk about their families, but when David lands at Ziklag and the town is overrun, it says that everyone lost someone to the kidnappers. Again, reading year after year, letting the Spirit make slow, natural connections pays off and adds human feel to the details.

V. 27 Then, in the nick of time, a messenger arrived telling Saul that the Philistines had raided a city and without knowing how close he was to finding David, Saul broke off the search and went away. David wasn't saved permanently, but this small deliverance probably had a psalm written for it.

Because we weren't there, we see these events very one dimensionally and objectively. We don't feel the heat or sense the urgency, but it was all there. Ironically, in the middle of this desperate escape, God was so present that Saul could have been a million miles away, because God wasn't going to let David get caught. It is good to remember God's sovereignty even when we are acting with God's urgency, going nuts and sweating like crazy in the harvest. We can work hard but still be calm, knowing that our Father is working.

### **John 10:1-21**

This is such a great portion of Scripture that what it says to us as disciples is deeper than any of us could ever go. Note that this reading concludes at v. 21. All of this is happening in October. Verse 22 picks up at Hanukkah in December.

As you read, look for stuff to underline, especially about doors and shepherds. Take a little time to figure out what all that means.

Vs. 1-6 What Jesus says here is immediately after what He just said to these Pharisees. As shepherds, they had just cast this sheep out of the synagogue. This is why Jesus launches into this talk. They showed by their action against this man who had been blind, that they were robbers and thieves and had not entered the sheepfold by the right way. And then to boot, they didn't get what Jesus was saying.

Vs. 7-10 So to explain what He meant, Jesus further confused the Pharisees by telling them who He was. Here Jesus says that the only way to come into the fold as a sheep or a shepherd is through Him. He is the door to serve the sheep and He is the door for the sheep. Those who come to Him are saved and find pasture and life.

Vs. 11-13 Now Jesus says He is the Good Shepherd who dies for the sheep. Notice that dying for the sheep is how He will protect them.

Vs. 14-16 As the *Good Shepherd*, Jesus calls His sheep; they know His voice, and they follow Him. I wonder if the Pharisees understood that they couldn't hear His voice. Notice that Jesus is saying that He also had Gentile sheep and that there would eventually be one flock.

Vs. 17-18 This is the *authority* that Jesus spoke of back in John 5. The Father has granted Him to have life in Himself. Although no one could take it from Him, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus willingly laid down His life for the sheep. Hallelujah!

Vs. 19-21 This is a very interesting look into the minds of the leaders of the people. Most of them simply rebelled, but some of the priests, scribes and Pharisees were being honest and were challenged by the spiritual truth in Jesus' words. Later it will say that many, even among the authorities, believed in Jesus. They were just afraid to admit it.

Jesus will pick up this same line of teaching in the next verse, which will occur two months later.

As disciples following our Lord, we are also under the authority of the Father. We are not our own; we've been bought with a price, and there are sheep who need to hear the message of Christ. We are called according to His purpose and given the Spirit to be His witnesses in His harvest.

And as disciples we need to remember that we are His sheep and need to follow His voice.

### **Psalm 115**

This psalm seems to echo how alive, close and dependable the Lord is to His people. This was probably written during the reign of David or some other king who promoted the worship of Yahweh.

V. 1 The declaration of worship here is to give glory to the living God who is known by His *steadfast love* and *faithfulness*.

Vs. 2-3 Notice the contrast. The nations that have idols wonder where Israel's idols are. Israel, according to the psalmist and God, didn't need idols. They had a living God in heaven.

Vs. 4-8 These verses are full of the contradictions of serving *idols*. The nations, but also Israel, followed idols. The irony in v. 8 is interesting. Not only do people who trust in idols become dumb like the idol, but they also actually trust in themselves.

Vs. 9-13 This is the call for Israel to throw away their idols and trust in God. Notice the repetition of words like *help*, *trust*, and *bless*. This is what only the living God can do and He promised to do just that in the law. Notice the mention of Aaron. This is referring to the priesthood and worship at the tabernacle. That was where Israel was supposed to gather for worship and be blessed. Instead they worshiped and sacrificed on every high hill. This writer, possibly David, wanted the people to return to God.

Vs. 14-16 The Lord is the one who blesses, because He is the creator of everything.

Vs. 17-18 Most religions have some sort of rite for the dead. Israel didn't have that. Israel was to worship and praise the living God who saved them. The *forevermore* suggests that those the Lord has saved will, in fact, praise Him *forevermore*, because they will be alive in Him.

As disciples, all of this talk about idols shouldn't be taken lightly. I know we all laugh at the thought of idols, but when we're in need, it is easier to go to the plastic (charge card) than to sit before the Lord in silence, waiting until He answers as only He can.

### **Proverbs 15:18-19**

In contrast to yesterday when the three verses fit together, we have these very different verses.

So, I figure it like this: A hot-tempered man is like a sluggard in the sharp contrasts, edges, and unevenness in his life. The upright controls his temper and is balanced in dealing with his life before the Lord.

## **MAY 19**

### **1 Samuel 24-25**

As we read about David on the run, we get very little sense of the difficulty this presented for David or his followers. Over the 10 years he lived on the run in virtual exile in Israel, and then in Ziklag, it had to have taken a toll on all of them, with their emotions and tempers running the gamut. I'm sure he had people "encouraging" him saying, "Don't worry, this will only last a few months. The people know what's going on. Maybe they'll do something. Maybe God will do

something." Don't you hate it when people do that? God doesn't always pay on Friday, or this year, for that matter. In the meantime, this "chase" was becoming something of a cultural phenomenon. Everybody, even the Philistines, knew about it. The Lord will encourage David at the most unexpected times and by the most unexpected means. This will be a good lesson for us, too, to simply follow in the harvest and let God give us recognition and encouragement as He sees fit.

This map might be a help. "David's Flights From Saul," Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 452. It's located at the end of this document.

#### 1 Samuel 24

Vs. 1-7 This was not only unexpected, but David's reaction was also unexpected. I'm sure David loved or respected Saul, but more than that, David respected the Lord's sovereign choice of anointing Saul. It looks like David himself was surprised at how the Spirit stung his conscience. David's men also got a good lesson in godliness and following the Lord.

V. 3 I have never heard a good explanation for the expression "covering your feet," (you should have a note saying what the literal words are), so here is my theory. When a guy stands and empties his bladder, depending on the target surface and wind direction, he usually gets his feet wet, but only notices it if he's barefooted or wearing sandals. They wore sandals in those days. Apparently someone came up with the idea of covering their feet and the phrase caught on and became an expression like "going to the john" or "going to the place where even the Kaiser has to go on foot" (i.e., without his horse...it's German...oh, forget it). You get the idea.

I can't imagine that David had all 600 men in the cave, but certainly a scouting party.

Vs. 4-7 You can imagine the pressure on David. All the discomfort and stress of running, and here, with one good slice and the battle is over. I don't know what good influences there might have been on David to develop his heart, but the Spirit was with David and, in this instance, He smote David's heart. Remember too, that David was also anointed. He could have done a lot of rationalizing. But here, the Spirit led him. The respect David shows here to God and Saul, and his willingness to stand against the voice of the people (unlike Saul) is what made him a leader and model to his men. In the German it says that David used hard words to steer his men away from this plan of action. And I wonder if Saul was deaf. I can't imagine David arguing with his men in a cave making no noise unless they were doing pantomime.

Vs. 8-22 To me, the most significant thing that comes out of this is Saul's sad confession that he knew David would become king. In other words, Saul knew he was fighting God. In v. 21, as he makes David swear not to kill his family, he all but admits that he knows God will prevail.

Notice that this was very public. In v. 2 we are told that Saul brought 3000 of his best men. They all heard him confess his guilt and declare that David would become king. What a funny thing for God to arrange. Yet, in spite of this public declaration, Saul will still irrationally pursue David, and so will the leaders and men who heard what had just been said.

Sin, this same kind of sin, is in us. Rationality and education can only go so far and these will always give way to the vicious sickness in our souls. Our problem is spiritual, so the cure must be spiritual. We have been given a new spiritual life, but still we need our meds, the Word, daily. Until the Lord takes us and frees us completely from this body of death, we desperately need the Word, the Spirit, and following Christ in the harvest.

#### 1 Samuel 25

This chapter is given entirely to the story of David and Abigail. So, what is this chapter really about? Is this a romance? If you ask me, and I know I'm hopeless, every year when I read this, I

wish David would have just hung with Abigail. I know God is sovereign, so Solomon had to come, which meant Bathsheba would have been David's wife eventually (without David killing Uriah). So then, if this isn't a romance, what is the point of the story?

Vs. 1-8 We have no clue here as to the passage of time. It could have been days or years. David apparently attended Samuel's funeral. David must have been living a very public life, as we'll see in a few verses. If you use the map of David's Flight From Saul, follow line 14 up to Ramah. That would have been the funeral. Then follow line 15 down to Maon. As only a shepherd could, David guarded Nabal's (Nabal means fool) flocks and his shepherds. Wrongly, David felt that Nabal owed him something. Since the man was rich and David had rendered a service, he could have been generous. I think it is a little irrational that David demanded a payday and was willing to kill.

Vs. 9-13 I guess you could call this a tale of two hot-heads.

Vs. 14-17 This guy was the unsung hero of this story. I've never noticed him before. Notice his advice to Abigail. I had to smile when he called Nabal a worthless man.

Vs. 18-22 Abigail and Nabal apparently complemented each other. He was a fool and she was very wise. She was not only bringing a lot of stuff, but she sent servants on ahead so they could temper David's anger. David on the other hand was ready for war. His words show that he wasn't depending on God. He "served" Nabal to get something from Nabal.

Vs. 23-31 Besides all that may have been going on here culturally, God gave David a very unexpected encouragement. Notice what Abigail says in vs. 28-31. She is saying that everyone knows David is God's choice to be king and she has faith that God will exalt David. Wow. She even asks David to remember her when God brings him to the throne. Now, if Abigail and everyone knew this about David, so did Nabal.

Notice that she tells him twice that he shouldn't help himself by his own hand. It's hard not to fight.

Vs. 32-35 I think this is the point of the entire story. David would have been completely unjust in doing this. He would have been a murderer. God saved him. Abigail said what was obvious, that God was going to make David the king over Israel. In the bitterness of waiting, David had lost perspective.

Remember Balaam, no one could convince God to curse Israel, but they could bring a curse on themselves through sin. Then both justice and Satan would be storming God's throne to bring wrath and judgment. Later, in the case of Uriah the Hittite, David will become a murderer. God will judge him, and he and his entire family (not to mention the nation) will suffer as a result. Here, David is spared.

Do you ever wonder why God blocks you or why that slow driver pulls out in front of you to make you drive slower? In this way, and in a thousand other ways in all sorts of situations, the Spirit guiding us often blocks us, protecting us to keep us safe before God, so that we will remain focused and qualified to bear witness to our Lord in the harvest, and to make disciples.

Vs. 36-42 Almost a happy ending. God struck Nabal, and David learned the mercy of God in being blocked and the importance of waiting on God. And David married Abigail.

Vs. 43-44 This is what takes the edge off of the happy ending for me. There is no example of a man with multiple wives where there wasn't trouble. Abigail might have been that one woman of spiritual wisdom that David needed. Having multiple wives meant that his attention would never be fixed, and he would never be fulfilled and "one" with anyone. This abundance of women and lack of oneness will get both him and Solomon in a lot of trouble.

## John 10:22-42

Today, "The Feast of Dedication is called Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights. It commemorates the re-consecration of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. after its desecration in 168 B.C. by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who was the foreshadowing of the antichrist. The time for the eight-day feast was in December." (Bible Knowledge Commentary-NT, p. 311) This then is just four months before Jesus' death.

The link between what happened earlier in this chapter and now is the continued conflict with the leaders, the question of Jesus' identity, and the analogy of the sheep.

Vs. 22-24 *The Jews* means the Pharisees and leaders. Their request seems reasonable except that Jesus had already told them who He was. They wanted to argue with Him to satisfy their unbelief and catch Him saying something they could say was wrong.

Vs. 26-30 This is a great portion of Scripture and worth memorizing.

V. 27 If you break this verse down into parts, you get a good description of saving faith and discipleship. And you get a good devotional for a group.

V. 28 is a good text for eternal security.

V. 30 This started a fight. They asked Jesus and He told them.

Vs. 31-33 They understood exactly what Jesus was saying.

Vs. 34-42 In Psalm 82:6 the men God sent to judge and lead Israel were called *gods* or mighty ones simply because they had the Word of God. Jesus says here that if those guys were called gods and sons of God, how much more should He be called the Son of God since He was sent from the Father and was doing the Father's works? Jesus wasn't saying He wasn't God's Son, He was confirming He was the Son of God.

Vs. 37-38 Even with this level of anger and resistance, Jesus still appealed to them to believe by looking at the miracles instead of looking at Him.

Vs. 39-42 Jesus escaped again and went to Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John first bore witness to Jesus (John 1:28). The leaders of the people hated Jesus and would not believe, but the people believed. Notice that although the people were attracted by the signs, they believed in the person of Jesus as the Messiah. The Pharisees couldn't get beyond the person of Jesus.

In about four months, the Jewish leaders would get what they wanted.

For us as disciples, we have Jesus as our model and our Lord. His compassion in dealing with the Jewish leaders, putting Himself in harm's way to give them a chance to respond, is mercy and grace, and is an example to us. Also, He is the model of what it means to abide. Jesus saw each situation as staged by His Father and was alert and followed as the Spirit led. That is how we abide in our Lord in the harvest.

## Psalm 116

What a great psalm. As you read it think of two things. First, the power of our love for the Lord is always connected to how we understand what He rescued us from. As Jesus said, *he who is forgiven little, loves little*. Second, in our ongoing journey following Christ, He teaches us to rest in Him, by leading us into situations where we can depend on only Him. Think of this psalm as being written by David after living through the two chapters we just read today.

Vs. 1-4 God's love was known from His deliverance and therefore the writer loves the Lord. But there was calling out and crying to the Lord before the deliverance came. David and his guys

were hiding in a cave, praying, while 3000 men waited outside for Saul to return, and suddenly God delivered David and his men.

Vs. 5-11 In what David was suffering, there was not just the danger from Saul, but the shame of hearing lies and being treated with scorn by people like Nabal. Yet God saved and vindicated David. In fact, God protected David from himself. That is mercy.

Vs. 12-19 If this is David, he is saying that he will repay the Lord by public praise and testimony to God's deliverance. Notice that he calls himself God's servant and keeps repeating that he will praise God before the people. This is what David says often and what he did when God made him king.

The psalm begins with *I love the Lord*, and ends with *Praise the Lord*.

### **Proverbs 15:20-21**

Apparently v. 21 is dependent on v. 20. Isn't it interesting that the foolish man despises his mother? Assuming this is a godly woman, women tend to think holistically, seeing many things connected that maybe no one else sees. Moms might see love for Jesus and eating peas as practically the same thing. Rejecting their motherly wisdom and living a life that despises their values by its contrasting values and actions (you don't have to eat peas), is what God calls being a fool for foolishness' sake. A wise man walks a straight path understanding all of this, respecting his mother's viewpoint, though he may not eat peas ever again once he leaves the house.

## **MAY 20**

### **1 Samuel 26-28**

We are only getting a few stories from this time in David's life. I guess you could call The Psalms, David's journal. In Chapter 27 we come to a point where we know some dates and how much time is passing. David will live in Ziklag 16 months, and he became king in Hebron when he was 30. This means that in chapter 27, David is 28 and eight months or so. David has been running for years, probably since he was 20.

#### **1 Samuel 26**

Vs. 1-12 I think this is the first time we hear of Joab the son of Zeruah and any of his brothers. During this time of running, David acquired his mighty men, amazing warriors who could really kick donkey (I think they said that back then). There were the "three," and then there were the "thirty." While the "three" refers to three actual guys, "the thirty" probably refers to a group whose members changed. Abishai was part of the thirty.

Apparently, as they observed how everyone was sleeping, David knew that it was a God-induced sleep.

Notice in v. 8 that Abishai was willing to do the job that he knew David didn't have the conscience for. Abishai might have been with David in the cave when David spared Saul. David spared Saul again and told Abishai the reasons why this shouldn't be done, even appealing to God's own judgment. Here, knowing what Joab's character is like, I find it interesting that the Lord lets us know it was Abishai who suggested this murder.

Vs. 13-25 Notice how David went after Abner; and then in v. 19 said if the Lord was doing this, good, but if it was men who were inciting the king, then they should be cursed. It seems to me that with the length of time David had been running, and with the length of time David will be in a civil war with the house of Saul after Saul is dead, that there were other players and people working to keep Saul on the throne and to kill David. I'll bet Abner played a major role in

keeping the political intrigue and misinformation alive. In many of his psalms, David talks about lying and treachery. Saul had powerful men around him who knew that if David came to power, they would lose their jobs and their income.

V. 21 There is nothing more uncertain and unstable than someone who says he's wrong and keeps on doing the same wrong thing. I'm sure this is what led to David's actions in chapter 27. David finally saw there would be no human solution.

Vs. 23-24 David seems to be saying that he expected the Lord to keep him safe and understood this was a kind of test that the Lord had given him. The opposite would be true of Saul, who was neither righteous nor faithful.

#### 1 Samuel 27

Vs. 1-4 This is the same Achish, king of Gath, that David did the drool thing with back in 1 Samuel 21:13. Now, possibly seven or eight years later, the madness of Saul and the plight of David were a kind of legend. Achish had proof that David was hated by Saul and alienated from his people.

For some undisclosed period of time, David lived at Gath with his small army and their families. This must have been crowded, but it did achieve a purpose. In v. 4 it shows that Saul was still actively pursuing and trying to kill David, but there was no way Saul would go to the gates of Gath to do it. Saul stopped.

Vs. 5-7 This is ironic. In return for David's loyalty, Achish gave David Ziklag. According to Joshua 15:31, Ziklag belonged to the tribe of Judah. This would be David's home, with his 600 men and their families, for the next 16 months.

Vs. 8-12 What do you do if your only skill is killing and looting? Somehow when I read this, I don't think David's lying is noble or honoring to the Lord. I don't know what David should have done, but his lying and deception will come back to haunt him, I think.

On a positive note, in v. 8 I finally noticed that the people David preyed upon were the "old" inhabitants of Canaan, who Israel, in disobedience, did not drive out. Some of these people were preying upon Israel. In effect, David was acting as a judge in Israel and fulfilling some of what God had told Joshua and Israel to do.

Apparently the times were so lawless that you almost expected some nomadic group to swoop in and destroy a town. That must have added to David's deception and have kept him safe.

V. 12 Achish definitely got the wrong idea. David was a thoroughly true-blue Jew and follower of Yahweh.

#### 1 Samuel 28

Vs. 1-2 I think this put David into a hard situation, but he played along. The words, *you shall know what your servant can do*, would have been an amazement to Achish, if David had gone into battle with him. David would have fought to defend Israel, and Achish would have been toast.

Vs. 3-7 In the years of David's hiding, Saul did some "god things" to show he was religious and was a "good" follower of Yahweh. One of those is that he had all those who communicated with the dead put out of the land or put to death. Apparently Saul did this out of some emotional response to Samuel's death. Later in 2 Samuel 22:1, we'll find out that during this time, Saul also almost exterminated the Gibeonites from Israel. These are the people who tricked Joshua and with whom Joshua made a covenant. Saul apparently thought killing these people would make God happy. This act of Saul's will come back to haunt his family. Whereas David promised not

to kill Saul's family, because of God's judgment on what Saul did to the Gibeonites, most of Saul's male heirs will die. Anyway, during this time Saul was busy doing "god things" to get back into God's good graces. He just never changed his heart. God never rejects true repentance.

Vs. 8-14 I heard a Walter Martin tape on this one time and it made sense to me. The woman had a "familiar spirit," a demon she worked with that could impersonate the dead person who was "called." What freaked her out was that this wasn't her lying spirit, it was actually Samuel whom she saw. Therefore she freaked and knew that she had been tricked and was in danger.

Notice that Samuel appeared in bodily form, as do Moses and Elijah later with Jesus. Texts like these help give us the "doctrine" or teaching of the intermediate body. That is, before we receive a resurrection body, we will still have a body. For the church, the resurrection body comes at the coming of Christ for the church (1 Cor. 15:51-58 ...the dead in Christ shall rise and we [those of the church living at that time] will be changed), and then for all other believers (pre- and post-church age) they will be given a resurrection body at the second coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Finally, for those who have rejected God from every age, they will receive a resurrection body, albeit, without a sinless nature, at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:12-13) and thrown into eternal judgment.

I'm sure you wondered where we get all this theology and teaching from. It's from the Bible and all of this stuff you're reading. Pretty cool, huh?

Anyway, Samuel had a body.

V. 19 almost sounds like that "good news/bad news" joke, where the good news is that there's baseball in heaven, and the bad news is that the guy getting this report will be pitching tomorrow. But Saul didn't think this news was funny.

Vs. 20-25 At the end of the story there is a little more going on than meets the eye. Saul refused to eat...almost made a vow; but in typical fashion, Saul was talked out of it and gave in to those urging him. He was a man of no resolve, except to resist God and kill David.

But, on the part of the woman, if they received her hospitality, they couldn't kill her. That is why she did the elaborate *fattened calf* thing. I mean, how long did that take? They didn't have microwave *fattened calf*. This had to have taken hours. A couple of sandwiches would have worked too. Saul must have rested during this time and talked with his men. Anyway, they couldn't receive her kindness and then kill her. It looks too, that she wanted Saul healthy enough to get up and get out of there.

What a messed-up deal, but really, on this earth, all of us are messed-up, walking encyclopedias of contradictions. That's what sin does to us.

### **John 11:1-53**

This is another great chapter in John with great disclosures about Jesus' identity, and it shows us how Jesus abided in the Father.

Vs. 1-4 When Jesus heard this, He understood from the Spirit that this situation was for the glory of God, and would be a testimony to His identity. I think that in abiding in Christ, this is how we also are to understand the situations the Lord brings into our lives. We are here to serve Him in the harvest and He designs every intersection. Our job is to remain alert and ready for what He has for us.

V. 2 is an editorial note. Apparently this event was known throughout the church. Mary anointed Jesus' feet weeks after this event.

Vs. 5-6 Under the Spirit's direction Jesus knew what was happening, and therefore stayed until Lazarus was not just dead, but good and dead.

Vs. 7-16 It is interesting to see that the disciples were very concerned with their lives. They knew the danger of going anywhere near Jerusalem, and Bethany was only two miles away from Jerusalem. Jesus' comment for them to walk in the day either meant to follow Him while He was still there, or to follow when God's will is clearly laid out before us. In any case, following the Lord, we can have absolute confidence that nothing can happen to us that is not allowed by the Father.

I don't know that they understood Jesus would raise Lazarus, but Thomas spoke for all of the disciples by his willingness to follow to the death. He wasn't being funny. He meant that.

Vs. 17-19 This is all very interesting information. That Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days is important. The Jews thought that the spirit hovered over a dead person for three days. So, it is significant that Jesus waited until the fourth day to arrive. Also, it says that many Jews, leading people from Jerusalem, were present with Martha and Mary.

Vs. 20-27 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went into action and met Him. Apparently as a result of Jesus' teaching, she had a good idea of the coming judgment and resurrection. Her remark that Jesus could ask anything of the Father and receive it could have been her hoping against hope that Jesus might raise Lazarus, but when she raised a stink at the tomb, it appears that she didn't believe Jesus would raise her brother. She must have only understood that Lazarus would be raised on the last day.

V. 25 Jesus told her that the resurrection wasn't focused on a time, but on a person, Him.

V. 27 This is a great confession of faith.

Vs. 28-37 It is interesting to see how the Father set up this situation. The Jewish leaders all followed Mary, and when Jesus was faced with all this sorrow, He too was overcome. Verse 35 is the shortest verse in the Bible.

When it says Jesus was *deeply moved*, that can be translated as "angry." I've heard a lot of spiritual explanations of why Jesus was angry, but I think Jesus looked angry because He was simply fighting back tears. I think His face was contorting, because he was trying to keep from crying, and this is what John expressed.

Vs. 36-37 Now the Jewish leaders were also caught in the emotion, wishing Jesus had been there.

Vs. 38-44 There isn't a lot of build up here. Martha objected to the stone being removed, but Jesus told her that faith was necessary in order for *the glory of God* to be seen. Jesus prayed very briefly, shouted, and out popped Lazarus. The expression in Greek is, "Loose him and let him go." I like that.

So, was this resurrection or recreation? If the spirit had returned to that body, it would have been a mess. After four days the body was just rotting flesh and dead blood, yuck! In order for the body to have been made ready for the spirit of Lazarus to return, the body had to have been fully recreated: every cell and every function. Who says God needs billions of years to create? Jesus did it there. It took no time, and there was no pause, or grunt of exertion.

Vs. 45-53 Many Jews believed but some were snitches. The entire discussion of the leaders was a profound lesson in irrationality. Jesus did mighty signs. Everyone might *believe in Him*. The Romans would come and destroy Jerusalem. But if Jesus was the Christ, the signs were from the Father, and believing in Him was right. If the nation had turned to Him, the Romans would not have been a problem.

V. 51 God can even use the mouths of evil men.

V. 52 This is John showing that this was for the plan of redemption.

### **Psalm 117**

V. 1 Paul quotes this in Romans 15 when talking about Jesus coming to save the Gentiles. *Nations* and *Gentiles* are the same word.

Romans 15:8-12 *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,<sup>9</sup> and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."<sup>10</sup> And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."<sup>11</sup> And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."<sup>12</sup> And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."*

V. 2 God's *faithfulness* is to fulfill His promise of redemption, to save and rescue those lost in sin and darkness. We, the rescued, work with Him as His disciples, following Christ in the harvest. In so doing, He continues to show His *steadfast love* and *faithfulness* to those who need Him.

### **Proverbs 15:22-23**

Amen.

### **MAY 21**

This is one of those days to celebrate. With today's reading, you have read the first nine books of the Old Testament.

#### **1 Samuel 29-31**

1 Samuel 29

Vs. 1-5 God saved David at the last minute. You know that David would not have fought against Saul and Israel. David must have discussed with his men what they would do if it came to a fight. The way that God was with David, in a fight, David would have torn the Philistines apart.

Notice that the other kings of the Philistines were well aware of David's reputation.

Vs. 6-11 David was sent home and threw a fake fit for Achish. This is all ironic, and David's lack of honesty, even in this situation, seems wrong to me.

I guess this is all to say for us as disciples, if God gets us in a jam, He will get us out, or show us what to do.

1 Samuel 30

Vs. 1-6 This looks like things going from bad to worse. It took three days to get back to Ziklag. They had been away for six days. Everyone had lost their wife and sons and daughters. The note says they were all taken alive, so there were no bodies lying around; and again, God engineered this so no one died. David thought he had known bad, but now the men were so bitter they wanted to kill him too.

*But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.* Psalm 27 is a psalm of David, written sometime during all of his running. The last line is very instructive and deep, and there might be a slight qualifying phrase in it. It says, *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.* (Ps. 27:14, KJV) That line, *be of good courage*, is important.

If we really believe God loves us and is sovereign, it gives us what we need to strengthen ourselves in the Lord. Being of good courage shows that our hope is set on God, that our treasure is in heaven and that Jesus is the one we are following in this life. Sometimes it takes suffering in the wilderness to strip away the things that we've acquired to support us and define us. The wilderness and suffering are used by the Lord to bring us back to reality. The reality is that we have been saved from judgment and hell by the blood and sacrifice of our Lord. The reality is that this world will end and that lost people desperately need to be presented with the gospel. We have been saved to be complete in Him and work in His harvest. Our strength is in Him.

Vs. 7-10 I wonder if David had also asked the Lord about going to the fight with the Philistines. Somehow I don't think he did. But here, pushed by personal tragedy, and at his wits' end, he went to the Lord. When will we ever learn? Disciples need to learn to pray desperately before they get pushed to desperation by circumstances.

Vs. 11-20 This was a miracle, complete with God leaving bread crumbs (Ok, *an Egyptian*) for David to follow. They not only regained all their families alive, but they won the lottery. They were suddenly rich. Imagine the happy reunions. Imagine 400 Jewish men singing, "If I were a rich man." Well, maybe not that last one.

Vs. 21-25 Notice how David dealt with these *worthless fellows*. Every group/church gets some of these complainers. Saul didn't have the gumption for dealing with them. David does a great job. David actually made it a *statute* - those who guarded the fort should get the same amount as those who fought.

Vs. 26-31 David apparently was protecting these Judean towns the same way he had been protecting Nabal's sheep. David had so much, that he sent gifts to these towns. More importantly, David understood that the Lord had blessed them and given them the victory.

With everything that happened here, there was a happy ending. Now, why did God allow this to happen? I think it was to keep David and his men occupied with a personal emergency so they wouldn't be wondering how the battle was going and if they should go rescue Saul. By the time David and his men returned with their families to Ziklag and then rebuilt the city enough to live in it, the fight was over. God had taken care of the situation without David. Having begun the rebuilding of Ziklag, unknown to them, they would soon be leaving.

1 Samuel 31

Vs. 1-7 This was a very sad day for Israel. If David had been there, no doubt, the battle would have been won, but the problem would have gone on too. The Lord took care of things.

I would feel bad for Jonathan, but then, what is to feel bad about? After those few minutes of pain, he was welcomed by God (I'll bet he got a bro-hug), given a new body, a place to sit and rest with something nice and cool to drink. Obviously God knew that if Jonathan had lived, there would be problems in establishing David's kingdom. I think Jonathan was OK with how this turned out.

V. 4 Notice that Saul's own *armor bearer* was afraid, even in these circumstances, to put his hand against God's anointed. Note this, because David will soon get news from someone who didn't have this same respect.

V. 5 Take note of what is said here. It clearly says in the text that Saul was dead. Remember that.

Vs. 8-13 The Philistines dishonored the bodies, but the men from Jabesh-gilead slipped in and brought the bodies to be buried. Do you remember what Jabesh-gilead has to do with Saul?

The running was finally over. God protected David and judged Saul and did things His way. David had no guilt for sinning to avenge himself. For ten years David lived the words that

Paul/Spirit would write in Romans 12:19-21, *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

With God's help, David was able to do this. These words, however, are for us, Christ's disciples, as we follow Him in the harvest, reaching out to the sinning, and making disciples, who make disciples. As we work in the harvest we get battered and have lots to forgive, but the love of our Lord refreshes our hearts and we rest in Him, knowing He is in control.

### **John 11:54-12:19**

John 11:54-57

After Jesus raised/recreated Lazarus, He and His disciples went about 15 miles north of Bethany and Jerusalem to stay away from the Jewish leaders. Being on the edge of the wilderness, it would have been easy for them to escape, if need be.

Since the Passover was a major event, people got there early and began looking for Jesus. He usually taught on the temple grounds.

John 12:1-19

This is the week that Jesus will die.

Vs. 1-8 There is a little difference of opinion regarding when Mary anointed Jesus. It could have been here, on Saturday when He arrived, or it could have been Wednesday evening. At this point, it isn't important when it happened, only that it happened.

V. 3 This Mary is not the woman who did this earlier in the house of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7; but this Mary, a rich woman with a good reputation, humbled herself to imitate that woman, a sinner, and anoint Jesus' feet.

V. 4 We know that all of the disciples objected to Mary "wasting" this ointment, but Judas must have been the most vocal. In v. 6 John tells us why. It was probably as a result of this that Judas became enraged, allowed Satan into his heart, and went to betray Jesus. Judas probably went to the chief priests to betray Jesus on Wednesday evening or on Thursday.

Vs. 9-11 How irrational can you get? Sure, go and kill the guy raised from the dead and hide the evidence, for God's glory.

Vs. 12-19 One interesting addition here is that as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people who had seen Lazarus raised were in the crowd bearing witness to Jesus. You don't get that from the other Gospels. Nor do you understand from the other Gospels that the reason that many of these people were there to greet Jesus is that they heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus.

Although the people were saying the right things, there was still no real recognition of who Jesus was. Even the disciples didn't understand this event until after Jesus was glorified. So, what were they really celebrating here? I think they thought that the kingdom would appear immediately.

### **Psalm 118:1-18**

Doesn't this read like something David would have sung when the 10 years of running were over? It seems like he remembered all of the desperation and emotion; but what saved him was what he mentions four times at the beginning, *His steadfast love endures forever.*

We get the second part of this psalm tomorrow. In the second half, there are allusions to Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and His rejection. Knowing that, read this portion today with the idea

that some of what is written here could be a prophetic expression of how Jesus would feel, and as a man, how He would find strength in His Father.

Vs. 1-4 This is what David learned in the wilderness. Each day had its ups and downs, but the *steadfast love* of the Lord never failed him.

Vs. 5-9 David didn't even trust his own men. They would have killed Saul. But David was vindicated by the special deliverances God gave him.

Vs. 10-13 After David became king in Hebron, civil war raged for seven and a half more years. Then when he became the king of the entire nation, other nations came against him. He cried out to the Lord; God gave David victory and suddenly distant countries were paying tribute to David.

Vs. 14-16 In all of this, the Lord was David's salvation.

Vs. 17-18 There was discipline and "pruning" by the Lord to make David ready to be king.

### **Proverbs 15:24-26**

Amen, amen, and amen! I would think that David was being taught all of this in the wilderness and while he was running. I know that hard times have been the only way I have learned some of these things on my journey as a disciple.

## **MAY 22**

With this reading you are beginning the 10th book of the Old Testament. Celebrate with a *Frappuccino*® or whatever else sounds good. When was the last time you read all of these books? And for one more landmark to look forward to, tomorrow you begin Psalm 119, where more than any other place, you see what it means when it says that David was a man after God's own heart.

### **2 Samuel 1:1-2:11**

#### 2 Samuel 1

Vs. 1-16 Notice that this guy tells David of both Saul and Jonathan. He knew the mention of Jonathan would catch David's interest.

Since this account of Saul's death is different than the one found in 1 Samuel 31, it appears that this is a lie. It would have been ironic that the guy who finally killed Saul was an Amalekite since Saul had disobeyed God regarding the Amalekites. The fact that he came to David in Ziklag with Saul's crown indicates that he expected this to be good news to David and expected to be rewarded. What would make him even more of a hero, he thought, was that he had ended Saul's life.

Vs. 11-12 are a summary of the effect of this news on David and his men, but actually vs. 13-16 were carried out right away.

Can you imagine? This guy was probably expecting some reward from David. Saul's own armor bearer wouldn't lift his hand against Saul, but this guy said he did. David didn't think too highly of that.

Vs. 17-27 I don't doubt that David actually loved Saul, but he certainly loved Jonathan. I think in all of this there is also some grieving for the entire tragedy of the past 10 years. Notice the repetition of *how the mighty have fallen*.

Vs. 20 and 21 are a curse of sorts. David will finally defeat the Philistines.

Vs. 25-26 This is David's tribute to Jonathan. It was a true bond as brothers and something David was blessed with, but something that few men will ever experience.

## 2 Samuel 2:1-11

Vs. 1-4 I'm impressed that *David inquired of the Lord*. The fact that he did this and it was recorded makes you wonder about times when David did stuff and it wasn't mentioned, like going with the Philistines to fight against Israel, even if that was a ploy. I think David was like us in this regard. Normally he didn't ask God, but when he was in a hard situation, he asked, and then remembered to ask for a while after that until everything was normal again. However, when he was in control, like us, he didn't think he needed to ask.

David was made king in Hebron over the tribe of Judah. Verse 4 should have been cut in half. The second half of the verse actually belongs to the conflict story.

Vs. 5-11 David blessed the men of Jabesh-gilead. As a point of interest, the rescue of Jabesh-gilead in 1 Samuel 11:1 was Saul's first battle as king of Israel. The people there never forgot that. When they learned of the humiliating way the bodies of Saul and his sons were displayed on the wall at Beth-shan, they returned the kindness of Saul's rescue of their city. See the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), p. 455.

When David blessed the men of Jabesh-gilead, he also invited them to accept his kingship...BUT, v. 8. Abner intervened. It appears that Abner drove the civil war which ensued, perhaps wanting to be king himself. I say this because it is interesting that all the dates and times mentioned in vs. 8-11 paint a very funny picture. Abner must have finally made Ish-bosheth (man of shame?, [BKC](#), p. 458) the king after five and a half years of civil war. We know the war lasted seven years and six months and ended at the assassination of Ish-bosheth. Abner was the real guy in power. This is another reason why Joab, David's military commander, hated Abner. The big reason he hated Abner comes tomorrow.

As disciples following Jesus, there is always the sense of living in tension. I don't know when life ever gets easy, especially following Jesus in the harvest and working to reach people and make disciples. There is always a point of conflict somewhere, a relationship that isn't working out. So what do you do?

In David's life this was the same. You would have thought that the entire nation would have been ready to unite around David and get redemptive history cleaned up and looking respectable. But the sin of Saul had a long reach and was rooted in the heart of his followers, particularly Abner. Abner had his own ambitions too.

When a disciple becomes proven in service, it means having gone through many times of upheaval and disappointment. Especially after being hit by "friendly fire," drawing ever closer in that pain and suffering to Christ is a must or you just become bitter. He is the only one who makes sense of all this baloney, and He alone is the one who keeps our passion alive and healthy, and our vision clear. This is how you learn to abide in Christ.

Somewhere in all of this, probably in Hebron during those seven years, David wrote his own copy of the law. It was also probably during this time that he wrote Psalm 119. We'll begin reading that psalm tomorrow, and it will show why David was able to survive this continued time of trial.

### **John 12:20-50**

This is Tuesday. Jesus had just cursed the fig tree on the way to the temple. Upon arriving He cleansed the temple for the second time and made the leaders deadly mad; but they couldn't get to Jesus for fear of the crowds, because the people hung on Jesus' every word. Sometime in this day, probably earlier than later, the Greeks show up. It is significant that they came after Jesus cleansed the court of the Gentiles and taught saying that the temple was to be a house of prayer for the nations.

Vs. 20-23 Who knows why they came to Phillip. Phillip had a Greek name and Bethsaida was on the edge of the more Gentile area of Galilee. But really, who knows other than that God directed them to Philip.

As Jesus was told of this request and maybe seeing the men at the back of the court where He was teaching, the Spirit must have nudged Him. Jesus now understood that the Father had done something, and Jesus officially knew that His hour had come. These Greeks were "God-fearers" and were close to Judaism, the same as the centurion whose slave Jesus had healed, and later Cornelius, also an Italian and a centurion and an important person in the gospel going to the Gentiles. I would think that the request of these Gentiles was a signal from the Father, almost like the Gentile world saying, "even if the Jews have rejected your offer for now, we're ready to receive it."

V. 24 This parable is very important. Not only is it used by Paul later in 1 Corinthians 15, but also in John 15, Jesus uses it to define glorifying the Father and proving to be His disciple. You always hear people wondering what kind of fruit Jesus is talking about in John 15. Here, and therefore in chapter 15, the meaning of the fruit is obvious: Jesus must give His life so that many more will experience life. The *fruit* is people who will come to faith and obtain eternal life through the giving of His life.

Vs. 25-26 Notice how Jesus immediately repeats here, what He has said previously in the context of discipleship to His disciples. Notice that Jesus intensified the 'losing' one's life to 'hating' one's life in this world. To serve Jesus, you must follow Him. This comes with two promises. First, you have the promise of His presence; and second, you have the promise of being honored by the Father.

Knowing Christ means following. Discipleship is not an option, yet, we have made it that way. This is why the Great Commission says to make disciples, not "lead them to belief, and then later, try to persuade them to follow if it's not too much trouble for them." If Jesus is presented as who He is, God who became man and gave His life for us, that He is God inherently means He is worthy of worship/service. Following is a natural part of the message of turning way from sin and turning to Him for forgiveness and life. We make it hard on ourselves when we think knowing Jesus means salvation, but not necessarily following. Jesus didn't think that.

Vs. 27-36a His hour having arrived, the reality of what He would have to endure also hit Him. Jesus the man, the Son of God, and Son of Man, knew what He was going to have to suffer. His humiliation and physical beating, vividly shown in the movie, "Passion of the Christ," was *simply* the path that brought Him to His real work, hanging on a tree, being cursed and punished by His Father. Only what He endured on the cross, the spiritual judgment and rejection, made forgiveness possible. *Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree (Gal. 3:13)*. We are impressed, and rightfully so, with His suffering before He got to the cross; but it was what happened on the cross that purchased our pardon. Jesus willingly endured that, to get to the cross for us. Figuratively, we are healed by His stripes, but it was His death on the cross which bought forgiveness. It was when the animal was on the altar that it became a sacrificial offering. What Jesus is visualizing here is the spiritual aspect of what He will have to endure for mankind.

V. 28 Jesus lived to glorify the Father. The Father said He would do it again too. If you look at Jesus' life, the arrival of angels and the voice of His Father came at very crucial times. This was a critical time.

V. 31 Wow! "Now" was the judgment that would be complete with His crucifixion and resurrection, but we are still waiting until that judgment is fully executed.

V. 32 It is the cross where it all goes down. When Jesus said this, *lifted up* must have meant "crucifixion" to the people, therefore, the response of the people in v. 34.

V. 34 To be fair, the disciples didn't get it either. It wasn't until after the resurrection that they understood why the Christ had to suffer. The disciples didn't get it, but they still believed He was the Christ. That's the difference.

Vs. 35-36a This was a warning for the people to force themselves to think spiritually while He was still there to be seen. Jesus was the message. Regardless of what they had heard, they needed to see Him and believe in Him. Jesus will refer to this in a few verses.

Vs. 36b-50 is a kind of summary from John, regarding Jesus' public ministry to this point. Notice that at this point Jesus hid Himself. He needed time to chill.

Vs. 37-43 These verses explain why the people didn't understand. Part of this prophecy is Isaiah 53, and part is Isaiah 6:10. In both places, the rejection of the Messiah and rejection of the truth are the result of sin and not being desperate to understand the truth. This isn't God blinding their eyes as much as it is not making them desperate to seek Him. This falls in line with Jesus' use of parables. If people were desperate and tired, they understood. It also falls in line with what Isaiah said of the Messiah in Isaiah 53, *and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*

He wasn't what they were looking for because they were not desperate for the truth. They wanted what they wanted. God's work in Israel at the close of this age will be that Israel will be so desperate and needy in seeking the Lord that they will cry out, *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.* And this Jesus that they are rejecting here will return for them, and in the Tribulation they will want Him.

V. 41 is interesting if you link it to v. 42. Isaiah said this about Israel because He saw God's (Christ's) glory and spoke of Him. It made Isaiah jealous for God. He saw and he spoke. Now notice that many of the people and the leaders saw Jesus' glory, but they didn't speak of Him. I find that interesting.

Vs. 44-50 Sometime toward the close of the day Jesus again appeared in the temple. Whatever crowd was there heard this amazing declaration. Jesus just never gave up.

Vs. 44-46 couldn't be clearer. Jesus was God in the flesh and the light of men. This sounds like the first verses of John.

V. 47 is a transition verse. Jesus came to save, not to judge the world; but you can tell by what He says, there will be judgment. He came to save the world, not a country or language group or western cultural mindset. He came to save every person. There is no other way. There is no other Savior.

Vs. 47-50 are an incredible warning. To understate the case, Jesus' words are not to be taken lightly. Everyone will be judged by them. And to think, all of this came into motion, as the hour struck when a couple of Greeks came to see Jesus.

For us in the harvest, it is an encouragement to us to get the word out. Many will respond to the Lord and become disciples. Most will reject His Word. Our job in the harvest is to follow Him, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples. And as we abide in Christ, we watch Him work and we follow.

### **Psalm 118:19-29**

It's interesting that in this last part of the psalm, there are two references to Jesus and one reference to a song. This is the danger of hacking up The Psalms like this. Now that we can see that some reference is made to Jesus, we can read back over the first part and see that the suffering it refers to might also have some connection to His suffering. It must have been strange

for the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus, because this psalm is quoted by Jesus during those final conflicts in Jerusalem before His death and resurrection.

Vs. 19-21 The writer (David?) asks the Lord to open the gates to him to enter into His presence. Because God had saved him, he knew that the Lord had opened up to him.

Vs. 22-24 Here is that salvation, the rejected stone. Not only was the Father's working in this marvelous, but it became the day of salvation.

V. 25 This is the plea of David and Israel and mankind.

Vs. 26-27 The Lord came to the city and to the house. He is the *light* and He is the *sacrifice*.

Vs. 28-29 Notice how the declaration, *You are my God*, is repeated. He is not only our Savior; He is our God. And at the end of the day, we give thanks because of His *steadfast love* and how it *endures forever*.

You probably saw vs. 22 and 23. So where did Jesus say v. 26?

What a great psalm foreshadowing Jesus.

### **Proverbs 15:27-28**

It is interesting that v. 27 says that the result of this pursuit of stuff is that the entire family is troubled. Most people have more gifts from God than they realize, that can give them a solid, healthy family. Wanting more often kills a family, even if you don't want to obtain it unjustly.

That sense of pondering, going to God and really seeking answers, builds a solid foundation in life.

## **MAY 23**

### **2 Samuel 2:12-3:39**

#### 2 Samuel 2:12-32

Vs. 12-17 We have no real description of the fighting that went on between David's forces and Abner's forces. It went on for over seven years. What we have here is a small battle that might have happened fairly early in the civil war, after David had established himself in Hebron and organized his army. It is a small battle, but it is huge in understanding some of the events that followed. Also, it gives us tiny character sketches of the two main players, Joab and Abner.

Joab is never mentioned as one of David's mighty men, but he does later become the captain of his army. Joab and his brother were David's half-nephews and were probably the same age as David. It is probably a good guess that Joab had been with David from the early days of David's service for Saul. Apparently he was a confident and commanding leader.

Abner would have been the older man, and it is likely that Joab had been in the army under Abner just as David had been. They all knew each other.

V. 16 This wasn't a sword fight, it was a dagger fight. The intent, I guess, was to decide the war with the outcome of this fight; but BOOM, a miracle - they all killed each other.

Vs. 18-23 Notice that Abner knew Asahel. Apparently Asahel's pride was his death. Abner was too good a prize to pass up; unfortunately, Abner was also the experienced fighter. The most important part of this story is Abner killing Joab's brother.

Vs. 24-28 Fueled by their need for vengeance, Joab and Abishai (who wanted to kill Saul for David) drove the army of David. Abner tried to speak peace to the situation and Joab listened. In

a sense, Joab was blaming Abner for the fighting, suggesting that if Abner had spoken sooner, they would have stopped fighting sooner.

Vs. 29-32 The interesting thing here is the headquarters of Abner and Ish-bosheth. It was in Mahanaim, way across the Jordan in the middle of Gad. It was miles away from Hebron and the main life of Israel.

2 Samuel 3:1-39

V. 1 During this story, years are passing. What we actually read about here will happen fairly close to the end of the civil war. We know this war lasted seven years and six months.

Vs. 2-5 According to the law, the king was not supposed to have a lot of wives. This would be a good place to look at what God said:

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 *"When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,'<sup>15</sup> you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.<sup>16</sup> Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.'<sup>17</sup> And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.<sup>18</sup> "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.<sup>1</sup> And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them,<sup>20</sup> that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.*

Now, how many wives are too many? We guys ask ourselves that all the time, and some days "one" is too many; but usually we would say, "Who'd want more than one?" By v. 5, David has six wives and he'll acquire some others along the way. This will quietly set up David for a fall, one from which he will never fully recover. If the point of marriage is completion and becoming "one" with one person, then the effect of all of these women was that David remained incomplete and "one" with no one. David would remain unsatisfied emotionally and sexually and he would keep looking, in all the wrong places.

Vs. 7-8 This was a very serious thing that Abner did. To claim one of Saul's wives as his own, even having sex with her, would have been a step to the throne. When Solomon's brother tried to marry David's last concubine (which would have been illegal under the law), Solomon had him killed, knowing it was a ploy (instigated by Joab and Abiathar) so he could claim the right to the throne over Solomon. It was a murky business and what Abner did here was possibly preparation for becoming king himself. In Abner's defense, although he never denies the charge, he seems offended by the insinuation. He still did what he did and shouldn't have. I wonder if Abner was getting tired of fighting against God. They all knew Samuel had anointed David king.

Vs. 9-11 Abner, as a political animal, would have to find a way to come into David's favor. Ish-bosheth seems like a tragic figure here. If Abner hadn't fueled the civil war, I think Ish-bosheth, who was probably a friend of David's and was legally David's brother-in-law, probably would have been happy with making peace with David and endorsing David's throne.

Vs. 13-16 This is all very interesting. David wanted Michal back. She had been his wife, but also, she was the daughter of Saul and he was Saul's son-in-law. It was justice, it was political and it could heal some things.

Notice that Ish-bosheth had her taken and separated from her husband. Ish-bosheth doesn't seem like a bad guy, and the fact that David didn't kill him during these seven years shows some respect. Before this whole fiasco, I'll bet they had been friends.

Somehow I feel bad for this poor schmuck Paltiel. His name sounds like a sandwich from Panera and he is really moved and hurt by this thing. What a mess. People were still paying for Saul's ungodliness.

Vs. 17-19 Abner, a natural leader and very influential person, was laying the framework for bringing all the tribes to David.

Vs. 20-21 There might be more to this than meets the eye. Abner had been one of those former "friends" of David who had kept Saul's fears of and hate for David alive. This covenant was not only for peace with Abner, but it might have been for Abner to have a position in David's government.

Vs. 22-39 This story eventually brings the civil war to an end, and it seems tragic to me for more than one reason.

V. 26 Joab not only acted without any obedience to David, but he showed that he was very deceitful and ambitious.

V. 27 This verse explains God's view of why Joab did this.

V. 35 Unlike Saul, David's resolve was firm.

Vs. 36-37 God used this situation to bring the people to David. Politically speaking, removing Abner was a good thing, but the means by which it happened would poison David's reign. Although David rightfully said he didn't know about this, and then cursed Joab's family, and cried and made a poem, the just thing would have been to have put Joab to death. David saved this job for Solomon. In the future, David will command Solomon to kill Joab for this act.

I can only think that David was so fixed on getting things secure and stable that he didn't want to lose a man like Joab, who was important to the forming of Israel. You will get your own ideas as you read this, but year after year I'm saddened by these stories.

I know we are all riddled by sin and weakness, and none of us is any better than David; but these stories are here for us to learn. I guess I would say that if we begin with faith and dependence on God, we have to end that way. There have been ministries that have protected key players when they have sinned, because if those sins had been exposed or that person treated justly in accordance with their failure, it would have "hurt" the ministry. No one is so important that their sin can be overlooked if it disqualifies them from leadership. No ministry is so important that it can tolerate sin for the greater good. All of us are prone to this, but in different areas and different ways.

Here, at the beginning of David's reign, he is allowing poison to enter the stream, and it will get worse. It might be that David's own tolerance for his own lying also made him weak to dealing justly with those who were like him. Again, we'll see the tragic result of that too.

### **John 13:1-30**

The Gospel of John is very unique, and particularly after reading the first three Gospels, there is a different kind of richness in the stories John includes. If the other portions of John shine, this part is absolutely brilliant. This Upper Room Discourse, beginning in chapter 13 and ending in chapter 17, is amazing. It is uncut discipleship teaching. Jesus is preparing His disciples to hold on to their faith, which will be severely tested at His death. He is also preparing them for the ministry they will have after His resurrection as they are guided by the Spirit. Understanding this

portion of Jesus' teaching is dependent on understanding the stress they all felt and the fact that they were entering a very dark tunnel. This teaching would stay with them the rest of their lives and mark their ministries, but here, it was meant to give them hope following Him as His disciples on this mission.

We actually get the setting for chapter 13 from the other Gospels, where they tell us that a fight broke out among the disciples as to who was the greatest. They all knew that something was going to happen during this visit to Jerusalem. Thomas had already said those sage words, *Let us also go that we may die with Him* (John 11:16). They all knew there were threats against Jesus. And Jesus kept talking about His death and resurrection. There was some expectation that something would happen, and they must have been hopeful that Jesus would win and there would be a kingdom.

Vs. 1-11 Notice that Jesus served from a position of strength and He had a goal and a message. We tend to think that those who "can," "do," and those who "can't," "serve." Not so. Servant leadership always has a deep strength, a goal and a message. Notice, too, that this was outside of Jesus' "job description" as a rabbi, but not outside His job as a savior and maker of disciples.

V. 8 Jesus seeks to wash. How sad to resist.

Vs. 12-20 Jesus gave the explanation of what He had done. This was not only teaching on leadership and servanthood, but there was something here about preparing the disciples for the night ahead.

Vs. 21-30 Jesus was *troubled in His spirit* again, but this time, because one of His own would betray Him.

V. 23 The disciple Jesus loved is the writer of this Gospel, John the son of Zebedee, Jesus' cousin.

V. 27 This was Satan himself taking possession of Judas. Satan saved the big job for himself.

Again, although Jesus knew what Judas would do, His love and actions toward Judas never wavered. The disciples had no clue by Jesus' actions or moods or words to Judas that Judas was a traitor. Judas always had the option of saying, "No." Jesus never treated Judas unfairly. Judas' problem was within himself.

V. 30 is very poetic and ominous in its ending, *And it was night*.

### **Psalm 119:1-16**

I believe that David wrote this during his seven years in Hebron. I think the view you have here of David's heart describes him as a man after God's own heart in a way the stories about him do not. As much as I understand that David was a contradiction in his life and actions, this psalm expresses his heart. I know I'm a contradiction. All of us are. So what do we do? We follow David's/the Spirit's advice in this psalm, if possible, and do it better than David did. This psalm ought to be the cry of every disciple's heart.

Notice how often words like *law, testimonies, commandments, word*, and other variants are used. Verse 11 is one of the famous verses out of this section. How can we as disciples afford to live one day without reading His Word and allowing it to flow through our hearts, cleansing us? Reading the Word daily is a must. Memorizing is what truly leads to meditation. On this earth, I think that is vital for us too.

In this psalm, each paragraph of eight verses begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It's kind of artsy.

Vs. 1-8 This paragraph begins with the letter “A.” Since it is the introduction of the psalm, David uses it to describe blessing. The key to blessing is not just keeping God’s Word, but fixing our eyes on it.

Vs. 9-16 The question asked in v. 9 is answered in this section. What a great section of Scripture and v. 11 is definitely worth memorizing if you haven’t done it already.

Our longevity and fruitfulness in the harvest is held in all that David is saying here. Jesus said, *If you abide in Me and My words abide in you....* His words have to dwell in us and we are all leaky vessels. We need to be pouring in the Word every day.

### **Proverbs 15:29-30**

If our hope is set on the Lord, our good news each day comes from His Word. And with His hope and His Word, we bring strength to His disciples and His light to those who are lost in the dark fields of this world.

## **MAY 24**

### **2 Samuel 4-6**

Just a parenthetical note here. After the books of Samuel, come the books of Kings and Chronicles. Some of the history we are reading will be recounted in those books. So, as you read, try to remember or notice if a story is being repeated and then go back and look at the first rendition. Often in the other recounting, there will be new details, sometimes even a spiritual commentary on the event.

#### 2 Samuel 4

Vs. 1-3 Note that the assassination of Abner didn’t bring the civil war to an end. I’m sure that Joab thought that killing Abner was a good idea, especially if it brought an end to the war. God is never glorified by that kind of stuff. It is too bad that David allowed someone poisonous like Joab to get close to him.

Not only was Ish-bosheth frightened by the news of Abner’s murder, but all Israel, that is, the other 11 tribes, lost heart.

V. 4 This is an important note. The reason that Mephibosheth (“from the mouth of shamefulness” - what awful names) is mentioned here is that with Ish-bosheth dead, Mephibosheth would have been a contender to the throne. But since he was a cripple, he apparently wasn’t dangerous. Soon, we’ll hear more about M, and his condition plays a role in understanding some of what is coming up.

Vs. 5-12 Apparently this was a horrible assassination. Stabbing him in the stomach was not only a slow death, but it was the same murderous death inflicted by Joab on Abner. Remember again that David was the son-in-law of Saul. It is likely that he and Ish-bosheth had been friends. What were these guys thinking? Whatever it was, they didn’t realize that David was spiritually minded, and deadly.

V. 12 The way David displayed the bodies showed his disdain. Cursed is everyone who is hung from a tree.

#### 2 Samuel 5

Vs. 1-5 As you note the age of David here, remember that he had been anointed by Samuel sometime around the age of twelve. Twenty-five years was how long Abraham had to wait from God’s promise to the birth of Isaac. Waiting is the norm in following God, not the exception.

I find it interesting that the heads of the tribes already knew this about God's choice of David. So why did they fight such a long war? Notice in v. 5 that the difference between Judah and Israel is firmly established. David would make them one unified nation, but even during David's life, it didn't take much to break that unity.

Vs. 6-10 This is David taking Jerusalem, once and for all. We've been reading about Jerusalem and the Jebusites for a long time, but now the case is settled. For another look at this battle and for what became official as a result of it, look at 1 Chronicles 11:6. The Luther, KJV and NKJV seem to insert a part of 1 Chronicles 11:6 into v. 8. It was another one of those things that made Joab hard to get rid of. According to the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 461, Jerusalem was a good choice for a capital city because in all the years Israel was in the land it was always under the control of the Jebusites, and therefore neutral. Another reason it was a good choice is that the city was given to both Judah and Benjamin by Joshua. And then, I think the main reason Jerusalem became the capital is that David apparently thought it was a cool place. I'll bet God gave him that thought.

Vs. 11-12 This was encouragement from the Lord that He was blessing David and Israel. It is significant that David, who had lived in tents for years, now had a house. That will be important in a few verses.

Vs. 13-15 I guess this is given to show evidence of God's blessing. I'm too much in the one man/one woman frame of mind to see this as a blessing. That's 11 more kids and maybe as many new wives. I wonder if David did much consulting of God in this area of his life. I think this ruined David, just as it will ruin Solomon.

Vs. 17-25 Having taken Jerusalem and making it the national capital was unprecedented in Israel. It was like, "whoa, they mean business." Not only that, Jerusalem had a reputation for being like a fortress. For the Philistines, it was time to move against David. Notice that David did do some "consulting" here. To me it is interesting to see that this wasn't just the U&T, but there had to have been a prophet involved because of the detailed instructions in the second battle. We'll meet that prophet tomorrow.

## 2 Samuel 6

I think bringing the ark to Jerusalem was more a desire of David's heart, than a political move; but as a political move, it was smart too. Even in Samuel's day, Samuel had to make a circuit of teaching and leading people in worship in different places. Israel hadn't been unified in worship, as God intended it to be, since the days of Joshua.

The ark at this point had been separated from the tabernacle for about 100 years.

Because of David's love for the Lord, and perhaps because he had made his own copy of the law, David sought to bring the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle together at Jerusalem. With this done, Israel would be united as God had intended.

Vs. 1-11 Just one problem, if you are going to honor God, it is best to do it His way and not simply think that if we have good intentions, everything will be ok and He'll look the other way. There was an instruction book, but you know how guys are when it comes to reading instructions. For the last little while, everything David had done had turned to gold. Suddenly, something went wrong. Oddly enough, Uzzah and Ahio were Levites and should have known better. What a disappointment for all involved. Notice that David had 30,000 people gathered for this event. David needed to check himself and respect God.

For another look at this, look at 1 Chronicles 13 and 15.

Vs. 12-23 You have to read 1 Chronicles 15 to understand what David was told or had read, that the ark had to be moved by the Levites, with the carrying poles. In other words, this time, he did it God's way.

David dancing before the ark must have been a sight. Apparently, and I have to make myself imagine this because I'm not that kind of guy, this was heartfelt joy and emotion and leaping and dancing, with all his might.

V. 14 should be understood that David was *only* wearing a linen ephod. Apparently in all the leaping and joy, from time to time, people saw a bit more of David than they needed to.

V. 16 This is an important comment in the story.

Vs. 17-19 Apparently, David had brought the tabernacle to Jerusalem. If David did this right, he brought the animals for offering and the priests and the Levites did the actual sacrificing. David, like Saul, would have been forbidden to sacrifice. I think David had read the instruction book by now. This was probably the first united worship event the nation had had in years.

Vs. 20-23 Every guy fears coming home and having his wife mad at him. David's honest sincerity and joy is what wins the day here. He was fully absorbed in the love and joy of the Lord.

That Michal has no children is not only God's judgment on her, but politically speaking, if she had had a son, it could have made problems in the future. The people could have thought of putting that son on the throne and reestablishing the family of Saul. As it is, God took care of this potential problem.

I have to wonder too, among all of her other hang-ups, if Michal was put off by being taken from her "husband" and landing in this ever growing harem, where she essentially had no husband and no one who really loved her.

### **John 13:31-14:14**

V. 31 Judas' leaving would make the betrayal and vengeance of the Jewish and "spiritual" authorities complete.

What was that like, watching Judas leave, seeing and hearing the door shut? Jesus might have lowered His head for a moment, and then looked up at the disciples and said, *Now is the Son of Man glorified.*

V. 32 And that glory was now going to multiply exponentially, as the secret plans of God would burst into fulfillment, resulting in the forgiveness of sin, the redemption of man and the birth of the church.

V. 33 It seems like Jesus is revealing Himself more and more in this discourse, and here, calling them His *little children*. I wonder if any of them realized how surreal this talk was.

Vs. 34-35 Notice that the commandment to *love one another* is prefaced by v. 33. They were about to be left without Christ. For the mission before them, He would not be there to guide them as He had in the past, especially in terms of encouragement and support. Therefore, for the sense of providing in His absence what He had given in His presence, they were *to love one another* as He had loved them. This is not a theoretical love or general context. They were to love each other as in binding together in the mission. The mission provides the context. They were to be a "Band of Brothers." Without the context of supporting and encouraging one another in carrying forth the message of Christ, loving one another becomes some flowery, nice, but vague, command. Over the past three years, in and out of controversy, in tiredness, in stress, in busyness, Jesus' love and encouragement had been the glue that kept them following in the

harvest. Now they were to do that for one another. The disciples were about to be tested. Jesus commands them to be there for each other, as the darkness was closing in.

This testing and the mission following His resurrection is the context for what He is about to share with them.

Vs. 36-38 This morning I was reading about Peter walking on water. Everyone was terrified seeing Jesus coming toward them on the water. He told them to take heart and not to be afraid, so Peter said, *Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.* And Peter walked on water. This guy had a hero's heart, but he was very human. He had no idea of the forces at work that night or how small his strength was, just like all of us.

John 14:1-14

V. 1 Notice that this is the context. They were troubled and Jesus would be leaving. How would they hold on, much less continue His work? They were confused and didn't see the redemptive plan of God coming together. They didn't understand that the plan for Israel would be put off for years. They had no clue of the church. They certainly didn't know that they would be the guys leading the church and bringing the gospel of Christ to the world. They were just troubled.

Vs. 2-3 So what is the point of the rooms? Why is Jesus telling them this? The context is everything.

Vs. 4-7 Verse 4 is the lead-in to one of the greatest verses in all of Scripture. In the context of their troubled hearts, Jesus is saying that the guarantee of their safety, being with Him where He is going, is that they know the way, the truth and the life.

V. 6 summarizes the truth and reason why Christianity can never "coexist" with any other religion. God is revealed through Jesus and Jesus is the only way to Him. Just as gravity operates the same in all nations and all cultures, the same God created them all and is only reached in one way.

V. 7 is a kind of rebuke to their slowness of heart, but Jesus promises that the result of the next few days will change them forever.

Vs. 8-11 Now it's Philip's turn. This answers the question, "If God ever walked on earth as a man, what would He look like and how would He act?" The events that follow this night answer another question, "If we could ever get our hands on God, what would we do?"

Our challenge as disciples is very real and comes from this passage, but is repeated all over the NT. If Jesus was the representation of the Father, we are to be the representation of Jesus. We are commanded to be imitators of Christ, ambassadors of Christ. Somewhere in all of this is the answer of what it means to abide in Christ.

Vs. 12-14 Again, this is to be understood in the context of the mission for which He is preparing them. They would stand on the earth without Him. Positionally in heaven, they were eternally secure and a place was prepared for them. On earth, on mission, they were to bind together to provide the love for one another that Christ had provided for them. I don't know how much comfort that spoke to them. It still kind of sounds like they'll be alone....or will they? In what Jesus says in this entire discourse is the understanding of being one with Him and abiding in Him. The reality of abiding in Christ is something we as disciples need to grow into.

### **Psalm 119:17-32**

As you read this, imagine David trying to deal with stress. He had the stress of running from Saul, followed by seven years of civil war in Israel. How do you respond when you're eaten up with thoughts that bother you, or when you hear evil things about you or your motives? David

had all of that, plus trying to put a government in place with war always threatening on the horizon. That makes it hard to keep your thoughts straight.

This is what David did. Probably as he was writing out his copy of the law, either all of the first five books or just Deuteronomy, David might also have been writing Psalm 119. Notice how harassed his thoughts are. Underline all the negatives in one color. Then, underline in another color David's remedy. This is food for the disciple's soul, and good therapy.

Vs. 17-24 It seems that the first thought in each of these sections guides the concerns David had. Here it looks like he felt threatened by the brevity of life on the earth. In a way, time was slipping away from David, waiting to be king. But the Word gave David perspective on life that was centered in God's care.

Vs. 25-32 This sounds like David dealing with his emotions. Emotions change, but the Word is what guided David through the sorting out of his feelings. It also helped tune himself to reality. Our emotions and fears often only exist in our heads. When the Word is our meditation, God enlarges our hearts and gives us faith.

This morning I was reading in Philippians 4:8-9, *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

### **Proverbs 15:31-32**

V. 31 More valuable than advice or knowledge is reproof. Not only does it give intense correction in practical situations, but it shows a person's heart. Is a person able to take it, and learn from it?

V. 32 Reading that word *intelligence*, I think more of the military usage than thinking about IQ. In a war, knowing the lay of the land, the alliances, the plan of the enemy, all of that stuff, is what they call intelligence; and to the wise person, it would show you what to do and what not to do.

The Lord gives lots of information in the Word and through others. Some of this comes in the form of correction and reproof. Being disciples means we're not here for ourselves, but living to please Christ and to be useful for Him in reaching out to others and making disciples. And to think, He only corrects us because He is deeply in love with us.

## **MAY 25**

### **2 Samuel 7-8**

#### **2 Samuel 7**

This is a big chapter in the Bible because of the Davidic Covenant. Basically, in this covenant God promises that someone from David's lineage will rule over Israel forever. This will be fulfilled in Jesus. Something interesting to note is that when Paul talked about the gospel he preached, it went like this: *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.* (2 Timothy 2:8) This covenant is suddenly a very clear revelation of the next step forward in God's plan of redemption.

Vs. 1-2 David had a house built for him by Hiram. His days of living in tents and in caves were over. In thanking God for this, it must have made David think about the ark being in a tent. The tent represented God's presence and I doubt the tabernacle looked as good as the one Moses made in the wilderness.

V. 3 I find it kind of funny that Nathan thought that God would approve everything David did since He was blessing David in everything else. It was a good time, and I guess they were beginning to take God for granted.

Vs. 4-17 These are the words of the covenant God was making with David. Nathan was the prophet. Note in vs. 1-7 that God acknowledged David's heartfelt concern for God and His glory.

Vs. 8-12 This is what God had done with David and will still do with David. It is interesting that God took David from *following the sheep* to making him the shepherd of Israel. God said that He was responsible for protecting David and bringing blessing through him.

Vs. 13-17 In what God is saying to David here, there would be a near literal fulfillment. There would be a temple built by Solomon, and there would be a lineage of David. But there is also a future fulfillment that will be when Jesus sits on the throne in the Millennial Kingdom. The Davidic line would not rule unbroken, as obviously it hasn't. But that rule, when reestablished, will be resumed by a descendant of David, Jesus; and He will build God a house. (1 Peter 2:5)

Vs. 18-29 So what is faith? David talked to a man named Nathan. He said, "You know, I think I'll build a temple to the glory of God, to house the ark of the covenant." The guy, Nathan, said, "Go for it." A few hours later, Nathan came back and said, "By the way, God said not to do it, but instead He is going to establish your lineage into an eternal dynasty." So David, having heard this from this guy, went into the forecourt of the tabernacle, before the Lord, and prayed this. The faith really blows me away. Nathan could have made that up. David heard from a human, but understood the words were from God and poured out his heart in gratitude. Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29, "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*"

This is a very impressive prayer and act of faith.

V. 29 What David understood and what awed him was *forever*. This is what awed Paul, and this is why everyone in the Gospels who cried out to the Son of David usually had saving faith.

## 2 Samuel 8

Vs. 1-8 All of this was the blessing of the Lord and fulfilling what God had said He would do for Israel and David. David would be established and have peace. What God was doing here not only involved victories, but He was giving David and his men the wisdom to organize and keep the nations in submission to him. At the same time, God was blessing the nation of Israel.

Vs. 9-12 God not only took care of David's enemies, but He gave David allies. We'll see in Chronicles that although David couldn't build the temple, he had all the materials stockpiled and he gave a set of blueprints to Solomon before he died.

Vs. 13-14 This might be mentioned because the Edomites lived in the rock and may have been thought to be invincible. David defeated them.

Vs. 15-18 So David and Israel got organized. David's sons were officials. We'll see later that this was a way kings began to train their sons. One son in particular will take his role as an official very seriously. That would be Absalom.

We'll be reading a lot more about David in Kings and Chronicles, and it is amazing how much David organized. It seems that as God expands His work and blesses what we do for Him, He also organizes us. I think some of the organizing David did came out of passions that God gave him. We can trust God to do this for us too in the harvest. If He blesses, He will help us get organized.

## **John 14:15-31**

Remember from John 14:1 that being troubled of heart and afraid is the context here. This worry is because Jesus will be leaving them, now and in the future. This is mentioned several times.

Vs. 15-17 The Holy Spirit then will take Jesus' place both leading and comforting them in the mission. The Holy Spirit is not given primarily to comfort us when the car breaks or we're lonely. There is a purpose for us being left here on earth as witnesses of Christ, and the Holy Spirit comforts and enables us for that.

Vs. 18-24 Jesus speaks lots of comfort and encouragement here. Notice that the way for them, and us, to commune and connect with the Lord will be through His Word. The Holy Spirit enables this, but we respond in love to knowing and obeying the Word. Not only do the Father and Son dwell with us, but the Father confirms His love to us. And all of this is when we are following in the harvest. Verse 22 shows that this is all enabled by the Spirit.

Also, notice how often love is mentioned in these verses. Circle the word *love*. Loving Christ and obeying Him, following Him in the harvest, will result in the Son and the Father manifesting themselves to us and making their abode with us, all this via the Holy Spirit. So what is it that we are obedient to? This obeying is not general moral living or going to church or singing in worship and living harmless lives. This obedience is following Christ in the mission. We'll see this emphasis of mission in the next chapter, and it is important to grasp this to understand how the Holy Spirit will help us. If you think about what Jesus commanded His disciples, you'll see that much of it had to do with being fearless, anxiety-free followers in the harvest who were not ashamed to testify to His name. His commandments are summed up in the Great Commission.

Vs. 25-31 As Jesus introduced the ministry of the Spirit, He applied the Spirit's coming to their immediate need for comfort. They would also need the Spirit's comfort in their future ministry, as they stood for Jesus. There is the element of joy that Jesus was going to the Father. But they didn't understand what that would mean for the plan of redemption or the incredible message they would be taking into the world. They also didn't understand the power of the spiritual authorities that would be directed to them this night or in the future. In that too, the Spirit of God would be their Helper.

As disciples we need to see that the power and ministry of the Spirit is to aid and comfort and empower us as we are laboring in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples. Jesus told His disciples, *If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also*. Jesus is still seeking to save the lost and we need to be with Him in the harvest. Then we will know the power and wonder of the Spirit.

## **Psalm 119:33-48**

Notice how many ways God's Word is referred to. Notice the pleas, petitions and cries for help. Isn't this amazing stuff with which to fill your heart? This is how we are to cry out and what we are to do, when we are being pressed by the stuff of this life. Our hope is only in God and His Word.

Vs. 33-40 This is David crying out to hold true to the Word. Notice the mention of *selfish gain*, *worthless things* and the reproach of others. Those are things that take us from the Word. David, here and elsewhere, expresses his delight and longing for the Word. When he had those, David was safe and thriving. That's the same with us.

Vs. 41-48 Here, the *steadfast love* of the Lord and remembrance of God saving David secured his heart in the Word, even when he was taunted. Notice the importance of meditation to David. Again, when David did this, he was a mighty man for God.

## Proverbs 15:33

Amen. I wish I had really, really, really learned this in my 20's.

## MAY 26

### 2 Samuel 9-11

It feels too soon in the record of David's life to begin looking at his ruin, but actually we've been reading about David for about 23 chapters. And we're not through by a long shot. This is more "history" than Noah or Abraham received. In reading the Bible and observing what is there, the "law of proportion" is important. The question to ask is "Why is so much written about David?" Apparently David is very, very important. Yesterday I quoted a verse from Paul to Timothy, in which he mentions that Jesus being descended from David was a part of the gospel he preached. In Romans 1:3 (RSV), Paul says, *the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh*. Knowing what Paul says in Romans, and the close attention Jesus' connection to David receives in other parts of the Bible, it seems safe to say that God's promise to David is huge. The promise is not only pointing to the redemption of man, but also to the redemption of Israel and the fulfillment of their purpose before God to be a witness to the nations. Jesus is the Son of David who fulfills everything.

It is good to keep in mind, that David was a true man of faith and graciously blessed by God. Remember that, because what you are about to read about David is shocking, tragic and sad. But then again, there's a lesson here. Many disciples begin well, but lose their focus on the love and mission of Christ.

### 2 Samuel 9

Remember the mention of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth (M)? I will only make a few comments on this story, but some of the small details here will be important later. I'm drawing your attention to this now, because you won't hear from Ziba again until chapter 16, and you won't know the full story until chapter 19. You'll get all of this, as you read your Bible year after year and take good mental notes, so treasure all these little details in your heart.

Vs. 1-8 Notice that the story is about M, but look at all the detail you have here about Ziba. That detail is very important. Ziba was a steward but was actually a rich man, living large off of Saul's estate, because there was no heir. He became a rich man, living under the radar until now.

M is very humble, and probably somewhat fearful of David, too. Being a cripple in any culture is hard, but being a survivor of the family of the last king, the king who tried to kill David, would make life harder.

V. 7 Mephibosheth would eat at David's table always. When the king ate, he usually had his closest friends and advisors with him. We'll see this spelled out more, looking at who ate regularly with Solomon. Probably, David's mighty men ate with him as well. This might play a role in the upcoming story. In any event, M was now a part of this group.

Vs. 9-13 Ziba and his family and his servants became the servants of a cripple. Not only that, Ziba was now accountable to David. The proceeds of the land had to be accounted for and given to M. This would change his lifestyle. Do you see what is happening here?

Vs. 10-11 The phrase, *Now Ziba*, is important. This footnote is being given to us for a reason, but you'll have to figure it out later. You seldom read about anyone with this many sons, much less daughters and wives. He had the means to afford this size of family. And I'll bet they rode on fifteen donkeys. David didn't have this many sons.

Notice v. 12.

V. 13 To make matters worse, M lived in the capitol city and ate at David's table in honor. Just imagine what this change meant for Ziba, now serving an absentee master.

Back to M, he seems like a nice guy and very humble, married with a little son that makes you think of Mickey Mouse.

So why are we told *Now* in v. 13? Again, this is introducing an important editorial note. In the NT you never hear of a cripple being anything but a beggar, much less a great man or a king. Back then, you reigned because you could defeat those who stood against you. When this all plays out, it will be sad.

## 2 Samuel 10

This story sets up chapter 11. It tells you why chapter 11 begins with Joab fighting against the main city of the Ammonites. Chapter 10 is also important in that Israel not only broke the strength of Syria, but they defeated armies beyond the Euphrates into Assyria. The nations knew to respect David. Israel was now secure in the world.

Vs. 1-5 This began innocently enough. The Lord was actually going to use this event to bring peace and security to Israel. I'll bet David even wrote a psalm about these battles.

Vs. 6-8 This was God's way of flushing out those enemies of Israel and David who could have slowly made life miserable for Israel. Here, for no reason, 33,000 men take to the field against David's army.

Vs. 9-14 This is one of the few times Joab looks like a godly man. At the end of this action it looked like the battle was over.

Vs. 15-19 But now the Syrians were mad. They had been hired as mercenaries. The original fight had nothing to do with them. So the Syrians gather a mega army. We don't know how many men were there, but we have some numbers of chariots and horsemen. The foot soldiers were probably double these numbers.

As disciples we need to remember, and I still forget, that when God allows conflict and opposition to rise, it is because He is trying to do something. It isn't our fault necessarily. He might be trying to flush out the problems all at once so that He can bless our work in the harvest. When you see Jesus in conflict in with the Jews, you understand that God was using them to get Jesus to clarify some teaching or something about Himself that brought someone closer to trusting Jesus. As Jesus abided in the Father, He expected the Father to work. And the Father did work and brought conflict to the feet of the Son. When we abide in Christ, sometimes the Lord does this for us too. We are His servants and it is His harvest, so we just need to be alert, relax and let Him do His work through us.

## 2 Samuel 11

V. 1 Sermons have been preached on all of this. David obviously should have been out fighting.

Vs. 2-5 This "sighting" might not have been an accident. This was a common time for women to bathe for ceremonial cleansing. David, in his palace, had a high vantage point.

Now, David had 11 wives and many concubines at this time. So, if he saw a naked woman, why not make a date with one of them? Actually, I think having so many wives meant that he was not "one" with any of them.

V. 3 If David didn't already know who she was, this information should have frozen him. It should have made him afraid. It should have made him rebuke himself. Unfortunately, once lust is on a roll, it is really hard to stop and submit to rational thought. As we'll see later, or you can find out on your own, David definitely knew who she was. I think that he knew who she was,

and the fact that her husband wasn't home is the reason David didn't call in any of his wives or concubines.

These names are important. Not only will they explain some things that happen later, but these show how very tragic this was. These names also *could* mean that David stayed behind in Jerusalem for this very reason. He knew that none of these men would be in Jerusalem and that Bathsheba would be alone. This might have been like a wife asking her husband if he wants to go with her and the kids to the store, but he prefers to stay home because he's tired. Then, as soon as the car pulls out of the driveway, he fires up the computer.

Also, just think of this: David crossed a line here from fantasy to action. This must have taken time. The names above (v. 3) will let you know that David knew who Bathsheba was and thought that, maybe, he deserved her more than her husband did. More on this later.

Vs. 4-5 How did David think he could keep this quiet? This had to have taken some planning.

That she had just cleansed herself meant she had just had her period (v. 4). It would be another month before she would know she had missed a period and was pregnant.

So here is the question: Was this mutual consent or was it rape? If it was mutual consent, both of them needed to be put to death for adultery. It is hard to imagine this any other way, but those were different times.

Now, what follows is my understanding of the situation:

In Leviticus 19:20 there is a case where a master rapes a slave woman who is engaged. She is not killed and he is not killed, although he has to pay for his crime. The reason the slave woman is not charged with any sin is because she is under the power of her owner. I think this was kind of the same case with David and Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, was a foreigner, and a close servant/friend of David. David was the ruler of Israel. Socially and culturally, if David made a demand of her, she could not deny David. This was more than statutory rape. In that culture, Bathsheba would have been required to consent, because of David's standing as king and her husband's position under David.

There is one more thing that points to rape in this situation. Later, when God judges David, He will tell David that though David did this secretly, God will do the same thing to David that David did here, and He will do it publicly. God will judge David by bringing David's own sin back upon him. As a result of what David did to Bathsheba and to Uriah, David's family will experience two cases of rape and a murder. His oldest son Amnon will rape his half-sister Tamar. Then Absalom will murder Amnon, and during the civil war that Absalom incites against David, Absalom will rape 10 of David's concubines (wives) openly, on the roof of the palace for all Israel to see. (I wonder if it is the same roof where David saw Bathsheba.) To further underscore this last event, look at 2 Samuel 16:21 and see who it was who suggested this. If you track that name down, this entire act becomes so sad and sick that you want to wring David's neck.

Now, I'm being a little sketchy here so that if you are interested, you can track down all the names and figure this out by yourself. When we get to 2 Samuel 16, I'll put all the details together for you. But right now, it is important to have an idea of what David did here. It was arrogant and ugly. Many, many people will suffer and the collateral damage will be widespread. And, David will never be the same. That should inspire us with the fear of God.

And by the way, nothing negative is said about Bathsheba, thereby suggesting that she was innocent.

V. 6 I wonder if Joab's sneaky mind got a hint of anything here.

Vs. 7-13 God Himself was thwarting David's scheming with a humble, simple man who was better than himself. What did David think when he saw this happening? I'm sure he knew it was God, but he kept on sinning. Sin makes fools of us all.

As bad as sin is, coming clean and admitting what you've done, yourself, is more honoring to God than having to be backed into a corner or trapped and forced into an admission. When we sin and create a tangled "Gordian Knot" of lies and involvements, it is simple to get out of it. The next thing you do, after you come to your right mind, is to honor God. Obey Him and follow, regardless of the consequences, and the knot is sliced down the middle and God helps you sort out the mess. Keep lying, and you're imprisoned in the world of your lies.

Vs. 14-25 Can you imagine that David put a letter in Uriah's hand that was actually the order to have Uriah killed? Here David gave Joab power over himself. Joab could figure this out. They all knew Uriah (have you figured out why yet?) and knew this lowly, foreign guy had a "knock-out" for a wife. David would never be free of Joab now, because he had become a murderer just like Joab. David's conscience would be a mess forever.

V. 17 Notice that in order to get Uriah killed, Joab had to send a party of men to the wall and some of them were killed too. So actually, many men died to cover this sin. Now, just like in the situation with Achan, there is collateral damage and innocent people dying. How sad.

V. 25 Utterly sad. From this point on, David's ability to think clearly and judge others rightly is destroyed.

Vs. 26-27 There is a reason to fear the silence of God. There is a reason to be afraid when the intent of our heart is evil and God doesn't allow anything to stand in our way. David, the man after God's own heart, had sinned in a way that is absolutely mind numbing. The spiritual powers and the surrounding nations would mock the God of Israel for this. God would forgive David, but David will never be the same man. This sin will devastate his own heart, his judgment, and his family. And as we learned in Exodus through Deuteronomy, if one man sins, the entire nation will suffer. Israel will suffer, and many, many more will lose their lives because of one man's sin.

As we look at what happens here, obviously this is all written for our instruction and warning. Does God forgive? Absolutely. Should we play with God's grace and forgiveness, presuming upon His kindness and mocking His love? Absolutely not. Galatians 6:7 says, *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap*. Notice that Paul/the Spirit was saying this to believers.

God loved David, but He will cut David very little slack in terms of consequences. As disciples, we also need to fear God. As we follow Christ in the harvest, in deep humility, we need to tune our hearts daily to God in the Word and in the Lord's Prayer. Thinking about those last lines of the prayer, *and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, we need to remember the danger we face on this earth, that we are very vulnerable and weak. But for the grace of God, this would happen to us too.

## **John 15**

So, in this dangerous world, following Christ in the harvest, God the Father uses the very troubling circumstances, like what the disciples will be going through, to prune and equip them/us for effectiveness.

There are a few passages in this section that are murky, where someone could think that a believer could lose their salvation. Not so. The best way to view this passage is to think of a couple of examples as you walk through it.

First, think of the apostle Paul. He was shaped by the love of Christ, shaped by the suffering of Christ and shaped by the joy of seeing the power of the gospel transform lives. Paul lived no easy life, but there is no greater example, after Jesus, of what this chapter means.

Second, think of someone like David, who was fully saved, yet still suffered damage and "withering" on earth; because he chose not to walk close to God. Many believers have injured themselves, and have shipwrecked their faith and witness for Christ. It doesn't mean they are lost, but they are damaged and unfruitful.

Vs. 1-11 In the testing the disciples would face, Jesus tells them to remain or abide in Him. This is not just to "believe" in Jesus or go to church, it is to remain in His love, His mission and in the reality of the purpose of His life and death. In trial or persecution, they would be tempted to "forget" reality, to give up and retreat. If you think of all the discipleship teaching and warnings Jesus had given them, everything He taught them fits here. Those who heed His words build a house that stands in trials; those who hear and don't follow, well, their house gets ruined.

Notice how often Jesus uses the words, *abide*, *bear fruit*, and *love*.

V. 2 Pruning is normal and necessary to our lives following Christ in the harvest, in this darkness.

V. 4 Bearing fruit is to be looked at as normal and necessary.

V. 5 Abiding in Jesus (responding to Jesus' presence and actions like Jesus responded to the Father's presence and actions) insures bearing *much fruit*. *Apart from me you can do nothing* refers to bearing much fruit. To be fruitless means not to be abiding in Christ, whether we think we are or not.

V. 6 To me this is the same thing that happens to the salt that loses its saltiness or to a man who builds on the foundation of Christ with wood, hay or stubble. There is waste and loss during this lifetime, loss of reward and humiliation before Christ. Of course there is salvation and entrance into heaven, but *as through fire*.

V. 7 Notice the conditional nature of this promise. If a person abides in Christ (His love and mission and the reality of the purpose of His life and death) he will ask according to this reality in order to bear fruit for Christ. That prayer will be answered. Why?

V. 8 The Father will grant this prayer, because He is glorified when we *bear much fruit* and so prove to be disciples of our Lord.

Just in case we get lost here; what is bearing fruit? It is our lives being involved in and focused on being witnesses for Christ so that others may find salvation through Him. It is duplication. Whether we are doing this alone or doing it with the church, it is living as a witness to Christ. It might mean serving so that the church can reach out and make disciples, but it is living to follow Christ so that fruit can be borne for Him. Jesus said that the sower and the reaper are both responsible for the harvest, and both are blessed. Our service in the harvest is part of the harvest. The fruit is people coming to Christ. Jesus defines fruit in John 12 when He says that if He, Himself, died He would bear much fruit. This fruit is the outgrowth of His death and sacrifice. It is people; it is us; it is those who are still lost and need to hear the message. Saved people are the fruit of the travail of His soul. I know for some people, the bluntness of hearing that we are only here on earth to be witnesses to Christ seems oppressive, but it is the reality of living as disciples on this dying planet. Sharing His love is a privilege.

Vs. 9-11 It is all about joy and love in the context of following Christ in the harvest and not giving up or hiding. If we "hide" anywhere, it is in the love of the Father and the Son.

Vs. 12-17 Notice that the call to *love one another* is in the context of the mission, abiding in Christ, bearing fruit. Jesus invites us as friends into the very mission and plan for which He gave His life.

Notice that the commandments are in the context of, and defined by, the harvest, abiding and bearing fruit.

V. 16 The promise of answered prayer here is for that person bearing fruit in the harvest whose heart and desires are locked into following his Savior and bearing fruit.

V. 17 It is a precious thing to be united together by Christ and His mission. In Christ, it is the church, groups of people somewhere on this earth in their own small portion of the harvest field, whom God is using to bring the gospel to the lost. We need to love and care for one another, to encourage and guard each other, to "have each other's backs." Our love is sort of like "Band of Brothers," and forged in His death and sacrifice for us. In the military, you have to be willing to protect your fellow soldier with your life. *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13). When you read Paul, you notice the strong bond he had with those who labored with him "side by side" in the gospel. Paul often called them *fellow soldiers*.

Vs. 18-25 Notice that Jesus immediately brings them back to the reality of their situation.

Vs. 26-27 Therefore, the giving of the Spirit is to equip, empower, comfort and encourage them and us as we all follow Christ in the harvest.

### **Psalm 119:49-64**

Back to the David we love, who was still afflicted and hadn't been ruined by success. This ought to tell us something too. Our hearts are closer to God when we are being pruned and when we feel we can't survive without being in the Word every day. So we need to make sure we are pursuing Christ in the harvest, sweating and straining for Him. God made sure Paul had a thorn in the flesh to humble him, but Paul himself knew of no other way to live. Paul said, *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death* (Phil. 3:10). Notice how close to God David was when He really, really, really needed the Lord. Remember too, that the same guy who wrote this, when he became comfortable and successful, also did what we have just read in 2 Samuel. That frightens me.

Vs. 49-56 God's Word gave David hope in his afflictions. Our problem isn't finding afflictions. Our problem is finding hope in afflictions, and notice where David found this hope. It was in God's Word and promises and rules and law and statutes and precepts.

There is no shame in admitting we are wrecked by the sin within us and are spiritually "bi-polar," if we will take our "meds" daily, living in the Word of God. Paul said that he would gladly boast of his weakness, because when he was weak, he was strong in Christ.

Vs. 57-64 Knowing God's promises kept David from giving in to the despair of having so many enemies. The Word revealed God's *steadfast love* to him and led his heart in praise.

### **Proverbs 16:1-3**

I guess another way to say this is, "if we deeply abide in Christ, our plans and work, our spirits and vision, our hearts and our tongues will be pleasing to the Lord." That's what I want, and the way to be like this is to abide in the love of Jesus my Savior.

**MAY 27**

**2 Samuel 12**

It seems from the narrative, that once Bathsheba found out she was pregnant and sent word to David, it wasn't long after that, that Uriah died. Now, it looks like the baby has been born. I wonder why God waited so long before He confronted David. Obviously, David had more than enough time to confess his sin and come clean. What would have made him resist God for so long? I think we know the answer and I think this length of time ignoring God had a lasting effect on David's heart.

Vs. 1-6 I wonder how many of the details of the man's affection for the lamb described the relationship of Uriah and Bathsheba before David destroyed things. If you read a lot into this, Uriah deeply loved Bathsheba and David had no respect for Uriah. Have you figured out yet how David knew Uriah?

Vs. 7-14 It stands out to me here, that if David had sought the Lord and waited for Him, God would have "added" to him and given him more (v. 8). In fact, it might have been that David would have gotten Bathsheba anyway, but more on that later.

V. 9 Notice that God sees David as having despised His Word. And keep in mind that this is the guy who wrote Psalm 119.

Vs. 10-12 All of what God "promises" David will come true and will become a real tragedy.

Vs. 15-23 In all of this it is good that David went in and worshiped God, but I don't sense a lot of spiritual wisdom in this entire situation. Maybe I'm just being too negative.

Vs. 24-25 Now here is an interesting thought. God loved Solomon and He told Nathan, and so, Solomon had another name that meant that God loved him. Why does God love this person born out of such a foul history? Since God is sovereign, I would have to think that God knew that Solomon would be born of David and Bathsheba and that Solomon was a part of His plan. I think that if David hadn't sinned, God would have brought these two people together without sin. Probably Uriah would have died in battle or some other way, and since David knew Uriah, he would have taken Bathsheba legally as a wife. We've seen something like this before with Rebekah and Jacob stealing the blessing from Esau. If it is God's will for something to happen, we need to wait and be patient. Taking "God's will" by our own hand only adds grief and sorrow to it.

Imagine what this sin would have done to David's entire "family." Would any of the other wives have felt good about being with David after he had done this?

This part about Solomon is probably a summary of the future birth. We know from 1 Chronicles 3:5 that Bathsheba had four boys and Solomon was the youngest of them. Incidentally, while Solomon is not in the direct bloodline to Jesus (through Mary), Solomon's brother, Nathan, is in the line to Jesus. I think Solomon was excluded because of his idolatry.

Vs. 26-31 The long fought battle (over a year) finally ended in victory. I can't help but see this "victory" as a very ironic defeat for David and all of Israel.

**John 16**

Vs. 1-4 I've tried to underscore the fact that the context of this Upper Room Discourse is the immediate and ongoing threat there would be to the disciples as they followed Jesus now, and then later after Pentecost. This same atmosphere of threat is true for any of us who are following Christ in the harvest. Many of the truths in this discourse are great. The problem is that if what

Jesus says here is removed from this context and taught in isolation, the truths can be misleading. The context for this truth is following Christ on His mission under pressure.

If you take a piston from an engine and use it at Christmas to crack nuts, it will work for that. But imagine if you eventually forgot that it was anything other than a nutcracker. This is exactly what happens with teaching about the Holy Spirit. We use Him for all sorts of things, especially for our comfort. We just forget the context in which He is introduced, the mission, and therefore, the context in which we will find His power and comfort.

Vs. 5-15 Notice that Jesus is speaking again about His leaving them.

V. 7 Jesus will send the Spirit into the disciples. Whereas Jesus could only be in one place at one time, the Holy Spirit can indwell an infinite number of disciples. Notice what this Helper will do in v. 8. How does that help us? It only helps us if we are in the harvest.

Vs. 8-11 The idea of convicting the world concerning sin is focused on the person of Jesus. When Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, it was a declaration of His righteousness as a man to declare judgment on all mankind. Now Jesus is the King of mankind and the “fake” ruler has been dethroned. All of this “reality” has taken place and now just waits for the completion. Now would be the time to confess Christ as Savior.

Vs. 12-14 Jesus was their constant teacher and taught them before and after events, before and after conflicts. Now He was leaving them. The Spirit of Truth would now take His place, doing what Jesus had done.

Vs. 16-24 Somehow, I don't think the disciples understood the impact it would have on them when He died. He is bracing them to experience intense disappointment, fear and sorrow; and He's promising them that the joy they experience afterward will wipe that all away. Notice the references to joy and the encouragement for them to pray. Jesus is helping them to protect them, and I don't think they had a clue.

Vs. 25-28 It is interesting that Jesus is already telling them He will teach them after the resurrection. Jesus will say more about the Father and His love for them in chapter 17, but here it is said to assure them so that they will survive the dark night that will come upon them.

Vs. 29-33 Here, it is like the disciples say, "Oh, so that's what you're saying. Null Problemo." And then Jesus says, "Oh yeah. You've got it down? You guys are about to be scattered in fear."

V. 33 Although we haven't seen the word “abide” since the last chapter, notice the condition of the promise here. Jesus said, *in me you may have peace*. This is contrasted with the next words, *In the world...* Abiding in Jesus is where we find that peace, but abiding is a choice. If our lives are oriented around and defined by the world, we are in trouble. If everything about us is defined by Jesus, we stand in His Spirit with His view of the reality around us, with His purpose in our heart. Notice that the context for this peace is peace in persecution for being a follower of Christ in the harvest. Jesus is saying this to strengthen them. But, will they remember He said this as He is hanging on the cross?

There is a spiritual understanding of Jesus and life in Him behind all of what Jesus is saying here. It might seem hard even for us to understand what He is saying, but Paul promised Timothy that if he kept thinking over what Paul told him, God would give him understanding. The same is true for us now in the harvest. I think God teases us with these sayings to see if we will invest the time to understand Him. We have the Spirit, but it takes time, reading and re-reading and praying and asking and seeking and knocking. Those last three things are things Jesus encouraged or commanded the disciples always to do. Those who ask, receive. Those who seek, find. Those who knock, have the door swing open to them.

## **Psalm 119:65-80**

I noticed again today the references to being *afflicted* and how affliction worked to drive David to the Word. Seeing what is happening with David in 2 Samuel, I understand that it is better to be *afflicted* and in the Word, than to have everything going well and feel you can survive without His Word.

Vs. 65-72 David seems to be saying that everything God did to him bore out the truth of the Word. This is like Paul saying to prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. It is worth being *afflicted* to see the truth of the Word. We discover that God is always true and that waiting on Him is always right. David says it was more valuable to him than gold or silver.

Vs. 73-80 Just as God formed David in the womb, God was forming David through his afflictions as David clung to God's Word. Verse 79 says that David's life became a testimony to others. God says the same thing in Isaiah 55, *I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples*. That came through afflictions and being forged in the Word. Afflictions do not help us. God helps us through His Word. If God is present, afflictions are just a means to show us how to abide in Him.

## **Proverbs 16:4-5**

In the OT stories, we have seen how the Lord used the evil and failings of men to further His plan of redemption. We've also seen, and will see, that v. 5 is true, even among God's own children.

## **MAY 28**

### **2 Samuel 13**

It is hard to tell how much time had passed. David had written Psalm 51 and shown true repentance (sort of). It might be that David hoped that what the Lord had said would happen, would not happen, or maybe he thought the threat would come from outside of Israel. I'm sure he didn't see this coming. This is not only a sad day in the history of redemption, but days like this would keep on rolling.

Vs. 1-6 Here we are introduced to the old "come and bake bread in my presence" ploy. With so many wives and children, these people, though related, didn't have the same, normal "I'd gag if I kissed my sister" repulsion. They were almost like strangers to each other in this respect. Although we don't see the name "Satan" anywhere in this context, we know from the New Testament, that he was involved somewhere.

Isn't it interesting that we hear so little about Satan in all of this history? I think it is because the real "enemy" is the sickness within us.

Vs. 7-14 Apparently this was an accepted custom in that culture for a sick person. That's why David fell for this. I can imagine that if you were rich, the food was prepared by servants somewhere removed from the main living quarters, possibly in another house. Now, you have to admit, that when the right stuff is being made, it makes the house smell great. Actually, I think I have even gained weight just smelling bread being baked. That sense of warmth and wholeness and smell, and, in general, the wonderfulness of it all was probably thought to help make a sick person well. Anyway, as silly and as transparent as this sounds to us, it probably was rational in that culture.

When Amnon sent everyone out of the room, didn't anyone think it looked fishy?

V. 13 This marriage would have been forbidden in Israel, meaning they would have had to leave Israel, and Amnon could not have been king. Under the guidelines of the law, this kind of incest was forbidden, but it would have been no different than Abraham and Sarah, who both had a common father but different mothers. It is just to say that if Amnon had really been honest, he could have had her by abdicating from the throne and living in Moab or Egypt. With David's connections, it would still have been a good life and a realistic option.

V. 14 This is God's punishment on David. The sickness released in the family was ironically bearing fruit. I wonder how much this act mirrored David's interaction with Bathsheba. I wonder if he used the "come and bake bread for me" ploy too?

Vs. 15-19 Violating Tamar like this would make her "unmarryable" in the proper circles. Tamar was not at fault, but it would have been Amnon's responsibility to do the right thing and marry her.

Vs. 20-22 This will be like the spreading of a cancer. Obviously Absalom will be responsible for his own actions, but this, humanly speaking, destroyed him. And this is where David failed as a father, as a leader and as a follower of God. He failed too because of his own failure. How could David judge his son for doing what he, himself, had done? And now we also see another sickness in David that will be very transparent when he has to deal with Absalom. David was consumed with worry about which son would take the throne after him.

You might have a note that the Dead Sea Scroll and Septuagint (and Luther) add, "But he would not punish his son Amnon because he loved him, since he was his firstborn." David couldn't judge him; and at the same time, he hoped that Amnon would take the throne when he died. This lack of justice created an intense hatred and bitterness in Absalom that would engulf the nation in war. As we'll see, there was at least one other man who was deeply affected by this. I'm sure that many, many people lost confidence in David.

V. 22 You can see that hatred was festering in the heart of Absalom.

Vs. 23-33 Two years went by. That is not only hatred; it is commitment to have revenge.

V. 26 How did David fall for this? I'm assuming that as the heir apparent, Amnon represented the king at some events and this is what Absalom was asking for. He certainly didn't want David there. He must have known that David would refuse; and so, as a compromise, he pleaded with David to show the favor of his presence by sending Amnon to represent him.

This is just a speculative point here, but I don't think David was a good relational communicator. He wrote wonderful songs and psalms, but as a father and as a verbal minister to his family, he seems to have been a disaster. We'll see more of that tomorrow and in the days to come.

Vs. 37-39 Three years and no communication, just brooding and sulking on David's part. And what was going through Absalom's mind? And here we see a very confused David, so compromised in his own heart and so anxious to have his own son sit on the throne, that he can no longer judge rightly. And this all began one evening as he watched a loyal friend's wife bathe. How tragic.

For us as disciples, I think the lesson to learn here is to be very serious and intentional to keep our passions fulfilled God's way. I've heard of people who have fallen into adultery or pornography and disqualified themselves from ministry, if by no other way than by the distrust and bitterness they have brought into their close relationships. God is showing us something in David's life that is meant to be a warning to us. With everything God is showing us here, it would be doubly tragic to make the same mistakes. Imagine getting to heaven and having David walk up to a fallen disciple and say, "What? God exposed my sin and wrote it on the pages of His Word to help you and you ignored it?"

## **John 17**

Vs. 1-5 It is instructive that as Jesus begins this prayer for His disciples, it is all about glory, that is, revealing who the Son is and who the Father is. As followers of our Lord, living for and giving glory to the Father should be just as important to us as it was to our Lord.

V. 3 This is a great definition of what eternal life is.

Vs. 4-5 This seems like a very intimate talk between the Son and His Father.

Vs. 6-8 I guess you could say that it wasn't Jesus' job to make them believe, but to manifest the Father before them. The final word on their progress was that they had kept the Father's Word, which was the Word that Jesus had spoken.

Vs. 9-12 It appears that Jesus was praying for their growth and unity in Him. Judas was lost and these 11 would be tested. Jesus was glorified in them in that they had saving faith and were still following Him. Jesus didn't just want the Father to protect them, but to give them the oneness with Him that Jesus had with the Father. I guess that unity is a supernatural enablement too. I think this oneness grows out of the mission.

Vs. 13-19 Notice that it was the Word that made them hated by the world, and it was the Word that sanctified them in the truth. Verse 18 is the pre-resurrection giving of the Great Commission. Jesus is not only announcing that they will complete what He has begun, but Jesus is saying He will continue His work with them by consecrating Himself, now and during the church age as He sits at the right hand of God. (See Mark 16:20.)

Vs. 20-23 Jesus prayed that the Father would grant that all who believed in Jesus would have spiritual unity.

Vs. 24-26 Jesus also prayed that they/we would be with Him and would see His glory and would be filled with the love that the Father had for the Son.

There is a lot of love and unity being spoken of here. And it makes sense to me that it is not only in Jesus and in His Word, but we need to be following Him in the harvest to really understand what He is talking about.

## **Psalms 119:81-96**

Vs. 81-88 What stands out to me is the longing in these verses. Do you notice here, and through this entire psalm, the interchange between David's distress and going to the Word?

Vs. 89-96 I think David understood that as the promises were made in the past, there was also waiting and suffering as those promises moved to fulfillment. Abraham waited; Joseph waited; Israel waited and Moses waited. David was now a part of this waiting, but also he had become a part of the story of God's faithfulness.

V. 92 I'm sure this was true for David in those long years of running from Saul. I'll bet it became true for David again as his family was falling apart.

V. 93 If only that had been true of David. It needs to be true of me.

## **Proverbs 16:6-7**

David was still a man after God's own heart and I'm sure these two verses came into play as God forgave David and as David refocused his life on following God. We need the fear of the Lord, and we need to live to please our Lord and honor our Father, as we follow in the harvest.

## MAY 29

### 2 Samuel 14:1-15:22

In what happens in the next chapters, you see, little by little, what effect David's own sins and his lengthy refusal to confess his crimes had upon his ability to discern and make good judgments.

#### 2 Samuel 14

David was very conflicted morally and emotionally. Absalom should have died for what he did, but David should have died also. David had been promised that one of his sons would be on the throne, but rather than trust God to be true to His Word, David, after losing the hope he had for Amnon, now put his hope in big, tall, handsome Absalom. David wanted to forgive his son and bring him back, but his sense of justice and anger (guilt too, knowing he had brought this on his family) held him back.

Vs. 1-3 Joab was a deceitful and crafty man, and was by no means to be confused with a godly man. It was probably the force of David's devotion to God that influenced Joab for good. Now, with David confused, Joab went into action. This woman was probably the equivalent of an actress.

Vs. 4-20 Apparently David was a sucker for a good story. Nathan had moved David to repentance with a story. Notice that in none of this did David seek God. It doesn't say he sought God beforehand, and it doesn't say he sought God afterward. David was on auto-pilot. This was about to turn into a horrendous disaster. David had the prophet Nathan and he had the priests and the U&T, but in his guilt and confusion, he just sat there.

As disciples we know we have to live daily in God's Word. Sin is so strong in us that it is only kept in check by the Word and the Spirit. We need our meds every day and we should always be alert to our reactions. Living by the flesh or gut or good intentions is all the same thing. We have the Word and the Spirit. We should use them.

Vs. 21-24 This shows how emotionally/judgmentally hamstrung David was. What sense did this make?

Vs. 25-27 Absalom was a dude's dude, and the kind of guy you'd want as king. He was also a mess emotionally. In mourning for what happened to his sister Tamar, he named a daughter Tamar. Though it mentions here that he had three sons, later we'll find out that he had no one to carry on his name. Did they die? I don't know.

Vs. 28-33 This was completely dysfunctional and David was party to it. Talk about awful parenting and horrible communication skills. Emotionally, there was something wrong with David. Old Jerusalem was not that big a city not to know what was going on and not to talk with someone.

#### 2 Samuel 15

Vs. 1-6 So now that Absalom was completely bitter and had no regard for his father, he plotted to steal the hearts of Israel away from David (whose credibility was probably low). Obviously, there was much more planning going on here to put together this coup. Remember that Absalom plotted for two years to kill his brother Amnon. He knew how to patiently hatch a plan.

This went on for four years. Don't you think someone would have noticed how weird this looked? I suspect that David noticed and didn't stop him, thinking it might prepare Absalom to be king, and that maybe God was in it. Since Absalom was providing counsel to the people, it might be that because of what David had done, that David had become something of a recluse.

Vs. 7-12 Hebron would be important, because that is where David was crowned king.

V. 12 This is the last chance to figure out on your own who Ahithophel was. Tomorrow I'll tell you. Regardless of what you read about how bad and traitorous Ahithophel was, when you find out who he was, you will totally understand and want to cry and kick David.

Vs. 13-22 Since the people were won over to Absalom, David would be trapped in Jerusalem. His only chance was to run into the wilderness and fight.

V. 16 David shouldn't have left those 10 wives/concubines in Jerusalem, but how could he have known?

The men who had been with David when he ran from Saul were still loyal to him. The leader of these guys showed that despite his age and the discomfort, he would remain with David. I'm sure David's "mighty men" were with him. What is significant when you think of loyalty is that David had men who were still extremely loyal to him, but he might not have been that loyal to them. You'll see that tomorrow.

### **John 18:1-24**

Vs. 1-11 John doesn't mention that Jesus prayed in the garden after He and the disciples had crossed over to the Mount of Olives. John makes up for this by giving us a lot of other insider information.

V. 4 Jesus confronted the mob primarily to save the disciples. In v. 6 you can see that there was tension in the crowd. They must have expected Jesus to turn them into frogs or something.

Vs. 8-11 This shows Jesus trying to let His disciples escape. Peter tried to intervene, but Jesus told him to cool it.

Vs. 12-14 John is the only one who tells us that Jesus went to Annas first and then was sent to Caiaphas. Annas was the unofficial high priest while his son-in-law Caiaphas was the official high priest. Apparently Annas and Caiaphas lived close together in some priestly compound. What John shows us here is that Annas interviewed Jesus first, during which time Peter denied Jesus the first time. Then, after Caiaphas was dressed and had the Sanhedrin up and running, illegally, Jesus was sent, maybe across the courtyard to Caiaphas.

Vs. 15-24 That unknown disciple, again, was John, the writer of this Gospel. Apparently John had some family connections to the high priest (that's why he knew the name of the servant that Peter "Van Gogh") and was able to get Peter into the courtyard.

Vs. 19-24 Apparently Annas was also concerned about the disciples, that is, if this was some sort of secret society. Jesus told him that everything He taught had been taught publicly. It was a rebuke to the insistent unbelief of these men for Jesus not to answer the question, but to refer them back to what they already knew. This is the only time we see Jesus speaking to defend Himself. Oddly enough, almost the exact same thing happens to Paul years later.

### **Psalms 119:97-112**

Keep looking at the words that are used for the Word, the alternating cries for help and then the refuge taken in the Word of God.

Vs. 97-104 David's love for God's law was because it gave him wisdom and he could see that. He didn't need to be taught in theology. All he needed was the Word flowing through him, and it gave him an insight that neither his *enemies* nor his *teachers* had.

V. 103 I thank the Lord for every moment like this.

Vs. 105-112 Notice that when David talks about the Word being a lamp unto his feet, he mentions his afflictions in vs. 107 and 109-110. When Jesus tells us in the Lord's Prayer to pray every day, He mentions to pray regarding temptation and the influence of the enemy. The Word

is to lead us and especially lead us through adversity. It does this by filling us with trust in God and the strength to abide in Him. If we just go to the Word for a one-verse cure, we might be disappointed. It is the Spirit and the Word in us constantly filling and keeping us that gives us what we need.

### **Proverbs 16:8-9**

Amen and Amen!

## **MAY 30**

### **2 Samuel 15:23-16:23**

2 Samuel 15:23-37

Vs. 23-29 It had been a moment of great personal joy when David brought the ark into the city. Now, it must have broken his heart to see these well meaning priests taking it out of the city with him. David's heart is rightly humbled. David knew he had brought this situation on himself and was willing to submit himself to God's will and judgment. He sent the ark back into the city, hoping that the Lord would bring him back.

What comes from this is that both priests had sons who could bring him information.

Vs. 30-37 Jesus would one day weep on the Mount of Olives, but for a very different reason. He would be entering Jerusalem to die for sin. These people, with David, were leaving Jerusalem because of sin. I wonder why they were weeping. I wonder if anyone was thinking in the back of their mind that this was the result of what David did to Bathsheba and Uriah.

David's heart falls when he learns that Ahithophel was in league with Absalom. At that moment, it seems God sent David the answer to his prayer. Hushai would become the secret weapon against Ahithophel. Isn't it interesting that up until now, we've never heard the name of Ahithophel. Now we're afraid of him. If this guy was such a great counselor and such a wise guy, why did he turn against David and side with a foolish man like Absalom? What would cause a wise man like Ahithophel to oppose David and God and do something so irrational? Did you figure it out?

2 Samuel 16

Vs. 1-4 So here is Ziba, bearing gifts. I know he wasn't Greek, but the old adage applied to him too. Maybe this was just "old world" kindness. Maybe he knew the story of how Abigail's gift had touched David's heart. Of course, hindsight is always 20/20, but no one sees this yet as we will understand it in chapter 19.

Look at v. 3. All I want to say here is this, both in the law and in dealing with elders in the NT, God says, *Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses*. I know I'm jading you, slanting your thinking a certain way, but I have not read one commentary that catches what is happening here. This is where reading year after year allows the Spirit to give you insight deeper than studying a passage for only a few hours will give you.

So here you have the word of Ziba, that the crippled son of David's best friend, a godly friend, has said, "Good, now I'll become king." Especially knowing that all Israel was following after that handsome, fully functional, "dude's dude," Absalom. Really? A cripple was going to put himself forward as king?

V. 4 To me this ranks as a very sad verse in the Bible. David just broke the law of God by accepting the testimony of one man against another. And look what he did. He gave Ziba everything, and he never even asked Mephibosheth if this was true. I mean, seriously. Obviously, I know what's coming in chapter 19, but suffice it to say that David's judgment was damaged by

his sin and his guilt. There is one other little point to observe. According to “old world” custom and cleverness, if you accepted the gift of a man, you were indebted to him.

Vs. 5-14 This guy was wrong and ranted at David for all the wrong reasons. Now, if he had said something about killing Uriah and taking Bathsheba, that would have been true and instructive, especially because, as you will see, God’s judgment on David for his actions against Uriah and Bathsheba is being fulfilled here. Back to Shimei. God will judge him for this, but God used him to provide some "mood music" for David's march to the Jordan. David's words give us the idea that he understood that God was motivating Shimei. Interestingly enough, as David dies, he will give Solomon two assignments: one is to kill Joab and the other is to kill this guy, but of course, to do it legally. Sounds like a mafia movie.

Vs. 15-23 So now we look at the other side of this civil war. Hushai is in place to try to save David, but Absalom looks to Ahithophel for counsel. Ahithophel's first word to Absalom is that he should rape David's ten concubines (servant wives). Verses 20-23 are a summary that he actually did this, probably the next day. Presently however, the meeting isn't over.

Now, who was Ahithophel?

When we first heard about Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:3, we learned “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” This should have made David stop immediately. Why?

If you do a search on the name "Eliam," you'll find it coming up later in 2 Samuel 23. The name is found in the list of David's mighty men. David's mighty men were a select group of outstanding warriors and fighters, who were deeply loyal to David, probably having joined David when he was still serving Saul. David would have been very close to these men. These men were with him through all the ten years of running from Saul. Now as king, some of them would have been David's personal bodyguards. They would have been the men who ate daily with David at his table (as we see Mephibosheth doing). He would have known them and been close to these guys and their families. In putting together a government back then, you went to your family and your friends and their families. You chose men whom you knew and could trust. The world was small, and so you surrounded yourself with your trusted, proven friends and their families.

So, in 2 Samuel 23:34 you'll see that Eliam, one of David's mighty men, was the son of Ahithophel. So if Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, she would be the granddaughter of Ahithophel. She was Ahithophel's granddaughter! Look at the end of the list of David's mighty men. The last hero listed is Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was in this select group and known by David. Both Eliam and Uriah were members of an elite group of soldiers, friends and loyalists of David, known as David's “mighty men.” Ahithophel was David's most trusted counselor. These men sat at the table with David.

Did David really not know who Bathsheba was? He knew she was the granddaughter of his most trusted counselor, the daughter of one of his closest and most loyal men, and the wife of one of his closest and most loyal men. He also knew they were away from Jerusalem fighting a battle. David wasn't stupid, but what he did was.

What would cause a wise man like Ahithophel to join Absalom to oppose David and God and do something so foolish? Ahithophel saw how David had sexually forced his granddaughter, killed his "grandson-in-law," destroyed his family and violated the trust and loyalty Eliam and Uriah had shown him when he was running from Saul. How sad. Then notice that Ahithophel tells Absalom to rape his father's concubines. I don't think Ahithophel was an evil man. He just wanted justice in kind. David had raped his granddaughter, now David's son raped his wives.

Poetic justice, just as God had promised to judge David. And since David had killed Ahithophel's grandson-in-law, now Ahithophel hoped to kill David.

When David says in Psalm 51:4, *Against You, You only, have I sinned...*, I have to respectfully disagree. David should have had long talks with Ahithophel and Eliam and their families and apologized until his voice was hoarse and he couldn't cry another tear. I don't think David did this. Look at how David communicated with his own sons. David wrote songs, but he was a basket case when it came to discussion for restoration.

Ahithophel became a bitter man and will rightfully pay for his bitterness. His new great grandson, Solomon, will become king; but where hearts are bitter, where there is no justice, and where there is no repentance and honest communication, there is seldom forgiveness or peace. David should have begged for their forgiveness. When that didn't come, Ahithophel needed to have left Jerusalem and his service for the king and gone to God and found solace in Him alone. I don't think he did that.

So, Ahithophel's first word of counsel to Absalom is to go and do publicly to 10 of David's wives, what David had done secretly to Bathsheba. Remember too, that this "just" punishment is exactly what God promised as judgment for what David had done in secret. (2 Samuel 12:11-12) And as if that weren't enough, Absalom did this on the roof top where David had been watching Bathsheba.

David is still a great man of God, but this should be a caution for us to take God's Word seriously. This is a divine testimony to the corrupting power of sin in the soul of a godly man and in the group that was around him. As disciples, not only do we need to be in the Word daily, but we need to live in the fear of the Lord. As a man sows, so shall he reap. And there is no partiality with God.

### **John 18:25-19:22**

John 18:25-40

Vs. 25-27 It is interesting that all four Gospels record that Peter, who was a leader in the church when these accounts were written, had failed Jesus. Isn't it ironic that a relative of the guy whom Peter "van Gogh-ed" was present? God's record of redemption includes a lot of failed men saved by grace. That men like Peter and Paul ended well should be an encouragement to us all. It's odd that we are reading this about Peter, as we are dealing with the fallout of David's hormonal rampage.

Vs. 28-32 Pilate wanted to set Jesus free. He really didn't like the Jewish leaders. In the process of Pilate's journey he will say some immortal words. Almost everything Pilate says is noteworthy.

V. 28 During this time in Israel's history, the Passover meal could be celebrated on two days. Some say it was because of some technicality in the calendar. It might have been because of the large number of people and the large number of lambs that needed to be sacrificed. It might also have been because of the scarcity of rooms in which to celebrate. Jesus and the disciples celebrated on the early day. The Pharisees celebrated on the later day.

Vs. 33-40 Pilate was working to try to let Jesus go. It seems from Pilate's attitude that he didn't take this very seriously, yet.

V. 38 This famous quote comes from an arrogant ruler speaking to a Jewish peasant. Pilate was an embattled, bitter, unpopular ruler. The Jewish lobby in Rome had made his life miserable. *What is truth?* is both the expression of Pilate's bitterness and his mocking of this unfortunate, uneducated Jew. Everything Jesus says to Pilate here will come back on Pilate as the eerie events

of this morning unfold. Apparently Pilate hadn't drunk enough coffee yet and gotten his other brain cell going.

John 19

Vs. 1-5 This beating was actually for show and was meant to make Jesus look broken and humiliated. It was not the pre-crucifixion beating. Pilate still wanted to release Jesus and make the Jews feel sorry for Him. Jesus would have been maimed for life by this. *Behold the man* is another one of Pilate's memorable quotes.

Vs. 6-11 Pilate is not very arrogant now. This event is shaping up to be very "spooky" for him. According to the other Gospels, his wife has even told him to distance himself from this. While he wasn't a believer in Jesus, he was a believer in divine forces.

V. 11 Notice that Pilate isn't laughing at Jesus any more.

Vs. 12-16 *Caesar's friend* was a political designation of being in good standing. The Caesar in Rome was mentally imbalanced and Pilate already had several strikes against him. When the Jews threw this statement at Pilate, he knew he had lost. This event would go straight back to Rome. Pilate still could have let Jesus go.

The irony here is bitter. "*Behold your King!*" "*We have no king but Caesar.*" What infamous statements.

V. 16 At this point, Pilate hands Jesus over to his soldiers for the normal pre-crucifixion beating. The effect of both of these beatings, humanly, explains why Jesus couldn't carry His cross and why He died so quickly.

Vs. 19-22 God uses even the evil of men for His purpose. Pilate put the sign above Jesus out of his hate for the Jewish leaders. He wanted to be ironic and irritating. Yet, what was written, regardless of his motive, was exactly true and a statement of judgment.

V. 22 When I was in seminary with a full load and a family and a job, having way too many papers to write, this was my key verse and biblical justification for never writing a second draft of a paper. The first draft had to do the trick.

### **Psalm 119:113-128**

These verses, written by David and the Holy Spirit, are absolutely true, and absolutely sobering. I hope they are as sobering for you as they are for me, knowing that when David was close to God because of adversity and in the Word daily, this is what his heart looked like. This should be a lesson for us all. David's success and busyness as an executive ruined him, because it took him from the Word and from needing the Lord every day.

Vs. 113-120 If this were written during the time of the civil war with the house of Saul, you could understand David's frustration with the double-minded. This was like Saul and others who swore to the Lord and promised something and then reneged. God's Word and God's promise were sure and steady. David learned to put his hope in God and His Word rather than in the word of men.

Vs. 121-128 David's oppressors were still on his mind. I identify with vs. 123-125. In all of the troubles the Lord leads us through, we all come to the same place. We learn to find hope and comfort in His Word, which is actually the sure and certain expression of His heart and character. I can falsely imagine a lot of stuff about God because of my fear or emotions, but His Word is the expression of the reality that is true about Him.

## **Proverbs 16:10-11**

Before David fell, his judgments, it is said, were like the words of an angel, meaning He had keen insight. These verses would have been true of him at that point. Sin, guilt, and the consequences of murder changed all that in David. As disciples, we would be wise to learn from what the Lord is showing us from David's life.

## **MAY 31**

### **2 Samuel 17**

Vs. 1-4 Ahithophel had a good plan and he would have taken David.

Vs. 5-14 This tells you why God allowed Hushai to win the day both to save David and to bring Absalom to ruin. It seems to me that Ahithophel was not a deeply vocal and persuasive man. He seems like more of a good, wise and gentle man. Hushai and Ahithophel knew that the "big" battle plan played into God's hands and would be the ruin of Absalom.

Vs. 15-22 This is really a funny section of people running around. Actually, after Hushai's plan was adopted, David was perfectly safe on whichever side of the Jordan he had slept. But actually, there were friends waiting for David on the other side. Maybe the Lord made sure he moved to find this help.

V. 23 How sad. Ahithophel knew God had thwarted him and that David would win. It's interesting that he went home and put all of his affairs in order. I don't think he killed himself for fear of David. Had he been an evil man, he probably would have been happy to have spit in David's face before he died. I think he committed suicide out of personal bitterness, knowing that God would spare David. I wonder if Ahithophel and the Lord had a good long conversation after this. I hope so.

It's interesting here that Eliam lost his father, Bathsheba lost her grandfather and Solomon lost his great-grandfather. And remember, up until all this took place, Ahithophel was a revered man in the palace. Sad.

Vs. 24-26 If you remember this name, Mahanaim, it is where Ish-bosheth set up his headquarters in fighting against David in the civil war. Apparently, it was a fortress. Notice that Amasa was put over the army of Absalom. He is Joab's cousin and a nephew-in-law to David. This will be interesting in a few chapters.

Vs. 27-29 Apparently this is the reason why God made sure David went over the Jordan so quickly. Notice that beds, food, bathtubs, microwaves, bratwurst, chips, cheese whiz, etc., were brought from surrounding nations including, ironically, the city that Joab had had under siege when the events took place that led to all this baloney.

### **John 19:23-42**

Vs. 23-24 It is interesting that John mentions this fulfillment of Scripture.

Vs. 25-27 John is the only one who mentions that Jesus' mother was at the cross. The other Gospels mention the other three women standing at a distance. What happened here is that at some point Mary neared the cross. She was escorted by her sister, Salome and by Salome's son John (the son of Zebedee, who was also the disciple whom Jesus loved), by her sister-in-law, Mary the wife of Clopas (Clopas is thought to be Joseph's [remember Joseph, Mary's husband] brother), and by Mary Magdalene. So, when Jesus saw His mother and His cousin John, who is also the apostle John, Jesus gave John the care of His mother.

Vs. 28-30 It is interesting that with all the other things Jesus said on the cross, it seems that it was after taking care of His mother that Jesus knew all was now finished. Now with all the loose ends tied, the sacrifice for mankind completed and the Father's justice satisfied, Jesus said, *It is finished*, and He died.

Vs. 31-37 This Friday would have fallen on the normal day to kill the lamb, and that Sabbath evening would have been the time to eat the Passover. So it was doubly holy, being both the Passover and the Sabbath. John was apparently standing there, with the other women watching all of this. He saw the water and the blood. Since Jesus was already dead, there was no need to break his legs. Notice again that John cites two examples of the Scripture being fulfilled even after Jesus was dead and still hanging on the cross. The Father was still working.

Vs. 38-42 Joe and Nick came out of hiding. Because they had to do this quickly, they used Joe's own tomb, which was close at hand, and Nick brought the necessary things, 75 pounds worth of spices and the necessary sheets, to prepare the body quickly before the Sabbath. The three women helped. Afterward, Sunday morning, they would come back and do a more thorough job. To be continued!

### **Psalm 119:129-152**

Vs. 129-136 This is what good preaching and teaching does, it unfolds the Word. It shows people how to understand the Word for themselves and every time they go back to that passage, they can develop the thoughts and find that light again. Notice again the oppression and adversity that is still in the shadows, driving him to the Lord.

Notice v. 135. I understand that desire more and more.

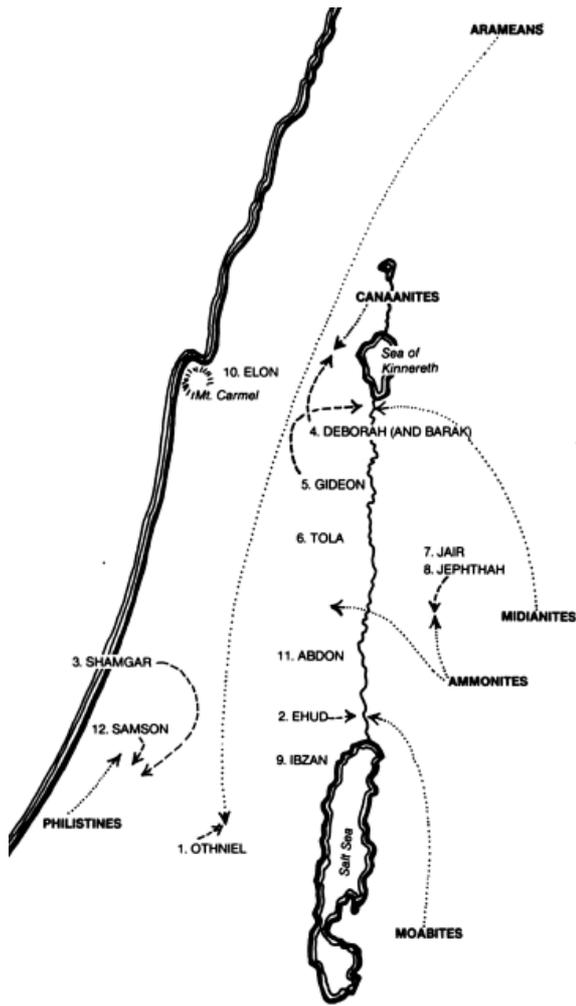
Vs. 137-144 If only David would have kept on feeling small and despised. When I read v. 143, I think I appreciate more why God allows this. It is the only thing that keeps us on our knees before Him in His Word.

Vs. 145-152 Look at all the crying out in these verses. I'll bet at some point David longed for those old days, when life wasn't complicated by the demands of ruling and by the sin of his actions. Even though there was affliction, there was this vital and pulsing freshness.

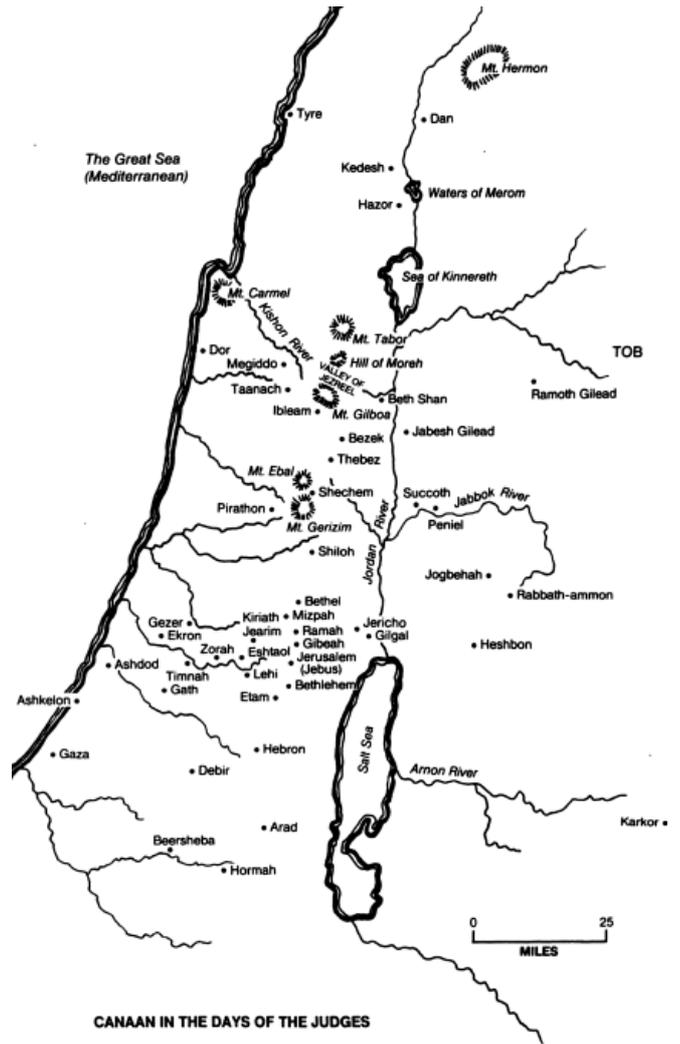
So, what could he have done? If my theory is right and David wrote this during the same time he was writing his copy of the law, I would say he should have kept reading that copy daily as Moses said. David, like everyone of us, was spiritually "bi-polar," meaning he needed to acknowledge his condition daily and take his meds every day, without exception. David got busy, comfortable, and lazy, just like we do. Paul, out of God's love and mercy, was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to keep him humble and needy. The secret revealed through Paul is this, *For when I am weak, then I am strong* (2 Cor. 12:10). If you are a disciple, serious about bearing fruit in the harvest and staying close to Christ, you need the Word daily and you need to pursue Him and work under a certain amount of affliction. You don't have to "lash yourself;" because, if you are in the harvest, the Father will prune you and that will make you both effective and needy.

### **Proverbs 16:12-13**

Since we really don't identify with *kings*, I find it helpful to substitute the title, "spiritual person." The king of Israel was supposed to lead the nation before God, modeling what it meant to be under God's control. That didn't happen often in Israel. Also, and we're seeing this now, kings often followed God when they were young and afflicted, but once they became strong, rich, secure, proud, etc., these men of faith did silly, unspiritual stuff. We can, and should, learn from their stories. This proverb, probably written by Solomon, is still true and spoken by God; even if Solomon, like his father before him, denied, by his life, the very words he was writing.



THE JUDGES AND THE OPPRESSORS

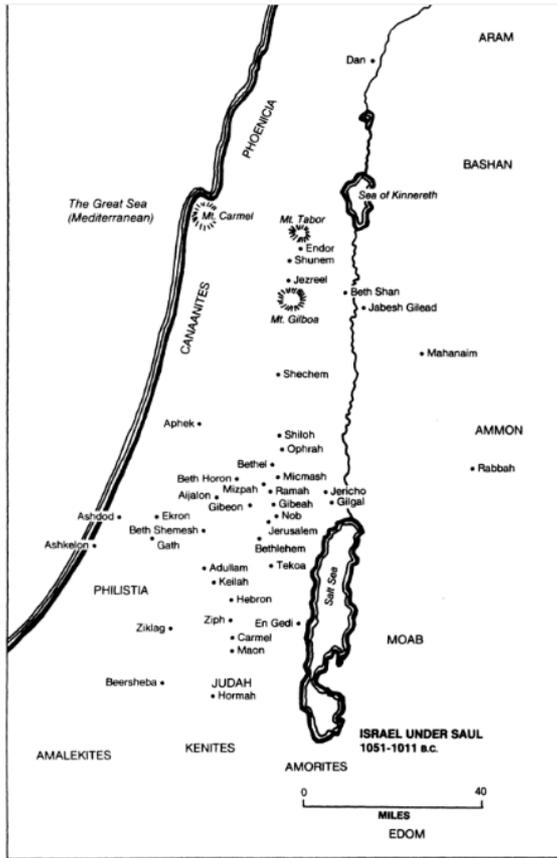


CANAAN IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

### The Judges of Israel

Oppressors	Years of Oppression	Judges	Years of Judging	References
Arameans	8	1. Othniel	40	Judges 3:7-11
Moabites	18	2. Ehud	80	Judges 3:12-30
Philistines	?	3. Shamgar	?	Judges 3:31
Canaanites	20	4. Deborah	40	Judges 4-5
Midianites	7	5. Gideon*	40	Judges 6-8
?	?	6. Tola	23	Judges 10:1-2
?	?	7. Jair	22	Judges 10:3-5
Ammonites	18	8. Jephthah	6	Judges 10:6-12:7
?	?	9. Ibzan	7	Judges 12:8-10
?	?	10. Elon	10	Judges 12:11-12
?	?	11. Abdon	8	Judges 12:13-15
Philistines	40	12. Samson	20	Judges 13-16

\*Abimelech, Gideon's son (Jud. 9), though often considered a judge, is not included here because he usurped authority over Shechem and God did not appoint him as judge.



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