LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 1

In studying the Bible, the book of books, we need to be clear that the Bible is not a book of doctrine. Strictly speaking, the Bible is not even a book of truths. What, then, is the Bible? The Bible is the divine revelation. The Greek word for *revelation* means to uncover something that has been hidden or concealed. The Bible is totally God's revelation concerning Himself, the universe, and humanity. The more I study the Bible, the more I am convinced that it is not by man but by God. There are a great many sentences in the Scriptures that could have been uttered only by God.

To understand the Bible as the divine revelation, we need a spirit of wisdom to know and a spirit of revelation to see. This was the reason Paul prayed that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would give to us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph. 1:17). This indicates that we need divine wisdom to understand the divine revelation. The natural human mind and the common human knowledge cannot apprehend the revelation of God. For this we need a spirit. Thank God that He has created us with such an organ! As Job 32:8a says, "There is a spirit in man." God has created for us a spirit particularly that we may know Him. Today we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know and to see the things which are covered, hidden, concealed.

We must admit that we do not know the Bible. Only the processed and consummated Triune God knows the Bible. The more we realize this, the more we will pray, "Lord, we need You. We need Your mercy and Your blessing. Lord, we need You as the Spirit and as the Word. Otherwise, we may read the Bible again and again and still not know anything."

The Bible as the divine revelation reveals God's eternal economy, which is for a particular person—Christ. Christ is God Himself from eternity, but one day He became a man. He is the complete God and a perfect man; hence, He is called the God-man. We can see God only in Christ. Apart from Christ, or outside of Christ, we cannot see God. Likewise, the real humanity is only in Christ. Apart from Him, we cannot see a true, real, and genuine man.

Christ came to do the will of the Father (John 6:38; 4:34; 5:30), to carry out God's economy. He lived on earth and tasted all aspects of human life. He then went to the cross and died an all-inclusive death. Three days later He rose in His humanity, and by resurrection He brought His humanity into divinity, making His humanity a part of the Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4). In this way He became the firstborn Son of God, regenerating us as the many sons of God (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:3).

He as God became a man, and we as man are becoming God in life and in nature but not in His Godhead. He is the source, and we are the produce. The produce must be the same as the source. Thus, we, the children of God (John 1:12), are the same as God in life and nature but not in the Godhead, in the person of God. As a whole, we are the Body of Christ. Christ as the Head and we as the Body form the new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10-11). As believers in Christ, we all are parts of this new man. This is a brief sketch of the divine revelation concerning God's economy.

Without this governing view of God's economy, we cannot understand the Bible. If we do not have such a view as we read the Bible, we will wrongly understand the Bible. This is the reason I pointed out in the messages on Joshua, Judges, and Ruth that the most important thing for us to see is God's economy. These three books are not merely books of history; they are a part of the divine revelation concerning God's economy. Furthermore, in these books are a number of types, which are pictures, portraits, showing us how we can participate in God's economy. The principle is exactly the same with the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. These books are part of the

revelation concerning God's economy and contain pictures related to our participation in God's economy.

For this life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel, we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see what is revealed in these two books. In 1 and 2 Samuel there are four main persons—Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David—and at this point I would like to say a brief word about each of them. The crucial matters regarding these persons may be expressed in the following four statements, which are extracts of 1 and 2 Samuel:

1. Eli's failure in the people's degradation brought in the waning of the stale priesthood.

2. Samuel's ministry in the Nazarite vow ended the judgeship and brought in the priesthood for God's oracle and the kingship for God's administration.

3. Saul's fleshly life insulted the kingship in the divine government and caused him to lose it.

4. David's godly life secured the kingship in God's economy, and his indulgence contaminated the kingship of God's holiness.

At the beginning of 1 Samuel, there is a picture of Eli's failure. This failure took place in the degradation of the people of Israel. Eli was a priest who brought in the waning of the stale priesthood.

Samuel's ministry brought in the prophethood for God's oracle and the kingship for God's administration. The priesthood ordained by God was supposed to do two things: to speak the word of God and to carry out God's administration, His governmental dealing with His people. Thus, on the one hand, the priests were God's spokesmen and, on the other hand, they were God's representatives. They spoke the things of God, and they represented God in His administration. Because the priesthood at the time of Eli was stale and was waning, Samuel was raised up to replace the stale and waning priesthood. Samuel did not have a failure. Rather, he had a ministry in the Nazarite vow that ended the judgeship and brought in the prophethood for God's speaking, for God's oracle, and also brought in the kingship for God's administration.

Although it may be difficult for us to understand Samuel, it is easy for us to understand Saul because he and we are

sick with the same disease. Saul's life was fleshly, and our life also is fleshly. No matter what our nationality may be, we all are Sauls. Saul's fleshly life insulted, offended, the kingship in the divine government and caused him to lose it. He brought shame upon God's kingship in the divine government. In a sense, many believers have done the same thing and have lost their kingship.

David is a contrast to Saul. Whereas Saul's life was fleshly, David's life was godly. The word *fleshly* denotes the fallen man, and the word *godly* refers to one who is with God. Saul's fleshly life caused him to lose the kingship, but David's godly life secured the kingship in the divine economy. However, David's indulgence in lust contaminated and damaged the kingship of God's holiness. Although David did not lose the kingship wholly, he lost a very large part of it. Only one tribe, Judah, was left for him.

Let us now go on to consider several other introductory matters.

I. FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL BEING ONE BOOK IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

In the Hebrew Scriptures 1 and 2 Samuel are one book.

II. THE WRITERS

First Samuel 1 through 24 was written by Samuel. The remainder of 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel were written by Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer.

III. THE TIME

The time of the writing of 1 and 2 Samuel was about 1171—1017 B.C.

IV. THE PLACE

The place of writing was Ephraim and Judah.

V. THE CONTENT

The content of 1 and 2 Samuel is the history of Samuel, Saul, and David, which continues the history of the judges and which is a crucial part of the central line of Israel's

history. Samuel was a Levite by birth and a Nazarite by consecration, to be a priest, a prophet, and a judge. He initiated the prophethood to replace the waning priesthood in the speaking for God, terminated the judgeship, and brought in the kingship. Saul was the first king among Israel in the negative sense. David was the king in the positive sense according to the heart of God.

God's heart is to carry out His economy. His heart is not that we always please Him and make Him happy, nor that we should be good, spiritual, holy, or victorious. He desires neither a good man nor a bad man but a God-man. God created us according to His image and wanted us to take His life, signified by the tree of life. Because we became fallen, God became a man to save us, to redeem us. He died an all-inclusive death for us, and He resurrected to beget us by imparting God's life and nature into us, making us God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

We should not regard the Bible as a book that teaches us to be a good man or a spiritual man. The Bible reveals that God wants us to be a "Christ-man." To be a Christian is to be a Christ-man, a man of Christ.

When some hear this, they may argue, pointing out that different portions of the Bible exhort us to be patient, humble, and perfect. There are many such exhortations in the book of Proverbs and in the Epistles of Paul. In understanding these portions we must take the Bible as a whole. The book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom. Wisdom is Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ is our wisdom in our daily living. Furthermore, the Epistles of Paul stress repeatedly that whatever we are and do must be in Christ.

VI. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of 1 and 2 Samuel is that the fulfillment of God's economy needs man's cooperation, as illustrated by the history of Samuel's mother Hannah, Samuel, and David, in the positive sense, and by the history of Eli and Saul, in the negative sense. Such a cooperation is related to the personal enjoyment of the good land, which typifies the all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ. Hence, 1 and 2 Samuel

are a continuation of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, giving us the details concerning the enjoyment of the God-given good land. The good land enjoyed by the cooperators with God became the kingdom of God, in which they reigned as kings. This is a type of the New Testament believers' enjoyment of Christ, which issues in their reign in the eternal life (Rom. 5:21).

We need to be impressed with the fact that the fulfillment of God's economy requires our cooperation. To cooperate with God means to be bound together with God. We may use a three-legged race as an illustration. The runners in such a race must run in pairs, with each partner having one leg bound to one of his partner's legs. In order for the partners to run, they must cooperate with each other and not move independently. This is a picture of the proper Christian life. To be a Christian is to be bound together with Christ and to have one living with Him by one life.

The birth of Samuel involved Hannah's cooperation with God. The old priesthood had become stale and waning, and God wanted to have another beginning. For Samuel's birth, God initiated things behind the scenes. On the one hand, He shut up Hannah's womb; on the other hand, He prepared a provoker (1 Sam. 1:5-7). This forced Hannah to pray that the Lord would give her a male child. In her prayer she made a vow and said, "O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me and not forget Your maidservant, but give to Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head" (v. 11). This prayer was initiated not by Hannah but by God. God chose Hannah because she was willing to cooperate with Him. God answered her prayer and opened her womb, and Hannah conceived and bore a son (v. 20). Then according to her vow, she offered her son to God, placing him in the custody of Eli. From this we see that Hannah, Samuel's mother, was one who cooperated very much with God. Her case shows us the kind of persons God expects to have today.

Recently, as I was considering this matter, I recalled the experience of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, which was a very spiritual mission and was much

used by God. In his biography, written by his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Howard Taylor, we are told that one day Hudson Taylor said to the Lord in prayer that he was willing to give his life and everything for the people of China. This vow was honored by God and resulted in the forming of the China Inland Mission.

Although I do not compare myself with Hudson Taylor, I can testify that my experience was very similar. In the last of my teen-age years, while I was endeavoring to get my education, God caught me, and I was saved. Immediately afterward, while I was walking on the street, I looked up to the heavens and told the Lord that I wanted only Him and that I wanted to serve Him and travel from place to place bringing the Bible and preaching Christ. Although I did not realize it at the time, I was actually making a vow to the Lord. That vow has been honored by Him.

Today many continents and countries are open to the Lord's recovery. There is the need for some to make a vow like Hannah. I hope that many of the young people will make such a vow. You need to say, "Lord, I am Yours. I just lend myself to You." God will take your heart and accomplish something to fulfill what you vow to Him.

VII. THE SECTIONS

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel have three sections: the history concerning Samuel (1 Sam. 1—8), the history concerning Saul (1 Sam. 9—15), and the history concerning David (1 Sam. 16—2 Sam. 24).

These books of history portray how God wants His people to enjoy the good land. In the Old Testament God allotted the good land to Israel. In the New Testament God has allotted Christ as our portion for our enjoyment (Col. 1:12). Eli's failure ended his enjoyment of the good land, but Samuel enjoyed the good land to the uttermost. Eventually, he was established to be a prophet, a priest, and a judge.

The types in 1 and 2 Samuel are a portrait showing us how we can and should enjoy Christ as our God-allotted land for the establishment of the kingdom, which is the church. The state of our relationship with God is a condition for our

enjoyment of Christ. If we are right with God, this gives us a condition that we may enjoy Christ. We need to enjoy Christ to such an extent that our enjoyment of Christ becomes the kingdom of God in which we reign in life with Christ. The kingdom today is the proper church life (Rom. 14:17). In this kingdom we reign with Christ in His eternal life. This is the content and the central thought of 1 and 2 Samuel.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWO

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAMUEL

(1)

HIS ORIGIN, BIRTH, AND YOUTH

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 1:1—2:11, 18-21, 26

In this message we will begin to consider the history concerning Samuel, beginning with his origin, birth, and youth.

I. HIS ORIGIN

In 1:1-20 we have a word regarding Samuel's origin. We should not consider that Samuel came out simply from his father, Elkanah. Actually, Samuel came out of God's economy. God had His eternal economy, but the carrying out of God's economy had come into question. God had ordained that Aaron's descendants would be the priests for the carrying out of His economy, but that priesthood became stale and waning. God's heart's desire was to gain someone to replace that priesthood.

In order to gain such a person, God brought together in marriage Elkanah and Hannah. Elkanah had two wives. According to God's sovereign arrangement, the second wife, Peninnah, had children, but Hannah had no children. Furthermore, "her rival provoked her bitterly to irritate her, because Jehovah had shut up her womb" (v. 6). This forced Hannah to pray desperately not mainly for herself but for God. She promised God that if He gave her a male child, she would return the child to Him by the vow of a Nazarite. God was pleased with Hannah's prayer and her promise and He opened her womb. Hannah conceived, bore a child, and named him Samuel. From this we see that actually no human being

was the origin of Samuel. God was the real origin, who motivated His people sovereignly and secretly.

A. His God-worshipping Parents

Humanly speaking, Samuel's origin was his God-worshipping parents (vv. 1-8).

1. Remaining in the Line of Life Ordained by God for His Eternal Purpose

In the midst of the chaos of the degraded Israel, Elkanah and Hannah remained in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose. The line of life is a line to bring forth Christ for the enjoyment of God's people that on earth God may have His kingdom, which is the Body of Christ, the very organism of the Triune God.

Elkanah and Hannah remained in this line of life not merely for God's eternal salvation but for His eternal purpose. God's salvation is mainly for our benefit, whereas God's purpose is related to the fulfilling of God's desire. We need to ask ourselves whether we are here for our profit or for God's purpose. Today on this earth everyone is concerned for his own profit. Even the majority of Christians do not care for God's purpose. I can testify of Brother Watchman Nee that he was a man altogether for God's purpose. I would like to follow his pattern. In the Lord's recovery, we are for God's purpose, remaining in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose, which is to gain the Body, the organism of the Triune God, that He may have a full expression in a corporate way.

2. In Cooperation with the Move of God on Earth for the Accomplishment of God's Economy

This couple was in cooperation with the move of God on earth for the accomplishment of God's economy. Elkanah and Hannah were not the only ones moving; they were moved by the moving One, by the unique, divine Mover, who was moving secretly behind the scene. Under God's sovereign dealing, Hannah was suppressed in her soul with a burden in her spirit to pour out before Jehovah. This was God's move. Because of God's moving in her, Hannah could not have peace

until she prayed for a son. God, the sovereign One, kept moving her and motivating her so that she had to pray, even though Eli, the one taking care of the service in God's house, did not understand her. In her prayer Hannah cooperated with the move of God.

God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life. As long as He can gain such a person, He has a way on earth. I hope that at least some of us will be today's Hannahs and say, "Lord, if You have anything on Your heart to accomplish for Your purpose, I am here. I am remaining in the line of life for the carrying out of Your economy." If you do this, I have the full assurance that you will be the ones whom God will move. He will come to you and motivate you. God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age.

B. Especially His God-seeking Mother with Her Prayer

The origin of Samuel was especially his God-seeking mother with her prayer (vv. 9-18). Her prayer was an echo of the heart's desire of God. Her prayer was a human cooperation with the divine move for the carrying out of God's eternal economy.

We should no longer pray old prayers in a formal way. Instead, we need to pray something that is an echo of what is on God's heart. This means that what we say in our prayer is exactly what God wants to speak. Such a prayer is the speaking out of God's heart. Hannah's prayer was like this. God wanted a Samuel, yet He needed Hannah's cooperation to pray to Him, saying, "Lord, I need a son." This prayer was very human, yet it was a cooperation with the divine move for God's economy.

C. The Moving God with His Answer to the Prayer of Samuel's Mother

1. According to God's Desire and Intention for His Move among His Elect

In a very particular way, the origin of Samuel was the

moving God with His answer to the prayer of Samuel's mother (vv. 19-20). After such a prayer as Hannah prayed, it was easy for God to do something, because man's cooperation had become a base on which He could move. The moving God answered the prayer of Samuel's mother according to His desire and intention for His move among His elect.

2. In Keeping with the Principle That God Needs Man's Cooperation

God's move in response to Hannah's prayer was in keeping with the principle that God needs man's cooperation with His move in His economy. This is the principle of incarnation.

3. To Produce a Nazarite Who Was Absolute for the Fulfilling of His Desire

God's move with His answer to Hannah's prayer was to produce a Nazarite who was absolute for the fulfilling of His desire. A Nazarite is one who is consecrated to God absolutely. A Nazarite could never cut his hair or drink wine. In the Bible, long hair signifies the headship, the authority. A Nazarite's keeping his hair long was a sign that just as a female takes her husband as her head, he takes God as the Head, considering God his Husband. Thus, a Nazarite is one who submits himself to God, taking God as the Head, the authority. This is why Hannah prayed that if the Lord would give her a boy, no razor would come upon his head (v. 11). In the Bible, to drink wine is to enjoy the worldly pleasures. A Nazarite not only submits to God as the authority but also has no interest in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Even before he was born, Samuel was consecrated by his mother to be such a person. This is a great thing, for it was Samuel who brought in a new age.

The New Testament age was brought in by another Nazarite—John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus was a Nazarite, as were Peter and Paul. Actually, everyone who remains in the line of life is a Nazarite. If we would be today's Nazarites, we must take God as our Head and Husband, submitting to Him, and have no interest in worldly pleasures.

We need to be impressed with Samuel's origin, with his

source. Because he came out of such a strong source, he could not be an ordinary, worldly person. Rather, he was the one who replaced the waning priesthood and brought forth David, who brought forth Christ.

II. HIS BIRTH

"In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, For, she said, I asked for him of Jehovah" (v. 20). This verse speaks of Samuel's birth, which came through God's answer to man's prayer. His name means "heard of God" or "asked for of God."

III. HIS YOUTH

A. Offered to Jehovah by His Mother to Fulfill Her Vow to God

In his youth, perhaps at the age of two or three, Samuel was offered to Jehovah by his mother to fulfill her vow to God (vv. 21-28, 11). It was not easy for Hannah to take her child from her bosom and place him under the custody of another person, especially a very old person who had nearly lost his sight. Nevertheless, Hannah fulfilled her vow by offering Samuel to God.

B. To Be a Nazarite

As we have seen, in his youth Samuel was offered to Jehovah to be a Nazarite (v. 11b).

C. The Offering Mother's Prayer

In 2:1-10 we have the offering mother's prayer. In her prayer she praised God for His salvation through His marvelous deeds. Her prayer was related to God's move in His economy and indicated that she realized something concerning God's economy.

D. Ministering to Jehovah before Eli the Priest

In his youth Samuel ministered to Jehovah before Eli the priest (vv. 11b, 18-19). To do anything requires some learning. Eli taught Samuel the way to minister to God.

1. As a Priest Not by Birth but by the Nazarite Vow

Samuel ministered to the Lord as a priest not by birth but by the Nazarite vow. By birth most of us have no standing. We were Gentiles, but God had ordained the Jews. Yet there is a "back door"—the Nazarite vow. Such a vow was ordained by God in Numbers 6. That opened the door for any person to be a priest. Samuel became a priest in this way, not in the ordained way but in the way of a voluntary vow.

2. Supported by His Mother

First Samuel 2:19 indicates that Samuel was supported by his mother. In the Lord's recovery today, we also need support, and we thank the Lord for the many mothers in the church life.

E. Growing before Jehovah in Favor Both with Jehovah and with Men

Finally, in his youth Samuel grew before Jehovah in favor both with Jehovah and with men (vv. 21b, 26). To be in favor with God means that God is for us, and to be in favor with men is that men are for us. Samuel was in a position that both God and men were for him. We may experience this in the church life today. If we are real Nazarites, we will be in favor with the saints, and the whole church will be for us. We will enjoy Christ to the uttermost and be a blessing to the church.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THREE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAMUEL

(2)

HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STALE AND WANING AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

(1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 1:25; 2:11b, 12-17, 22-25, 27-36; 3:4-18; 4:1-22

We can learn many valuable lessons from the books of history in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we cannot find such fine, detailed lessons concerning the enjoyment of Christ for the fulfilling of God's economy. Samuel's relationship to the stale and waning Aaronic priesthood has some lessons for us today.

I. UNDER THE CUSTODY OF THE OLD ELI

Samuel grew up under the custody of the old Eli, the last priest of the waning Aaronic priesthood (1:25). This was God's wisdom. Because God intended to replace the waning priesthood with Samuel, it was necessary for him to learn certain lessons while he was under Eli's custody. Samuel could realize that Eli had become a failure in the degraded priesthood. Samuel had the capacity to understand and apprehend what he saw in Eli's situation, and this became a constant warning to Samuel for the future.

II. LEARNING OF ELI TO MINISTER TO JEHOVAH AS A PRIEST

Samuel learned of Eli to minister to Jehovah as a priest (2:11b).

III. OBSERVING THE DETERIORATION OF THE DEGRADED AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

While Samuel was learning he observed the deterioration of the degraded Aaronic priesthood (2:12-17, 22-25). This did not weaken Samuel in his future priesthood. Rather, it became a constant warning to him throughout his priestly service.

A. The Two Sons of Eli Despising the Offerings of Jehovah

The two sons of Eli despised the offerings of Jehovah and took the best flesh of the people's offerings by force (vv. 12-17). I believe that when Samuel saw this, he must have had a deep impression as a warning to him concerning his future as a priest.

B. The Sons of Eli Committing Fornication with the Serving Women

The sons of Eli also committed fornication with the serving women (v. 22). How terrible! History tells us that this kind of thing has happened repeatedly among God's servants. In serving the Lord we cannot avoid having contact with the other sex, but we must learn the lesson to always keep a distance between us and the other sex. We should never stay in a private room with a member of the other sex with the windows covered and the doors closed. That gives the evil one the opportunity to tempt us to fall into sin. The two sons of Eli were caught by this. Concerning this, we should learn from Joseph, who fled from temptation (Gen. 39:7-12), and from Boaz, who was highly appraised for his high standard of morality in his contact with Ruth (Ruth 3:1-14).

C. The Sons of Eli Not Listening to the Exhortation of Their Father

The sons of Eli would not listen to the exhortation of their father (1 Sam. 2:22-25). Eli attempted to say something to his sons, but it seems that he was somewhat loose and that his exhortation was not very strong, faithful, desperate, and absolute.

D. Eli Honoring His Sons More than Jehovah

According to verse 29 a man of God spoke to Eli, saying, "Why then do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering, which I have commanded in My habitation, and honor your sons more than Me by making yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?" In 3:13 we see that Eli's sons brought the curse upon themselves, and Eli did not restrain them.

IV. REALIZING GOD'S SEVERE JUDGMENT ON THE HOUSE OF ELI

Samuel came to realize that God's severe judgment was on the house of Eli (2:27-36; 3:4-18; 4:1-22). We should not think that God is merely sitting in the heavens and is not doing anything about the situation of His people on earth. God is very busy in dealing with His people.

A. First, Prophesied by a Man of God

First, God's severe judgment on the house of Eli was prophesied by a man of God (2:27-36).

B. Second, Confirmed by the Word of Jehovah through Samuel

Second, this severe judgment was confirmed by the word of Jehovah through Samuel (3:4-18). I believe that God's purpose in letting Eli know through Samuel of the coming judgment was to make an unforgettable impression on this young priestly boy. This was God's wisdom.

C. Third, Executed by God through the Philistines

Third, God's severe judgment was executed through the Philistines (4:1-22).

1. The People of Israel Being Defeated by the Philistines

The people of Israel were defeated by the Philistines, and 30,000 foot soldiers of them were slaughtered (v. 10). At the time of Hezekiah, Judah looked to the Lord for protection, and one night He sent an angel to strike 185,000 in the camp

of the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35). From this we see that it would have been easy for God to defeat the Philistines. However, at that time He had given up Israel.

2. The Ark of God Being Captured

Israel was foolish in their degradation because they did not trust in God. Rather, they trusted in the systems ordained by God. In their situation they should have repented, made a thorough confession, and returned to God from their idols. Instead, they exercised their superstition to trust in the ark. Their past told them that quite often when the ark of God moved, there was a victory (Num. 10:35; Josh. 6). But this time their situation was not right. In their degradation they offended God to the uttermost, and God left them. Eventually, instead of the ark saving Israel, the ark itself was captured (1 Sam. 4:11a).

3. The Two Sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, Being Killed

The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, who had gone out with the ark, were killed because they had altogether disregarded God (v. 11b). This shows us that we need to learn the lesson of not being loose in the service of God.

4. Eli Dying at the News That the Ark Was Captured

Eli had been sitting on his seat by the roadside watching; "for his heart trembled for the ark of God" (v. 13a). When the news came to him that the ark had been captured, he fell off his seat backward, broke his neck, and died (vv. 17-18).

5. The Glory of God Departing from Israel

When the wife of Phinehas, who was pregnant and about to deliver, learned that the ark had been captured and that her husband and her father-in-law had died, she bowed down and gave birth to a son (vv. 19-20). She named the child Ichabod (v. 21), meaning "No glory," indicating that the glory had departed from Israel. Glory is God Himself. When God departed, the glory departed from Israel.

Samuel observed all these tragedies, and they became

lessons to him, warning him and reminding him throughout his service to God. Thus, his being placed by God in His wisdom under the custody of the old Eli was very profitable, for he learned certain things positively and observed other things negatively. This helped Samuel to remain pure in his service to God his entire life. When he was about to die, he could remind the people of Israel that he had never defrauded them, oppressed them, or taken anything from them (12:3-4).

While Samuel was under Eli's custody, God taught him in a very fine way, built him up, and established him as His proper priest. As such a priest, Samuel became a judge to judge Israel, a prophet to prophesy for God, and the one to bring forth the kingship. By this kingship the kingdom of God was established on earth. This is a picture of what our situation should be today. We need to be, first, a Samuel, and then, a David, enjoying Christ to such a degree that what we have enjoyed of Christ will become a kingdom, which is the church.

According to Matthew 16:18-19 the church and the kingdom are identical. The kingdom today is the church, and within the church there is the intrinsic essence—the Body of Christ. The church is visible, but the Body of Christ, as the intrinsic essence, is invisible. In the visible church there is the kingdom, the reigning, of God. In this visible church there is also the intrinsic essence as the very content, the reality, of the church. Our human body is visible, but the life within the body is invisible. The principle is the same with the church and the Body. The Body is the intrinsic life of the church.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE FOUR

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAMUEL

(3)

HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STALE AND WANING AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

(2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 4:1—7:2

In reading the Bible we need to have a clear view of God's economy and understand everything in the Bible in relation to God's economy. Why did God create the universe? Why did God create man and choose the people of Israel? God did these things for His economy. As we come now to Samuel's relationship with the stale and waning Aaronic priesthood described in 4:1—7:2, we need to consider the events recorded here in the light of God's economy. It is important for us to see that Israel became degraded because they had no concern for God's economy, for His move on earth, and for His kingdom.

V. KNOWING THE MISFORTUNE OF THE ARK OF GOD UNDER THE SUPERSTITION OF THE DEGRADED AND ROTTEN AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Samuel observed the misfortune of the ark of God under the superstition of the degraded and rotten Aaronic priesthood. As Samuel observed all these things, he must have received a deep impression, and these things became an education to him.

A. Usurped, in Their Superstition for Their Victory in Their Fighting against the Philistines, by the Elders of the People of Israel, Who Were Degraded from the Line of God's Economy

The ark of God was usurped by the elders of the people of Israel, who were degraded from the line of God's economy (4:1-8). The elders usurped the ark in their superstition for their fighting against the Philistines. Because the children of Israel had been defeated by the Philistines, the elders of Israel proposed that the people take the ark of God from the tabernacle in Shiloh into battle with them. The elders said, "Let us take unto us the ark of the covenant of Jehovah from Shiloh that it may be in our midst, and thus save us from the hand of our enemies" (v. 3b). When the ark came into the camp, the people were glad and "all Israel shouted with a great shout" (v. 5). They trusted in the system ordained by God, but they did not trust in God directly. They should have repented to God of their failure and inquired of Him as to what He wanted them to do. Before bringing the ark of God out of the tabernacle, they should have checked with God as Joshua did at Jericho (Josh. 6:2-4). The elders knew the history of Jericho, but because they had become degraded, not having any heart for God's desire or His eternal economy, their situation was absolutely different.

The ark was a type of Christ as the embodiment of God. It also signified Christ as the presence of the Triune God to be with His people for the carrying out of His economy to establish His kingdom on earth. To bring out the ark was just to bring out the presence of God. When the children of Israel began to move with the ark from Mount Sinai, Moses offered a prayer to God, saying, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered" (Num. 10:35). The ark took the lead to travel onward. The move of the ark was a picture of God's move on the earth.

In 1 Samuel 4 the elders of Israel were actually usurping God. At that time, God did not intend to move. The children of Israel had no thought of or concern for God's economy, and their bringing out the ark indicated that they were usurping

God for their safety, peace, rest, and profit. They were usurping God, even forcing Him, to go out with them.

Today many Christians usurp God by praying for their prosperity, health, or family without any consideration of God's economy. When we ask God for His healing, we must be fully related to His economy. If you are ill, you should not pray for healing in the way of usurping God. On the contrary, from the depths of your spirit you should say, "Lord, I am not here on earth for my health, my prosperity, my children, or my work. I am here for Your economy. Do You still want me to live on earth for Your economy? I have seen Your economy, I realize that You need Nazarites, and I have a heart to be a Nazarite for You. As one who has been born of God and who has the life and nature of God, I ask You what is on Your heart concerning me." If God intends that you continue living on earth for His economy, you will be healed, either through a physician or through some other way. The point here is that, instead of usurping God, we must pray, live, and be persons according to God's heart and for His economy.

B. Captured by the Winning Philistines, Indicating That the Glory Had Departed from Israel

Eventually, the ark of God, which had been with the children of Israel for at least 400 years, was captured by the winning Philistines, indicating that the glory had departed from Israel (4:9-22). From that time the ark began to have a history within the history of Israel.

A short time after the children of Israel brought out the ark of God, they were defeated, and the ark was captured. Thirty thousand among Israel were killed, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were also killed. Eli probably had a kind of intuition concerning the ark of God. Instead of staying at home, he sat "on his seat by the roadside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God" (v. 13a). When the news came that the ark of God had been captured, Eli fell backward, broke his neck, and died. Also, at that time Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, delivered her child and called him Ichabod, which means "No glory." Then she

said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been taken" (v. 22). Because the ark of Jehovah had been captured, the glory had departed from Israel.

These events must have made a deep impression upon the young Samuel. During the night he might have thought about them, saying, "Here I am in the tabernacle, and the center of the tabernacle is the ark. Today the elders brought out the ark, but Eli, under whose custody I am, was not at peace. His heart was trembling as he was waiting for news. When the news came about what happened to the ark and to Hophni and Phinehas, Eli fell backward and died. His daughter-in-law also died as she was giving birth to her child. Before she died, she named her boy Ichabod." I believe that Samuel, a very thoughtful boy, considered the significance of all these things.

C. The Ark Suffering Removal to Three Places among the Philistines, Consecutively

Having been captured, the ark suffered removal to three places among the Philistines, consecutively; and Jehovah dealt with them heavily for the protection of His ark (5:1-12). For God to protect His ark meant that He was protecting His holiness.

1. By Damaging the Philistine's God Dagon

First, Jehovah dealt with the Philistines by damaging their god Dagon, which means "the fish-god" (vv. 1-5). After the Philistines brought the ark to Ashdod, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it next to Dagon (v. 2). Early the next day, the Ashdodites found Dagon "fallen on his face to the ground, before the ark of Jehovah" (v. 3a). They put Dagon back in his place, but "when they arose early in the morning of the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground, before the ark of Jehovah. And Dagon's head and the palms of his hands were cut off, lying on the threshold; only Dagon's trunk was left to him" (v. 4).

2. By Striking Them with Tumors

Second, Jehovah dealt with the Philistines by striking them with tumors (vv. 6-12). Verse 6 says, "The hand of Jehovah

was heavy upon the Ashdodites, and He devastated them and struck them with tumors, even Ashdod and its borders." Eventually, the people of Ashdod said that the ark of the God of Israel could not stay with them, for His hand was hard on them and on Dagon their god (v. 7). The lords of the Philistines brought the ark to Gath, but "after they brought it there, the hand of Jehovah was against the city, causing great panic. And He struck the men of the city, from small to great; and they broke out with tumors" (v. 9). Then the ark was sent to Ekron. However, when the ark of God came there, the Ekronites cried out that the ark of the God of Israel had been brought to them in order to kill them. Thus, they told the princes of the Philistines to send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its place so that it would not kill them. "For the panic of death was throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there" (v. 11).

D. The Ark Suffering Another Removal, from the Philistines Back to Israel, Arriving at Beth-shemesh

In chapter six we see that the ark suffered another removal, from the Philistines back to Israel, arriving at Beth-shemesh. After the ark of Jehovah had been in the country of the Philistines seven months, the Philistines asked the priests and diviners to make known to them how they should send the ark forth to its place (vv. 1-2).

1. By the Superstitious Way of the Philistines

The ark was removed by the superstitious way of the Philistines, with five golden mice and five golden tumors, as a kind of trespass offering for God's forgiveness and for God's glory (vv. 3-5). The bringing out of the ark by the elders of Israel and the returning of the ark by the Philistines both were superstitious. There is superstition in every kind of religion. In the Lord's recovery we do not have superstition—we have the revelation from God's Word.

The Philistine priests told the men to put the ark of Jehovah on a new cart to which two milch cows were tied, and in a box by the side of the ark to place the articles of

gold which they were returning to Jehovah as a trespass offering. Then they told them to send the ark away that it might go and to watch to see if it went toward its own border at Beth-shemesh. If it did so, that would be a sign that it was Jehovah who had done great harm to the Philistines (vv. 7-9). The men did as they were told, and the cows went straight in the way toward Beth-shemesh. "Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. And when they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark, they rejoiced to see it" (v. 13). The Levites took down the ark of Jehovah and the box that was with it, and "the men of Beth-shemesh offered up burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to Jehovah" (v. 15).

2. By God Keeping the Holiness of His Ark

God kept the holiness of His ark, so that it was taken to Kiriath-jearim and abode there for twenty years until all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah (v. 19—7:2).

Verse 19 tells us that Jehovah "struck the men of Beth-shemesh because they looked into the ark of Jehovah; and He struck seventy men among the people" (v. 19a). Due to their looseness in dealing with the ark, these seventy men were killed. This shows us that we should not be loose in dealing with the ark. As we have pointed out, the ark is the presence of God for the purpose of accomplishing His economy. God had brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and had trained them at Mount Sinai, charging them to build the tabernacle with the ark, so that it would be made known that God was carrying out His economy. The ark was not for their prosperity, protection, safety, or healing—it was for God's economy. However, at Samuel's time the elders of Israel had no regard for this but only for their own profit and protection. They considered that everything was theirs, and they even usurped God. Nevertheless, God protected His holiness, not allowing the Philistines or the people of Beth-shemesh to do whatever they liked with the ark.

Eventually, the people of Beth-shemesh asked the people of Kiriath-jearim to come and take the ark (vv. 20-21), and the ark remained there for twenty years (7:1-2). Although the

ark returned to Israel and was under the care of the proper priesthood, the ark still did not go back to the tabernacle at Shiloh. This was an abnormal situation. While Samuel grew up in the tabernacle, the ark remained in Kiriath-jearim for twenty years until all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah (v. 2).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE FIVE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAMUEL

(4)

HIS MINISTRY

(1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 1:11, 28a; 2:35; 10:1; 16:1, 13; 3:20; 7:3-17; 8:6; 15:11b; 12:23

In this message we will begin to consider Samuel's ministry. Under God's sovereignty, Samuel was given to God by his mother, he grew up under the custody of Eli, he was educated and perfected, and his eyes were opened to see both positive and negative things. As a result, he became a person who was ready to be used by God to turn the age.

First Samuel 7:1 tells us that the men of Kiriath-jearim brought the ark of Jehovah to the house of Abinadab. "It was a long time from the day when the ark began to abide in Kiriath-jearim, for it was twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah" (v. 2). Here we see a dividing line in the history of Israel. Prior to this time Israel's situation was upside-down; after this time the situation became right-side-up. According to verse 3 Samuel "spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you are returning with all your heart to Jehovah, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from your midst, and direct your heart to Jehovah and serve only Him; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." Then the children of Israel removed the Baalim and the Ashtaroth and served only Jehovah (v. 4). Following this Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to Jehovah for you" (v. 5). The picture portrayed in these verses is very beautiful. Here we have a people returning to

God and a man—Samuel—who was one with God on earth. We may say that Samuel was the acting God on earth. At least we may say that Samuel was the representative of the very God in heaven to rule over His people on earth. As such a person, Samuel began to minister.

I. SAMUEL MINISTERING IN FIVE STATUSES

Samuel, who was by nature a Levite born of one of the descendants of the great rebel Korah (1 Chron. 6:33-38; cf. Num. 16:1-33), ministered in five statuses.

A. As a Nazarite Consecrated to God Absolutely for God's Fulfillment of His Economy

First, Samuel ministered as a Nazarite consecrated to God absolutely for God's fulfillment of His economy, a volunteer to replace any official and formal serving ones of God (1 Sam. 1:11, 28a). The Nazarite vow was initiated by his mother and completed by Samuel.

B. As a Priest

Second, Samuel ministered as a priest.

1. Not by Birth but by God Raising Him Up Particularly

Samuel was a priest not by birth but by God raising him up particularly. Referring to Samuel, God says in 2:35, "I shall raise up for Myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in My heart and in My mind; and I shall build him a sure house; and he shall go before My anointed continually." This indicates that Samuel would be a faithful priest to act on behalf of God, even to appoint and establish kings for the divine government on earth. David was appointed and anointed by him. From this we see that Samuel was high in qualifications and great in capacity.

2. Faithful to God to Do What Was in God's Heart and in His Mind

Samuel was faithful to God to do according to what was in God's heart and mind. His whole being and person, not

just his doing, living, and work, were according to God. Samuel's being and God's heart were one. For this reason it is not too much to say that Samuel, a man according to God, was the acting God on earth. God's mind was Samuel's consideration. He had no other thought, consideration, or thinking. His living and working were for the carrying out of whatever was in God's heart. As a consequence, Samuel was one who turned the age.

3. To Replace and Terminate, in a Sense, the Stale Aaronic Priesthood

As a priest Samuel replaced and terminated, in a sense, the stale Aaronic priesthood. He did not rebel against the house of Aaron, and he did not usurp anything of the house of Aaron. There was no revolution; there was only revelation. As Samuel was growing, God arranged the environment to perfect him and to build up his capacity to do everything that was needed for God to change the age. In the recovery the Lord will never allow any kind of rebellion, but He will bring in many changes, adjustments, and improvements, not through rebellion but through revelation.

Samuel had a clear view of God's economy and also of what the enemy had been doing to devastate God's economy on earth. Samuel was thus a person full of insight concerning God's economy and concerning the environmental situation. Eventually, God did something to match him, and there was a change among the people of Israel. The people returned to God, lamented before God, and were willing to remove all the idols. Before this change took place, there was preparation on two sides: on the side of the people, who returned to God, and on the side of Samuel, who was perfected, equipped, and qualified for God's move on earth. In this situation the Philistines, who knew certain things concerning Israel and God and who tried to bribe God with their kind of trespass offering, were defeated to the uttermost.

4. Anointing Saul and David to Be Kings

In this replacing priesthood, Samuel anointed Saul and David to be kings (10:1; 16:1, 13) as God ordained that he

should go before His anointed continually (2:35b) to supervise the king, observing what the king was doing. This indicates that Samuel, the acting God on earth, was greater than the king. Samuel could be qualified to such an extent because for many years God had been perfecting him for His economy, not for anything else.

When God's economy is carried out among His people, they are blessed. This means that our welfare, our well-being, is altogether linked to the carrying out of God's economy. We should not seek our well-being apart from God's economy. Because this has been neglected and even lost, it needs to be recovered. I wish to say, especially to the young saints, that we should not expect to have prosperity for ourselves. Rather, as saints in the Lord's recovery, we should expect that through us the Lord will do as much as possible to accomplish His economy. Then we will be blessed.

C. As a Prophet

Samuel ministered, or served, not only as a priest but also as a prophet. As a priest he anointed the king, and as a prophet he assisted the king.

1. Established by God

Samuel was established as a prophet by God (3:20), and no one could overthrow him.

2. To Speak the Word of God to Replace the Teaching of the Word of God by the Old Priesthood

Samuel was established by God to speak the word of God to replace the teaching of the word of God by the old priesthood. In the priesthood the first thing that a priest should do is speak for God. The breastplate and the Urim and the Thummim worn by the high priest were the means used by God to speak to His people. In the degradation of the priesthood, God's speaking was almost lost. Thus, God needed to raise up a living person, a prophet, to speak for Him, and this is what He did with Samuel. In God's ordination Samuel is counted as the first prophet. Of course, Abraham

was a prophet speaking for God, but in God's ordained way Samuel was the first prophet to set up a prophethood.

In the Old Testament the last part of the divine revelation is with the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi. Apart from God's speaking the universe would be empty. We thank the Lord that, by His mercy, we have His continual speaking in His recovery today.

3. Samuel Receiving the Word of God and Speaking It to the Old Eli in the Waning Priesthood

Samuel's first prophesying was his speaking to Eli (3:1-18). Samuel received the word of God and spoke it to the old Eli in the waning priesthood. This speaking should have gone forth through Eli, but he was waning, and God could not speak through him. Instead, God spoke through someone much younger.

a. At the Time:

1) When the Word of Jehovah Was Rare and Visions Were Not Widespread

"Now the word of Jehovah was rare in those days; visions were not widespread" (v. 1b). This indicates that Samuel's prophesying in chapter three was at the time when the word of Jehovah was rare and visions were not widespread.

2) When the Waning Eli's Eyesight Was So Dim That He Could Not See

According to verse 2, Samuel's first prophesying was also at a time when the waning Eli's eyesight was so dim that he could not see.

3) When the Lamp of God Had Not Yet Gone Out in the Temple

Furthermore, Samuel began to prophesy at a time when the lamp of God had not yet gone out in the temple (v. 3). God's speaking had stopped, but there was still some light. Applying this to today's situation, we may say that in

degraded Catholicism and Protestantism there is still a little enlightening. This is God's mercy.

4) When Samuel Did Not Yet Know Jehovah

At the time of chapter three, Samuel "did not yet know Jehovah, and the word of Jehovah had not yet been revealed to him" (v. 7). As described in verses 4 through 9, Samuel had a new experience: Jehovah called to him, and he began to hear Jehovah's speaking.

b. Concerning God's Severe Judgment upon the House of Eli

The first prophecy spoken by Samuel concerned God's severe judgment upon the house of Eli (vv. 10-18).

D. As a Judge

Fourth, Samuel ministered as a judge. A priest served God, a prophet spoke for God, and a judge carried out God's governmental administration. Samuel stood on the earth to be the acting God—the one representing God and acting for Him—in his priesthood, prophethood, and judgeship. In the church life in the Lord's recovery today, we have the priesthood, the prophethood, and the kingship. As a result, things are not upside-down but right-side-up.

1. Established by God

Samuel was established by God to minister as a judge (7:15-17).

2. To Replace the Judging of the People by the Old Priesthood

Samuel was established as a judge to replace the judging of the people by the old priesthood. The judgeship actually belonged to the priesthood, for the priesthood included the two matters of speaking for God and administrating for God. But because the old Aaronic priesthood was waning, God raised up Samuel to be a new priest, a new prophet, and a new judge.

Through Samuel and his threefold responsibility in the

priesthood, prophethood, and judgeship, a good order was brought in, and the Philistines were defeated and subdued. In this situation, God commanded Samuel to anoint David to be God's chosen king. Samuel brought in David, a crucial ancestor of Christ. Christ's coming to earth was the greatest event in the universe, and credit for this should be given to Samuel.

Today Christ is our good land, and now we are developing Him and laboring on Him. We are the members of Christ and the constituents of His Body, the church. This is God's accomplishment of His eternal economy, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem. In order to accomplish His eternal economy, God needed a Samuel.

E. As a Man of Prayer

Fifth, Samuel ministered as a man of prayer.

1. Praying for God's Elect, the Children of Israel

Samuel prayed for God's elect, the children of Israel (7:3-14; 8:6; 15:11b).

a. For Them to Be Kept in the Way of God

Samuel prayed for the children of Israel to be kept in the way of God, to be one with God, not to be ensnared by the idols of the nations, and to enjoy God as Eben-ezer, which means "the stone of help." "Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen; and he called its name Eben-ezer and said, Thus far Jehovah has helped us" (7:12).

b. That God's Desire of His Will in His Elect Might Be Fulfilled

Samuel prayed for God's elect that God's desire of His will in His elect might be fulfilled. Up to this day God has helped us, but why has He helped us? God has helped us that His desire might be fulfilled. We need to realize that God's helping us is for His fulfillment of His economy and that we are enjoying the blessing in this fulfillment. Today God is blessing us in every way for the fulfillment of His economy to build up the Body of Christ.

2. In Samuel's Consideration, Ceasing to Pray for God's Elect Being to Sin against Jehovah

In Samuel's consideration, ceasing to pray for God's elect was to sin against Jehovah (12:23). We also need to pray for God's people. In particular, the co-workers and elders need to pray for the churches every day.

3. God Admitting to Jeremiah That Samuel, like Moses, Was a Man Standing before Him for His People

God admitted to Jeremiah that Samuel, like Moses, was a man standing before Him for His people (Jer. 15:1). Moses was a priest, a prophet (Deut. 18:15, 18), and a judge, and he always prayed for God's people. In these matters Samuel was the same. He was a priest, a prophet, and a judge who prayed for God's people. In the Old Testament, only Moses and Samuel were qualified to participate fully in the priesthood, the prophethood, and the judgeship.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE SIX

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAMUEL

(5)

HIS MINISTRY

(2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 8

In this message we will continue to consider the history concerning Samuel's ministry.

II. THE ENDING OF SAMUEL'S MINISTRY

In chapter eight we see the ending of Samuel's ministry.

A. Making His Sons Judges over Israel

Samuel made his sons judges over Israel (vv. 1-3). However, they did not follow in his ways (v. 3a) but went after unjust gain and took bribes and perverted justice (v. 3b). This was evil in the sight of God (Exo. 18:21; 23:8; Deut. 16:19) and contrary to their father's pure and just way in his whole life (1 Sam. 12:3-5). Hence, the sons of Samuel should not be considered judges among the people of Israel, and their father Samuel should be considered the last judge. Hence, Samuel terminated the judgeship.

B. Giving the People of Israel Cause to Ask Him to Appoint a King to Judge Them like All the Nations

The unjust ways of Samuel's sons gave the people of Israel cause to ask him to appoint a king to judge them like all the nations. The elders of the people said to him, "Behold, you

are old, and your sons do not follow in your ways. Appoint now for us a king to judge us like all the nations" (8:5).

1. By Asking Him to Appoint a King, the People of Israel Displeasing Samuel

By asking Samuel to appoint a king to judge them, the people of Israel displeased him and caused him to pray for them (v. 6).

a. Samuel Not Liking to See God's Elect Rejecting God as Their King

Samuel did not like to see that God's elect would reject God as their King. From the first generation of the human race, man has been rejecting God as the King, the Head, and the Husband.

b. Samuel Not Wanting to See God's Elect Following the Way of the Nations

Samuel also did not want to see that God's elect would follow the way of the nations. Israel had been chosen by God to be a particular people on earth, and therefore they should have been absolutely different in every respect from the nations. Yet, they took the way of following the nations by rejecting God.

2. The People of Israel Offending God by Rejecting Him as Their King for a Replacement

The people of Israel not only displeased Samuel but also offended God by rejecting Him as their King for a replacement. "Jehovah said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people according to all that they have said to you; for it is not you whom they have rejected, but they have rejected Me from being King over them" (v. 7).

a. Actually, God Being the King of the People of Israel

In 12:12 Samuel said, "You said to me, No; but a king will reign over us, though Jehovah your God was your King." From this we see that actually God was the King over the people of Israel.

b. Asking for a King Equal to Rejecting God for a Replacement

Their asking for a king was equal to rejecting God for a replacement. This was a great wickedness, a great evil, in the sight of God (vv. 17, 19).

c. God Charging Samuel to Listen to the People's Voice but to Warn Them Solemnly

God charged Samuel to listen to the people's voice but to warn them solemnly and declare to them the king's cruel reign over them, telling them of the custom of the king who would reign over them (8:9).

d. Samuel Doing What God Charged Him

Samuel did what God charged him, speaking "all the words of Jehovah to the people, who had asked him for a king" (vv. 10-18).

e. The People Refusing to Listen to the Voice of Samuel

The people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel (v. 19a). Instead, they said, "No; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (vv. 19b-20).

f. Samuel Consulting Jehovah and Appointing a King to Them

Samuel heard all the words of the people and then consulted Jehovah, speaking their words in the hearing of Jehovah. Then Jehovah told him to listen to their voice and appoint a king to them (vv. 21-22).

g. The Elect of God Turning from Him to a Man

By insisting on having a king, the elect of God turned from God to a man. From this we should learn the lesson that no matter what we do, no matter how good, "spiritual," and even scriptural it may be, as long as we have a replacement for God, that is evil. We may do good things, but those good things are evil in the sight of God as long as we reject

Him as our Head, our Husband, and our King. It is not a matter of good or bad, right or wrong; it is a matter of whether we take God as our King or reject Him. Even in small matters such as shopping, we often take a replacement rather than God Himself. This is why the Nazarite must always keep his hair long, covering his head with God Himself as his authority.

We need to learn to take God as our Head in our married life. When we argue with our spouse, the only way to settle the disagreement is to stop arguing and come to our King, our Head. Although I am the husband, I would not exercise my headship. Rather, I would go with my wife to my Husband, to our Husband, to see what our Husband, the very God, would say to us. Whatever He would say, we would take. This settles every problem and maintains a good and proper married life.

We need to learn the same lesson concerning the service of God in the church life. Concerning any problem related to God's economy, we should stop any quarreling, struggling, debating, and reasoning and go to our Head. We should stand on the position that we keep our hair long; we should keep our vow as a Nazarite.

I encountered rebellious ones at least three times in the past forty-four years. Every time, I told the brothers, "Let us stop and go to the Lord and pray together. Let us gather the leading ones in the Lord's recovery and come together to pray and fellowship." But they would never agree. We all need to learn from this to accept the Lord as our Head, our Husband, and our King. This is the only way to participate in the fulfillment of God's eternal economy.

III. SAMUEL BEING A MAN WHO TURNED THE AGE IN GOD'S ADMINISTRATION FROM THE AGE OF THE PRIESTHOOD TO THE AGE OF THE PROPHETHOOD WITH THE KINGSHIP

Samuel was a man who turned the age in God's administration from the age of the priesthood to the age of the prophethood with the kingship. This was a great thing not

only in the history of Israel but even in the history of humankind.

The proper prophethood is always an assistant to the kingship. This should be a lesson to us. In the church life today, the elders hold the kingship. If you are not one of the elders and you see something in the church that is not so right, you should never criticize, oppose, or gossip. You need to be a prophet by praying to the Lord to receive a word from Him. If you do not receive a word from the Lord, you should not say anything. But if, in His mercy to His church, the Lord gives you a word, a prophecy, then you should go to the elders and prophesy to them. The elders, realizing that they hold the kingship, should learn that they are not all-capable, that they may be deficient. Therefore, they should listen to this brother's prophecy. This is the proper situation in the church life.

A. After Moses, God's Administration Being Centered on the Priesthood

Moses was a priest, and after him God's administration was centered on the priesthood.

B. The Priesthood Being to Minister the Word of God to His People and to Exercise the Authority of God over His People

The priesthood was to minister the word of God to His people and to exercise the authority of God over His people. We all need to learn to do these two things. However, one may be a prophet, having a vision of the riches of Christ, but he may not know how to exercise God's authority to take the proper way to deal with the lack of vision concerning Christ's riches. Troubles in the church life are often caused by those who do not know how to exercise God's authority.

Once again I wish to emphasize the fact that Samuel never did anything rebellious, and his turning of the age was not through a revolution. Rather, it was absolutely a matter of the divine revelation. He behaved, worked, ministered, and served altogether in a mild, moderate, and proper way of

revelation. He was a man of revelation, and he did everything according to what he saw. Furthermore, he was a man according to God's heart; that is, he was a copy, a duplicate, of God's heart. As such a person, he would never do anything rebellious.

C. The Aaronic Priesthood Failing God in Ministering His Word and in Exercising His Authority

The Aaronic priesthood failed God in two things: in ministering God's word and in exercising God's authority. This is why the New Testament charges the elders to learn to do two things: to teach the saints (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17), that is, to speak the word of God; and to take the lead among the saints (Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3), that is, to exercise God's authority. If the elders teach the saints, they must take the lead to practice whatever they teach. This is to exercise God's authority by taking the lead.

When the priesthood was proper, the priests were patterns to the people. What the priests taught and what they exercised in the authority of God, they themselves did, taking the lead to carry out all the things regarding God's eternal economy. For example, the priests took the lead to step into the river Jordan and then to circle the city of Jericho. That was the proper way to exercise God's authority. Today, this is the proper way to take care of the church—teaching to speak for God and taking the lead to exercise God's authority.

D. God Beginning a New Age in Raising Up Samuel to Replace the Waned Priesthood

At the waning of the God-ordained priesthood, God began a new age in raising up Samuel, a young Nazarite, as a faithful priest to replace the waned priesthood (1 Sam. 2:35). God ministered His word to His elect by establishing Samuel as a prophet in the uplifted prophethood (3:20-21), and He exercised His authority over His elect by raising up Samuel as a judge (7:15-17).

E. Samuel Terminating the Judgeship and Bringing In the Kingship with the Strengthening of the Uplifted Prophethood

Samuel, as the last judge, terminated the judgeship, and, as the new priest, brought in the kingship with the strengthening of the uplifted prophethood, in which Samuel was established as the first prophet (Acts 3:24; 13:20; Heb. 11:32). This means that God had put aside the old priesthood due to its deterioration. The old priesthood had the word of God and exercised the ruling of God. God replaced it with the uplifted prophethood to speak God's word to His people and the kingship to rule over God's people.

Such a condition was built up among God's people through Samuel. He set up a kind of governmental administration in God's economy that God could fulfill His promises to all the foregoing fathers and accomplish His desire according to His economy—that is, to have a lineage of genealogy to bring Christ to earth. Surely, the bringing forth of Christ was the greatest thing. Today we are participating in the benefit from Samuel's service. Thank God for this.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE SEVEN

SAMUEL—A MAN ACCORDING TO GOD

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 1:11, 20; 2:35; 8:1-22; 9:15-17

In this message I would like to give a further word on Samuel and his ministry.

GOD'S REPRESENTATIVE

At the end of his ministry, by the time that Saul was raised up to be the king in Israel (9:3—10:27), Samuel had reached the highest position. We may say that in the whole universe, there was only one who was above him, and that one was God. We may even say that, as God's representative, Samuel was the acting God. God intended to move, to act, yet He needed a representative. Samuel thus became a prophet, a priest, and a judge. He was God's oracle and God's administration. As such, he was the acting God on earth.

GOD'S INTENTION TO HAVE A KINGDOM

Although Samuel was God's representative, God did not have any intention to make him a kingdom. Rather, according to the Bible, God determined to raise up a man named David, through whom He intended to build up a kingdom. When God chose Abraham, it was not His intention to gain a single person or even a group of people who would seek after Him. God's intention has been to have a kingdom. The consummation of the revelation in the Bible is a kingdom. Revelation 11:15 says, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." In the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem, there will be the eternal kingdom of God.

In Matthew 16 there is a word concerning both the kingdom and the church. When Peter received the revelation

of Christ as the Son of the living God (vv. 16-17), Jesus said to him, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church" (v. 18), and then He went on to speak of the kingdom of the heavens (v. 19). In these verses the phrase "the kingdom of the heavens" is used interchangeably with the word "church." This shows that God does not want just a church but a kingdom-church. In Romans 14:17 Paul also indicated that the practical church life is the kingdom: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Even though Samuel eventually attained the highest position, God still had not reached His goal. As a man who was according to God's heart, Samuel knew that within God's heart there was a desire for a kingdom. God wanted the kingdom to be brought in not through Samuel but through David.

GOD'S HEART BEING DUPLICATED IN SAMUEL

When someone attains a high position, there is always a question as to whether he will allow someone else to come in to match him or to be above him. If you had been Samuel, would you have given any ground for someone to match you or be above you? Samuel was pure and single. He was a Nazarite according to his mother's vow and was altogether not self-seeking. He never sought to gain anything for himself. He had no heart for anything besides God and God's elect. God loved Israel, and His heart was duplicated in Samuel.

Because God's heart was duplicated in Samuel, Samuel did not care for his own interest or gain. At the end, Samuel gained nothing but a tomb to be buried in. Due to the situation at the time, Samuel appointed his sons to be judges, but, contrary to Saul, he had no intention to build up a kingdom for them. His sons did not follow in his ways but went after unjust gain, took bribes, and perverted justice (1 Sam. 8:1-3). When the people asked Samuel to appoint a king, he was not offended by anything related to his sons; on the contrary, he was offended by their desire to replace God (vv. 4-7). Because he had no intention to build up a kingdom for his descendants, Samuel's concern was not for his children but for God's people.

In such a situation it was easy for God to bring in the kingdom.

A PERSON WHO CARED ONLY FOR GOD AND FOR GOD'S INTEREST AND PROFIT

Samuel would never have cooperated with God if he had been a self-seeking person. As we will see in the next message, the day before Saul came to Samuel, God revealed to Samuel what He wanted him to do. God said to him, "At about this time tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him as the leader over My people Israel" (9:16). When Saul and his servant came to Samuel, Samuel did exactly as God had instructed. He did not care to gain anything for himself or for his children.

Now we can see why Samuel was so useful in the hand of God. He had no self-seeking nor any thought of self-gain. Instead, as a Nazarite, who allowed no razor to come upon his head and who did not drink any wine, he was absolutely for God. He was happy to go wherever God wanted him to go and to do whatever God wanted him to do. He was a man according to God, a man according to God's heart. Therefore, he was a man whom God could use to carry out His economy.

We should not think that Samuel did not have any kind of human concept. One day Jehovah said to him, "Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have selected for Myself a king among his sons" (16:1b). When Samuel heard this, he said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me" (v. 2a). This indicates that Samuel was very human and had human concepts. Nevertheless, he was not a self-seeking person. All of his seeking was for God and for God's elect. He cared for God and for His interest and profit, and He prayed for God's people.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN SAMUEL AND SAMSON

Some Bible students have pointed out that Samuel was a person of high character. The matter of character, however, is not the crucial point regarding Samuel. Many people have a high character, but they are just for themselves, their enterprise, and their kingdom. They are not for God's kingdom.

Samuel was not only high in character; he was high in the Nazarite vow.

It is worthwhile to compare Samuel with another Nazarite—Samson. Samson also was a Nazarite by his mother's vow, but he was very different from Samuel. When the Bible speaks of Samson and the other judges, it often says that the Spirit of God rushed upon them (Judg. 14:6, 19). But there is no such word about Samuel. A Nazarite does not need rushing power; rather, a Nazarite needs a heart that is a reflection of God's heart. Unlike Samson, Samuel did not gain a mighty victory by slaughtering a great number of others. On the contrary, Samuel was a Nazarite for God's interest.

Although it was not easy for Samuel to stand for God in his particular environment, he cared for God's interest and he turned the age. According to the Old Testament, Samuel is ranked with Moses in being for God and for God's interest (Jer. 15:1).

GOD USING A NEGATIVE KING TO DISCIPLINE ISRAEL

The history in 1 Samuel was directed by God. God did not go directly to David because David was still young and because Israel, whom God loved to the uttermost, needed some training. They needed to be disciplined by God with a negative king so that they would realize that replacing God with a king was not a matter of blessing.

God is a God of patience. Even though Eli was not so positive, God allowed him to be the judge for forty years. It is difficult to determine the length of Samuel's judgeship, which must have lasted at least thirty years before Saul came in to reign over Israel negatively. Next, God tolerated the reign of Saul for forty years, and then He brought in David.

GOD'S INTENTION THAT CHRIST WOULD BE BORN IN THE LINEAGE OF DAVID

Without Samuel it would have been very hard for God to carry out His economy. God had the intention that Christ would be born in the lineage of David, and only Samuel could bring in David. Without a David there would not have been the lineage of Christ's genealogy. In order for God to reach

the time of incarnation, there had to be some preparation, and Samuel was a part of that preparation. God raised up Samuel and prepared him for God's use to do whatever was necessary to gain, through David, the proper lineage of the genealogy of Christ.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEGINNING WITH DAVID

God used Samuel to anoint first Saul and then David. As we will see when we consider the history concerning Saul, Saul only had a monarchy. The kingdom of God came first under David, when God's throne was established in Jerusalem. In Matthew 21:43 the Lord Jesus told the Jewish leaders that the kingdom of God would be taken from them. This indicates that the kingdom of God began in the Old Testament. It did not begin with Abraham or with Moses but with David. Therefore, what we see with David is not any kind of monarchy but the kingdom of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAUL

(1)

HIS ORIGIN AND GOD'S ANOINTING

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 9—10

In this message we will begin to consider the history concerning Saul. Although Saul's history is neither positive nor encouraging, I believe that our study of it will be quite encouraging to us.

I. HIS ORIGIN

In 9:1 and 2 we have a word regarding Saul's origin.

A. Of the Tribe of Benjamin

Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe (v. 1a).

B. Of His Father, Kish

Saul's father Kish was a man of wealth (vv. 1b, 2a). The Hebrew word for "wealth" here may also be rendered "valor." Kish was a man rich in wealth and perhaps rich also in valor.

C. Named Saul

The name Saul means "asked for" (v. 2b).

D. A Handsome Young Man

Saul was a handsome young man (v. 2c). The Hebrew word for "young" in verse 2 also means "choice." As a young man, or, a man of choice, Saul was a choice to people. The fact that he was handsome, or, comely, indicates that he was

attractive to people. Humanly speaking, Saul was a good choice for king.

II. GOD'S ANOINTING

Saul became king through God's anointing. God's purpose in anointing Saul to be king was to use him as a "whip" to discipline Israel.

A. Through the Loss of His Father's Donkeys under God's Sovereignty

Saul's becoming king took place through the loss of his father's donkeys under God's sovereignty (vv. 3-10). I believe that the loss of these donkeys was arranged by God for His purpose in making Saul the king of Israel. Surely this was the only time in history that a person became king through the loss of donkeys.

1. His Father Asking Him to Search for the Donkeys

When Kish, Saul's father, learned that his donkeys were lost, he asked his son to take one of the servants and go to search for the donkeys (v. 3). It was a difficult task to find the donkeys, for no one knew where they went, and it is likely that there was no way to trace them.

2. Saul Not Finding the Donkeys, and the Servant Proposing That They See a Man of God (Samuel) for Their Journey

Saul and his servant passed through the hill country of Ephraim, the land of Shalishah, the land of Shaalim, and the land of Benjamin, but they did not find the donkeys. When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul told the servant that they should return; otherwise, his father would stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about them (vv. 4-5). But the servant said to him, "There is a man of God [Samuel] here in this city, and he is a man held in honor; all that he says happens without fail. Let us now go there; perhaps he will tell us about our journey that we have set out on" (v. 6). I believe that this proposal, which exactly fit the need, was inspired by God. Eventually, Saul accepted the

servant's proposal, and they went to the city where Samuel, the man of God, was (v. 10).

B. By Meeting Samuel under God's Arrangement and God's Call through Samuel

God's anointing of Saul happened by Saul's meeting Samuel under God's arrangement and God's call through Samuel (vv. 11-27).

1. Jehovah Having Foretold to Samuel That He Would Send Saul to Him

Jehovah had foretold to Samuel that He would send Saul to him, whom Samuel was to anoint as the leader over His people Israel (vv. 15-17). The day before Saul came, Jehovah had spoken to Samuel, saying, "At about this time tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him as the leader over My people Israel" (v. 16a).

2. Samuel Telling Saul That His Father's Donkeys Had Been Found and That All the Desire of Israel Was for Him and All His Father's House

According to God's foretelling, Samuel told Saul that his father's donkeys had been found and that all the desire of Israel was for him and all his father's house (v. 20).

3. Saul's Answer to Samuel

Saul was shocked by Samuel's word and answered, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?" (v. 21; 15:17). Saul's humility here was a pretense. From the beginning he was a pretender. As we will see, when he knew that Samuel would appoint him to be king, he hid in "humility" (10:22). That he was not genuinely humble is seen in his being unwilling to give up the throne. Because he was altogether self-seeking, he tried desperately to keep the throne for his son Jonathan (20:30-31).

All the events recorded in 9:3-21 were under God's sovereignty. God caused the donkeys to be lost; He caused

the servant to make a particular proposal; He revealed certain things to Samuel; and He sent Saul to Samuel. All these matters were used by God to accomplish something crucial—to make Saul king in order to discipline, to train, the children of Israel that they would learn not to have a king to replace God.

C. By Samuel's Anointing with Oil

"Samuel took the vial of oil and poured it upon his head, and he kissed him and said, Has not Jehovah anointed you as prince over His inheritance?" (10:1). Here we see that Saul was made king by Samuel's anointing him with oil.

D. Confirmed

In 10:2-13 we are told how God's anointing of Saul to be the king was confirmed.

1. By the Spirit of Jehovah Rushing upon Him Mightily and Causing Him to Prophesy

Samuel told Saul that he would encounter a group of prophets who would be prophesying and that the Spirit of Jehovah would rush upon him (vv. 5b-6a). This word was fulfilled later that day when a group of prophets met him. Then the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he began to prophesy among them (vv. 10-13).

2. By God Giving Him Another Heart and Making Him Another Man

Samuel also told Saul that after the Spirit of God rushed upon him, he would "be turned into another man" (v. 6b). This word was later fulfilled (v. 9a).

E. Checked by His Uncle

When Saul's uncle checked with Saul where he had gone with his servant, Saul told him that they had gone to look for the donkeys, and when they were not to be found, they went to Samuel (v. 14). Then Saul's uncle said that he should tell him what Samuel said to him. Saul told him the part

about the donkeys, but "he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom that Samuel had spoken of" (vv. 15-16).

F. Made King by Samuel

Verses 17 through 27 give an account of how Saul was made king by Samuel.

1. Before the People of Israel

Samuel gathered the people together to Jehovah at Mizpah (v. 17). This indicates that Saul was made king by Samuel before, in the sight of, the people of Israel.

2. By Casting Lots to Prove That He Was Chosen by God

Saul was made king by the casting of lots to prove that he was chosen by God (vv. 20-23a). Saul was chosen by lot, but he was hiding himself among the baggage, and the people could not find him. But Jehovah told them where he was hiding, and they took him from there.

3. By Showing His Person to the People

Samuel then showed Saul's person to the people (vv. 23b-24). Concerning Saul, who was taller than all the people from his shoulders and up, Samuel said, "See him whom Jehovah has chosen, that there is none like him among all the people" (v. 24a). All the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

4. By Telling the People the Custom of the Kingdom

According to verse 25a, Samuel told the people the custom of the kingdom. He wrote it in a book and laid it before Jehovah.

5. Issuing in the Men of Valor, Whose Hearts God Had Touched, Going with Saul to His House

Saul went to his house at Gibeah, and the men of valor, whose hearts God had touched, went with him (v. 26). This was the issue of Saul's being made king by Samuel.

6. Some Worthless Men Despising Saul

Some worthless men said, "How can this man save us?" They despised him and brought him no present (v. 27). Whereas the others brought presents to celebrate Saul's kingship, these worthless men refused to participate in the celebration. But Saul kept silent.

Saul, the son of Kish, had gone to search for the lost donkeys and he returned to his father with the kingship. Regarding this, Samuel cooperated with God for His eternal kingdom, that is, for the eternal economy of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE NINE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAUL

(2)

SAUL'S CONQUEST OF THE AMMONITES AND SAMUEL'S REMINDER TO ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 11—12

As we read the history recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel, we need to realize that, no matter what was happening, God was behind the scene directing everything. We see this in a particular way in the history concerning Saul.

Saul, who was very tall and handsome, matched Israel's human concept of a king, and they immediately recognized him as the king. But God sees through all things from beginning to end and knew what was within Saul's heart. In the sight of God, Saul was useful at a certain juncture for carrying out God's temporary purpose. He was needed by God to discipline and train Israel. Israel needed an education under a king who was apparently good but who actually was very selfish. On the one hand, Saul was qualified and capable and had the capacity, humanly speaking, to rule Israel. On the other hand, he was evil in the sight of God and also a pretender who could put on many different masks. At the time of his inauguration, Saul put on a mask of humility, but near the end of his life, he was exposed as actually being an evil person before God.

After Saul's forty years of reigning, Israel surely learned not to follow the nations in a human way. As a peculiar people, a particular possession belonging to God, their way should be according to God's heart. This is the kind of person Samuel was. He was absolutely according to the heart of God, not

according to the customs of the nations. Although Israel had been delivered from tyranny in Egypt and had been brought into the promised land to be a particular treasure in the sight of God, they were not willing to be such a treasure but instead followed the customs of the nations. Therefore, God used Saul to discipline them.

Because Samuel, a Nazarite, was fully in submission to God as the Head, he was willing to do whatever God wanted him to do, without expressing his opinion. For this reason, when God told Samuel to anoint Saul to be the king over Israel, Samuel was obedient.

With this in mind, let us now go on to consider the history concerning Saul in chapters eleven and twelve.

I. SAUL'S CONQUEST OF THE AMMONITES

A. The Threatening and Reproach of the Ammonites

After Saul was anointed king, the Ammonites came to threaten and reproach the children of Israel (11:1-5). Nahash the Ammonite encamped against Jabesh-gilead, and the men of Jabesh told him that if he made a treaty with them, they would serve him. Nahash replied that he would make a treaty on the condition that all their right eyes would be gouged out. He would thus make it a reproach upon all Israel. The elders of Jabesh asked for seven days' respite to see if there was one who could save them, and they sent messengers to Gibeah of Saul. This created an opportunity for Saul to make a show. He was not for the kingdom of God but for his monarchy.

B. Saul's Conquering of the Ammonites

Saul conquered the Ammonites (vv. 6-11). God sent the Spirit to rush upon Saul (v. 6), and he was empowered by God. Then he gathered the people, divided them into three groups, and slaughtered the Ammonites (vv. 7-11).

C. Saul's Forgiveness of His Despisers on the Day of His Victory

Saul's victory uplifted him in the eyes of the people of

Israel. Some of the people said to Samuel, "Who said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men that we may put them to death" (v. 12). However, Saul forgave his despisers, saying, "No man shall be put to death on this day, for today Jehovah has accomplished deliverance in Israel" (v. 13). Saul behaved in an attractive way and gained the heart of the people, but Samuel was clear concerning Saul's real situation.

II. SAMUEL'S REMINDER TO ISRAEL

In 11:14—12:25 we have an account of Samuel's reminder to Israel.

A. The Renewing of the Kingdom and the Confirmation of Saul's Kingship before Jehovah by Samuel

After Saul conquered the Ammonites and forgave his despisers, Samuel spoke to Israel about renewing the kingdom, saying, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom" (v. 14). All the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before Jehovah and sacrificed peace offerings before Jehovah. There at Gilgal Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly (v. 15). Although Saul had been victorious over the Ammonites and appeared to be such an attractive, humble person, according to Samuel the nation of Israel was still not the kingdom of God on earth.

B. Samuel's Reminder

In 12:1-18 we have Samuel's reminder. This reminder implies a comparison between Samuel and Saul. If we compare Saul with Samuel, we will be able to see what is truly of God's heart and for God's heart.

1. Of His Integrity

First, Samuel reminded Israel of his integrity—that he was pure and just in dealing with the people (vv. 1-5). He reminded them that he had not taken anything from them, defrauded them, oppressed them, or taken any bribe from them. He said, "Jehovah is Witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything

in my hand" (v. 5a). Samuel's word implied that Saul would pervert justice and take away many things from the people. Samuel had this kind of foresight concerning Saul.

2. Of Jehovah's Righteous Acts for Israel

In his wisdom, Samuel did not first speak about God to the people of Israel. Instead, Samuel reminded the people of his integrity and then went on to speak to them of Jehovah's righteous acts for Israel. He reminded them that it was Jehovah who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought their fathers up out of the land of Egypt (v. 6). Then he reminded them that Jehovah delivered them from the hand of their enemies all around (v. 11).

3. Of Israel's Wickedness in Asking for a King, though Jehovah Their God Was Their King

Finally, Samuel reminded Israel of their wickedness in asking for a king, though Jehovah their God was their King (vv. 12-18). Jehovah was their King, yet they wanted another king (v. 12). Here Samuel was rebuking Israel for leaving her Husband. Because they wanted a king as a replacement for God, they would not have the proper enjoyment of the good land.

I believe that, to some extent at least, Samuel's intent here was to provoke the children of Israel. After Saul's conquest of the Ammonites, the people were happy, but they had been deceived by Saul, and Samuel was not happy about this situation. Samuel seemed to be saying to Israel, "You should have remained under the kingship of God, taking Him as your Husband and your Head. Then you would have enjoyed a good life, for He would have had His kingdom among you. But you have done wrong in taking a man as your head instead of God. You have actually divorced God and married Saul. You regard him as a handsome man, a man of choice, a man who is kind and humble. But this is only his outward appearance. Within him there is something dark. He will cause you to suffer and will take away many things from you."

a. Confirmed by Jehovah's Sending Thunder and Rain on That Day

Samuel's words were confirmed by Jehovah's sending thunder and rain (vv. 16-18). Samuel told them to stand and see the great thing that Jehovah would do before their eyes. Then he went on to say, "I will call to Jehovah, that He would send thunder and rain; and you will know and see that your wickedness which you have done in the sight of Jehovah by asking for a king for yourselves is great" (v. 17). Then Samuel called to Jehovah, and Jehovah sent thunder and rain on that day. These were not positive signs, for they were signs not of God's happiness but of His displeasure.

b. All the People Fearing Jehovah and Samuel Greatly

After Samuel called to Jehovah and He sent thunder and rain, all the people feared Jehovah and Samuel greatly (v. 18b).

C. The People's Confession and Samuel's Charge

Verses 19 through 25 record the people's confession of their sin and Samuel's charge to them and his praying for them.

1. The People's Confession of Their Sin and Their Begging Samuel to Pray for Them

The people confessed their sin, saying that they had added to all their sins the evil of asking for a king for themselves. Thus, they begged Samuel to pray to Jehovah his God that they would not die (v. 19).

2. Samuel's Charge to Them That They Would Not Turn Away from Following Jehovah but Serve Jehovah with All Their Heart

Samuel charged the people of Israel not to turn away from following Jehovah but to serve Him with all their heart (v. 20). He warned them not to turn away to vain idols, which, being vanity, could not profit them or deliver them. The people needed to have only one heart, a heart that was toward God

and with God. Therefore, Samuel said, "Only, fear Jehovah and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be consumed" (vv. 24-25).

3. Samuel's Praying for Them without Ceasing, so that He Would Not Sin against Jehovah

In verse 23a Samuel told the people, who had begged him to pray for them, "As for me, far be it from me that I would sin against Jehovah by ceasing to pray for you." This reveals that Samuel considered not praying for God's peculiar people to be a sin against Jehovah. We need to learn of Samuel to pray not only for our own children but also for God's children. If we pray for our children without praying for God's children, we may be selfish and sin against God. Praying for God's children actually includes praying for our children. As we pray for God's children, our children will be under His care.

The record in 1 Samuel shows us that Samuel's heart was only for God's elect. The term *elect* is precious to the ears of God and to the heart of God. His elect are His peculiar, personal possession as a treasure. Caring for God's elect was a crucial aspect of the history concerning Samuel, which was in sharp contrast to the history concerning Saul.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAUL

(3)

SAUL'S CONQUEST OF THE PHILISTINES

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 13—14

Saul first conquered the Ammonites, and then he conquered the Philistines, Israel's most difficult enemy. Both of these conquests gave Saul the opportunity to make a name for himself. In the first conquest he behaved in a kind, humble manner, but in the second conquest he behaved in a way that caused him to lose his kingship. As we will see, Samuel's intention, which was according to God's heart, was to build the kingdom of God on earth. Saul's intention was altogether in another realm. Saul intended to build a monarchy for himself within the kingdom of God. Saul thought that it was possible to have his own monarchy; actually, it was not possible. God had no intention to build anything for Saul.

Let us now consider the details regarding Saul's conquest of the Philistines.

I. HIS PREPARATION FOR WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

In 13:1-4, 6-7 we read of Saul's preparation for war against the Philistines.

A. With the Assistance of His Son Jonathan

In his preparation for war, Saul was assisted by his son Jonathan, who was quite good.

B. By Blowing a Trumpet to Gather the People

Saul had learned that he needed people and he blew a

trumpet to gather the people. Today's politicians also realize that they need to gain the people.

C. Some of the People Hiding and Some Escaping

Because some of the people were afraid of the Philistines, they hid themselves in caves and in pits, and some escaped into the land of Gad, east of Jordan.

II. THE PHILISTINES' PREPARATION FOR WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

In their preparation for war against Israel, the Philistines assembled 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and "people like the sand that is on the seashore in multitude" (v. 5).

III. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

In 13:8-15a we have a word concerning Saul's disobedience. In this war Saul's intention to act on his own for the building up of his monarchy was exposed. Saul's disobedience, which was observed by Samuel, meant that he had given up God. In his first conquest Saul behaved very well in the sight of the people and before the Lord, but in his second conquest he was disobedient and actually gave up God.

A. In His Sinful Offering

Saul's disobedience was exposed in the matter of his sinful offering (vv. 8-12). Saul was disobedient, yet he still offered something to God. Today's situation is exactly the same. People offer something to God for His service, but they disobey God and do not care for His purpose.

1. His Complaint

Saul disobeyed, offering up a sinful offering, yet he complained against Samuel that Samuel had not come at the appointed time. At that time Samuel was the acting God. Saul had an appointment with Samuel, but Saul did not have the freedom to do whatever he liked. He should have been subordinate to Samuel. Apparently, Samuel was mistaken in his delay, but Samuel's delay exposed Saul.

2. His Excuse

Saul's excuse for his disobedience was that the people were scattered from him and that the Philistines assembled themselves for fighting. There was no excuse for what Saul did. He should have waited for Samuel to arrive before taking any action.

B. Resulting in His Losing His Kingship

Saul's disobedience resulted in his losing his kingship (vv. 13-15a; 15:28).

1. Condemned by Samuel

Saul was condemned by Samuel for having acted foolishly and not keeping the commandment of Jehovah (13:13a). Samuel was surely right in condemning Saul.

2. His Kingdom Not Continuing

After condemning Saul, Samuel told him that his kingdom would not continue (vv. 13b-14a).

3. Saul Being Replaced by David, a Man according to God's Heart

Samuel went on to say to Saul, "Jehovah has sought a man according to His heart for Himself, and Jehovah has appointed him as leader over His people" (v. 14b). Here Samuel was referring to David, to whom God would shift the kingship.

In studying the history in the Bible, we need to learn all the different lessons. First Samuel 13—14 contains a great lesson. It may seem that Saul's disobedience in making an offering was a small disobedience. But Samuel realized that Saul would take the opportunity to usurp God's appointment to build up his own monarchy within the building up of God's kingdom. God intended to build up His kingdom on earth, not to build up a monarchy for Saul.

Samuel taught the people the custom of the kingdom (1 Sam. 10:25). Moses gave the law to the children of Israel, but before Samuel came they did not have a set of by-laws, a constitution. Samuel told the people the by-laws, the constitution, the practice, the customs, the manners, the

ordinances, and the rules of how to practice the kingdom of God on earth. Saul should have practiced the kingdom life according to this constitution. Samuel, the composer of the constitution, watched Saul, and he saw a tendency with him to build up a human monarchy by usurping the practice of the kingdom of God.

The Lord's recovery today is the kingdom of God. Some have attempted to build up their work and to establish a monarchy for themselves within the recovery. Brother Nee strongly stressed this same matter when he said that some so-called co-workers were building up for themselves something separate from the recovery while they remained in the recovery. These co-workers built up their own little empires. Recently, a monarchy was built up in a certain area of this country, but the saints there refused to go along with such a monarchy. They wrote to me saying that the churches in that area were not raised up by the one who wanted to build up a monarchy, but were established and nourished by the essence of the Lord's recovery. These saints said that they wanted the recovery, the kingdom of God today.

The recovery around the globe is uniquely one. The intrinsic essence of the kingdom of God is the Body of Christ, the church of God. Through the past several decades, some brothers have worked and labored very well, and we appreciate what they have done. Yet certain of the workers carried out a work in the recovery by usurping the recovery. Today in some places there is still a tendency, under the name of the recovery, to build up something within the ministry of the recovery, usurping the advantages of the recovery and using the materials of the ministry of the recovery. There are signs that the work in these places is not a pure work—a work purely for the building up of the Body of Christ, the kingdom of God. Rather, it is a work built up for the interest of certain ones.

Six years ago a teaching came out which said that the local churches are autonomous. Some said that after the apostles establish a church and appoint elders, they should keep their hands off the church, leaving the church as an

autonomy. Such a teaching of autonomy was actually the building up of a monarchy.

We practice the local churches, and each of the local churches is autonomous in business affairs. But this does not mean that the local churches are divided. In a sense they are local churches, but all the local churches on this globe are just one church. Every local church has its own freedom and jurisdiction to make decisions concerning, for example, the times of the meetings. However, this does not mean that the local churches are different. Paul taught all the churches in the same way (1 Cor. 4:17).

All the churches are the same in life, in nature, in testimony, in serving, and in expressing Christ. We may be different in nationalities and languages, but our singing and praising are the same. We are one Body, testifying the same Christ. We preach, announce, admonish, and teach concerning Christ as revealed in the Bible. We do not have different schools, different teachings, or different testimonies. Christianity has been divided because of different practices, for example the practice of baptism. But the "dictionary" in the Lord's recovery has only one word—Christ. We are not for various kinds of teachings. We are for Christ, who is for the kingdom of God. We are for the kingdom of God, which is the Body of Christ, the unique church of God.

IV. THE SITUATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PHILISTINES

First Samuel 13:15b-23 tells us about the situation between Israel and the Philistines.

A. On the Side of Israel

On the side of Israel (vv. 15b-16a), Saul mustered the people who were with him, about 600 men. Saul, Jonathan, and the people dwelt in Geba of Benjamin.

B. On the Side of the Philistines

On the side of the Philistines (vv. 16b-18, 23), raiders came out from the camp in three companies toward three directions.

C. Israel Being Short of Swords and Spears

Israel was short of sword and spears (vv. 19-22). There was no smith throughout all the land of Israel. At that time, Israel was under the strict control of the Philistines, who did not allow them to make swords or spears. On the day of battle, only Saul and Jonathan his son had a sword and a spear.

V. ISRAEL'S CONQUEST OF THE PHILISTINES

In 14:1-23 we have an account of Israel's conquest of the Philistines. Their situation was that they had no weapons. In such a poor situation, God was their unique weapon. Saul, Jonathan, and the people of Israel fought the battle by God.

A. Under Jonathan

Verses 1 through 15 describe the conquest under Jonathan.

1. Jonathan Not Letting His Father and the People Know That He Was Going to Attack the Philistines

Jonathan did not let his father and the people know that he was going to attack the Philistines (vv. 1-5).

2. Trusting in Jehovah for His Victory

Jonathan trusted in Jehovah for his victory (vv. 6-10), believing that there was no constraint on Jehovah to save by many or by few. Jonathan was assured that Jehovah would deliver the Philistines into his hand.

3. Jehovah Delivering the Philistines into the Hand of Israel

Jehovah delivered the Philistines into the hand of Israel (vv. 11-15). Jonathan and his helper, a young man, killed the Philistines. There was panic among the Philistines in their camp, in their field, and among all the people. Even their garrison and their raiders were in a panic, and the earth quaked.

B. Under Saul

Verses 16 through 23 describe the conquest of the Philistines under Saul.

1. The Multitude of the Philistine Army Melting Away

According to verse 16 the multitude of the Philistine army was melting away, and they were going here and there.

2. Saul Finding Out That Jonathan and His Helper Had Gone Away from Him to Attack the Philistines

Saul found out that his son Jonathan and his helper had gone away from him to attack the Philistines (v. 17).

3. Saul Seeking God's Leading through the Priest and the Ark

In verses 18 and 19 Saul did something quite good—he sought God's leading through the priest and the ark.

4. Saul Hearing That the Tumult in the Camp of the Philistines Continued to Increase

Saul heard that the tumult that was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase. He and all the people who were with him gathered together and went into the battle, while each Philistine's sword was against his companion, and the tumult was very great (v. 20).

5. The Hebrews Who Had Been with the Philistines Turning to Be with the Israelites Who Were with Saul and Jonathan

The Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and who had gone up with them into the camp also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan (v. 21).

6. All the Men of Israel Who Had Hidden Themselves Following Saul and Jonathan Closely

Even all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country followed Saul and Jonathan closely in the battle (v. 22).

7. Jehovah Saving Israel from the Philistines

That day Jehovah saved Israel from the Philistines (v. 23).

VI. SAUL'S RASH OATH

Verses 24 through 46 are concerned with the matter of Saul's rash oath. A strong person is often rash.

A. Cursing Any Man Who Ate Food before the Evening

In the oath he laid on the people, Saul cursed any man who ate food before the evening, when Saul would be avenged of his enemies (vv. 24-26).

B. Jonathan Not Hearing His Father's Oath and Eating Some Honey

Jonathan did not hear his father's oath and ate some honey (vv. 27-30).

C. The People of Israel Eating the Sheep, Oxen, and Calves with the Blood

The people of Israel ate the sheep, oxen, and calves with the blood (vv. 31-35). They did this because of the heavy blitz on the Philistines and Saul's rash oath. Saul corrected the people in that sin and asked them to slay their oxen and sheep and eat before him that night. Then Saul built his first altar to Jehovah.

D. Jonathan's Breaking of His Father's Oath Being Caught

Jonathan's breaking of his father's oath was caught (vv. 36-46). Saul sought God's leading for him and the people of Israel to pursue after the Philistines, and God did not answer him that day (vv. 36-37). Following this, Jonathan's death crime was found out (vv. 38-44). When Saul said that Jonathan would die, the people vindicated Jonathan and saved him from the death crime (v. 45). Then Saul went up from following the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to their own place (v. 46).

VII. A CHRONICLE OF SAUL

Chapter fourteen concludes with a chronicle of Saul (vv. 47-52).

A. Saul Taking the Kingdom over Israel and Fighting against All His Enemies All Around

Saul took the kingdom over Israel and fought against all his enemies all around—Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah, and the Philistines (v. 47).

B. Striking Valiantly the Amalekites

Saul struck valiantly the Amalekites and delivered Israel from those who had plundered them (v. 48).

C. Saul's Generations

In verses 49 through 51 we have a list of Saul's generations: his grandfather Abiel; his father Kish; his uncle Ner; his cousin Abner (the captain of his army); his wife Ahinoam; his father-in-law Ahimaaz; his sons Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-shua; and his daughters Merab and Michal.

D. There Being Severe War against the Philistines All the Days of Saul

This chapter concludes by saying that there was severe war against the Philistines all the days of Saul and that Saul took any mighty man or any valiant man for himself (v. 52).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING SAUL

(4)

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE IN HIS CONQUEST OF THE AMALEKITES

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 15

First Samuel 15 is a record of Saul's disobedience in his conquest of the Amalekites. He conquered the enemy, yet he was altogether disobedient to God. Here Saul was absolutely, thoroughly exposed, and then he was given up by God and also by Samuel. This chapter contains an important lesson for us today.

I. IN TYPOLOGY THE AMALEKITES SIGNIFYING THE FLESH—THE FALLEN MAN

In typology the Amalekites signify the flesh—the fallen man (Exo. 17:8-16; Gen. 6:3a; Rom. 3:20a). The divine revelation in the Bible shows us that God did not create the flesh. God created a man. However, man became fallen and eventually became flesh. Genesis 6:3 indicates that because man had become flesh, God could not do anything with him. Romans 3:20a says, "Out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him." Here "no flesh" means no fleshly man. All men have become flesh. We, the believers in Christ, have been saved, but most of us are still living in the flesh.

In the entire universe, God's real enemy is not Satan but us. As long as we remain in the status of the flesh, we are an enemy to God (Rom. 8:7). Our flesh is altogether one with Satan. Without the flesh, Satan would have no way to fight

against God. In the church life all the troubles come from the flesh. The hardest thing for God to deal with is the flesh.

In our daily life we may be either in the spirit or in the flesh. When we exercise our spirit, the vision is clear. But if we remain in the flesh, the vision will become dim. When we are in our spirit, we may regard the church, the elders, and the recovery as wonderful. However, when we are in the flesh, we may be critical of certain elders, or our flesh may be so bothered that we may even consider leaving the recovery. Whenever we realize that we are in the flesh, the enemy of God and the source of troubles in the church life, we need to pray and ask the Lord to forgive us.

II. THE AMALEKITES' OFFENSE TOWARD GOD AGAINST ISRAEL, AFTER ISRAEL CAME UP OUT OF EGYPT

In 1 Samuel 15:2 Jehovah said, "I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they set themselves against them in the way as they came up out of Egypt." In the war with Amalek described in Exodus 17:8-16, Moses stood on the top of a hill with the rod of God in his hand, and Joshua went out with chosen men to fight against, and to defeat, Amalek. While Joshua was fighting, Moses was praying. After Joshua defeated Amalek, God declared that He would "have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (v. 16). This shows how seriously God regarded the frustration caused by the Amalekites. At the time of 1 Samuel 15:2, He declared that He would punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel.

III. JEHOVAH'S COMMAND TO SAUL

After Saul was anointed to be the leader of God's people, he defeated the Ammonites and the Philistines. Eventually, the Amalekites rose up to frustrate the establishing of God's kingdom, and Saul was charged to destroy them. In verse 3 Jehovah said to him, "Go now and strike the Amalekites; and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, oxen and sheep, camel and donkey." In charging Saul to utterly destroy

the Amalekites, which typify the flesh as God's unique enemy, God wisely put Saul on the spot in order to test him.

IV. SAUL'S ATTACKING OF THE AMALEKITES

Verses 4 through 9 describe Saul's attacking of the Amalekites. Saul summoned the people and mustered them, 200,000 footmen and 10,000 men of Judah (v. 4). Saul then came to the city of the Amalekites and set an ambush in the river valley (v. 5). Before striking the Amalekites, Saul sent the Kenites away from the destruction of the Amalekites, for they showed kindness to the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt (v. 6). Then Saul struck the Amalekites and captured Agag their king (vv. 7-8a). Saul utterly destroyed all their people, but he "spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings, and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was despised and worthless, this they utterly destroyed" (vv. 8b-9). For Saul, this was an opportunity to make himself rich. He was trying to build up his own monarchy within God's kingdom.

V. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

Verses 10 through 31 are concerned with the matter of Saul's disobedience.

A. Jehovah Repenting of Saul's Kingship because of His Disobedience, and Samuel Being Angry

Jehovah told Samuel that He repented of appointing Saul as king, for he did not fulfill His words. Samuel became angry and cried to Jehovah all night long (vv. 10-11).

B. Samuel's Dealing with Saul

In verses 12 through 31 we see Samuel's dealing with Saul.

1. Coming to Meet Saul Early in the Morning

Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. It was told Samuel that Saul had gone to Carmel and had set up a

monument for himself (v. 12). Saul built this monument not for the kingdom of God but for the remembrance of himself because of the victory that made both him and his monarchy rich. This was a strong indication that Saul's intention was to build up his monarchy.

2. The Conversation between Samuel and Saul after Samuel Came to Saul

Verses 13 through 23 are a record of the conversation between Samuel and Saul after Samuel came to Saul. When Saul declared that he had fulfilled the word of Jehovah, Samuel asked, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen that I hear?" (vv. 13-14). Saul explained that they had been brought from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to Jehovah and destroyed the rest. Samuel then told Saul to stop and he would tell him what Jehovah had spoken to him the night before. Then he went on to say, "Though you are small in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah has anointed you as king over Israel. And Jehovah sent you on a journey and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed. Why then did you not obey the voice of Jehovah, but flew upon the spoil and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?" (vv. 17-19). Saul responded by claiming that he did obey the voice of Jehovah, but that the people took sheep and oxen of the spoil to sacrifice to Jehovah (vv. 20-21).

In verses 22 and 23 Samuel continued by speaking a very strong word to Saul: "Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices / As much as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? / Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, / And to heed, than the fat of rams. / For rebellion is like the sin of divination, / And insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim." Here Samuel seemed to be saying, "Saul, you say that you spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to Jehovah, my God. But God prefers that you obey His word. He told you to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all that they have. Instead of obeying this word, you kept some of the sheep and

oxen for yourself. This morning you raised up a monument for yourself. You did not raise up anything for God. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed, to take care of, God's speaking is better than the fat of rams. Saul, you have rebelled against God, and rebellion is like the sin of divination, like the sin of witchcraft. What you did was just as evil as contacting an evil spirit for the purpose of carrying out the intention of that spirit, not God's intention. You did not subordinate yourself to God as your Head but acted presumptuously, according to your ways and by your will. Now your kingship is over. Because you have rejected the word of Jehovah, He has rejected you from being king." Saul was thus exposed as being a rebel against God and an enemy of God.

C. Saul's Confession and Begging

1. Saul Confessing His Sin with an Excuse of His Being Afraid of the People

Saul confessed his sin to Samuel with the excuse that he had transgressed the commandment of Jehovah and Samuel's words because he "feared the people and obeyed their voice" (v. 24).

2. Saul Begging Samuel to Pardon His Sin and Return with Him

Saul begged Samuel to pardon his sin and return with him, but Samuel refused to do so because of Saul's rejection of Jehovah's word and Jehovah's rejection of Saul's kingship (vv. 25-26).

3. Samuel's Word to Saul concerning Jehovah's Tearing Away the Kingdom of Israel from Him

When Samuel turned around to go, Saul seized the corner of his cloak, and it tore. Then Samuel told him that Jehovah had torn the kingdom of Israel away from him that day and had given it to an associate of his, who was better than he. This associate was David. Samuel went on to say, "Moreover

the Eminence of Israel does not lie nor repent, for He is not a man that He should repent" (vv. 27-29).

4. Saul Begging Samuel to Honor Him before the Elders of His People and before Israel

Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. Honor me now, I beg you, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me so that I may worship Jehovah your God" (v. 30). Then Samuel returned after Saul, and Saul worshipped Jehovah (v. 31).

VI. SAMUEL'S EXECUTION OF AGAG

Samuel asked that Agag the king of the Amalekites be brought near to him. Agag came to him cheerfully, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death has turned" (v. 32). Samuel said to Agag, "Just as your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women," and then he hewed Agag to pieces before Jehovah (v. 33).

VII. SAMUEL'S DEPARTURE FROM SAUL

Chapter fifteen concludes with Samuel's departure from Saul (vv. 34-35). Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah. Samuel never again saw Saul unto the day of his death, though Samuel mourned for Saul, because Jehovah repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

We should be warned by this account of Saul's disobedience not to do anything in the kingdom of God by our flesh. We need to fear God and remember that we are flesh. But the Son of God has crucified the flesh and He has come into us to regenerate our spirit. Now He is living in our spirit, moving, acting, and taking the lead to guide us into the line of life for the building up of His organism, the Body of Christ. This is the kingdom of God, God's eternal kingdom, which will consummate in the upcoming New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. This should be our goal. We should not try to build a monarchy for ourselves in God's kingdom. This is the lesson that we need to learn from our study of this portion of the history in the Old Testament.

We thank the Lord that, under His mercy, He has opened up the intrinsic secrets in the Word to show us the real lessons. We have to learn the lesson of the cross and crucify our flesh with its passions and its lusts and leave it on the cross always and in everything (Gal. 5:24). We should faithfully exercise our spirit to follow the Lord, who is the life-giving, consummated Spirit indwelling our spirit and who is one with us. Then the kingdom of God, the church as the intrinsic Body of Christ, will be built up.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(1)

PREPARED BY GOD TO BE A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD 1 SAMUEL 16—2 SAMUEL 1

(1)

CHOSEN, TRAINED, ANOINTED, TESTED, AND APPROVED

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 16—17

First Samuel 16 begins the history concerning David as one prepared by God as a man according to the heart of God. Chapters sixteen and seventeen show us how David was chosen, trained, anointed, tested, and approved by God.

Chapter fifteen ends with a miserable situation. God had abandoned Saul, rejecting him from being king over Israel. Then in the first verse of chapter sixteen, God sent Samuel to contact a young boy, who was perhaps only about fifteen years old. This shows that while Saul was abusing the God-given kingship, God knew the whole situation and was doing something marvelous to prepare the right person. God went secretly to David, the great grandson of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:21-22).

God gave Saul the kingship for the purpose of building up His own kingdom. Saul should have been God's acting king, reigning over the people for God. Yet he behaved as a king absolutely for himself. He usurped and even abused the gifts given to him by God—the kingdom, the people, and the kingship—in order to build up his own monarchy. But while Saul was openly abusing, God was secretly preparing.

Eventually, God's preparation was completed in David, the youngest of Jesse's sons. David was the eighth son, and in the Bible the number eight signifies resurrection. In the scriptural sense, David was one in resurrection; hence, he was the one whom God could use.

David was prepared by God to be a man according to the heart of God. Otherwise he could not have been such a man. In a very real sense, he was created by God to be such a man. However, he still needed to pass through the process of being chosen, trained, anointed, tested, and approved. To be chosen is wonderful, but to be trained by God is to go through suffering. To be anointed also is very good, but after being anointed we must be tested. Second Samuel 5:4 tells us that David was thirty years old when he began to reign. After David, a boy of about fifteen, was anointed by Samuel, he was tested for about fifteen years. In particular, he was bothered and troubled by Saul. Eventually, David passed the test and was approved by God.

I. CHOSEN BY GOD

David was chosen by God (1 Sam. 16:1-10). "Jehovah said to Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, though I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have selected for Myself a king from among his sons" (v. 1). Jesse had seven of his sons pass by Samuel, but Jehovah had not chosen them. David's family seemed not to care for him, but God was determined to use him, for He had chosen him. David was God's unique choice among the children of Israel.

II. TRAINED BY GOD IN HUMILITY

David was trained by God in humility through his circumstances. God purposely caused him to be born as the youngest one, the last one, to make him humble. Furthermore, David was assigned to go to the field to take care of the sheep. None of his seven brothers would do that; they all wanted a better job.

III. ANOINTED

First Samuel 16:12-23 relates how David was anointed.

A. By Samuel with Oil

Because David was God's choice, Samuel, God's acting representative, came purposely to anoint him with oil (v. 13a).

B. Confirmed by the Spirit of Jehovah Rushing upon Him from That Day

Samuel's anointing David with oil was confirmed by the Spirit of Jehovah rushing upon him from that day (v. 13b). This rushing of the Spirit was related not to life for salvation but to power for outward activities.

C. Confirmed from the Negative Side

In verses 14 through 23 we see that the anointing of David was confirmed also from the negative side.

1. By the Spirit of Jehovah Departing from Saul and an Evil Spirit from Jehovah Tormenting Him

Verse 14 says that the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul and that an evil spirit from Jehovah terrorized him. That was a further confirmation that God had chosen someone other than him. From that time onward Saul no longer had any peace, and he became jealous of David. The more he saw the good points of David, the more he realized that the kingdom would not go to his son Jonathan but to David. Therefore, Saul tried to kill David a number of times. On the one hand, Saul was terrorized by an evil spirit. On the other hand, he was troubled by his realization concerning David. Saul realized that the kingdom would not be a monarchy passed on to Jonathan but instead would go to David.

2. By David Being Selected and Becoming an Attendant of Saul

When Saul's servants saw that an evil spirit from God was terrorizing him, they suggested that they seek out a man who was skilled in playing the lyre and who could play it when the evil spirit was upon Saul. Saul agreed, and David

was brought to Saul to serve as his attendant. David played the lyre to refresh Saul at home (v. 23), and he also became Saul's armor bearer (v. 21c). Saul loved him greatly.

Under God's sovereignty, David was selected to become an attendant of Saul. God put these two together to live and work together very closely. Eventually, however, the closer they became, the more Saul hated David. Saul and David became a test to each other. Simply by being put together, these two were fully tested. Saul was exposed as a person who was opposite to God's will, and David was manifested to be a man according to God's heart. This was God's sovereignty.

For David to be tested in his relationship with Saul meant that David was continually put on the cross. This may also be our experience in the church life and in our married life. The saints in the church life, especially the elders, may become a test, a cross, to us. Likewise, in married life our spouse will be a cross to us. Since there should be neither divorce nor separation, the only way for us in our married life is to go to the cross and remain there, allowing the cross to terminate our flesh and our particular kind of ambition.

IV. TESTED AND APPROVED IN TRUSTING GOD AND DEFEATING GOLIATH

In chapter seventeen David was tested and approved in trusting God and defeating Goliath.

A. The Armies of the Philistines and the Men of Israel Being Assembled in Array

The armies of the Philistines and the men of Israel were assembled in array and were ready to engage in a war against one another (vv. 1-3). This was a test to both Saul and David.

B. A Champion by the Name of Goliath Coming Forth from the Camp of the Philistines to Defy the Armies of Israel

A champion by the name of Goliath came forth from the camp of the Philistines to defy the armies of Israel (vv. 4-11, 16). Goliath was six cubits and a span tall.

1. Being Arrogant in His Valor

Goliath was arrogant in his valor, in his kind of strength and power (vv. 8-10). In his arrogance he said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, and let us fight together" (v. 10).

2. Saul and All Israel Being Dismayed

When Saul and all Israel heard Goliath's words, they were dismayed and greatly afraid (v. 11).

3. Goliath's Defying Lasting Forty Days

Goliath's defying lasted forty days, morning and evening (v. 16).

C. David's Defeating of Goliath

Verses 12 through 54 give us a detailed account of David's defeating of Goliath.

1. David's Status and Occupation

In verses 12 through 15 we have a word regarding David's status and occupation. His three older brothers went after Saul to the battle. David, the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse, was an attendant of Saul and a shepherd of his father's sheep.

2. David Being Sent by His Father to Strengthen His Brothers with Food and to Greet Them

David was sent by his father to strengthen his brothers with food and to greet them and to get some news about them (vv. 17-22).

3. David Hearing Goliath's Defiance

David heard Goliath's defiance and found out that Saul would make the man who killed the defier rich and give him his daughter and make the house of his father free from tax and duty (vv. 23-27). David considered that Goliath was defying the armies of the living God (v. 26b). He also considered that to kill such a defier was to turn away the reproach from Israel (v. 26a).

4. The Anger and the Despising Word of David's Oldest Brother

Verses 28 through 30 tell us about the anger and the despising word of David's oldest brother, who mocked him, saying that he should have remained to take care of those few sheep in the wilderness. He condemned David by accusing him of having pride and evil in his heart. David responded by indicating that there was a cause for his coming there (v. 29). David realized that the cause was that he had been sent there by God to defeat the defier.

5. David Gaining the Agreement of Saul for Him to Fight against Goliath

David gained the agreement of Saul for him to fight against Goliath (vv. 31-39). At first, Saul discouraged David from fighting with Goliath, saying that David was but a youth and that Goliath had been a man of war since his youth (v. 33). However, David had the assurance that Jehovah would deliver him from the hand of Goliath. David's assurance was based upon his experience of Jehovah delivering him from the paw of the lion and of the bear in his shepherding of his father's sheep. Because his experience as a shepherd had trained him to trust in the Lord, David could say to Saul, "Jehovah, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (v. 37a). When Saul heard this, he said to David, "Go, and may Jehovah be with you" (v. 37b). Then Saul put his armor on him, but David tried it and took it off (vv. 38-39).

6. David Going to Fight against Goliath

David went forth to fight against Goliath (vv. 40-48). He took his staff, chose five smooth stones from the brook, and held his sling in his hand (v. 40). Goliath scorned him for being but a youth and considered that his coming to him was as one with staves coming to chase away a dog. Goliath then cursed David by his gods and said that he would give David's flesh to the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the field (vv. 41-44). David said to Goliath, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of

Jehovah of hosts, the God of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied. On this day Jehovah will deliver you up into my hand; and I will strike you and remove your head from you. And I will give the corpses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of heaven and to the animals of the earth on this day. And all the earth will know that there is a God in Israel; and all this congregation will know that it is not by sword or spear that Jehovah saves, for the battle is Jehovah's and He will deliver you into our hand" (vv. 45-47).

7. David Killing Goliath and Defeating the Philistines

David killed Goliath and defeated the Philistines (vv. 49-54). He killed Goliath by slinging a stone into Goliath's forehead and beheading Goliath with his own sword (vv. 49-51a). The Philistines fled, and the men of Israel and Judah pursued them to slay them and plunder their camps (vv. 51b-53). David took the head of Goliath and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put Goliath's armor in his tent (v. 54).

8. A Strong Confirmation to God's Choosing and Anointing of Him

David's victory over Goliath and the Philistines was a strong confirmation to God's choosing and anointing of him.

D. Saul Finding Out That David Was the Son of Jesse

Saul found out that David, who held Goliath's head in his hand, was the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite (vv. 55-58).

What happened to David in chapters sixteen and seventeen was altogether under God's sovereignty. We all need to realize that because we are pursuing Christ today, every aspect of our environment is absolutely under God's sovereign hand. Eventually, those who defy the church life will be defeated. Therefore, we should trust in the Lord, have confidence in Him, and be at peace.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(2)

PREPARED BY GOD TO BE A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD 1 SAMUEL 16—2 SAMUEL 1

(2)

PERSECUTED AND TRIED BY SAUL

(1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 18—20

As we read the Bible, we should not interpret it in a loose way. We surely need guidance from the Lord, and we also need to know the controlling principles. Otherwise, we may be careless in our interpretation. In studying the books of history in the Bible, we need to be poor in spirit and we need a seeking spirit. We need to pray, "Lord, there is something here that I do not know, but You know. Lord, reveal to me the intrinsic significance of this portion of the Word." This should be our prayer as we continue to consider the history concerning David as one prepared by God to be a man according to the heart of God.

V. JONATHAN'S LOVE FOR DAVID

David was persecuted and tried by Saul. Saul was nearly the unique source of all David's trials. In the trials that God gave to him in His sovereignty, God prepared a provision for David. God prepared Jonathan, Saul's son, who loved David (18:1-5).

A. Jonathan Loving David like His Own Soul

Jonathan loved David like his own soul (vv. 1b, 3b). While the father was persecuting David and plotting to kill him, his son was loving David to the uttermost. It seems that there was discord in the family over David, with the father hating him and the son loving him. If God had not provided Jonathan in such a way, it is doubtful that David could have endured the trials under Saul. David could pass through these trials mainly because of the help that Jonathan rendered to him. From this we see that when we are under God's trial, God knows that we need some provision. On the one hand, we have the trials; on the other hand, we have God's provision to support us and sustain us in the trials.

B. He and David Making a Covenant

Jonathan and David made a covenant, something that was to be kept and fulfilled to the uttermost (v. 3a).

C. Giving His Robe, Armor, Sword, Bow, and Belt to David

In order to equip David, Jonathan gave him his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt (v. 4).

D. Saul Taking David and Keeping Him from His Father's House

Saul took David and would not let him return to his father's house (v. 2). This is a further indication that God had prepared all the details concerning David's environment.

E. David Being Successful in Every Mission That Saul Sent Him On

David was successful in every mission that Saul sent him on (v. 5a). The secret of David's success was his wisdom. Even as a youth, he behaved in a very wise way. For example, when his oldest brother condemned him for coming to the camp of the Israelites, he asked his brother, "Is there no cause?" (17:29). He realized that there was a cause from God and that God had prepared him and sent him. God had

sovereignly put him in the field to take care of sheep, and God used the attack of the lion and the bear to train, prepare, and equip him to kill Goliath. David was also very experienced in speaking and in confronting people. His youth had been full of experiences which were the basis for his assurance in relation to Goliath. It is not an insignificant thing for a teen-ager to kill a lion or a bear. As a youth David gained this experience. Therefore, he was not afraid of Goliath.

F. Saul Setting David over the Men of Battle

Because David acted wisely, Saul set him over the men of battle, and it was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants (18:5b). Whatever Saul did to David became a good opportunity for David to gain favor with the people.

VI. SAUL'S ENVY OF DAVID

In 18:6-9 we see Saul's envy of David.

A. David's Return from Striking the Philistines

Saul became envious of David after David's return from striking the Philistines (v. 6a).

B. The Women's Welcome and Praise

As David returned from striking the Philistines, the women came out of all the towns of Israel to meet Saul and they said, "Saul has stricken down his thousands; / But David, his ten thousands" (v. 7). When Saul heard this praise, he was displeased and said, "They ascribe ten thousands to David, but to me they ascribe only thousands. And what more can he have except the kingdom? So Saul eyed David from that day on" (vv. 8-9). Saul was angry and was envious of David.

There are many "Sauls" in the church life today. We may become envious when others are approved and we are not. For example, suppose you share in a meeting and hardly anyone says amen. Then someone else shares, and he receives many amens. You may say to yourself, "Why were so many

amens spoken to him and so few to me?" If you say this, you are today's Saul.

Let us take as another illustration of the Sauls in the church life the matter of appointing elders. In appointing elders we must be fair and pure, and we must not be political. Suppose that in a particular church five brothers are taking the lead, but thus far no one has been officially appointed to be an elder. Eventually, only three of these brothers are appointed. The other two are very good brothers, but they do not have the capacity to be elders. These two may be stumbled and wonder why the other three were appointed to be elders and they were not. These two brothers might say, "The five of us have been laboring together to take care of the church, but we two have been set aside. Why were the others appointed to be elders and we were not?" These brothers need to receive grace in order to put their flesh on the cross. Otherwise, they may become cold to the church and withdraw, no longer continuing faithfully in the church life.

The hardships in the church life are related to the flesh. All the flesh in the church life needs to be diminished. Galatians 5:17 says, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." In the whole universe there is only one war—the war between man and God. The man warring against God is the flesh. The flesh wars against God as the Spirit, and God who is the Spirit is warring against our flesh. Our flesh is the real enemy of God. However, Galatians 5 not only speaks of this war but also says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (v. 24). Christ has crucified the flesh, and now we must apply this to ourselves.

David was very different from Saul. David knew only to behave and to have his being according to God's heart. He had no feeling for himself. Rather, he knew only to labor and conduct himself for God's people and God's kingdom.

VII. SAUL'S DEVICE TO KILL DAVID

In 1 Samuel 18:10—20:42 we have Saul's device to kill David. Saul went from being envious of David to plotting how he might kill him without damaging his own name.

A. Attempting to Kill David by Striking Him with a Spear Even to the Wall

Saul attempted to kill David by striking him with a spear even to the wall (18:10-11a). When Saul attempted to kill him, David did nothing to avenge himself. He only fled (v. 11b). Saul was afraid of David, for Jehovah was with David and had departed from Saul (v. 12). If Saul had learned to know the flesh, he would have worshipped the Lord for choosing David. He would have realized that the Lord was sovereign and that He, not Saul, should be the originator.

Saul removed David from being with him and made him the captain of a thousand (v. 13). In all his campaigns David acted wisely, and Jehovah was with him. When Saul saw that David acted wisely, he was in awe of him (v. 15). All Israel and Judah loved David (v. 16).

B. Plotting to Cause David to Be Killed by the Philistines

Saul plotted to cause David to be killed by the Philistines (vv. 17-30). Saul's plot was to give his oldest daughter, Merab, to David as wife; however, Saul did not keep his word (vv. 17-19). When Saul learned that another daughter, Michal, loved David, Saul plotted to give her to David as wife that she might be a snare to him (v. 21). Saul's giving of Michal to David was on the term that David would give him a hundred Philistine foreskins (vv. 22-25). Saul intended that this would fulfill his plan to kill David through the hand of the Philistines.

David brought the full number of foreskins to Saul, and Saul gave him Michal as wife. When Saul saw that Jehovah was with David and that his daughter Michal loved him, he was more afraid of David and became his enemy from then on (vv. 28-29). Furthermore, when the princes of the Philistines went forth against Israel, David succeeded more than all the servants of Saul. So David's name was very highly esteemed (v. 30).

C. Determining to Kill David

Saul not only plotted to have David killed but determined to kill him (19:1-7). He told Jonathan his son and all his servants to kill David.

1. Jonathan's Protection of David because of His Great Delight in David

Because of his great delight in David, Jonathan protected him (vv. 1b-3). Jonathan informed David that his father was seeking to kill him. Also, Jonathan promised David that he would speak about him to Saul and then tell David anything that he might learn.

2. Jonathan's Appeasing of Saul

Jonathan appeased Saul concerning David by relating all the marvelous deeds David had done for Saul and for all Israel (vv. 4-5). As a result, Saul was appeased not to kill David, and David was in Saul's presence as before (vv. 6-7).

D. Attempting Again to Kill David

Saul was appeased only temporarily, for he attempted again to kill David (vv. 8-24; cf. Psa. 59, title).

1. By Trying to Strike David to the Wall

Saul tried to strike David to the wall while David was playing the lyre to Saul when Saul was troubled by an evil spirit from God (vv. 9-10a). Some readers of this book may be bothered by the fact that an evil spirit from Jehovah came upon Saul. They may wonder how such a thing could happen. In matters such as this, we need to realize that God is sovereign and that everything is under Him and everything is for Him to carry out His eternal plan.

2. David Fleeing from Saul with the Help of His Wife Michal, Saul's Daughter

David fled from Saul with the help of his wife Michal, Saul's daughter (vv. 10b-17). The very one whom Saul thought would be a snare to David was a help to him.

3. David Fleeing and Coming to Samuel at Ramah

David fled and came to Samuel at Ramah (vv. 18-24). In doing this David went to the proper source to receive consolation. Saul sent messengers three times to seize David, and each time the Spirit of God came upon the messengers to cause them to prophesy (vv. 19-21). Then Saul himself went to Ramah, and the Spirit of God came upon him as well to cause him to prophesy, even to strip off his clothes and prophesy before Samuel, laying naked all that day and all that night (vv. 22-24).

E. Jonathan's Help to David

Chapter twenty describes Jonathan's help to David. David entreated Jonathan to save him (vv. 1-10), and Jonathan helped David to flee from Saul (vv. 11-41a). Eventually, David and Jonathan departed from each other in the covenanted love (vv. 41b-42a), and David fled from Saul (v. 42b). This was all that David could do.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(3)

PREPARED BY GOD TO BE A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD 1 SAMUEL 16—2 SAMUEL 1

(3)

PERSECUTED AND TRIED BY SAUL

(2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 21—24

In this message we will continue to see how David was persecuted and tried by Saul.

Through all of Saul's persecution, David did not fight or do anything to avenge himself. The only thing he did was flee. As Saul was seeking to kill David, Jonathan and Michal helped him flee. Through them God sovereignly provided David with certain kinds of information. In everything related to David, God was sovereign.

From David's experience under Saul's persecution, we need to learn an important lesson. This lesson is that in the church life there should not be anything of the flesh; there should be no anger, no devices, no conspiracies, and no plots. The church is the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17), and in the church there must be the divine authority with the proper order. No one should overthrow this order. As we will see, David feared God and did not dare to overthrow the order arranged by God. It would be a shame for us to say that we are in the Lord's recovery, yet we do not know that there is a God-ordained order. Rebellion and fighting annul the church life.

With us there should be no rebellion, no anger, and no fighting. We should just live Christ in the spirit that we may live a church life according to the divine, ordained order.

We need to learn the lesson of crucifying the flesh. Avenging and fighting back are matters of the flesh. In Ephesians 4:26 Paul said, "Do not let the sun go down on your indignation." This means that when the sun sets our anger should also set. No anger should linger. This is the revelation in the Bible, and we should practice it.

In the kingdom of God the flesh has to be ruled out. Galatians 5:17 says that "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." Verse 24 says that "they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." Verse 21 says that those who partake of the things of the flesh "will not inherit the kingdom of God." If we are partakers with the flesh, we are through with the kingdom and will have no share in it. Things such as jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, and divisions are foreign articles in the kingdom. In the church life, therefore, there should not be any foreign articles.

Let us now see what is recorded in 1 Samuel 21 through 24 concerning David's being persecuted and tried by Saul.

VIII. SUPPLIED WITH THE HOLY BREAD OF THE PRESENCE AND WITH THE SWORD OF GOLIATH BY THE PRIEST AHIMELECH

When David was fleeing from Saul, he and his companions were supplied with the holy bread of the presence and with the sword of Goliath by Ahimelech the priest (21:1-9). The Lord Jesus referred to this when the Pharisees came to Him, saying, "Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:2). He answered them by reminding them that David and his companions had eaten of the holy bread of God's presence. He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, and those who were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and they ate the bread of the presence, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, except for the priests only? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath

the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here" (vv. 3-6). Christ is greater than David and greater than the temple. Without Christ, we should not do anything. Without Christ, whatever we do is wrong. With Christ, whatever we do is right. This is God's kingdom.

IX. FLEEING FROM SAUL AND GOING TO ACHISH KING OF GATH

A. Suspected by the Servants of King Achish

David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath (1 Sam. 21:10-15; cf. Psa. 56, title). The servants of Achish suspected him and said to him, "Is this not David king of the land? Is this not him of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying, Saul has stricken down his thousands; / But David, his ten thousands?" (v. 11).

B. Disguising Himself as a Madman to Escape from Gath

When David was suspected by the servants of King Achish, he disguised himself as a madman to escape from Gath (vv. 12-15; cf. Psa. 34, title). Saul's persecution of David was so severe that David was forced to disguise himself as a madman. It seemed as if there was no place for him in the land of Christ. In Isaiah 8 the good land was called the land of Immanuel. There was no place for this God-fearing and God-loving man to remain in the land of Immanuel, the land of Christ.

X. STAYING IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM AND IN MIZPEH OF MOAB AND IN THE FOREST OF HERETH OF JUDAH

David went from Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1-2; cf. Psa. 57, 142, titles). From there he went to Mizpeh of Moab (1 Sam. 22:3-4). But when Gad the prophet told him to depart and go into the land of Judah, David went into the forest of Hereth of Judah (v. 5).

XI. SAUL KILLING AHIMELECH THE PRIEST AND HIS FAMILY BECAUSE OF DAVID

When Ahimelech's supplying of David was reported to Saul, he killed Ahimelech and his family (vv. 6-23; cf. Psa. 52, title). This shows that Saul was utterly rebellious toward God. He had no subordination to God, nor did he take God as his King and Head. He was constituted with rebellion, which equals the worship of idols (15:23). Every case of rebellion is a matter of presumption, a matter of daring to do things without God.

XII. DEFEATING THE PHILISTINES AND STAYING IN KEILAH

According to 23:1-12 David defeated the Philistines and stayed in Keilah. Even though David was persecuted, he could still fight against the Philistines. However, instead of staying in the proper place, the good land, he stayed in Keilah.

XIII. REMAINING IN THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH

David remained in the wilderness of Ziph (vv. 13-28; cf. Psa. 54, 63, titles).

A. Saul Seeking Him Every Day, but God Not Delivering Him into Saul's Hand

Even though Saul sought for David every day, God did not deliver him into Saul's hand (1 Sam. 23:14).

B. David Being Strengthened by Jonathan the Son of Saul to Trust in God

David was strengthened by Jonathan the son of Saul to trust in God (vv. 15-18). There was an occasion when Jonathan could leave Saul and come to David for the purpose of strengthening him. Jonathan was surely a great provision for David.

C. David Hurrying to Get Away from Saul

David hurried to get away from Saul, while Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men in order to capture them. Then a message came to Saul that the Philistines had

raided the land. So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went to meet the Philistines (vv. 25-28).

XIV. DAVID GOING UP FROM THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH AND REMAINING IN THE STRONGHOLDS OF EN-GEDI

David went up from the wilderness of Ziph and remained in the strongholds of En-gedi (v. 29). When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told where David was, and Saul took three thousand choice men and went to seek David (24:1-2).

XV. SAUL FALLING INTO THE HAND OF DAVID, BUT DAVID NOT KILLING HIM

A. This Being God's Discipline on Saul in His Pursuing of David

When David and his men were hiding in a deep cave, Saul fell into David's hand (vv. 3-4a). This was God's discipline on Saul in his pursuing of David.

B. David Not Killing Saul but Only Cutting Off a Corner of Saul's Cloak

David would not kill Saul but only cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. However, even for this David's heart smote him, because of his fear of God in that Saul was God's anointed (vv. 4b-7). In God's kingdom there is a divine order of authority. Saul was not a self-appointed king; he was the king appointed and anointed by God. Saul was therefore the divine authority, and David feared God in this. David kept the God-ordained order of authority among God's elect. By so doing, David laid a good foundation for himself to be the king of God's elect in the coming days. If he had rebelled against Saul, then he would have been to the people an example of rebellion against the God-ordained, appointed king.

C. David Pleading with Saul

David pleaded with Saul, and Saul was somewhat influenced by David's appeal (vv. 8-15). What David did here was exactly what the New Testament teaches concerning not

repaying evil for evil but overcoming evil with good (Rom. 12:17, 21).

D. David's God-fearing and God-honoring Life Subduing the Reckless Saul

Finally, David's God-fearing and God-honoring life subdued the reckless Saul and stopped Saul from pursuing him (1 Sam. 24:16-22). In his relationship with Saul, David is a very good pattern for us in the church life today.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND DAVID'S TAKING THE LESSONS OF THE CROSS

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 18—24

I love the books of 1 and 2 Samuel because they contain many stories that are illustrations of real lessons in life. In the long section concerned with David's being persecuted and tried by Saul, there are two striking points—God's sovereignty and David's taking the lessons of the cross. My burden in this brief message is to speak a word regarding these two points.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The first striking point in this portion of 1 Samuel is God's sovereignty. It is crucial for us to have a vision of God's sovereignty. As the sovereign One, God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything.

Preparing Saul to Perfect David

On the one hand, God prepared David to be a man according to His heart for His kingdom. On the other hand, God prepared a Saul to perfect David by testing him and putting him on trial. Saul was produced and prepared through God's sovereignty. Without Saul, David would have been greatly lacking in perfecting. David's father and brothers did not care very much for him. David received only a limited perfecting through his experience with the lion and the bear. The greatest part of David's perfecting took place through Saul. Under God's sovereignty, Saul was an excellent perfecter.

Preparing Jonathan and Michal to Help David

In His sovereignty God not only prepared Saul to perfect David but also prepared Jonathan, the son of Saul, and

Michal, the daughter of Saul who became David's wife, to help David. Apart from the help rendered by Jonathan and Michal, David could not have endured being persecuted and tried by Saul. The sovereign God prepared David and, for David's sake, He also prepared Saul, Jonathan, and Michal.

DAVID'S TAKING THE LESSONS OF THE CROSS

The second striking point in this section of 1 Samuel is David's taking the lessons of the cross.

Always under the Cross

Although David was persecuted and suffered so much, he never fought, reacted, or responded. Using the New Testament term, he was always under the cross. He bore the cross every day under any kind of situation. He did not complain, criticize, oppose, or condemn. He was just under the cross to suffer the dealing.

Christ within Us Being the One Who Bears the Cross

The New Testament speaks of bearing the cross, but who is able to do this? Philippians 3:10 indicates that the strength for us to bear the cross is the power of Christ's resurrection. We have One who is not only resurrection power—we have One who Himself is the resurrection (John 11:25). He is our Jonathan and our Michal. He is much greater than Jonathan and Michal, and He is nearer to us. We have a Christ who is in us. While we are bearing the cross, actually we are not the ones who are doing this. The Christ who is within us is the One who bears the cross.

In the New Testament there are two crucial "ins." The New Testament revelation emphasizes the fact that, on the one hand, Christ is in us (Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27) and that, on the other hand, we are in Christ (John 14:20; 15:4; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:17; 12:2; Gal. 3:27-28). How wonderful it is that we are in Christ and that Christ is in us! The entering of Noah and his family into the ark, a type of Christ, illustrates that our Christ today is enterable. However, this illustration is limited,

because although Noah could enter into the ark, the ark could not enter into Noah. We therefore must go on to see that Christ is not only the enterable One—He is also the entering One, the One who has come into us to live in us and to bear the cross within us.

God's Provision

As David was taking the lessons of the cross, he enjoyed God's provision. Jonathan was a type of Christ as God's provision, and Michal was a type of God's provision. We have seen that when David was persecuted by Saul, he did not react in a negative way, and he did not complain, condemn, criticize, or oppose. The only thing he did was flee. As God's provision to David, both Jonathan and Michal helped David to flee. Without them, David would not have had a way to escape from Saul (1 Sam. 20:1-42; 19:11-18). Eventually, David "graduated" from his trials under Saul. If God had graded David, He surely would have given him the highest mark.

David Being the Gainer and the Enjoyer

Under God's sovereignty, David took the lessons of the cross. Because of this David eventually was not a loser but a gainer, not a sufferer but an enjoyer. Whereas David became the winner, Saul was the loser and also the sufferer.

The situation should be the same with us today. We need to learn two vital lessons—the lesson of God's sovereignty and the lesson of taking the cross with the power of resurrection. If we would be quiet, remaining in a situation under the cross, we may apparently be the losers and the sufferers, but actually we are the gainers and the enjoyers. The more we learn the lessons of God's sovereignty and of taking the cross, the more we will be the gainers and the enjoyers.

READING 1 AND 2 SAMUEL WITH A VIEW OF GOD'S ECONOMY

We need to read the books of 1 and 2 Samuel with a view of God's economy. In particular, we need to have the view of one who sees God's sovereignty and who has received the

grace to learn to suffer under the cross while enjoying all the provisions afforded by the processed, consummated Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

In the New Testament we have the pure revelation, but we do not have very many illustrations. However, the books of history in the Old Testament, especially 1 and 2 Samuel, contain many stories that actually are illustrations of the New Testament revelation. There are a number of lessons that we cannot learn adequately without these illustrations. As we read the stories in these books, we need to pray with Paul that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would give us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17). If we have such a spirit, then in the record concerning David's trials under Saul we will see the Triune God, the cross of Christ, and the power of His resurrection.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(4)

PREPARED BY GOD TO BE A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD 1 SAMUEL 16—2 SAMUEL 1

(4)

PERSECUTED AND TRIED BY SAUL

(3)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 25:1—28:2

In this message we will consider further the matter of David's being tried and persecuted by Saul.

XVI. SAMUEL DYING

In 25:1a we are told that Samuel died. All Israel mourned for him, and they buried him at his house in Ramah.

A. After the Proper and Full Enjoyment of His Portion in the Good Land Promised by God

Samuel died a peaceful death after the proper and full enjoyment of his portion in the good land promised by God. Samuel enjoyed the good land throughout his entire life. His enjoyment of the land exceeded that of everyone else in the Old Testament, including Joshua and Caleb, who spent much time fighting to gain possession of the land. From his youth in the tabernacle until the time of his death, Samuel enjoyed the good land in every way and in every sense.

B. After Being a Priest, a Prophet, and a Judge

Samuel became a priest, a prophet, and a judge to usher in the Davidic kingdom for the accomplishment of God's economy on the earth. He was the one who brought in the kingship, anointing both Saul and David, the first two kings. He therefore established the kingdom of God and wrote all the regulations concerning the kingdom of God.

C. In the Disappointment of Saul's Kingship

Samuel was deeply disappointed with Saul's kingship and mourned for Saul (15:35). Samuel mourned to such an extent that eventually God said to him, "How long will you mourn for Saul, though I have rejected him from being king over Israel?" (16:1a).

D. With the Encouraging Expectation of David's Kingship

Although Samuel was disappointed with Saul's kingship, he died with the encouraging expectation of David's kingship. This was a comfort to him. When he died, he was assured regarding the Davidic kingdom, a type of the kingdom of God. I believe that as Samuel was dying he was full of joy concerning this.

XVII. DAVID'S DEALING WITH NABAL AND ABIGAIL

First Samuel 25:1b-44 is an account of David's dealing with Nabal and Abigail.

A. David's Seeking Help from Nabal, Considering Himself a Son to Him

In verses 2 through 9 David sought help from Nabal, a wealthy man. David sent ten young men to Nabal, instructing them to say to him, "Live long; and peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have" (v. 6). The young men were also to say, "Give whatever you may have on hand to your servants and to your son David" (v. 8). Here David was very humble, considering himself a servant and a son to Nabal.

B. Nabal's Folly in His Rejecting David's Entreating and in His Insulting David's Servants

In his folly, Nabal rejected David's entreating and insulted David's servants. Nabal said to them, "Who is David, or who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who break away from their masters. Shall I then take my food and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" (vv. 10-11). When David's servants told him what Nabal said, David charged each of his men to gird on his sword (vv. 12-13). Then David said, "It was certainly in vain that I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that he has; for he has repaid me evil for good. May God do so to David's enemies, and even more, if I leave so much as a male child of all that he has until morning" (vv. 21-22).

David's word here indicates that he was offended by Nabal. In this matter David did not pass the test. He bore the cross under Saul, but in this small cross he failed. If David had taken the cross in this situation, he might have praised the Lord for Nabal's refusal to provide food. Then God might have come in to inspire Nabal to repent and come to David with an abundance of food. However, with Nabal David did not take the cross.

The situation is often the same with us today. It may be easy for us to prevail in bearing the bigger crosses, but we may be careless in bearing the smaller crosses. Through the small crosses the flesh is exposed.

C. The Wisdom of Abigail, the Wife of Nabal, in Appeasing David

In this chapter we see not only the folly of Nabal but also the wisdom of Abigail, Nabal's wife, in appeasing David (vv. 14-20, 23-25). She "hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two skins of wine and five sheep ready dressed and five measures of parched grain and one hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and she put them

on her donkeys" (v. 18). When she saw David, she fell at his feet and said, "Upon me alone, my lord, be this iniquity; and let your maidservant speak in your hearing, and hear the words of your maidservant. May my lord not take this worthless man Nabal to heart" (vv. 24-25a). Abigail went on to ask David to please forgive the transgression, and then she concluded, saying, "When Jehovah has done to my lord according to all the good He has spoken concerning you and has appointed you ruler over Israel, this will not be a qualm of conscience to you or a stumbling block in heart to my lord, that you shed blood without cause or that my lord has avenged himself. And when Jehovah has dealt well with my lord, may you remember your maidservant" (vv. 30-31).

David responded to Abigail's appeal by blessing Jehovah, who sent her to meet him, and also by blessing her, who kept him from entering into bloodshed and from avenging himself by his own hand. David then took from her hand what she had brought and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have listened to your voice and have accepted your person" (v. 35). Here we see that David's anger was appeased by Abigail's wisdom.

D. Nabal's Death under God's Striking

When Abigail told Nabal all these things, "his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. And about ten days later Jehovah struck Nabal, and he died" (vv. 36-38).

E. David's Marriage to Abigail

This chapter concludes with a word regarding David's marriage to Abigail (vv. 39-44). Her beauty and wisdom caught David, and after Nabal's death he took her as his wife. Here we see the weak point in David's life. He was quite prevailing and overcoming in nearly everything, but he was weak in the matter of sex. David overcame the lion and the bear, but he did not overcome his sexual lust. Eventually, David's weakness and indulgence contaminated the kingship of God's holiness. The root of his later failure in murdering Uriah and taking Bath-sheba was manifested here.

XVIII. JEHOVAH DELIVERING SAUL INTO THE HAND OF DAVID, BUT DAVID NOT KILLING HIM BECAUSE OF HIS FEAR OF GOD IN THAT SAUL WAS GOD'S ANOINTED

According to chapter twenty-six Jehovah delivered Saul into the hand of David, but David would not kill him because of his fear of God in that Saul was God's anointed. This indicates that before David became king, he set up a good order and pattern showing us how in God's kingdom we should honor God's ordination and respect and regard God's authority. Therefore, when David became king, everything was headed up.

A. David Hiding Himself on the Hill of Hachilah

David hid himself on the hill of Hachilah, and Saul was informed of this (v. 1).

B. Saul Seeking David Again

Saul sought David again (vv. 2-4). He went out with three thousand choice men of Israel to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. David sent spies and thereby learned for certain that Saul had come.

C. Jehovah Delivering Saul into the Hand of David, but David Not Killing Him

In verses 5 through 16 we see that whereas Jehovah delivered Saul into the hand of David, David would not kill him. Saul was "sleeping within the entrenchment, and his spear was stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay around him" (v. 7). Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand today" (v. 8a). He then encouraged David to have Saul killed by striking him with the spear to the ground. But David would not destroy Saul because of his fear of God in that Saul was God's anointed (vv. 9-11). David said to Abishai, "Jehovah forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against Jehovah's anointed" (v. 11a). Although David was weak in losing his

temper with Nabal and in taking Abigail his wife, in dealing with Saul David was an outstanding success.

D. David's Appeal to Saul

Verses 17 through 20 are concerned with David's appeal to Saul. When Saul recognized David's voice, David asked him, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?" (v. 18).

1. Begging Saul Not to Drive Him Out so that He Could Not Share in Jehovah's Inheritance

David begged Saul not to drive him out so that he could not share in Jehovah's inheritance, the good land, but go to serve other gods (vv. 19b-20a). David considered that to remain in the good land was the greatest blessing. To be driven out of the good land and to go to another land to serve other gods was a curse. By this we can see that this book is on the enjoyment of the good land, that is, the enjoyment of Christ.

2. Likening Himself to a Single Flea and a Partridge in the Mountains

In his appeal to Saul, David likened himself to a single flea and a partridge in the mountains (v. 20b).

E. Saul's Repenting

Even though Saul was wicked, he was still human and was touched by David's word and repented (vv. 21-25).

1. Admitting That He Had Sinned

Saul admitted that he had sinned, acted foolishly, and made a very great mistake (v. 21).

2. Blessing David by Saying That David Would Most Certainly Do Great Things and Prevail

Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David. You shall most certainly both do and prevail" (v. 25). However, Saul did not say anything about the kingship or kingdom, because he still wanted his son Jonathan to succeed him as king.

XIX. DAVID'S ESCAPING TO AND STAYING IN THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES

A. Escaping to Achish King of Gath

"David said in his heart, I will now one day perish at the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines; then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within all the territory of Israel. Thus I will escape from his hand" (27:1). After realizing this, David and his men crossed over to Achish (vv. 2-3).

B. Saul Ceasing to Seek David

Because David had escaped into the land of the Philistines, Saul ceased to seek him (v. 4). Saul felt that he was at peace because David had gone out of the holy land. This indicates that David had done the right thing in leaving the holy land temporarily.

C. Staying in Ziklag

David stayed in Ziklag (27:5—28:2). According to verse 7 he stayed in the land of the Philistines a year and four months. During that time he attacked and destroyed the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites, but he pretended before King Achish that he attacked the south of Judah (vv. 8-12).

D. Achish Making David His Bodyguard for Life

In 28:1-2 we are told that Achish made David his bodyguard for life.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(5)

PREPARED BY GOD TO BE A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD 1 SAMUEL 16—2 SAMUEL 1

(5)

PERSECUTED AND TRIED BY SAUL

(4)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 28:3—30:31

From the tragic end of Saul we can learn many things concerning God's economy. The tragedy suffered by Saul was altogether due to his not being properly related to God's economy. God is carrying out His economy on earth, and He brought Saul into His economy. Instead of participating in God's economy and cooperating with it, Saul was selfish. God wanted to build up His kingdom among His chosen people, but Saul usurped God's kingdom to build up his own monarchy. With David the situation was entirely different. When David was anointed by Samuel, he had a clear understanding that he had been assigned by God to be the king, but he did not have any thought about kingship. After Saul was appointed to be the king, he was immediately filled with thoughts of the kingship, including how his son would succeed him (20:31). In this Saul was selfish and wrong to the uttermost. He sought to build his selfish monarchy rather than the kingdom of God.

Eventually, God gave Saul up and cut him off, tearing the kingdom away from him. In 15:28 Samuel said to Saul,

"Jehovah has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today and has given it to an associate of yours, who is better than you." Because Saul was given up by God, he was left alone, like an orphan, having no provision of help when trouble came. Even though David was the most skillful and experienced fighter, he was of no use to Saul because of Saul's selfishness and envy. Actually, because Saul wanted to do away with him, David was forced to go to a country that was Israel's biggest enemy (27:1-2).

David went to the Philistines, in particular to King Achish. When the Philistines gathered their camps to fight against Israel, David, who had become the bodyguard to King Achish, was in a dilemma of being one with the Philistines to fight against Israel. This dilemma was the result of Saul's selfishness. The people of Israel suffered defeat and were slaughtered also because of Saul's selfishness. But God in His sovereignty came in to deal with Saul and to rescue David from his dilemma.

We need to muse upon every aspect of this story, for it contains some lessons that we need to learn. First, from this story, this illustration, we should learn the lesson of crucifying our flesh. Next, we should learn to condemn our selfishness—our self-interest and self-seeking. Furthermore, Saul was full of self, and from his tragic end we must learn to deny our self. As the Lord Jesus said, if we would follow Him, we must deny the self and take up the cross (Matt. 16:24).

At this juncture let us consider some further matters concerning David's being persecuted and tried by Saul.

XX. SAUL'S TRAGIC END PRETOLD BY SAMUEL

In 1 Samuel 28:3-25 we see that Saul's tragic end was pretold by Samuel.

A. Samuel Having Died

First Samuel 28:3a tells us that Samuel was dead and that all Israel had mourned for him and had buried him in his own city, Ramah. The death of Samuel was a great loss to Saul.

B. Saul Having the Mediums and the Soothsayers Put Out of the Land

By the time of chapter twenty-eight Saul had the mediums and the soothsayers put out of the land (v. 3b). Since mediums and soothsayers contact evil spirits, Saul did a good thing in having them removed from the country of Israel.

C. The Philistines Gathering Together against Israel, and Saul Being Greatly Afraid of Them

The Philistines gathered together against Israel, and Saul was greatly afraid of them (vv. 4-5). He was afraid because his courage and boldness had been taken away by God. God is our real encouragement and boldness. Without Him, we have nothing.

D. Saul Inquiring of Jehovah, but Jehovah Not Answering Him

Saul inquired of Jehovah, but Jehovah did not answer him, not by dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets (v. 6).

E. Saul Seeking a Medium and Inquiring of Her

Saul sought a medium and inquired of her (vv. 7-11). In chapter fifteen Samuel had warned Saul that his rebellion was like the sin of divination (v. 23). But here in chapter twenty-eight Saul practiced divination, which involves contact with evil spirits and is even worse than idol worship.

F. Samuel Coming and Speaking to Saul

Without the medium doing anything, Samuel came and spoke to Saul (vv. 12-19). Samuel told Saul that Jehovah had turned away from him and had become his adversary (v. 16). Then Samuel told Saul that Jehovah had torn the kingdom out from his hand and had given it to David, an associate of his (v. 17). Finally, Samuel told Saul that Jehovah would also give Israel with Saul into the hand of the Philistines and that the next day he and his sons would be destroyed (v. 19).

G. Saul Being Threatened

Saul was threatened and fell to the ground, and then he went away from the medium (vv. 20-25).

XXI. DAVID BEING SOVEREIGNLY KEPT AWAY BY GOD FROM JOINING THE PHILISTINES' CAMP TO FIGHT AGAINST ISRAEL

In chapter twenty-nine David was sovereignly kept away by God from joining the Philistines' camp to fight against Israel. The lords of the Philistines refused to have David go with them into battle against Israel, and Achish therefore sent him away (vv. 6-11).

A. Not to Get Involved in the Destruction of Saul, His Sons, and the Men of Israel

If David had fought against Israel, he would have had a bad name for the rest of his life. David, however, was not involved in the destruction of Saul, his sons (including Jonathan), and the men of Israel (31:1-6).

B. To Rescue His Two Wives and the Families of His Men

Under God's sovereignty David was kept from joining the camp of the Philistines so that David could rescue his two wives and the families of his men, who had been captured by the Amalekites (30:18-20).

C. To Save Himself from the Turmoil of His Men in Losing Their Families

Under God's sovereignty, David saved himself from the turmoil of his men in losing their families to the Amalekites (30:1-6a).

D. To Send Some of the Spoil as Presents

Finally, as a result of being sovereignly kept by God from joining the Philistines' camp to fight against Israel, David, after defeating the Amalekites, sent some of his spoil as presents to his friends and friends of his men in many cities (vv. 26-31).

XXII. DAVID CONQUERING THE AMALEKITES AND CAPTURING THEIR CAPTIVES

Chapter thirty tells us that David conquered the Amalekites and captured their captives.

A. The Amalekites Conquering Ziklag and Burning It

The Amalekites had conquered Ziklag and burned it and captured all the women, including the families of David's men and his two wives (vv. 1-6a).

B. David Strengthening Himself in Jehovah and Seeking for Jehovah's Leading to Pursue after the Amalekites and Capture Their Captives

The soul of all the people was bitter, and they spoke of stoning David, but he "strengthened himself in Jehovah his God" (v. 6b). Following this, he told Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod to him, and he inquired of Jehovah, saying, "Shall I pursue after this band? Will I overtake them?" Jehovah said to him, "Pursue, for you will certainly overtake them, and you will certainly deliver them" (v. 8). Then David and four hundred of his men pursued the Amalekites, with the assistance of a young man of Egypt who was a servant of an Amalekite. The provision of the help from this Egyptian indicates that the details of David's environment were under God's sovereignty. Eventually, David conquered the Amalekites and captured their captives, delivering all that the Amalekites had taken. "Nothing was missed by them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil nor anything that they had taken; David brought everything back. And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drove before the other cattle and of which they said, This is David's spoil" (vv. 19-20).

C. David Sharing the Spoil with the Two Hundred Men Who Had Not Been Able to Follow Him

David shared the spoil with the two hundred men who

had not been able to follow him in pursuing the Amalekites (vv. 21-25). Concerning this David said, "As his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike" (v. 24). From that day forward David made this a statute and an ordinance for Israel (v. 25).

D. David Sending Presents from His Spoil to His Friends and the Friends of His Men in Many Cities

Finally, according to verses 26 through 31, David sent presents from his spoil to his friends and the friends of his men in many cities.

I wish to say once again that we need to relate everything in these chapters to God's economy. All the small things in this record show that God was working in a detailed way to carry out His economy. God exercised His sovereignty to rescue David from his dilemma. God did this not only for David's sake but also for the sake of His economy. God preserved David, keeping him in His hands, for the accomplishment of His economy. In Matthew 1:1 Jesus Christ is called the son of David. This indicates that David was very much related to God's becoming a man named Jesus and to fulfill what had been determined in eternity past. Without David there would not have been the genealogy through which Christ as God became a man to be one with mankind. If David had been destroyed, the genealogy of Christ would have been terminated, and God would not have had a way to carry out His economy.

At this point it would be helpful to compare the situations of David and Saul toward the end of 1 Samuel. By fighting the Amalekites David gained many rich spoils. While he was becoming rich, Saul was being defeated. David was flourishing, but Saul was diminishing, even to death. If Saul had had the proper view regarding the kingdom of God, he would have realized that David, a skilled and vigorous fighter, could have been of great help to him in defeating the Philistines for the building up of the kingdom of God. But due to his selfishness Saul lost this provision and even persecuted David and forced

him to flee. However, under God's sovereignty this persecuted one became flourishing and was established in the good land to enjoy God's portion. David's situation became brighter and brighter, whereas Saul's situation became darker and darker until, with his sons, he died a tragic death.

Saul's tragic ending should warn us not to play with God. We should not try to build up any kind of monarchy. We are all here to build up the kingdom, the Body of Christ. In the Lord's recovery we do not have many pieces of work. No matter where we may be, we have only one work. We should not be today's Saul, considering only the work in our region and trying to build up a monarchy for ourselves.

We all, especially our co-workers, should realize that we are not involved in a small work. David probably never realized that his history was fully related to God's becoming a man to join Himself to mankind and to live on earth to accomplish His eternal will. Nevertheless, David was related to the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1, and what we are doing today is related to the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. Therefore, we must have the confidence that we are of God, that we are under His sovereignty, and that we are doing one unique work—the work in His recovery to carry out His economy, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(6)

PREPARED BY GOD TO BE A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD 1 SAMUEL 16—2 SAMUEL 1

(6)

PERSECUTED AND TRIED BY SAUL

(5)

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam 31:1—2 Sam. 1:27

In this message we will consider the ending of Saul (1 Sam. 31) and David's reaction to it (2 Sam. 1).

XXIII. THE ENDING OF SAUL

The first point concerning Saul's ending was that he lost God's presence (1 Sam. 16:14). Today we treasure and enjoy God's presence. God's presence is just the Spirit. The Spirit is the resurrection of Christ; the resurrection of Christ is Christ Himself (John 11:25); and Christ is the embodiment of the processed and consummated Triune God. The Spirit is the reality of God and of the resurrection of Christ. If we have the Spirit, we are in resurrection. If we have the resurrection, we have Christ. If we have Christ, we have the embodiment of God. It is a tragedy that many of today's Christians miss the Spirit. They have the Spirit in their theology, but they do not treasure the Spirit as the consummated God.

At this point I would like to say a word about the steps of God's process. God in eternity past was merely God, divine

and triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. According to His desire God made an economy, and according to His economy He created the heavens and the earth with man as the center. Yet He still remained purely divine. However, God intended to join Himself to man in order to make Himself one with man. Thus He became a man through incarnation, putting on man's blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14). In eternity past He was merely divine, but by being incarnated He became a God-man named Jesus Christ. Through the process of incarnation He entered into humanity, making Himself, the divine One, one with humanity. In this way He became the God-man, the One who is both divine and human, the complete God and the perfect man.

As the almighty, eternal, and complete God, He lived in humanity for thirty-three and a half years. Then, as the eternal One who is the eternal life, He entered into death and toured Hades for three days. Rising from Hades, He walked out of death and entered into resurrection. Through incarnation He brought God into man, and in resurrection He brought man into God. Through incarnation He brought divinity into humanity, and in resurrection He brought humanity into divinity. After His resurrection He entered into heaven, and today He is in the heavens as a man sitting on the throne (Acts 7:56; Heb. 1:3b; Eph. 1:20).

As such a One, He is now the consummated God, having passed through the steps of incarnation, human living, the all-inclusive death, resurrection, and ascension. In ascension as the consummated Triune God He remains the complete God mingled with the perfect man—the God-man. This realization is the conclusion of our study of the Bible over the last seven decades.

Today as the consummated God He is the Spirit, our life, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Master, our Lord, our Father, and our God. He is everything to us. He became a man that we as men may become God in life and nature (but not in the Godhead). He has made Himself one with us, and He has made us one with Him. He went through human living, and we traveled with Him. He went to the cross, and we were crucified with Him. He resurrected, and we resurrected with

Him. He is in the heavens, and we are there with Him. Now the consummated Triune God as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) indwells our spirit (6:17; Rom. 8:11). Hence, the realization of God's presence is altogether a matter of these two spirits.

Saul lost God's presence, and eventually death came in every way, in every aspect, and in every sense. Saul and his sons died a corporate death. Let us now consider the account of the ending of Saul in 1 Samuel 31.

A. The Philistines Fighting against Israel

At the time of chapter thirty-one, the Philistines were fighting against Israel (v. 1a).

B. The Men of Israel Fleeing

The men of Israel fled from the Philistines and fell down slain before them on Mount Gilboa (v. 1b).

C. The Philistines Chasing Saul and His Sons

The Philistines chased Saul and his sons and struck down his three sons, including Jonathan (v. 2).

D. Saul Being Badly Wounded and Taking His Sword and Falling on It

The battle bore heavily against Saul, and he was badly wounded by the archers. Saul asked his armor bearer to draw his sword and thrust him through with it, but the armor bearer refused. Then Saul took his sword and fell on it (vv. 3-4).

E. Saul's Armor Bearer Falling on His Sword and Dying with Him

Saul's armor bearer fell likewise on his sword and died with him (v. 5). Therefore, Saul, his three sons, and his armor bearer died that day together (v. 6). This corporate death was God's fair judgment on the one who had rebelled against Him, had usurped Him, and had become His enemy. Saul had set

up his own monarchy, abusing to the uttermost all the divine things given to him.

F. The Men of Israel Forsaking the Cities and Fleeing

The men of Israel on the other side of the valley and on the other side of the Jordan forsook the cities and fled, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them (v. 7).

G. The Philistines Finding Saul and His Sons Fallen on Mount Gilboa

The next day the Philistines came to strip the slain and they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor and sent them all around throughout the land of the Philistines, in order to announce the good news in the houses of their idols and to their people. Then they put Saul's armor in the house of Ashtaroth and fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan (vv. 8-10). What a terrible ending!

H. The Inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead Hearing What the Philistines Had Done to Saul

The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, and all the valiant men went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan and burned them and buried them at Jabesh. Then they fasted seven days (vv. 11-13).

XXIV. THE REACTION OF DAVID

In 2 Samuel 1 we see David's reaction to the death of Saul.

A. A Young Amalekite Reporting the Death of Saul to David

On the third day after Saul's death, a young Amalekite reported the death of Saul to David. In order to please David he told him that he saw Saul leaning on his spear and that Saul had asked him to kill him and that he had done so (vv. 1-10).

B. David Condemning the Amalekite for Killing the Anointed of Jehovah

David was not pleased with the report of the young Amalekite, but rather condemned him for killing the anointed of Jehovah and sentenced him to death (vv. 11-16). David did not consider Saul his enemy but always regarded him as God's anointed. This was David's view of Saul.

C. David Singing a Dirge over Saul and over Jonathan His Son

David was deeply saddened by the death of Saul. David sang a dirge over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he commanded that The Song of the Bow be taught to the children of Judah (vv. 17-27).

The record of Saul's terrible end is a strong warning to all the serving ones in the kingdom of God not to do a separate work within the kingdom of God or to abuse anything in the kingdom. In the Lord's recovery we must be in fear and trembling, always working for God's kingdom and not for our own work.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE NINETEEN

LESSONS OF THE FIVE MAJOR FIGURES CONCERNING THE ENJOYMENT OF THE GOOD LAND IN 1 SAMUEL 1 TO 2 SAMUEL 1

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 2:27-30, 35; 3:21; 12:3-5, 23; 18:1-4; 23:16-18; 9:1-2, 17; 13:13-14; 15:19, 23; 16:1, 12-13; 30:6b-10; 26:19b

The books of Samuel, as books of history, are on Christ for our enjoyment that God may carry out His economy. These books reveal the right, the particular, and even the full way for us to enjoy Christ that we may be a part of God's economy. Concerning this we need to realize that God desires people who are according to Him, people who are His duplication. In the long period of history covered in 1 Samuel 1 to 2 Samuel 1, there are five major figures: Eli, Samuel, Jonathan, Saul, and David. We need to learn the lessons of these five persons in relation to God's economy.

I. LESSONS OF ELI

A. A Priest by Birth according to God's Ordination

A descendant of Aaron, who was chosen to be God's priest, Eli was a priest by birth according to God's ordination.

B. Having the Right to Enjoy the Top Portion of the Good Land

As a priest Eli had the right to enjoy the top portion of all the good land allotted to the twelve tribes of Israel (Num. 18).

C. Disregarding the Priesthood in His Loose Disciplining of His Two Evil Sons

Eli disregarded the priesthood in his loose disciplining of

his two evil sons (1 Sam. 2:28-29). This caused the tragedy of the ending of his history, the termination of his enjoyment of the good land, and the fading of the priesthood in the divine revelation, that is, in the speaking for God. Today we need to learn of Eli to have a high regard for what God has given us in His recovery.

II. LESSONS OF SAMUEL

A. Being Faithful in All His Statuses and Offices

Samuel was faithful in all his statuses and offices. As a Levite, he served God his whole life. As a Nazarite, he kept his consecration without failure. As a priest-prophet, he spoke for God honestly and initiated the prophethood to replace the fading priesthood in the divine revelation. As a judge, he was faithful to God and just to the people, terminating the judgeship and bringing in the kingship for the changing of the age in the fulfillment of God's economy on the earth.

B. Enjoying His Portion of the Good Land to the Fullest for His Whole Life

Samuel enjoyed his portion of the good land to the fullest for his whole life. He was therefore a person who enjoyed the God-allotted portion of the promised good land, that is, Christ. There was no defect in his enjoyment of Christ.

C. The Only Defect in His History Being His Appointing His Two Sons as Judges among the Children of Israel

The only defect in Samuel's history was that he appointed his two sons as judges among the children of Israel. His sons did not follow in his ways, and this gave cause for the children of Israel to ask for a king (8:1-7). Humanly speaking, Samuel made a mistake in this matter, but this mistake helped God to manage the situation among His people for the fulfillment of His economy.

III. LESSONS OF JONATHAN THE SON OF SAUL

A. Loving David and Covenanting with Him

Jonathan loved David, covenanted with him, and predicted that he would be the second in David's kingdom when David would be the king (18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:8, 14-17, 41-42; 23:16-18). Saul's intention was to preserve the kingdom for Jonathan. However, Jonathan was not willing to take the kingdom but recognized that David should be on the throne. Jonathan should have told his father about this and then should have left his father to be with David. In typology, for Jonathan to follow David would have signified our following Christ today and our giving Him the preeminence. If Jonathan had gone with David, Saul might not have suffered such a tragic ending. Saul might have been helped by Jonathan not to build up a monarchy for himself but to build up the kingdom of God.

B. Not Going to Follow David but Staying with His Father

Jonathan realized that David would be the king, but instead of going to follow David, Jonathan stayed with his father because of his natural affection toward his father.

C. Suffering the Same Fate as His Father

Because Jonathan would not leave his father, he suffered the same fate as his father and died with him in the battle.

D. Losing the Proper and Adequate Enjoyment of His Portion in the Good Land Promised by God

Jonathan lost the proper and adequate enjoyment of his portion in the good land promised by God because of his failure in not following David according to God's will due to his natural affection toward his father.

IV. LESSONS OF SAUL

A. Chosen by God and Anointed by Samuel to Be the King of Israel

Saul was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to be the king of Israel (9:17; 10:1, 24).

B. Disobeying God's Word at Least Twice

Saul disobeyed God's word at least twice so that he lost his kingship and his kingdom (13:13-14; 15:19, 23; 28:17-19). When Saul disobeyed God in chapter fifteen, he actually rebelled against Him. Thus, in this chapter Samuel told Saul, "Rebellion is like the sin of divination, / And insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim" (v. 23a). To practice divination is to have contact with evil spirits, something that is utterly contrary to God's principle. What Saul did in rebelling against God was like this sin of divination. Saul was not subordinate to God and in fact became an enemy to God. As a result, he lost his kingship.

C. His Ambition and Jealousy Confiscating and Ending His Enjoyment of the Good Land Promised by God

Saul's ambition to have the kingdom for himself and for his son, with his jealousy of David, confiscated and ended his enjoyment of the good land promised by God (20:30-34).

V. LESSONS OF DAVID

A. Being Chosen and Anointed by God through Samuel and Praised by the Women of Israel as Higher than Saul

First, David was chosen and anointed by God through Samuel (16:1, 12-13). After David slew Goliath he was praised by the women of Israel as higher than Saul (18:7).

B. Not Being Made Proud nor Becoming Ambitious for the Kingship

With David there is no hint that he was made proud nor that he became ambitious for the kingship.

C. Going through the Trial of Saul's Persecution

After David was anointed and before he was enthroned as the king of Israel, he went through the trial of Saul's persecution for about seven years, from about 1063—1057 B.C. While he was under the trial, he was approved to be the right

one to carry out God's economy by establishing the kingdom of God on the earth.

D. Not Destroying Saul because of His Fear of God

When David was under Saul's persecution, he had two chances to destroy Saul. However, David would not do this because of his fear of God in that Saul was God's anointed (chs. 24, 26). The fact that David would not do anything to damage God's anointed indicates that David maintained a good order in God's kingdom.

E. Forced to Stay in the Land of the Philistines

Although David had slain Goliath, the giant of the Philistines, and could have been useful to Saul in utterly defeating the Philistines, Saul would not use David to accomplish this but instead persecuted him. David was forced, by Saul's seeking to kill him, to stay in the land of the Philistines (27:1-7).

F. Not Rejoicing at the Death of Saul

At the death of Saul David did not rejoice but rather sentenced to death the reporter of Saul's death and then sang a dirge praising and uplifting Saul to the uttermost (2 Sam. 1).

G. Not Avenging Himself but Denying Himself for the Fulfilling of God's Purpose

No doubt, David learned a lot regarding not avenging himself but denying himself for the fulfilling of God's purpose, on the basis that he was a man according to God's heart (1 Sam. 13:14a).

H. Being a Person Who Trusted in God and Walked according to God's Sovereignty

David was a person who trusted in God and walked according to God's sovereignty in all his trials (17:36-37; 23:14-16; 30:6b-10). While he was under trial, he sought God's leading. He was one with God and behaved according to God.

I. Being a Typical Model of a Genuine Child of Israel in the Enjoyment of the Good Land Promised and Given by God to His Chosen People

David is a typical model of a genuine child of Israel in the enjoyment of the good land promised and given by God to His chosen people, by trusting in God and walking with God according to His leading and instruction. David expected to remain in the good land and share in Jehovah's inheritance and serve Him (26:19b). His sincere trust in God and his faithful walk with God qualified him fully to enjoy the good land to a high level, even up to the kingship in the good land according to God's heart with a kingdom which became the kingdom of God on the earth. David was one with God. What was his was God's, and what was God's was his. He and God had only one kingdom. Such a one enjoyed the good land, Christ, to the uttermost.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(7)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(1)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 2—3

In this message we come to the second major section of the history concerning David (2 Sam. 2—24). This section covers the matter of David's being crowned by the people to be the king for the kingdom of God on the earth.

I. CROWNED BY THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

After David passed through all the trials and was approved by God, he was crowned by the tribe of Judah.

A. In Hebron

When David inquired of Jehovah whether he should go up into one of the cities of Judah, Jehovah told him to go up to Hebron. David went to Hebron, bringing up his men who were with him and their households. They dwelt in the cities of Hebron, and there in Hebron the men of Judah anointed David king over the house of Judah (2:1-4a).

B. At the Age of Thirty

According to 5:4 David was thirty years of age when he began to reign.

C. To Reign over the House of Judah for Seven and a Half Years

The house of Judah followed David, and he reigned over the house of Judah for seven and a half years (2:10b-11).

D. Gaining the Men of Jabesh-gilead Who Had Buried Saul

David gained the men of Jabesh-gilead who had buried Saul (vv. 4b-7). When David was informed concerning what they had done, he sent messengers to them, telling them that they were blessed of Jehovah for showing this kindness to Saul and promising to repay them for this good thing which they had done. In this way David gained these men of Jabesh-gilead.

E. Ish-bosheth Rivaling David in the Kingship

In verses 8 through 10a we see that Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, at the age of forty rivaled David in the kingship. Abner, the son of Ner, the captain of Saul's army, helped Ish-bosheth to become king. Abner took him and made him king over all Israel, and Ish-bosheth reigned over Israel for two years.

F. The War between the House of Saul and the House of David

Second Samuel 2:12—4:12 is a record of the war between the house of Saul and the house of David.

1. The Servants of Ish-bosheth Competing with the Servants of David and Being Defeated by Them

The servants of Ish-bosheth competed with the servants of David and were defeated by them (vv. 12-17). Verse 17 says, "The battle was very severe that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were routed before the servants of David."

2. Asahel, a Servant of David, Pursuing After Abner and Being Killed by Him

Asahel, a servant of David, pursued after Abner, a servant of Ish-bosheth. Abner said to him, "Turn away from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to Joab your brother?" (vv. 18-22). Asahel refused, and he was killed by Abner (v. 23).

3. Abner Appealing for Peace, and Joab Responding to Him

Abner appealed for peace, and Joab responded to him (vv. 24-29). Verse 28 says that Joab blew the trumpet and "all the people stood still; and they pursued after Israel no more, neither did they fight any more." There was peace for a period of time.

4. David's Servants Killing Three Hundred and Sixty Men of Ish-bosheth

In this battle nineteen of David's servants plus Asahel were missing, and the servants of David killed 360 men of Ish-bosheth (vv. 30-32).

5. The House of David Becoming Stronger, and the House of Saul Becoming Weaker

The war between the house of Saul and the house of David was long. The house of David became continually stronger, and the house of Saul became continually weaker (3:1).

6. David Begetting Six Sons of Six Wives, Respectively, in Hebron

David begot six sons of six wives, respectively, in Hebron (vv. 2-5).

7. Abner Rebelling against Ish-bosheth

While there was war between the house of David and the house of Saul, Abner made himself strong in the house of Saul. He went in to Saul's concubine, but he was checked by Ish-bosheth, and rebelled against him (vv. 6-11). Abner said to Ish-bosheth, "May God do so to Abner, and even more, if I do not do for David as Jehovah has sworn to him; to transfer

the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba!" (vv. 9-10).

8. Abner Appealing to David

Abner appealed to David, asking him to make a covenant with him. David said that he would make a covenant with him, and then he requested Abner to bring Saul's daughter Michal his wife to him (vv. 12-16).

9. Abner Persuading the Elders of Israel to Take David as Their King

Abner persuaded the elders of Israel to take David as their king (vv. 17-21). He told them that Jehovah had spoken of David, saying, "By My servant David I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines and out of the hand of all their enemies" (v. 18). David held a feast for Abner and for the men who were with him, and Abner said to David, "I will rise up and go and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you and that you may reign over all that your soul desires" (v. 21).

10. Joab Not Agreeing with David concerning Abner's Appeal to David

Joab did not agree with David concerning Abner's appeal to David. Joab killed Abner by plotting to avenge himself of Abner's killing his brother Asahel (vv. 22-27).

11. David Regretting Abner's Death

David regretted Abner's death, wept at Abner's grave, and lamented for him (vv. 28-39).

While all the events recorded in these chapters were taking place, God was present in His sovereignty behind the scene. After Saul's death only one tribe—Judah—was loyal to David. David was crowned by the tribe of Judah, but Ish-bosheth rivaled him in the kingship, and there was war between the house of David and the house of Saul. Everything that happened was in David's favor. He did not do anything; rather, he was simply the enjoyer on the throne.

I wish to emphasize the fact that behind all the details

concerning the house of David and the house of Saul, God was there in His sovereignty. God was behind the scene to direct the situation so that it would turn out in favor of David.

God's intention was to terminate the house of Saul. Saul had four sons. Three went to the war with Saul and were killed with him in the battle. Ish-bosheth was spared, but he was killed within two years, ending Saul's family. When the nursing mother of Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth, heard the news that Saul and Jonathan were dead in the war, she ran with the little child in her bosom, and he fell down to the ground (4:4). As a result, he became crippled. Thus, in a short time God terminated the entire family of Saul, leaving just one crippled boy as an orphan under the loving care of David, who kept his covenant with Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14-17; 2 Sam. 9:1-13). We all need to learn a lesson from these illustrations—to fear God and not play with Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(8)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(2)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 4—5

In this message we will continue to consider the matters related to David's being crowned by the tribe of Judah, in particular the matter of the war between the house of Saul and the house of David (2:1—4:12). Then we will see that David was crowned by the other tribes (5:1-5) and established by God as king with his kingdom exalted for the sake of God's people Israel (vv. 6-25).

12. Ish-bosheth Hearing of Abner's Death

Abner was the one who had taken Ish-bosheth and made him king over all Israel (2:8-9). When Ish-bosheth heard of Abner's death in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel was dismayed (4:1).

13. Jonathan's Son Mephibosheth Being Made Lame

Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son whose name was Mephibosheth. When the boy's nurse received the news that Saul and Jonathan had died in the battle against the Philistines,

she took up the child and fled. As she hurried to flee, Mephibosheth fell and was made lame (v. 4).

14. The Two Sons of Rimmon the Beerithite Murdering Ish-bosheth

The two sons of Rimmon the Beerithite murdered Ish-bosheth and brought his head to David in Hebron to please him (vv. 2-3, 5-8). They said to him, "Jehovah has granted my lord the king to be avenged this day of Saul and of his seed" (v. 8b).

15. David Reacting Negatively and Sentencing the Two Murderers to Death

Instead of being pleased, David reacted negatively and sentenced the two murderers to death (vv. 9-12). First, he told them about what he had done to the one who thought that he was bringing good news by telling him that Saul had died. Then David commanded his young men, and they slew the two murderers.

II. CROWNED BY ALL THE OTHER TRIBES

According to 5:1-5 David gained the heart of the people and was crowned by all the other tribes.

A. In Hebron

David was crowned by the other tribes in Hebron (vv. 1-3). They came to him there and said, "Here we are; we are your bone and your flesh. Even previously, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And Jehovah said to you, You shall shepherd My people Israel, and you shall be ruler over Israel" (vv. 1b-2). When all the elders of Israel came to King David at Hebron, he made a covenant with them before Jehovah, and they anointed him king over Israel (v. 3).

B. At the Age of Thirty-seven

Verses 4 and 5 tell us that David was thirty-seven years old when he began to reign.

C. Reigning over All Israel and Judah for Thirty-three Years

David reigned for forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years (vv. 4b-5).

III. ESTABLISHED BY GOD AS KING WITH HIS KINGDOM EXALTED FOR THE SAKE OF GOD'S PEOPLE ISRAEL

David was established by God as king with his kingdom exalted for the sake of God's people Israel (vv. 6-25). Here we see that David's kingdom was established by God. Saul, on the contrary, had tried to exalt himself with his monarchy, but he did not succeed. With David, God did everything to establish and exalt him and his kingdom for the sake of God's people. From this we need to learn that if we do anything for ourselves, God will not exalt us, but if we live our lives for God's kingdom and God's people, God will exalt us for His people's sake. Therefore, we should not seek any kind of self-exaltation. If we do, we will suffer and be put down (Matt. 23:12). Saul tried his best to exalt himself, but in just one day Saul and three of his sons were terminated. On the same day that God was putting down Saul, He was exalting David (1 Sam. 30—31).

The history concerning David, particularly the record in 1 Samuel 18:1 through 2 Samuel 5:25, reveals that our God is sovereign. It may seem that He is silent and that He is hiding Himself, but He is everywhere and with everyone. I believe, for example, that God motivated all the lords of the Philistines to complain about David, making it necessary for Achish to send David away (1 Sam. 29:1-11). This rescued David from the dilemma of having to fight with the Philistines against Israel. From this we can see that God was doing everything behind the scenes, directing everyone to accomplish His purpose for the carrying out of His economy. Everything, everyone, and every situation were in the hand of the God in whom David trusted. David did nothing, but God did everything behind the scenes. As a result, Saul was

put down, and David was exalted. After the death of Saul, "there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David became continually stronger, and the house of Saul became continually weaker" (2 Sam. 3:1). Throughout the books of 1 and 2 Samuel we can see that God was moving and acting all the time in every way for Himself, His kingdom, His people, and the accomplishing of His economy. Without anyone seeing or knowing, God takes care of everything according to His will to accomplish His economy (Eph. 1:11).

A. In His Victory over the Jebusites

A number of matters in 2 Samuel 5:6-25 are evidence that God had established David and had exalted his kingdom. The first of these is recorded in verses 6 through 8, where we see that David was established by God in his victory over the Jebusites.

B. In the Building of Zion as His Stronghold and of Jerusalem and in His Becoming Greater and Greater

David's being established by God is seen also in the building of Zion as his stronghold and of Jerusalem (v. 9). Furthermore, "David became greater and greater; and Jehovah, the God of hosts, was with him" (v. 10). This indicates that David had God's presence. In serving the Lord, we need to have the assurance that we have His presence. If we are really following the Lord for the fulfillment of His economy, we will certainly have His presence. If in any matter we do not have the inner sense that the Lord is with us, we must be careful and consider our way. Saul first lost the presence of God (1 Sam. 16:14). That should have helped him to reconsider his way, but he did not. In the Lord's recovery, whenever we do anything, we must take care of the sense of the Lord's presence.

C. In Hiram King of Tyre Supplying Him Materials for the Building of a Palace for Him

Hiram king of Tyre sent David materials and workmen

for the building of a palace for him (2 Sam. 5:11-12). This was a further strong evidence that David's being established as king over Israel was really of God. Such an assurance is very important and is necessary in our working for the Lord. We all need to learn the lesson of caring for these two things: the inward presence of God and the outward confirmation in our environment.

D. Begetting More Children, Including Solomon, in Jerusalem

According to verses 13 through 16, in Jerusalem David begot more children, including Solomon.

E. In His Repeated Victories over the Philistines

Finally, David's being established by God was seen in his repeated victories over the Philistines (vv. 17-25). When David inquired of Jehovah, asking whether he should go up against the Philistines, Jehovah said to him, "Go up, for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into your hand" (v. 19). David struck the Philistines and said, "Jehovah has broken forth upon my enemies before me like the breaking forth of a flood" (v. 20b). David continued to do as Jehovah had commanded him and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer.

Israel's two most troubling enemies were the Amalekites and the Philistines. Even before Israel entered into the good land, they were frustrated by the Amalekites. In Exodus 17 the children of Israel fought a war against the Amalekites in a particular way under two leaders—Moses and Joshua. In typology these two leaders signify Christ in two aspects. The people of Israel fought against the Amalekites under Joshua, signifying the Spirit within us, and under Moses, signifying the Christ who is in the heavens praying for us. The pneumatic Christ as the life-giving Spirit, as the reality of Christ in resurrection, is living and working within us, and the ascended Christ is interceding for us. The Amalekites signify our flesh, our most bothersome enemy. We should never think that we can overcome the flesh. However, by Christ as the Spirit within and as our Intercessor in the heavens, this enemy can be defeated.

Israel's other enemy was the Philistines, who were very close neighbors of Israel. At times they became somewhat mixed up with Israel. Eventually, David, the one who killed Goliath and defeated the Philistines, became friends with Achish, a king of the Philistines. In typology, the Philistines signify the worldly Christians.

The Philistines were very close to God's people, yet they were worldly and handled the things of God in a worldly way. Consider how they sent back the ark of God. According to God's ordination, the ark should not have been moved by any means other than by living priests, but the Philistines caused it to be carried on a cart. The ark, which represents God Himself, should never have been carried in such a way. To use a cart and two cows in order to send the ark back to Israel was the worldly way. The Philistines knew something about the divine things. They offered a trespass offering to appease God's anger, but they did this in a worldly way. Today, we are troubled mainly by these two things: the flesh within and the worldly Christianity in our environment.

Everything concerning David was arranged under God's sovereign direction to accomplish one thing: the building up of His kingdom in His elect through the proper person. At that time the proper person was David, but today it should be the people in the Lord's recovery. In every age God has a particular thing to accomplish. In this age, the twentieth century, the particular thing that God intends to accomplish is to recover everything that has been lost and is missing in today's worldly Christianity.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(9)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(3)

DAVID'S CARE FOR GOD'S HABITATION ON THE EARTH

(1)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 6

In this message we will begin to consider David's care for God's habitation on the earth. As we will see, in chapter six David took care of the habitation of the ark of God, and in chapter seven he wanted to build a house for God.

I. TAKING CARE OF THE HABITATION OF THE ARK OF GOD

By the time of chapter six, David was not lacking in anything. All things had worked together in David's favor. He had become the king not only of Judah but also of all the tribes of God's people. He had obtained a stronghold—Zion—and a capital—Jerusalem. Furthermore, he had a palace, which had been built with cedar from Lebanon. He was under God's sovereignty, and God's presence was with him. At that juncture he began to take thought about God's dwelling place on earth. Whereas he was living in a house of cedar, the ark, which represented God, still did not have a home (2 Sam. 7:2). Unable to bear such a situation, David decided to remove the ark of God to a permanent dwelling

place. This indicates that David's heart was set on God's house, God's habitation.

The matter of God's dwelling place on earth is worthy of much consideration on our part. We need to realize that whatever God does for us and whatever He gives to us should be altogether for our concern for the building up of God's dwelling place on earth. For God to have a house on earth is a great shame to His enemy, Satan. For generations Satan has been struggling to abuse, usurp, and occupy the earth. As a result, in a sense God has been driven away from the earth. That was the situation at David's time. However, David was for God; he was one with God and according to God. As a man according to God's heart, David desired to prepare a place where God could settle Himself down on this earth.

In order to understand adequately David's taking care of the habitation of the ark of God, we need to review the history of the ark of God.

A. The History of the Ark of God

The ark, which was made of acacia wood covered with gold, was a type of Christ as the embodiment of the moving and working God. The ark was placed in the inner chamber of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, and thus became the center of the tabernacle. On the lid of the ark God came to contact His people. There God's righteousness was appeased, and God and man could have peace and harmony with each other. This was also God's oracle, where God spoke to man.

The ark was respected to the uttermost by the Jewish people because they considered that the ark was God's presence. To go to the ark was to go to God. Thus, to remove the ark to David's stronghold was to move God from the heavens to the earth, to the holy land, and to Zion, where He could have His residence.

1. Made by Moses

The ark was made by Moses (Exo. 25:10-22) according to God's design in order to contain the law on the two tables as the testimony of God. The law was according to God and was

a "photograph" of God. The law regulated man's relationship with God and with other men. Because the law as the testimony of God was placed in the ark, the ark was called the ark of the testimony (vv. 16, 22; 26:33). The ark was also for God to meet with His people and to speak to them (25:22).

2. Placed in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle

According to Exodus 40:20-21 the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle.

3. Traveling through the Wilderness with the Children of Israel

The ark traveled through the wilderness with the children of Israel for about forty years (Num. 10:33-36). This means that God traveled with His people. In a sense, the priests carried Him, but in actuality God took the lead to travel, bringing all the congregation of the children of Israel onward.

4. Staying in Shiloh

After the children of Israel entered into the good land, the ark stayed in Shiloh (Josh. 18:1).

5. Captured by the Philistines

At a certain point in its history, the ark was captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:4, 11a, 21-22).

6. Staying in the Country of the Philistines for Seven Months

The ark stayed in the country of the Philistines for seven months (6:1).

7. Returned to Beth-shemesh

Eventually, the ark was returned from the land of the Philistines to Beth-shemesh (6:11-15).

8. Removed from Beth-shemesh to Kiriath-jearim and Put into the House of Abinadab

The ark was removed from Beth-shemesh to Kiriath-jearim and was put into the house of Abinadab and stayed there for

twenty years (6:20—7:2). At that time God was homeless. He was a "guest" and Abinadab was the host.

B. David's Desire to Remove the Ark from the House of Abinadab to Zion, the City of David

As a man who was according to God's heart, David knew that God desired to have His own home. Hence, David desired to remove the ark from the house of Abinadab to Zion, the city of David (2 Sam. 6:1-10).

1. The Removal of the Ark of God, and David and All the House of Israel Playing on Musical Instruments before Jehovah

The ark of God was removed from the house of Abinadab, and David and all the house of Israel played on musical instruments before Jehovah (vv. 1-5). That was a most joyful occasion because God was moving from a guest house to His own lodging.

2. The Oxen Stumbling, Uzzah Reaching Out for the Ark of God and Taking Hold of It, and the Anger of Jehovah Striking Him to Death

The people of Israel, perhaps influenced by the Philistines, moved the ark by means of a cart. The ark should have been borne by the Levites (1 Chron. 15:2). God did not condemn the worldly Philistines for using a cart to move the ark, but He would not tolerate the same action by His people. Under God's sovereignty the oxen stumbled at Nachon's threshing floor, and Uzzah, having a good intention, reached out for the ark of God and took hold of it (2 Sam. 6:6). Instantly, he was killed. "The anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" (v. 7). The natural hand, the hand of man, touching something divine brought in God's anger.

3. David Being Afraid of Jehovah and Carrying the Ark into the House of Obed-edom

The death of Uzzah frightened David very much, and he did not want to remove the ark of God to himself in the city of David. Instead, he carried it into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite (vv. 9-10), where it stayed for three months.

C. David's Removal of the Ark of God from the House of Obed-edom to His City, Zion

In verses 11 through 23 we see that David removed the ark from the house of Obed-edom and brought it to his city, Zion.

1. Because of God's Blessing on Obed-edom

Obed-edom offered hospitality to the ark of God, and for this reason God blessed him and all his household. When David heard that God had blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that he had because of the ark of God, David came back to remove the ark of God to Zion, David's private city, which was the center of the public city of Jerusalem (vv. 11-12).

2. David Offering Sacrifices to Jehovah and Dancing with All His Might before Jehovah

When those who bore the ark of Jehovah had gone six paces, David sacrificed an ox and a fatling (v. 13). Also, David danced with all his might before Jehovah, having girded himself with a linen ephod (v. 14). David wore a garment which only the priests should wear. For that day, he became a high priest to wear the ephod. On that occasion he was a priest as well as a king. In a sense, he broke the divine ordination. But in another sense, this was an honor and a glory to God.

3. The Ark of God Being Brought Up with Shouting and the Sound of the Trumpet

Verse 15 tells us that David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Jehovah with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

4. The Ark of God Being Lodged in a Tent That David Pitched for It

The ark of God lodged in the tent that David pitched for it. David offered sacrifices before Jehovah, blessing the people in the name of Jehovah of hosts and apportioning to all the people some cakes (vv. 17-19).

5. Michal the Wife of David Despising Him at His Dancing before Jehovah and Receiving the Curse of Not Having a Child

Everyone was happy except Michal, David's wife, who was of the house of Saul. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before Jehovah, she despised him in her heart (v. 16). After David blessed the people, he returned to bless his household, and Michal went forth to meet him and mocked him, saying, "How the king of Israel has made himself honorable today, uncovering himself today in the sight of the maids of his servants as some worthless fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!" (v. 20). David replied, "It was before Jehovah, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of Jehovah, over Israel; so I played before Jehovah" (v. 21). The chapter concludes by saying that Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death (v. 23). Her mocking of David brought upon her the curse of childlessness.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(10)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(4)

DAVID'S CARE FOR GOD'S HABITATION ON THE EARTH

(2)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7

In the foregoing message we saw from chapter six that David took care of the habitation of the ark. In this message we will see that, according to chapter seven, David wanted to build a house for God. Concerning this matter I have a very particular burden.

II. WANTING TO BUILD A HOUSE FOR GOD

A. Considering That He Himself Dwelled in a House of Cedar, but That the Ark of God Dwelled within Curtains

David considered that he himself dwelled in a house of cedar but that the ark of God dwelled within curtains (v. 2b).

B. Releasing His Consideration to Nathan the Prophet

David released his consideration to Nathan the prophet,

who encouraged him to go and do what was in his heart, telling David that Jehovah was with him (vv. 2a, 3).

C. God's Response to David through Nathan

In verses 4 through 17 we have God's response to David through Nathan. Verse 4 tells us in that night the word of Jehovah came to Nathan.

1. God Having Never Asked Anyone to Build Him a House That He Might Dwell in It

God told David that since the time He brought Israel up out of Egypt, He had never asked anyone to build Him a house that He might dwell in it. Rather, He went about in a tent and in a tabernacle (vv. 5-7).

2. God Taking David from the Pasture of the Sheep That He Might Be Ruler over His People Israel

God charged Nathan to tell David that He took him from the pasture, from following the sheep, that he might be ruler over His people Israel (v. 8). Also, God had been with David in every place and had cut off all his enemies (v. 9a). This refers to the presence of God. David was prosperous because he had the presence of God. This is a lesson for us today. Whenever we prepare ourselves to speak God's word, we must be assured that we have the presence of God. If we do not have this assurance, we need to pray until we have the deep sense of God's presence with us.

3. God Making a Great Name for David

God promised David that He would make a great name for him, "like the name of the great ones who are on the earth" (v. 9b).

4. God Appointing a Place for His People Israel and Planting Them

God said that He would appoint a place for His people Israel and plant them, that they might dwell in their own place without disturbances and without being ill-treated by the sons of wickedness (v. 10). David's heart was to get a

place for God to dwell in, but God's heart is to get a place for His people to be settled and even planted. For this to take place, however, God's elect people need to cooperate with Him.

5. God Giving David Rest from All His Enemies

God told David that He would give him rest from all his enemies (v. 11a). Here God seemed to be saying, "David, you have a heart for Me. My heart is for you, and I want you to have rest from all the enemies that are around you."

6. God Declaring to David That He Would Make Him a House

Jehovah declared to David that He would make him a house (v. 11b). When we love the Lord, we may feel that we should do something for Him. However, when we resolve to do something for the Lord, we may have the sense deep within us that we need the Lord to do more for us. As we will see, we are short of Christ and we need more of Christ.

7. God Raising Up David's Seed (Referring to Christ) and Establishing His Kingdom (Referring to Christ's Kingdom)

God said to David, "I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom" (v. 12). Here "your seed" refers to Christ and "his kingdom" refers to Christ's kingdom. In His response to David's desire to build God a house, God in a sense came in to stop David by indicating that before David could do something for God, he needed God to do something for him.

Whenever we would think to do something for God, God within us would tell us that we are short of something. Our shortage is Christ. We all need Christ. At this point I would ask you to consider some lines from a hymn that speaks of how much we need Christ (*Hymns*, #1024):

You need Jesus! You need Jesus!
Men and women all need Him!

For redemption you need Him,
For salvation you need Him!
And for everlasting life,
Yes, you need Jesus!

We need more and more of Jesus; we can never get enough of Him. We are short of Christ, God's Son. We need God to make His Son our seed; that is, we need Christ as our heritage and our treasure.

When a sinner turns to God and believes in Christ, he may then have the heart to do something for God. However, to such a person God would say, "Do you intend to do something for Me? You have a great need for Me to do something for you. What I want to do for you is to constitute My Son into your being to be your treasure. Unless I do this for you, you will never have the capacity to do anything for Me."

The Christ whom God desires to constitute into us is not only our treasure—He is also our home. Where do we live today? We live in Christ. Before Christ the Son of God was wrought into our being, we were homeless. To be homeless is to be Christless. Without Christ, we do not have a home. Likewise, without Christ we do not have righteousness, justification, or satisfaction. We need God to build Christ into our being to be our righteousness, justification, food and drink, clothing, satisfaction, dwelling place, and home. In order for this to happen, God has put us into Christ (1 Cor. 1:30), and now Christ is becoming everything to us.

In 2 Samuel 7:12 God was actually telling David that instead of building something for God, he needed God to build His Son into him. It is a marvelous fact that eventually David's seed would be called the Son of God (Rom. 1:3). This indicates the principle of incarnation. Christ is the God-man. As God, He is the Son of God; as man, He is our seed. If the Son of God is not constituted into us, we are nothing. The Son of God must become our seed, yet He remains the Son of God.

When we were saved, many of us believed the gospel in a shallow way. The more I study the Bible, the more I realize that the gospel is not shallow. The genuine and intrinsic gospel is that God intends to work Himself in Christ into us.

In 2 Samuel 7:12 we have the genuine preaching of the gospel. If we preach this intrinsic gospel, we will tell others that they should not think that they can do something for God, for their human life is empty. We will tell them that they are short of something and that what they need is Christ, the very God Himself, to be wrought into their being. This is the gospel.

In order to work Himself into us, God first became a man through incarnation. As a man He died for us, and then rose up from among the dead and became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). This life-giving Spirit is our Savior, who redeemed us on the cross and who is now saving us in our spirit. He is our Redeemer, Savior, life, and seed. As such a One, He is now being built, constituted, into us, making us a part of Him, even as He has made Himself a part of us.

If we read 2 Samuel 7 under God's enlightening, we will see that the seed of David is Christ. According to verse 7 God will establish David's kingdom, which refers to Christ's kingdom. This means that the kingdom of David is Christ's kingdom. The prophets spoke of David and Christ as one. In Hosea 3:5 and Amos 9:11 the coming of King David refers to Christ's coming.

8. Christ Building a House for God's Name, and God Establishing the Throne of Christ's Kingdom Forever

Second Samuel 7:13 reveals that it is Christ who will build a house for God's name, and God will establish the throne of Christ's kingdom forever.

9. God Being Christ's Father, and Christ Being God's Son

Verse 14a says, "I will be his Father, and he will be My son." This actually reveals that God will be Christ's Father and that Christ will be God's Son (Heb. 1:5b). God's salvation is just to make Christ, His embodiment, ours. The Son of God, who is the embodiment of God, God Himself, is in us. Therefore, we can declare that Christ, the Son of God, has been built into us.

10. God Striking David's Seed (Referring to the One Other Than Christ) if He Committed Iniquity

Second Samuel 7:14b-15 says that if David's seed (referring to the one other than Christ, that is, Solomon) committed iniquity, God would strike him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men. However, God's lovingkindness would not depart from him, as God took it away from Saul. Solomon did commit serious sin, and God chastised him because of it, but God's lovingkindness nevertheless remained with the house of David.

11. David's House and His Kingdom (Referring to Christ's Kingdom) Being Made Sure Forever

In verse 16 God said to David, "Your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever before you; your throne will be established forever." Here "your kingdom" refers to Christ's kingdom, and "your throne" refers to Christ's throne. In the Bible David and Christ have one throne. Christ is the real David (Matt. 12:3-6). Eventually, Christ and we become one, for in a very real sense Christ has become us. He is the Head and we are the Body, and the Head and the Body are one.

D. David's Response to God

Verses 18 through 29 are a record of David's response to God.

1. Thanking God for All the Great Things He Had Done to Him for His Word's Sake

In verses 18 through 21 David thanked God for all the great things He had done to him for His word's sake and according to His own heart.

2. Praising God for His Greatness in All That He Had Done for Israel

Next, David praised God for His greatness in all that He had done for His people Israel (vv. 22-24). In verse 24 David

said, "You have established Your people Israel to be a people to You forever, and You, O Jehovah, became their God."

3. Asking God to Build, Establish, and Bless His House Forever according to His Promise

Finally, David asked God to build, establish, and bless his house forever according to His promise (vv. 25-29). David concluded by saying to God, "May it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may be before You forever; for You, O Lord Jehovah, have spoken it. And with Your blessing may the house of Your servant be blessed forever" (v. 29).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

OUR NEED FOR GOD TO BUILD CHRIST INTO US

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Eph. 3:14, 16-17; 1 Cor. 3:11-12; Eph. 4:4-6

Second Samuel 7 is a very difficult portion of the Word to understand, and not many Christians have the proper view concerning it. I have been studying this chapter for over sixty years. My first impression was that here we see the love and kindness of God in wanting to build David a house instead of having David build a house for Him. That was merely the natural, human concept of a young man. I spent a number of years with the Brethren, who devoted a great deal of attention to 2 Samuel 7 and who preached and taught on it and published books about it. However, they did not see the intrinsic significance of this chapter, especially of God's word to David in verses 12 through 14a.

A CHAPTER OF PROPHECY THROUGH TYPOLOGY

Those who study the Bible realize that two matters in the Bible are not easy to understand—typology and prophecy. The book of Revelation, for example, is mainly a book of prophecy, but this book also contains quite an amount of typology. Hence, Revelation is a combination of prophecy and typology. The situation is the same with 2 Samuel 7. This chapter conveys a great prophecy, but this prophecy is unveiled through typology. We may say that it is a prophecy in typology.

BUILDING THE CHURCH WITH CHRIST AS THE UNIQUE ELEMENT

In 2 Samuel 7 David, like many of us, had the mistaken concept that God needed him to build something for Him.

When some hear this they may wonder how this concept can be wrong since we today are endeavoring to build up the church. Is building the church not a matter of building something for God? To answer this question we need to realize that apparently we are the ones who are building the church, but actually God is the One who is building the church with Christ as the unique element. When we are about to do some building work by speaking for God, He may check with us, saying, "Do you intend to build My house? With what material will you build My house?" If we say that we are building up the church with Christ, God may ask us how much we have of Christ. This exposes our shortage of Christ. We need Christ not merely in name and in knowledge; we need the real Christ, Christ as the Spirit in resurrection. We all need more and more of Christ.

We may have much knowledge of the Bible and be able to teach the Bible to others, but this is not the way to build up the church. The church is not built with the knowledge of the Bible. The church is built with Christ as the unique element. Many times, after trying to build up the saints with Christ, I have had to ask myself, "How much of Christ have you really ministered to the saints? Did you minister only doctrine and the high truths concerning God's economy, or did you minister the real Christ, the genuine Christ, the reality of Christ in resurrection as the Spirit?" Then I had to confess my shortage of Christ and repent, saying, "Lord, forgive me. I am still short of You. I need You to be wrought into me. I need more of You to be constituted into my being."

OUR NEED FOR GOD TO BUILD UP CHRIST INTO OUR INTRINSIC CONSTITUTION SO THAT WE MAY BE RECONSTITUTED

In 2 Samuel 7 David wanted to build God's house, but in this chapter God wanted David to realize that he needed God to build Christ into him. Thus, 2 Samuel 7 is the unveiling of a prophecy through typology showing us there is no need for us to build something for God. We simply are not able to do this. We cannot build something for God with ourselves or with our knowledge of the Bible and theology. We need

God to build up Christ into our intrinsic constitution so that our entire being will be reconstituted with Christ. As a result, we are not only changed, but we are transformed from one kind of person into another.

Perhaps now we can see that 2 Samuel 7 simply indicates that God does not need us to build anything for Him. We are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing. Therefore, we need Christ to be wrought into our being.

GOD'S ECONOMY BEING TO WORK HIMSELF INTO US IN CHRIST AS HIS EMBODIMENT

At this point we need to consider once again what God's economy is. God's economy is to work Himself into us in Christ as His embodiment. Through death and resurrection Christ has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Now we need to let God work Christ as the Spirit into every part of our being. The more God does this, the more we will be able to declare, "To me, to live is Christ," and "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20).

CHRIST MAKING HIS HOME IN OUR HEARTS

The New Testament verse that best indicates that Christ is building Himself into us is Ephesians 3:17. Here Paul says that Christ is making His home in our hearts. This is building. What is of crucial importance today is the question concerning how much of Christ has been built into us. How much has Christ been built not only into your spirit but into your heart in order to make His home there?

Our spirit, the central part of our being, is surrounded by our heart, which is composed mainly of our mind, emotion, and will. Christ is in our spirit, but how much has Christ made His home in our heart? Most of our hearts are still vacant, not occupied, saturated, and soaked with Christ. Every day our hearts are filled with other things. As a result, Christ is imprisoned in our spirit.

Ephesians 3 indicates strongly that the Triune God is building Himself into us in Christ's making us His home. Paul bowed his knees to the Father and prayed that He would

grant us, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man (vv. 14, 16) so that Christ may make His home in our hearts. Here we have the Divine Trinity: the Father is the One to whom Paul prayed; the Spirit is the One who carries out the strengthening; and Christ the Son is the One who is making His home in our heart. By building Himself into our being, He makes our heart, our intrinsic constitution, His home.

BUILDING THE CHURCH WITH THE PROCESSED AND CONSUMMATED TRIUNE GOD

In 1 Corinthians 3:12 Paul said that there are two categories of building material—wood, grass, and stubble, which are human and worldly, and gold, silver, and precious stones, which are precious treasures and transformed materials. If we build the church with wood, grass, and stubble—with the attainments that come from our natural background or with the natural way of living—we will mar the church (v. 17). We should build the church with gold, silver, and precious stones, signifying respectively God, Christ, and the Spirit. To build the church with these materials is to build the church with the processed and consummated Triune God. When we build the church with the processed and consummated Triune God, it is not actually we who are building. Rather, God is building through us, using us as a means to dispense and transmit Himself into people.

BUILDING THE CHURCH WITH THE TRIUNE GOD AS THE SOURCE, THE ELEMENT, AND THE ESSENCE

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church." But how is the church to be built? The church is built with the Triune God: with the Father as the source, with the Son as the element, and with the Spirit as the essence. This is clearly indicated in Ephesians 4:4-6. According to these verses, the whole church, the Body of Christ, is a mingling of the human frame with the Triune God as the source, the element, and the essence. On the one hand, the gifted persons perfect the saints unto the work of the ministry

so that the Body may build up itself in love. On the other hand, the processed and consummated Triune God as the source, the element, and the essence is building the church by building Himself into our being.

We need to have this realization as we are working for the Lord. It is not adequate simply to present to others some knowledge concerning God's economy and other divine, spiritual, and heavenly things. We need to dispense the Triune God into others. Through our prayer, fasting, repentance, and confession, the Triune God can fill us, saturate us, and mingle with us as our source, element, and essence. Then we can go with Him and work with Him. If we are filled with the Triune God, when we speak He will flow out and be ministered to others for their nourishment.

A PROPHECY CONCERNING THE TRIUNE GOD WORKING HIMSELF INTO US TO MAKE US HIS HOME

Second Samuel 7 is a prophecy predicting that the church will be built up by God Himself among His people in the New Testament. Christ is the One who actually builds God's house, God's temple. Christ is also the element in which and with which the church as God's house is built. In this chapter God seemed to be saying to David, "David, thus far you are still vacant and empty. Do not think that you should do something to build a house for Me. You need to realize that you need Me to build Myself into you as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Then you will have a house, and that house will also be My house."

The intrinsic significance of 2 Samuel 7 is that the Triune God is working Himself in His processed and consummated Trinity into His chosen people. Therefore, 2 Samuel 7 is a chapter on the Triune God working Himself into us to make us His home (Christ with the church) and to produce a seed (the all-inclusive Christ). Here we have a house and a seed. Christ is the house, and Christ is also the seed. Christ is the element, and Christ is also the issue. Christ is everything.

This Christ is both God's house and our house. Hence, we and God have a mutual abode. Christ abides in us, and we abide in Him. He and we, we and He, are mingled together

as one entity. The universe is waiting for this. Romans 8 tells us that the whole universe is eagerly awaiting the expression of the Triune God mingled with the tripartite man through His building, which is by Himself, with Himself, in Himself, and for Himself. This is what we all need, and this is what the universe needs.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

THE SEED OF DAVID AND THE SON OF GOD

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 3:17; John 14:23

In this message I have the burden to give a further word on 2 Samuel 7.

THE SEED OF DAVID BECOMING THE SON OF GOD

In 2 Samuel 7:12-14a Jehovah said to David, "When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he will be My son." The word concerning "your seed" and "My son" indicates that the seed of David would become the Son of God, that the seed of a man would become God's Son.

This thought is continued very strongly in the New Testament, particularly in Romans 1:3 and 4. Here Paul says, "Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we have the same thought as in 2 Samuel 7:12-14a—that the seed of David becomes the Son of God. These verses reveal, on the one hand, that Christ is the seed of David and, on the other hand, that He, the seed of David, has been designated the Son of God. When we compare these two portions of the Word, we see that both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we have the matter of the seed of David becoming the Son of God.

DAVID BEING A MAN ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD BUT NOT BEING GOD IN LIFE AND IN NATURE

In 2 Samuel 7 we see that David had a good heart toward God and wanted to build a house for God. However, God intervened and did not permit David to do this, because David did not have an adequate and thorough view of God's economy. After stopping David from building Him a house, God went on to reveal something further concerning His economy. In this chapter, therefore, the divine revelation took a great step forward.

The Bible tells us that David was a man according to God's heart (1 Sam. 13:14). Under the influence of this word, many Bible students have estimated David too highly. Yes, David was a man according to the heart of God, but, as the remainder of 2 Samuel and the book of Psalms show us, he was still a man in life, in nature, and in constitution. He was a man according to God, but he was not God in life and in nature. David could not say, "To me, to live is Christ" or "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Phil. 1:21a; Gal. 2:20). At the most, David was a "photograph" of God's heart, but he was not God in life and in nature.

DEIFICATION—BECOMING GOD IN LIFE AND IN NATURE BUT NOT IN THE GODHEAD

This brings us to the matter of deification—God's intention to make the believers God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. Athanasius referred to deification when at the council of Nicea in A.D. 325 he said, "He [Christ] was made man that we might be made God." Although the term *deification* is familiar to many theologians and Christian teachers, during the past sixteen centuries only a small number have dared to teach regarding the deification of the believers in Christ.

I have not been influenced by any teaching about deification, but I have learned from my study of the Bible that God does intend to make the believers God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. For instance, 1 John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet

been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is." This verse clearly reveals that we will be like God.

God makes us like Him by imparting His life and nature into us. Second Peter 1:4 says that we have become "partakers of the divine nature." John 1:12-13 says that we were born, regenerated, by God with His life. As God's children we are "baby gods," having God's life and nature but not His Godhead. The Godhead is unique; He is the only One who should be worshipped.

We have been born of God and today, having God's life and nature, we are partially like Him. One day, when He comes, we will be wholly and entirely like Him.

It was wonderful for David to be a man according to God's heart, but it was not sufficient. God wants those who can say, "I am not just a person according to God's heart. I am God in life and in nature but not in His Godhead." On the one hand, the New Testament reveals that the Godhead is unique and that only God, who alone has the Godhead, should be worshipped. On the other hand, the New Testament reveals that we, the believers in Christ, have God's life and nature and that we are becoming God in life and in nature but will never have His Godhead.

THE SEED OF DAVID BEING BOTH DIVINE AND HUMAN

David had the heart to build a house for God, but God indicated to David that this was neither what he needed nor what God needed. God told David that He would build One to be David's seed and that this seed would be called God's Son. This seed would be both divine and human. Hebrews 1:5 indicates that this refers to Christ as God's firstborn Son. Furthermore, as we have seen, Romans 1:3-4, which corresponds to 2 Samuel 7:12-14a, tells us that in resurrection the seed of David was designated the Son of God. In their intrinsic significance, 2 Samuel 7:12-14a and Romans 1:3-4 reveal to us a human and divine person.

OUR NEED FOR GOD TO WORK HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US AS OUR LIFE, NATURE, AND CONSTITUTION

Just as the photograph of a person does not have the life and nature of that person, so David, a photograph of God's heart, did not have the life and nature of God. Even though he was a man whose heart was according to God, he did not have anything related to God organically. What David needed is what we need today. We need God to build Himself in Christ into our humanity. This means that we need God to work Himself in Christ into us as our life, our nature, and our constitution. As a result, we are not simply a man according to God's heart—we are God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. We today are not outwardly as high as David was, but we can declare that we have God's life, nature, and constitution.

In order to accomplish this, God in Christ became a man and went through some processes that this man could be designated something divine. In resurrection He was designated the firstborn Son of God. In and through resurrection Christ, the firstborn Son of God, became the life-giving Spirit, who now enters into us to impart, to dispense, Himself as life into our being to be our inner constitution, to make us a God-man just like Him. He was God becoming man, and we are man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

GOD'S DESIRE TO BUILD HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US IN ORDER TO HAVE A MUTUAL ABODE

Many Christians are still trying merely to have a behaving, a living, and a being that are according to God's heart, but they do not have the concept that God desires to build Himself in Christ into our being. What He is building into us will be His abode, which will be our abode also. Hence, it becomes a mutual abode. The New Jerusalem is this mutual abode. On the one hand, the New Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God; on the other hand, it is also our eternal dwelling place (Rev. 21:3, 22). For eternity the New Jerusalem will be the fulfillment of the Lord's brief word in John 15:4: "Abide in Me and I in you."

Ephesians 3:17 tells us that Christ is now within us doing the work of building Himself into us to produce this mutual abode. We often say that Christ is living in us and working in us. Now we need to ask this question: What is Christ wanting to accomplish by His working in us? The answer is that Christ is working in us to build up God's habitation by building Himself into us.

David wanted to build God a house of cedar, but God wanted to build Himself in Christ into David. What God would build into David would be both God's house and David's house. This mutual abode is also unveiled in John 14:23: "If anyone loves Me,…My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." This abode will be not only for the Triune God but also for us. What God builds up in us is both God's habitation and our habitation.

We need to realize that God will have a habitation not by our doing or working but by His building. Christ builds the church (Matt. 16:18) by coming into our spirit and spreading Himself from our spirit into our mind, emotion, and will to occupy our entire soul. This church will become His habitation and our habitation. This is what we need, and our burden is to emphasize this one thing.

THE TRIUNE GOD BECOMING OUR INTRINSIC CONSTITUTION

There is no need for us to build anything for God. Rather, God needs to build Himself in Christ into us as our life, nature, and essence. Eventually, the Triune God will become our intrinsic constitution. We will be constituted with the Triune God. That will be the seed of David and the Son of God—something divine and human satisfying God's need and our need for a mutual abode. The New Jerusalem is the consummation of this mutual abode, and we will all be there.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

GOD'S BUILDING HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO OUR BEING THROUGH THE METABOLIC PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:12-14a; 2 Cor. 3:17-18

In this message I would like to give an additional word on 2 Samuel 7:12-14a. Many readers of the Bible do not understand the significance of these verses. As we will see, these verses refer to the very thing that God intends to build up in His elect. Thus, my burden in this message is to point out that, as a prophecy given in the way of typology, these verses speak of God's building Himself in Christ into our being through the metabolic process of transformation.

TWO PERIODS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS

The New Testament clearly reveals that there are two periods in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. First, He ministered on the earth until He died on the cross for our sins to terminate the old creation. Then He rose in resurrection and ascended to the heavens. There He became and still is the Minister of all the heavenly things to us. As such a Minister, He is not in the flesh, for in resurrection He as the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Now He is not only our Redeemer and Savior; He is also the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. For this reason, 2 Corinthians 3:17 declares, "The Lord is the Spirit."

TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY

Because Christ is the Spirit, He can dwell in us, and we can fellowship with Him in our spirit. We should look to Him, behold Him, and reflect Him, opening to Him the three layers

of our being—our spirit, our heart, and our mouth. Then we will spontaneously reflect Him as a mirror and gradually be transformed into His glorious image from glory to glory. As a result, we will have the same image that He has. This is altogether from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

In this way the Lord Jesus makes us like Him and even makes us Him. When we look unto Him, He impresses Himself into our being. Then we become His reflection. What we reflect is nothing less than the Lord Himself. This is what the New Testament calls transformation.

TRANSFORMATION BEING A METABOLIC PROCESS

Transformation is a metabolic process that changes us by adding some new element into our being and discharging the old element. This is illustrated by one's having a healthy complexion through the proper, daily eating, digesting, and assimilating of food. This healthy appearance is the result not of cosmetics but of nourishment. This nourishment causes a metabolic process in which a new element is brought in and the old element is discharged. In like manner, we need to receive spiritual nourishment day by day. This nourishment will supply a new element and then cause the old things to be carried away. Gradually, we will grow, change, and mature. This is transformation. God's economy is just to work Himself into us that we may experience such a metabolic process of spiritual digestion and assimilation that produces a gradual, intrinsic change in life.

GOD'S BUILDING HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US BEING AN ORGANIC MATTER

God's building Himself into our being is altogether an organic matter. In order for such a building to take place, we need to receive, digest, and assimilate an organic element. Our spiritual food and drink is the organic, pneumatic Christ (John 6:51, 57; 7:37-39), the Christ who is the life-giving Spirit.

This Christ is not merely the Christ of history in an objective sense. A Christ who is only an objective, historical Savior, the One whose story is recorded in the Bible, would not be related to us organically. It is a tragedy that many

Christians know Christ only in an objective way. The Bible reveals that Christ came and stayed with His disciples for a period of time. Then He passed through death and entered into resurrection, and through this process He became the life-giving Spirit. Today as the Spirit He is real, genuine, living, and present. Thus, we may say that He is the "now" Christ.

CHRIST'S BUILDING THE CHURCH WITH HIMSELF AS THE SPIRITUAL FOOD AND SPIRITUAL DRINK

When we enjoy the "now" Christ by eating, drinking, and breathing Him, a metabolic process, a spiritual digestion and metabolism, takes place within us. Through this metabolic process Christ is constituted into our being. This constitution is the building. Christ, therefore, is building Himself into us as our inner constitution. The issue of such a building is that we become a very particular class of people—the members of the Body of Christ. Whenever we gather together we are the church of God.

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church." Now we can see by what way Christ builds the church. He is building His church by supplying us with spiritual drink and by feeding us with spiritual food, which are uniquely Himself as the Spirit. The more we enjoy Him by eating, drinking, and breathing Him, the more He builds His church.

THE CHURCH BUILT NOT BY OUTWARD ORGANIZATION BUT THROUGH INWARD TRANSFORMATION

Concerning the building up of the church, we do not trust in outward organization; rather, we pay our full attention to the inward transformation, that is, to the inner constituting by the spiritual metabolism. In different kinds of meetings, we endeavor to minister Christ into the saints as their spiritual food and drink. The more we receive Christ in this way, the more we will experience the inner, spiritual metabolism. This metabolism is transformation, and transformation is the building.

Just as every member of our physical body is organic, so

every member of the Body of Christ is organic. The church is a group of transformed people who have grown into one organism, the organic Body of Christ. The way to be built up as this organism is to grow, and the way to grow is to eat, drink, and breathe Christ. No matter what our race or nationality may be, we are all undergoing the same metabolic process that day by day produces transformation, which equals building. This is the spiritual growth and also the spiritual building.

Every member of our physical body is not only organic but also inseparably connected to our body, for all the members have grown together organically to be one body. The principle is the same with the Body of Christ. As one who has been in the church for over sixty years, I can testify that I cannot be separated from the church. Without the church I could not live, for apart from the church, life would have no meaning.

JEHOVAH'S PROPHECY TO DAVID IN THE WAY OF TYPOLOGY

This organic building up of the church as the Body of Christ through the process of spiritual metabolism is actually what Jehovah prophesied to David in the way of typology in 2 Samuel 7:12-14a. It is only through this process that human beings can be transformed into sons of God. It is only through this process that something human—the human seed—can become divine—the sons of God. In typology God prophesied to David regarding this when He told David that his seed would be God's son. This indicates that a human seed would become a divine son. This is what we are experiencing today. Therefore, we, the believers in Christ, are a very particular and peculiar people. We are a precious treasure in the eyes of God.

FOUR LAYERS OF BUILDING

We need to have the proper understanding of the building up of the Body of Christ. First, according to Matthew 16:18, the Lord builds. Then He builds through the gifted persons, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers

(Eph. 4:11). He then builds the church through us, the perfected saints (v. 12). These are three layers of building. Eventually, the Body builds itself up (v. 16). This is the fourth layer. This is all by ministering Christ as the daily supply, as food, water, and breath.

We cannot build the church. We can only minister Christ to others. When they are nourished with Christ as their supply, a spiritual metabolism within them transforms them into His image and makes them just Him. Such a metabolic transformation is both the growth and the building up. This is the way the Lord Jesus builds us into the church.

DAVID'S HOUSE BECOMING HIS SEED

This is the proper teaching of the New Testament; this is the proper way to build the proper church; and this is the very thing that Jehovah prophesied to David in typology in 2 Samuel 7 when He said that He would build David a house. This house is the seed of David. Humanly speaking, we cannot explain how David's house could become David's seed. The only way David's house could become his seed was by God in Christ becoming a man, the God-man. Christ is the house, the seed, the life, and the food. He is everything. Today we are cooperating with Him to build up God's habitation and David's habitation, a mutual abode.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

A PROPHECY CONCERNING THE SEED OF DAVID BEING CALLED THE SON OF GOD

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Matt. 22:41-45; Rev. 22:16; Isa. 11:1; Matt. 26:63-64; Rom. 1:3-4

In this message I have the burden to give a further word on 2 Samuel 7:12-14a.

THE SEED OF DAVID AND THE SON OF GOD

Second Samuel 7:12 refers to the seed of David. Eventually, this human seed becomes the Son of God (v. 14). Concerning this, the Lord Jesus asked a question of the Pharisees (Matt. 22:41-45). First, He asked them, "What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose son is He?" (v. 42). When they said that Christ was David's son, the Lord Jesus went on to ask how David could call Him Lord (v. 43). Finally, He said, "If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" (v. 45). This is the greatest question in the universe. How could Christ be the seed of a man and also the Son of God? How could He be the son of David and also David's Lord? The Pharisees knew the Bible very well, but when the Lord Jesus questioned them concerning the two aspects of His person, their mouths were shut. The Pharisees realized that Christ was the seed of David, and they answered without any hesitation. But when the Lord Jesus asked why David, a forefather of Christ, called Christ the Lord, they could not answer. On the one hand, He was a man; on the other hand, He was God. No one can reconcile these two.

The study of Christ's person, Christology, began with the second generation of the church fathers, and it became a great concern among the believers. Today, however, most

believers would not pay much attention to this matter. They know that God is Christ and that Christ is their Savior and their Redeemer, but if we ask them how Christ can be God and also man, they cannot answer.

CHRIST STILL BEING A MAN WITH A PHYSICAL BODY AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

Today there are many who do not believe that Christ in His resurrection and ascension still has a physical body. They believe that when Christ died He died in the body, but when He resurrected He put off the body and resurrected only as a divine person. Because of this wrong understanding, there are many verses in the Bible which they have no way to interpret.

The Root and the Offspring of David

Revelation 22:16 says that Jesus is "the Root and the Offspring of David." Christ is God; thus, He can be the source, the Root, of David. This refers to His divinity. At the same time, He is also a man; hence He is the Offspring, the issue, of David. This refers to His humanity. David came out of Him as the Root, and as the Offspring He came out of David.

Isaiah 11:1 says, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." All knowledgeable teachers of the Bible agree that this verse refers to Christ. At Solomon's time the house of David was a flourishing tree, but a short time later that tree began to be cut down. Eventually, it became a stump consisting mainly of two persons—Joseph and Mary. Out of that stump a rod, a sprout, came out—the little child Jesus. That was God's building a house for David and giving David a seed.

The Creator and a Creature

Colossians 1:12 tells us that Christ is God's allotted portion to us, and verse 15 says that this Christ is "the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation." God is the Creator, and Christ is the image of the Creator. As such a One, He is surely divine. He is also the Firstborn

of all creation. This indicates that He is also a creature. Since He became a man with blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14), surely He is a creature. Therefore, He is both divine and human. He is God and He is also a man. He is the Creator and He is also a creature.

Christ as the Son of Man Sitting on the Throne in Heaven

Many do not know that after His resurrection and ascension Christ still has His humanity, and others would strongly disagree, saying that Christ is no longer a man. However, Matthew 26:63-64 reveals clearly that He is still a man. When He was being judged by the Sanhedrin, they charged Him: "Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God." In answering Jesus said, "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Today Christ as the Son of Man is sitting on the throne in heaven, and He will come again also as the Son of Man.

Christ's being a man is altogether related to God's economy. His humanity, therefore, means a great deal. He has been exalted by God as a man, and as a glorified man He is now sitting in the heavens. At this point, I would ask you to consider a hymn on His exaltation as a man (*Hymns*, #132):

Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting,
Christ the Lord is there enthroned;
As the man by God exalted,
With God's glory He is crowned.

He hath put on human nature,
Died according to God's plan,
Resurrected with a body,
And ascended as a man.

God in Him on earth was humbled,
God with man was domiciled;
Man in Him in heav'n exalted,
Man with God is reconciled.

He as God with man is mingled,
God in man is testified;
He as man with God is blended,
Man in God is glorified.

From the Glorified in heaven
The inclusive Spirit came;
All of Jesus' work and Person
Doth this Spirit here proclaim.

With the Glorified in heaven
Is the Church identified;
By the Spirit of this Jesus
Are His members edified.

Lo! a man is now in heaven
As the Lord of all enthroned;
This is Jesus Christ our Savior,
With God's glory ever crowned!

I would call your attention to the lines which say that the church is identified with the "the Glorified in heaven." Christ has been glorified and exalted as a man, and we are identified with Him.

Resurrected with a Body

Both John 20 and Luke 24 provide evidence that Christ was resurrected with a body. On the night of His resurrection, the disciples were gathered together in a closed room. There was no opening, yet the Lord Jesus was suddenly in their midst (John 20:19-22). Some of the disciples could not believe that it was Jesus with a physical body, so the Lord Jesus asked His disciples to touch His hands and feet (Luke 24:36-43). He had a real body that could be touched, yet He entered a closed room without any opening. This is a mystery.

Christ is human and divine; He is the Creator and He is also a creature; He still has a physical body, yet He dwells in our spirit. We simply do not have the capacity to reconcile these things. Even in the physical realm there are many things that we cannot understand. How can we understand

all the divine things? We can understand the reality of everything only through the Bible, a book of revelation. Apart from the Bible, we cannot know God, man, or the universe.

CHRIST AS THE SEED OF DAVID BECOMING EVERYTHING TO US AND BEING ALL IN ALL IN THE CHURCH, IN THE BODY, AND IN THE NEW MAN

The Bible is a book that clearly reveals Christ in many aspects. In 2 Samuel 7 God promised a seed to David. Eventually, this seed of David was designated the Son (Rom. 1:3-4). Today Christ as the seed of David has become all in all to us. He is the centrality and universality of God. He is the hub and the circumference. He is the condensation and consummation of God and man. He is the all-inclusive, all-extensive Christ. He is God and He is man. He is the Creator and He is a creature. He is the First and He is the Last (Rev. 1:17). He is the beginning and He is the end. He fills all in all (Eph. 1:23), and He has been consummated to be the Spirit. He is our food, our drink, our breath, and our clothing. He is also every member of the Body and He is within every member. The Body is not the Head, nor the Head the Body, but Christ is both the Head and the Body (1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 1:18). In life, in nature, in constitution, we as the Body are the same as Christ the Head. Eventually, this Christ is every person in the new man (Col. 3:10-11). In the new man there is no room for any nation, any race, or any class of persons. There is room only for Christ.

Regarding this, we need a vision to see that we are nothing. We have been annulled by Christ, and Christ has become all of us. In the church, in the Body, and in the new man, Christ is all, and He is in all.

The person of Christ is the greatest mystery in the universe. With Him, everything is a mystery, yet everything is real. We can experience Christ as the Spirit because He is within us and with us all the time, even until the consummation of the age (Matt. 28:20). Where there are two or three gathered into His name, He is in their midst (18:20).

GOD'S DYNAMIC SALVATION BEING THE TRIUNE GOD HIMSELF PROCESSED TO BECOME THE CONDENSED, CONSUMMATED, LIFE-GIVING, ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

Being a Christian is not a matter of adjusting ourselves or improving ourselves. Such things are something of religion and have nothing to do with God's dynamic salvation. God's dynamic salvation is just the Triune God Himself passing through the processes to become the condensed, consummated, life-giving, all-inclusive Spirit. As such a One He can be contacted through our prayer from our spirit. When we pray even a little from our spirit, we contact this all-inclusive Spirit. He is real, genuine, living, fresh, and moving. He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. He is the Redeemer and the Savior. He is life and everything to us. He is even us. He has become us in order to make us Him. This is God's dynamic salvation.

God's intention from eternity to eternity is to make Himself us, that we might become Him in life, in nature, and in constitution (but not in the Godhead). This is actually the prophecy in 2 Samuel 7 concerning the seed of David who is called the Son of God. He is divine as well as human; He is human as well as divine. He, the firstborn Son of God, is our elder Brother, and we, His many brothers, are the many sons of God. In God's dynamic salvation there is no need for us to adjust ourselves or improve ourselves. What we need is for this One to be wrought into us through the metabolic process of transformation. Through this process He will move in us and gradually transform us into His image (2 Cor. 3:18) until we are fully the same as He in life, in nature, and in constitution. This is God's salvation, and this is the revelation in the Bible.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

GOD'S DESIRE TO BUILD HIMSELF INTO US AND TO BUILD US INTO HIM TO PRODUCE A MUTUAL ABODE

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Eph. 3:17; Rev. 21:2, 9

In this message I still have the burden to speak on 2 Samuel 7:12-14a.

THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE BEING PROGRESSIVE

Man in Creation and in the Fall

The divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. At the very beginning, in Genesis, God created man with a good nature. This means that there was nothing sinful or evil in the man created by God. When God looked at what He had created, including man, He saw that it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). At the beginning of man's history, God put man into a pleasant garden in front of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling him that in the day that he ate thereof he would die (2:17). This indicates that God wanted man to partake of the tree of life. However, man fell. The conscience was activated, and fallen man thus feared God and worshipped Him, realizing that he should do good and abandon evil.

Eventually, Abel received the revelation of God's redemption. Redemption did not come at Abel's time. Rather, it was anticipated in God's foreknowledge, and this anticipated redemption was revealed to Abel. Later, a little more of the divine revelation was given to Enoch and to Noah.

The Case of Job

During the time from Adam to Job, the divine revelation was somewhat ambiguous. Job was a person who feared God, who worshipped God, and who endeavored to build himself up to the uttermost in his integrity, uprightness, and perfection. Job tried his best to practice his integrity. However, God stripped Job of everything to show him that his need was not integrity nor perfection nor the highest standard of morality; his only need was God Himself. God seemed to be saying, "Job, I do not want you to build yourself up in your integrity or perfection. I want you to build yourself up with Me. You should not be a man of integrity or perfection—you should be a man of God. Job, you need to realize that what you lack is Me. You do not need perfection or integrity—you need Me."

At the time of Job, the divine revelation had not proceeded very far. What had been revealed was mainly that man needed God, that man had been created by God and for God, and that he needed to receive God as life. A man should be solely, wholly, and absolutely a man of God. Thus far, nothing had been revealed concerning God's building. If we stop with the book of Job, we may think that it is sufficient for us to have God. However, to have God is not adequate, for, as we will see, God wants a building.

The Revelation Given to Abraham

After God gained Abraham, He gave him the promise of the good land and of a descendant to enjoy the land. Isaac, one who enjoyed the good land, was a type of Christ. The good land itself also was a type of Christ. The rich produce of the good land (Deut. 8:7-10) signifies Christ as our life supply. This life supply eventually becomes the life-giving Spirit, who is the reality of Christ. The blessing of the gospel that God promised to Abraham is actually Christ in reality as the Spirit (Gal. 3:14).

The Revelation Given to David

With David the revelation went further to show that man not only needs God but needs God to be built into him. God

wants not only to be our life and our life supply; He wants to be built into us. God desires to build Himself into us and to build us into Him.

David wanted to build a house for God, but God stopped him and told him that He would build a house, a family, for David, and out of that building He would give him a seed. Here we see that God builds Himself into man to produce a house, and the issue of this building is a seed, which is Christ. After this Christ enters into us, He does a building work in us, making His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). Christ builds His home in our hearts with the elements of divinity and humanity.

This home is a mutual abode. In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me,...My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." To "make an abode" is to build a house. This house, this abode, is for mutual abiding. Hence, the Lord Jesus went on to say, "Abide in Me and I in you" (15:4a).

In the New Testament the Divine Revelation Reaching the Highest Standard

In the New Testament the divine revelation reached the highest standard. This revelation includes the goal which had been revealed to David in 2 Samuel 7.

God wants a building, and the consummate issue of the Bible is a building. This building is the New Jerusalem as a wife, a counterpart, to match Christ (Rev. 21:2, 9). The New Jerusalem as the corporate wife of Christ is composed of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament believers (vv. 12-14), who have been built together with the Triune God. This building will become the wife of the Lamb, Christ, and will be a mutual abode for God and His redeemed (vv. 3, 22).

OUR NEED FOR CHRIST, THE EMBODIMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD, TO BE BUILT INTO OUR BEING

We have pointed out that Job was mistaken in seeking to build up his integrity and perfection. Eventually, Job learned

that what he needed was God. With Job, however, we cannot see the building. We need to realize, therefore, that it is not adequate simply to take God as our life and life supply. We today may say that Christ is everything to us: our life, our breath, our food and drink, our clothing, and our abode. Yet even to have Christ in all these aspects still is not adequate. We need Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, to be built into our being, to be constituted into us. This is what Christ is doing today.

Philippians 3:7-11 speaks of pursuing Christ and gaining Christ. When I was a youth I heard that we should pursue Christ and gain Him. Later I discovered that it is not adequate even to pursue and gain Christ. We need the Christ who is dwelling in our spirit to build Himself into our heart, making our heart, with our humanity, His home.

Are you pursuing Christ? Are you gaining Christ? It is wonderful to be a person who is pursuing and gaining Christ, but this is not adequate. John 14 and Ephesians 3 both reveal that Christ comes into us not just to dwell, or abide, in us but especially for the purpose of making a home for Himself in our inner being. This is building.

GOD'S ECONOMY AND GOAL ACCORDING TO HIS HEART'S DESIRE BEING TO BUILD HIMSELF INTO MAN AND TO BUILD MAN INTO HIM

Genesis 2 reveals the tree of life with a river and precious materials of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. These materials are for building, for after this, God built a woman, Eve. This corresponds to the entire Bible. Christ came into us as the Spirit to be life to us. On the one hand, He is working within us to transform us into precious stones; on the other hand, He is building with Himself (divinity) and with us (humanity) to produce a home, a dwelling place. Eventually, this dwelling place, which is a mutual abode, will issue in the New Jerusalem.

This view of God's building in the Bible indicates that God's economy and goal according to His heart's desire are just to build Himself into man and to build man into Him.

We have seen that Athanasius said, "He [Christ] was made man that we might be made God." This means that as God's children we are "baby gods," having the life and nature of God but not the Godhead. However, not even this is God's goal. God in Christ is within us to build Himself into our being and to build us into His being. He builds His divinity into our humanity and builds our humanity into His divinity in order to mingle and blend His divinity with our humanity into one entity. This is like the meal offering: fine flour mingled with oil for the satisfaction of both God and man.

THE MINGLING OF DIVINITY AND HUMANITY TO PRODUCE ONE ENTITY

At the time of David, the divine revelation reached the point where God showed David what He wanted. God revealed to David that He could not be satisfied simply to have a man who was according to His heart. Rather, God indicated to David that He wants to build Himself into the man who is according to His heart and to make this man His building as His house. Then out from this house would issue a seed of humanity, yet this seed would become the Son of God. This involves the mingling of divinity with humanity, a mingling that eventually produces the church, the house of God.

In this mingling God and man, man and God, are blended together into one entity. This entity is God's building, which is a mutual abode for God and man. This entity, possessing both the divine nature and the human nature, also is the wife of the redeeming Christ. This entity, the New Jerusalem, will remain forever and will be the centrality and universality of the new heaven and new earth. This is the entire and complete revelation of the Bible.

The Bible begins with the tree of life, the flowing river, the precious materials of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone, and a builded wife. At the end of the Bible, we see again the tree of life with the flow of the living water, three kinds of material—gold, pearls, and precious stones—and a builded wife, the New Jerusalem. The beginning of the Bible shows God's goal, and the end shows God's achievement and attainment. This is God's goal, and both God and we are

heading toward it. With this revelation as our "road map," we can know where we are and where we will be for eternity.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

GOD'S INTENTION TO BUILD HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:11b-14a; Isa. 11:1; Eph. 3:17; John 14:23; 1 Cor. 3:10-12; Rev. 21:2-3, 9, 12-14

In this message I have the burden to speak a word concerning God's intention to build Himself in Christ into us. God desires not mainly to do things for us but to work Himself into our being.

JOB'S NEED BEING GOD HIMSELF

Although there is no time element with God, nevertheless He has, in the course of time, gradually, bit by bit, released His revelation to man. For instance, He revealed something to Job that He had not revealed to Adam, Abel, Enosh, or Noah. God revealed to Job that what He wants is a man who has God, not a man of uprightness, integrity, and perfection. God seemed to be saying, "Job, you should forget about your integrity, your perfection, and your uprightness. You do not need these things—you need Me." God revealed to Job that his unique need was God Himself, but He did not reveal to him anything concerning building.

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM CONCERNING THE GOOD LAND AND THE SEED

When God appeared to Abraham, He promised to give him two things—the good land and a seed. The good land and the seed both typify Christ. This indicates that, in typology, God would give Abraham Christ as the good land and also give him Christ as the seed, the real Isaac. The genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 speaks of Christ as "the son of Abraham" (v. 1). Isaac is a type of Christ as the son of Abraham, the

One who inherits the promise and blessing God gave to Abraham (Gen. 22:17-18; Gal. 3:16).

According to Paul's interpretation in Galatians 3, both the good land and the seed are the Spirit. The blessing of the gospel is the promised Spirit (vv. 8, 14). The land signifies Christ, the seed signifies Christ (v. 16), and eventually Christ became the life-giving Spirit. Thus, in verse 14 Paul says, "In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The physical aspect of the blessing that God promised to Abraham was the good land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; 26:3-4), which was a type of the all-inclusive Christ. Since Christ is eventually realized as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), the blessing of the promised Spirit corresponds to the blessing of the land promised to Abraham.

When we believe in Christ, God gives us His Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the reality of the resurrected Christ, the very Christ in resurrection. The Spirit is the good land, and the Spirit is also the seed.

REDEMPTION AND SALVATION BEING FOR GOD'S DESIRE TO WORK HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US

According to the common understanding and view among Christians, God gave Christ to be our Redeemer and our Savior. He died for our sins, accomplishing redemption; He rose up from among the dead; and He has become our life. However, this does not tell us what God wants to do. God wants to work Himself in Christ into us. Redemption and salvation are for this. Christ's incarnation, Christ's human living, Christ's death and resurrection—they all are for God's desire to work Himself in Christ into us. Everything that Christ is and everything that Christ has accomplished are for this one thing. All the steps, big and small, that God takes in our daily life are to fulfill His intention of building Himself in Christ into our being.

THE PROPHECY THAT GOD WOULD BUILD A HOUSE FOR THE MAN WHO WAS ACCORDING TO HIS HEART

In 2 Samuel 7:2 David, a man according to God's heart,

said, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains." This indicates that David felt that he should do something for God, that he should build a house for God. God reacted by saying to David through Nathan the prophet, "Will it be you who builds Me a house to dwell in?" (v. 5). God went on to reveal to David, through a prophecy in typology, that His intention was not that David would build a house for Him but that He would build Himself into David. First, God told David that He would make him a house (v. 11b). Then He said, "I will raise up your seed after you…and I will establish his kingdom. It is he who will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he will be My son" (vv. 12-14a). Here God revealed to David something concerning building, a matter that had not been revealed to either Job or Abraham.

The prophecy in typology in 2 Samuel 7 is related to the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1, which tells us that a twig will come forth from the stem of Jesse and that a branch from his roots will bear fruit. This refers to Christ. The house of David, which was a flourishing tree at Solomon's time, eventually was reduced to a stump consisting mainly of Joseph and Mary. Out of that stump the child Jesus came forth as a twig, a sprout. That was God's building a house for David, and through this house God gave David a seed—Jesus Christ. Thus, the prophecy given to David in the way of typology was fulfilled in Christ's incarnation and human living. Christ is the seed that is the issue of God's building a house for David.

CHRIST'S SOWING HIMSELF AS THE SEED INTO US AS THE SOIL FOR GOD'S BUILDING

Matthew 13 reveals that Christ has sown Himself as the seed into us as the soil. Christ is the seed, and we are the soil with the nutrients for the growth of the seed. Christ in resurrection, Christ as the life-giving Spirit, has sown Himself into us not simply to stay in us but to grow in us. The growth of Christ in us equals the building.

The Christ who has sown Himself into us is now doing a particular work in us—the work of making His home in our

inner being, in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). This is building, and it is carried out through the mingling of divinity with humanity. Such a building is mentioned in John 14:23: "If anyone loves Me,…My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." This abode is not only for the Triune God but is also for us. Hence, it is a mutual abode.

This thought regarding the building is strengthened in 1 Corinthians and in Revelation. In 1 Corinthians 3:10 Paul says, "According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation [Christ], and another builds upon it. But let each man take heed how he builds upon it." Then he goes on to speak of building "upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble" (v. 12). Revelation 3:12 tells us that Christ will make the overcomer a pillar in the temple of God, which is the New Jerusalem. Eventually, the New Jerusalem, the consummation of the building, a composition of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament believers (21:12-14), will be the wife of the Lamb, Christ, and a mutual abode for God and His redeemed for eternity (vv. 2-3, 9).

GOD'S BUILDING—THE MINGLING OF DIVINITY WITH OUR REDEEMED, RESURRECTED, AND UPLIFTED HUMANITY

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus declared, "I will build My church." How does Christ build His church? He builds the church not merely by saving sinners and making them believers and members of Himself but by building Himself into them. When we believed in Christ, He came into us and began the work of gradually building Himself into our being.

In the Bible there is the line concerning God's building Himself in Christ into us. This matter of building is therefore mentioned strongly and repeatedly in the New Testament. According to the divine revelation in the Bible, God is building by working Himself in Christ into our being. This involves the mingling of divinity with our redeemed, resurrected, and uplifted humanity.

God is working Himself in Christ into us to make a house

not only for us but to us. This house will be both God's house and our house, a mutual abode. Eventually, the Triune God and redeemed humanity will be mingled, blended, and built up to be one entity, and this entity will be the New Jerusalem. If we see this, we will realize that all our problems today are due to one thing—our shortage of having God in Christ built into our being. Thus, our need today is not merely to be holy, spiritual, and overcoming. Our need is for God to carry out His building work within us.

A SEED OF MAN BECOMING THE SON OF GOD

What a great light the Lord has shown us from 2 Samuel 7! God revealed to David that his seed, a seed of man (v. 12), would become the Son of God (v. 14). How can this be? The answer is that a human seed is designated the Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4). Humanity is designated in divinity, and divinity and humanity are blended as one. Today, we, seeds of humanity, are becoming sons of God in divinity through the process of God's building. We praise the Lord that in His recovery on the earth today, we are undergoing the work of God's building. God is fulfilling His desire to build Himself in Christ into our being, and eventually the outcome of this building will be the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY

THE UNIQUE WORK OF THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD —BUILDING HIMSELF INTO OUR BEING

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:11b-14a; John 14:23; Eph. 3:16-17; Matt. 13:3, 8, 23; Matt. 16:18; Rev. 21:2, 9-10, 12, 14, 22

We thank the Lord that, throughout the years, He has opened His Word to us and has been speaking to us in His recovery. In this message I have the burden to help you to realize what is God's main work in His recovery, or in His economy.

GOD'S RECOVERY AND GOD'S ECONOMY

The words *recovery* and *economy* refer to one thing as seen from two viewpoints. With God, it is a matter of economy; with us, it is a matter of recovery. God's economy was unveiled through the apostles, but because the believers lost the proper understanding of God's economy, there is the need for it to be recovered. Therefore, what is being recovered today is God's economy.

The Lord's recovery is also to recover the oneness of the Body. This means that in the recovery we must see the universal Body and do everything in the limitation, the regulation, of the one Body. We all need to learn how to practice the Lord's recovery of the one Body.

GOD'S UNIQUE WORK

God's economy is centered on one thing—God's unique work. God's unique work in the universe and throughout all the ages and generations is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself one with them. This involves the mingling of divinity with humanity.

In order to work Himself into us, God became a man and

lived a human life on earth. Then He passed through death and entered into resurrection and ascension, becoming the consummated, life-giving Spirit ready to come into us. When He came into us, He regenerated our spirit. Now He is working in us to increase Himself in us and to build Himself into us.

CHRIST MAKING HIS HOME IN OUR HEARTS

The Bible tells us that God is working in us and that Christ is living in us. However, the Bible uses a very striking term—*build*—to denote God's work in us. In Ephesians 3:16-17 Paul prayed to the Father, saying, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith." To be sure, Christ's making His home in our hearts involves building. If we would make a home, we must first build a house. To make a home implies being settled in a particular place. However, if we would be settled, we must have a house. The words "that Christ may make His home" are a strong indication that He is doing a work of building in us. Christ is building a home in our inner being.

THE MATERIALS FOR THE BUILDING

Divinity and Humanity

In building a house, it is necessary to have the proper material. When God created the universe, He did not use any material; He created simply by His speaking. For instance, He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. However, in order to build a home in us, Christ must have the material. On the one hand, this material is Christ Himself as the element; on the other hand, this material includes something from us with our humanity.

Another verse that speaks of the Triune God doing a building work in us is John 14:23. Here the Lord Jesus says, "If anyone loves Me,…My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." The words "make an abode" in this verse equal "make His home" in Ephesians

3:17. The Triune God has come into us to do a building work with Himself as the element and also with something from us as the material. The word concerning building in these verses implies that God's building Himself in Christ into us has very much to do with what we are.

The Seed and the Soil with Its Nutrients

This is illustrated by the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. The seed is sown into the soil to grow with the nutrients in the soil. This seed, therefore, does not grow just with itself; it grows with itself and the nutrients in the soil. As a result, the produce is a composition of elements from both the seed and the soil. Here we see an important spiritual principle. In order to grow, the seed must be sown into good soil. If the seed were sown into sand or among stones, it would not grow, because neither sand nor stone can supply the necessary nutrients.

In Matthew 13 the seed is divinity, and the soil with its nutrients is humanity. We have within us certain nutrients created by God as a preparation for His coming into us to grow in us. God has created the human spirit with the human nutrients. For this reason, human beings can believe in the Lord and receive Him.

The seed that has been sown into us is Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God. The rate at which the seed grows within us depends on the nutrients afforded by us. The more nutrients we supply, the faster the seed will grow and the more it will flourish.

According to the Bible, growth equals building. The Lord Jesus declared, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). This building takes place by the growth of the divine seed within us.

The Triune God, the source of life, has sown Himself in Christ as a seed into our being. Once this seed comes into us, it meets something within us—our spiritual nutrients—and it begins to grow. The degree of growth depends not on the divine seed but on how many nutrients we afford this seed. Matthew 13 indicates that only the good soil (vv. 8, 23)

affords the adequate nutrients for the growth of the divine seed.

Our Need to Be Strengthened into Our Inner Man

Since God's building Himself in Christ into us depends not only on Himself as the element but also on the nutrients supplied by us, we need to be strengthened into our inner man. If we remain in our soul, in our natural man, there will not be any nutrients for the growth of the divine seed. But if we are strengthened into our inner man and if we pay attention to our spirit and exercise our spirit, the nutrients will be supplied. Then Christ will make His home in our inner being.

If Christ's making His home in our hearts did not need something from us, Paul would not have prayed for us as he did in Ephesians 3. Here Paul prayed that the Father would strengthen us with power through His Spirit into our inner man. This power, referred to in Ephesians 1:19-22, is the power that raised Christ from the dead, seated Christ at the right hand of God in the heavenlies, subjected all things under Christ's feet, and gave Christ to be Head over all things to the church. Such power operates in us (3:20), and with it God strengthens us for His building. The Spirit through whom God strengthens us is the consummation of the processed Triune God. On the one hand, God strengthens us with Himself as the element and, on the other hand, we afford the nutrients. Through these two God in Christ carries out His intrinsic building—the building of His home—in our entire being.

THE NEW JERUSALEM—A COMPOSITION OF DIVINITY AND HUMANITY BLENDED AND MINGLED TOGETHER AS ONE ENTITY

The conclusion of the divine revelation in the Bible is a building, the New Jerusalem. This building is a blending and mingling of divinity with humanity. This is proved by the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Verse 3 refers to the New Jerusalem as "the tabernacle of God," and verse 22 says, "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the

Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." The New Jerusalem as the tabernacle of God is for God to dwell in, and God and the Lamb as the temple are for the redeemed saints to dwell in. This indicates that the New Jerusalem will be a mutual dwelling place for God and man. Furthermore, this building is a composition of human beings. The gates are pearls inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel (v. 12), and on the twelve foundations are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (v. 14). This indicates clearly that the New Jerusalem is a composition of the Triune God, who is the essence, center, and universality, and God's redeemed people.

The New Jerusalem is a composition of divinity and humanity blended and mingled together as one entity. All the components have the same life, nature, and constitution and thus are a corporate person. This is a matter of God becoming man and man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. These two, God and man, man and God, are built up together by being blended and mingled together. This is the completion, the consummation, of God's building. We all need to see this vision.

THE EFFECT OF THE VISION OF GOD'S BUILDING ON OUR WORK TODAY

The Example of Job

The vision of God's building will affect our work today. If we see God's building, we will not try to help others to be more humble or gentle. That is merely something of human virtue, and that is not what God wants. Concerning this, I would ask you to consider the case of Job, a person who had the highest attainment in building up himself in integrity, uprightness, and perfection. Eventually, God stripped Job of all his attainments in order to show him that his only need was God Himself.

Christ Living in Us to Enjoy Himself as the Good Land

God went on from Job to Abraham, making promises to

him regarding a seed and the good land. Who are the ones who enjoy the good land? This question is answered in the prophecy by typology given to David in 2 Samuel 7. The One who enjoys the good land is actually Christ Himself. This means that God in Christ becomes us to be the enjoyer of the good land. David was a man according to God's heart, but God knew that this was not adequate. Therefore, God revealed that He would build David a house with His Son, who would become David's seed. On the one hand, this seed is the good land; on the other hand, this seed is the One who enjoys the good land. Who, then, is enjoying Christ? The answer is that it is Christ in us who is enjoying Christ. It is no longer we who live, but it is Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20). Christ is living in us to enjoy Himself as the good land.

Our Need to Have God Wrought into Our Hearts

As we will see in a later message, David, a man according to God's heart, had a great failure. This indicates that merely to be a person according to God's heart means nothing, for one may be according to God's heart but still be empty, not having God wrought into his heart. In 2 Samuel 7 God seemed to be saying, "David, you are a man according to My heart, but you need Me to be wrought into your heart. You need Me to be built into your being to make you Me in life and in nature. It is not adequate for you to be according to My heart. You must be able to say, 'To me to live is God.'" If David had been such a person, he would not have fallen.

A person may be according to the heart of God and yet be without God, not having God wrought into him. The fall of David illustrates the fact that even if we are a person according to God, if we do not have God wrought into us, we are no better than others. What is the value of being according to the heart of God if we do not have God wrought into our hearts? If we realize that God desires to work Himself into His chosen people and if we realize that this is what we all need, then the goal of our work will be to minister Christ to others so that the Triune God may build Himself into their being.

Ministering the Building God and the Builded God

Our work in the recovery today is to minister God to people. Yes, we need to save sinners and to feed the saints and perfect them. The crucial matter, however, is that we minister God to others. The God whom we minister is not just the building God—He is also the builded God. If we fail to minister God in this way, our work will be wood, grass, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:12).

I would ask you to reconsider the work you are doing for the Lord. Perhaps you have opened up a region or have brought many people to God. But I ask you this question: How much of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God has been wrought into those whom you have brought to God? If we are sincere and genuine, we will humble ourselves and confess that not very much of the Triune God has been wrought into the ones we have brought to God. Therefore, we need to practice one thing—to minister the processed Triune God into others so that He may build Himself into their inner man. In every aspect of our work—preaching the gospel, feeding the believers, perfecting the saints—the intrinsic element must be that we minister the building and builded God to others. I would urge you to pray that the Lord would teach you to work in this way.

The Processed Triune God Building Himself into His Redeemed People

The processed Triune God is embodied in Christ and realized as the consummated Spirit. This is the God whom we worship, preach, and minister to others. Today He is building Himself into His redeemed people in order to produce a house with Himself as the element and also with something from their redeemed and uplifted humanity. This house is the church, the Body of Christ. This house is the enlargement, the expansion, of Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God realized as the Spirit. As we carry out the God-ordained way in the four steps of begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and building, our work must be based upon the processed Triune God, who is building Himself into His chosen people.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEED OF DAVID BEING DESIGNATED THE SON OF GOD

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Matt. 22:41-46; Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:12; Rev. 21:2, 11, 18-21

The books of history in the Old Testament contain many stories. On the one hand, these stories are helpful. On the other hand, we may be distracted by these stories from the unique goal in the Bible. The one goal in the Bible has been neglected by Christians for centuries, but in His recovery the Lord has shown us this goal in a very clear way.

In this concluding word on 2 Samuel 7:12-14a, I have the burden to consider some striking matters covered in or implied by these verses. These matters are all related to the significance of the seed of David being designated the Son of God.

GOD MAKING HIMSELF MAN IN ORDER TO MAKE MAN GOD IN LIFE AND IN NATURE

In verse 12 God speaks of David's seed, and in verse 14a He says, "I will be his Father, and he will be My son." Here we have something of very great significance—the seed of David becoming the Son of God. These verses clearly unveil that a seed of man, that is, a son of a man, can become the Son of God. This implies that God's intention is to make Himself man in order to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. Such an implication is exceedingly great. Eventually, the whole Bible consummates with this matter. The New Jerusalem, the ultimate consummation of the Bible, involves God becoming man and man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead, and God and man being mingled together to be one entity.

The Diamond in the Box

If we read the Bible without paying attention to this crucial point, then, in a very real sense, the Bible is to us an empty book. This means that although the Bible is real in itself, in our understanding of it the Bible is empty. As an illustration, let us suppose that a certain box, which is quite attractive, contains a large diamond. A child may be interested in the box but not in the diamond. An adult, however, would focus his attention on the diamond contained in the box. Today, many Christians care for the Bible as the "box," but they have not seen and do not appreciate the "diamond" which is the content of this box, and they may even condemn those who have a proper appreciation of the "diamond" in the "box." The "diamond" in the "box" of the Bible is the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

The vast majority of today's Christians neglect the crucial point in the Bible that in Christ God has become man in order to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead and that God desires to mingle Himself with man to be one entity. Some not only neglect this; they falsely accuse as heretical those who teach it. Today many believe one aspect of this crucial point—that God became a man named Jesus—but they do not believe the other aspect—that man is becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

The Son of David Being Designated the Son of God

The Bible reveals a wonderful, marvelous person—Jesus Christ, the God-man. This One is both the Son of God and the Son of man. On one occasion when the Pharisees were gathered together, the Lord Jesus questioned them, saying, "What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose son is He?" (Matt. 22:41-42a). When they said to him "David's," He went on to say to them, "How then does David in spirit call Him Lord…? If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" (vv. 43, 45). The Pharisees could not understand this, and they were not able to answer Him. Here the Lord Jesus was

indicating that He, the son of David, was the Son of God—the very matter revealed in 2 Samuel 7:12-14a.

What is revealed in 2 Samuel 7 is expounded by Paul in Romans 1:3-4, where he tells us that Christ, a descendant of David, has been designated the Son of God. These verses say, "Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ is a descendant of David, yet He has been designated to be the Son of God. This is the mystery of God becoming man to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. The two, God and man, are thus built together, constituted into each other. In Christ God has been constituted into man, man has been constituted into God, and God and man have been mingled together to be one entity, which is called the God-man.

GOD BUILDING HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO MAN

In these messages on 2 Samuel 7, we have emphasized the matter of God's building Himself in Christ into man. God is building Himself not in Himself but in man, and not only *in* man but also *into* man. This building is God's constituting of Himself in Christ into man.

God in Christ is constituting Himself into man, making Himself the element of man. Thus, we human beings are constituted with a divine element. This means that a divine element is built into our human element, and the two elements are mingled with each other. Not only is God's divine element constituted into us—the human element is constituted into God. As the divine element is constituted into our humanity, we become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. As the human element is constituted into God, God becomes man. This is the building revealed in the New Testament.

Such a revelation should become a principle that governs our understanding of God and of God's building. When we talk about the building up of the church or about the building up of the Body, we need to realize that this building is a constitution of the divine element into the human element

and of the human element into the divine element. This building, therefore, is a constitution of the divine element and of the human element into each other. Such a constitution makes the divine element and the human element one entity. This is the building of the church, the building of the Body of Christ.

OUR WORK TODAY BEING PART OF A MUTUAL CONSTITUTION

As we work for God today, we should participate in this building. This means that our work must be part of this mutual constitution. If our work is not related to this mutual constitution, then in the eyes of God our work is like wood, grass, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:12). But if our work is a part of this mutual constitution, God will regard our work as gold, silver, and precious stones, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem built with gold, pearl, and precious stones (Rev. 21:2, 11, 18-21).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(11)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(5)

DAVID'S CONQUEST OVER HIS ENEMIES FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF HIS KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 8—10

We have seen that David was first crowned by the tribe of Judah (2:1—4:12) and later was crowned by all the other tribes (5:1-5). Then he was established by God as king with his kingdom exalted for the sake of God's people Israel (vv. 6-25). David's care for God's habitation on the earth is seen in his taking care of the habitation of the ark of God (ch. 6) and in his wanting to build a house for God (ch. 7). Chapters eight through ten are concerned with David's conquest over his enemies for the strengthening of his kingdom.

I. OVER THE PHILISTINES

David struck the Philistines and subdued them, taking control of the chief city out of the hand of the Philistines (8:1).

II. OVER MOAB

David struck Moab, putting their grown-up ones to death and keeping their younger ones alive. The Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute to him (v. 2).

III. OVER ZOBAH AND SYRIA

In his conquest over Zobah and Syria (vv. 3-8), David struck Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, and took from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers. When the Syrians of Damascus came to help the king of Zobah, David struck 22,000 men among the Syrians. The Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. From this we see that "Jehovah preserved David wherever he went" (v. 6b).

IV. CONGRATULATED BY TOI KING OF HAMATH

David was congratulated by Toi king of Hamath for his fighting against the king of Zobah (vv. 9-10).

V. CONSECRATING HIS SPOILS FROM ALL THE NATIONS TO JEHOVAH

David consecrated to Jehovah his spoils from all the nations, articles of gold, silver, and bronze (vv. 11-12).

VI. OVER EDOM

Verses 13 and 14 speak of David's conquest over Edom. He put garrisons throughout all of Edom, and all the Edomites became servants to him.

VII. DAVID'S REIGN IN JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

In verses 15 through 18 we have a word concerning David's reign in justice and righteousness. Verse 15 says, "So David reigned over all Israel, and David executed justice and righteousness for all his people." At that time Joab was over the army; Jehoshaphat was recorder; Zadok and Ahimelech were priests; and Seraiah was scribe. Benaiah was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites (the body guard and the runners), and David's sons were his advisers.

VIII. SHOWING KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH THE SON OF JONATHAN

Chapter nine is a record of David's showing kindness to Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan.

A. For the Sake of Jonathan

In verse 1 David asked, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show kindness to him for Jonathan's sake?" David felt obliged to show kindness, for the sake of Jonathan, to any remaining descendant of the house of Saul.

B. Finding Out Mephibosheth through a Servant of the House of Saul

A servant of the house of Saul, whose name was Ziba, was called to David, and David asked him, "Is there yet anyone at all of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" (v. 3a). The servant told him that there was still a son of Jonathan, one who was crippled in his feet. When Mephibosheth came to David, David told him not to be afraid, for he would surely show kindness to him for the sake of Jonathan his father. David went on to tell him that he would restore to him all the land of his father Saul and that he would eat food at his table continually (v. 7). Mephibosheth paid homage to David and said, "What is your servant that you should look upon a dead dog like me?" (v. 8).

C. Giving All That Belonged to Saul and to All His House to Mephibosheth

David gave all that belonged to Saul and to all his house to Mephibosheth, making Ziba and his household servants to Mephibosheth. David also asked Mephibosheth, who had a young son and who was crippled in both feet, to dwell in Jerusalem and eat at the king's table continually (vv. 9-13). This was the fulfillment, on David's side, of the covenanted love between him and Jonathan.

IX. FURTHER CONQUEST

Chapter ten is a record of David's further conquest.

A. Over Ammon

David tried to show kindness to Hanun the king of Ammon by sending word through his servants to comfort Hanun concerning his father, who had died (vv. 1-2). However, Hanun

insulted the servants of David by shaving off half their beards and cutting away half their garments at the buttocks (vv. 3-5). Seeing that they had become odious to David, the children of Ammon hired soldiers of the Syrians and men of Maacah and Tob (v. 6). When David heard of this, he sent Joab and all the host of mighty men. The men of Israel defeated the Ammonites, Syrians, Maacathites, and Tobites (vv. 7-14).

B. Over the Syrians

The Syrians beyond the Euphrates helped the Syrians from Syria to fight against Israel (vv. 15-16). David defeated all the Syrians, and all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer king of Syria made peace with Israel and served them (vv. 17-19). From this we see that David was altogether victorious, that the surrounding enemies were defeated or subdued, and that many brought tribute to David.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(12)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(6)

DAVID'S INDULGING SIN AND GOD'S PUNISHING CONDEMNATION

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 11:1—12:15a

Second Samuel 11:1—12:15a is a record concerning David's indulging sin and God's punishing condemnation.

I. DAVID'S INDULGING SIN

A. In the Time while Joab and David's Servants Were Fighting against the Kings of the Canaanites

David committed the sin described in chapter eleven in the time while Joab and David's servants were fighting against the kings of the Canaanites. David had sent out Joab and his servants, but he himself remained in Jerusalem (v. 1).

B. In His Life of Ease

After all the enemies of Israel were subdued and David was exalted as the king of Israel, David committed a great sin while he was in a peaceful situation. This indicates that whenever we are in a peaceful situation, it is easy for us to be seduced to indulge our flesh.

Verse 2a tells us that late one afternoon David rose from

his bed and went for a walk on the roof of the king's house. Here David was enjoying a life of ease, and his sin was committed during a time of ease. Ease is a big spoiler. We need to labor, toil, and suffer. Instead of damaging us, suffering is a help to us. We need to be occupied with either laboring or suffering.

C. In His Indulging of the Lust of the Eyes and the Lust of the Flesh

David's sin was the issue of his indulging of the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh (vv. 2b-3).

D. Committing a Willful Adultery by Robbery

David committed a willful adultery by robbery, abusing the power of his kingship (vv. 4-5). This was a real insult to God. David's great sin nearly annulled all his attainments from the past.

E. Pretending to Cover His Evil Deed

After committing a willful act of adultery, David pretended to cover his evil deed (vv. 6-13). Eventually, God exposed him.

F. Murdering Uriah, His Faithful Servant, by a Conspiracy with Joab

David murdered Uriah, his faithful servant, by a conspiracy with Joab (vv. 14-25).

1. Putting Uriah in the Forefront of the Hardest Battle and Withdrawing from Him

In a letter, David instructed Joab to put Uriah in the forefront of the hardest battle and then withdraw from him so he might be stricken down to death (vv. 14-15). By giving such a word to Joab concerning Uriah, David abused his kingship. Joab did what David commanded, and Uriah was killed.

2. Even at the Sacrifice of the Life of Some of the Servants of David

Not only was Uriah slain, but also "some of the people, some of the servants of David, fell" (v. 17b). This indicates

that David murdered Uriah even at the sacrifice of the life of some of the servants of David.

3. Comforting and Encouraging Joab

Joab surely realized that he was involved in a conspiracy to carry out a great sin, and his conscience must have condemned him. David comforted and encouraged Joab, the one who carried out the conspiracy, by saying, "Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your fighting against the city and overthrow it" (v. 25). What a terrible thing for David to say! Uriah was not merely devoured by the sword—he was actually murdered by David so that he could take Uriah's wife.

David's behavior here was utterly different from that of Joseph and Boaz. Joseph was tempted, but he ran and escaped from adultery (Gen. 39). Boaz, David's forefather, also kept himself clean from the indulgence of the flesh of sin (Ruth 3). This purity kept Boaz in the line of the genealogy of Christ. David, however, willingly committed adultery. By his one sin David broke the last five of the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:13-17).

Before David was crowned and enthroned, he already had a number of wives. Second Samuel 5:13 says that he took more concubines and wives. David was perfect in every way, but he was weak in the matter of the indulgence of the lust of the flesh. The lust of the flesh is like a wild horse. To subdue this lust, we must hold the bridle very tightly. In this matter David was loose, and he sacrificed his high attainment in the pursuit of God. David was a great "diamond," but his indulgence in lust was a black, foreign particle in this diamond. Even though he was a person of high attainment in his spiritual pursuit, he was still able to commit such a great sin.

G. Taking the Wife of the Dead Uriah as His Wife Right after Her Lamentation for Her Husband, Murdered by David

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. As soon as her mourning was over, David took her as his wife (11:26-27a).

H. Displeasing Jehovah to the Uttermost

The thing that David did displeased Jehovah to the uttermost (v. 27b). David's sin is referred to elsewhere in the Bible. First Kings 15:5 says, "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." Even in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 there is a word regarding this: "David begot Solomon of her who had been the wife of Uriah" (v. 6b). This genealogy does not say "of Bath-sheba" but "of her who had been the wife of Uriah," to emphasize this great sin of David's.

II. GOD'S PUNISHING CONDEMNATION

Second Samuel 12:1-15a speaks of God's punishing condemnation of David's sin.

A. Through Nathan the Prophet

God's punishing condemnation came to David through Nathan the prophet (v. 1a). In chapter seven Nathan had helped David realize that the need in the universe is for God to work Himself into human beings and to build Himself into them. In chapter twelve Nathan came to David to remind him of what he had done and to rebuke him.

B. By a Parable Leading David to Condemn Himself for What He Did in Murdering Uriah and Robbing Him of His Wife

Because David the king had power and because he could have misused this power to kill Nathan the prophet, Nathan was careful in speaking to David. Instead of directly condemning David, Nathan told him a parable which led him to condemn himself for what he had done in murdering Uriah and robbing him of his wife (vv. 1b-7a). When David heard about the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb, David's "anger was greatly kindled against the man. And he said to Nathan, As Jehovah lives, the man who has done this is worthy of death; and he shall restore the ewe lamb fourfold because

he has done this thing and because he had no pity" (vv. 5-6). Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man" (v. 7a).

C. Referring Him to All the Things That God Had Done for Him

Nathan went on to refer David to all the things that God had done for him (vv. 7b-8). Especially Nathan referred David to the fact that God had given him the house of Israel and of Judah. Then Nathan said that, if what had been given was too little, God would have added to David even more things.

D. Condemning Him for His Murdering of Uriah and His Robbing Him of His Wife

"Why have you despised the word of Jehovah by doing what is evil in His sight? You have stricken down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife as your wife and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon" (v. 9). Here God, speaking through Nathan, condemned David for murdering Uriah and for robbing him of his wife.

E. The Result of God's Punishing Condemnation

Nathan told David that because he had despised Jehovah the sword would not depart from his house forever (v. 10). God would raise up trouble against him from within his house. Further, God said that He would take David's wives before his eyes and give them to his companion, who would lie with them in the sight of the sun (v. 11). David had done this secretly, but God would do it before all Israel and even before the sun (v. 12).

Here we see that God is not only loving; He is also fearful. Under God's punishment, there was fornication and killing in David's family, and David's son, Absalom, even rebelled against him.

F. David Confessing His Sin against Jehovah, and Nathan Saying to Him That Jehovah Had Put Away His Sin and That He Would Not Die

David confessed his sin against Jehovah, and Nathan said to him, "Jehovah has also put away your sin; you will not

die" (v. 13). That was God's mercy to David, for David surely deserved to die. Nevertheless, because David had given the enemies of Jehovah much occasion to blaspheme Him, Nathan told him that the son who was born to him would surely die (v. 14).

When God forgives, He forgets (Jer. 31:34). To forgive is to forget. But it seems that God did not forget this sin of David's. As we have pointed out, in his record of Christ's genealogy, Matthew purposely wrote, "David begot Solomon of her who had been the wife of Uriah." This indicates the seriousness of David's sin.

We need to learn of David on the negative side as well as on the positive side. The lust of the flesh is a devastating element that can destroy us. If such a godly man as David could be seduced, can we escape? Human beings are human beings, flesh is flesh, and lusts are lusts. We should always keep a distance between ourselves and those of the opposite sex. A young man or young woman should not talk privately with someone of the opposite sex in a closed room. No godly person should be loose in contacting the other sex. Regardless of our attainment in our spiritual pursuit, it is possible for any of us to commit such a sin.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

MAN'S FAILURE AND GOD'S PUNISHMENT

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 11:1—12:23

In this message I have the burden to speak a word concerning man's failure and God's punishment.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND GOD'S ECONOMY

The books of Samuel unveil God's sovereignty and God's economy. God is sovereign; He is behind everything and everyone. He has the full capacity to carry out what He wants according to the desire of His heart and according to His eternal economy.

God desires to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself and them one organic entity. This means that the processed and consummated Triune God is building Himself in Christ into the intrinsic being of His chosen people, in order to have a constitution that is both divine and human. Such an entity is called the kingdom of God, the organism of the Triune God, and the organic Body of Christ. Whereas God is building such an entity, many of those who are spiritually blind are endeavoring to build up for themselves a monarchy within the divine kingdom.

MAN'S FAILURE

The books of Samuel also unveil man's failure. David, a man according to God's heart, failed in the matter of the lust of the flesh. David's defect was that he did not restrict his flesh. When he was crowned in Hebron at thirty years of age, he already had at least six wives (2 Sam. 3:2-5). Later, he abused his kingship by murdering Uriah and robbing him of his wife.

In His creation God ordained that man have one wife so

that man may have godly children (Mal. 2:14-15). However, some men broke this principle. For instance, Gideon, one of the judges of Israel, had many wives (Judg. 8:30). Boaz, an important ancestor in the genealogy of Christ, was a good pattern because he controlled the lust of his flesh (Ruth 3). Samuel was also a good example. His mother consecrated him to God as a Nazarite, and he kept the vow of his mother throughout his life. David, on the contrary, even though he was a man according to God's heart, had a great failure in the matter of the lust of the flesh.

GOD'S PUNISHMENT

In addition to man's failure, the books of Samuel reveal God's punishment. God exercised a severe punishment upon David because his sin was very evil.

The Change in the Behavior of David's Children Teaching Us to Fear God

After David's failure many evils, including incest, murder, and rebellion, took place among his family. It seemed that, after David's failure, the behavior of his children changed. This change is seen particularly in the case of David's son Absalom. Absalom killed his brother Ammon because he had defiled Absalom's sister, and then he rebelled against his father David, even seeking to kill him. The source of this unprecedented evil was David's indulgence in the lust of the flesh.

The change that took place with David's children should teach us to fear God. We must learn the lesson to have a holy fear toward God and to tremble before Him. Whether our children will be good or bad is altogether up to God. What we are in the sight of God will affect our children. Furthermore, God's chastisement and His governmental dealing with those who love Him always affect their children.

There Being No Peace in David's Family or in the Kingdom of Israel

In God's punishment, the first child born of the wife of Uriah died (2 Sam. 12:18). In God's sovereign mercy, another child was born of her. The name given to him by God was

Jedidiah, which means "beloved of Jehovah" (v. 25). David gave him the name Solomon, which means "peaceful" (v. 24). This indicates that David expected to have a peaceful time. But from that time there was no peace in David's family or in the entire kingdom of Israel. Solomon's kingship had a wonderful beginning, but the same thing happened with him as with his father, and his end was pitiful. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3). His pagan wives brought their idols with them and turned Solomon's heart away from God (vv. 4, 8).

God Being Just as Well as Merciful

Our God is merciful, but He is also just. God loved David, but because of his sin David lost his standing and position and eleven of the twelve tribes. Only the tribe of Judah remained with David (2 Sam. 20:1-2). After Solomon's reign the kingdom was divided, and eventually Judah and Israel were taken into captivity. The children of Israel lost their nation and the land of their fathers; they were scattered around the globe; and they were persecuted and killed. Today, although they have a narrow strip of land near the Mediterranean Sea, they have no peace with their neighbors.

God's Judgment in the History of the Church

If we trace the history of the church, we will see that what has happened during the past nineteen centuries matches the four matters found in the books of Samuel: God's sovereignty, God's economy, man's failure, and God's punishing judgment. In chapters two and three of Revelation, we see the church under God's judgment. This judgment will consummate in chapter seventeen, with the judgment of Babylon the Great. As we consider this matter of God's judgment, we need to be very conscious of what God is and of what our response should be.

THE ACCOUNT OF GOD'S PUNISHING JUDGMENT ON DAVID BEING WRITTEN AS A WARNING TO US TODAY

The account of God's punishing judgment on David is

written as a warning to us today (1 Cor. 10:11). We should read this account seriously in the presence of God. This account warns us that the indulgence of the flesh is a serious thing. David was tempted simply by a glance and then he failed to restrict himself.

In contacting the opposite sex, we in the Lord's recovery need to be sanctified and separated unto God. The evil concerning sex is very contagious. We must exercise our spirit to overcome our flesh and our old man. This must not be a mere teaching; it must be a practice in our daily life.

All the saints, especially the young ones, should search their hearts and make a strong resolution of heart (Judg. 5:15-16) never to go the way of the indulgence of the flesh. Our God is living, and Christ is real. With Christ as the life-giving Spirit, everything is real, but apart from Him everything is vanity of vanities. The Spirit is moving within us in a very gentle way. We need to say, "Lord Jesus, I love You, I need You, and I receive You." If we say this, He will be our Savior and our dynamic salvation. As the pneumatic Christ, He will save us, preserve us, and protect us from the contamination of this age, so that we may keep the glory that we have gained.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(13)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(7)

GOD'S PUNISHING JUDGMENT ON DAVID 2 SAMUEL 12:15b—20:26

(1)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 12:15b—14:33

Second Samuel 12:15b through 14:33 describes God's punishing judgment on David.

I. THE DEATH OF THE CHILD BORN OF URIAH'S WIFE

In 12:15b-23 we are told of the death of the child born to David of Uriah's wife.

A. Jehovah Striking the Child with Heavy Sickness

Jehovah struck the child whom Uriah's wife bore to David, and the child was very sick (v. 15b).

B. David Beseeching God for the Child

David besought God for the child with fasting, spending all the night lying on the ground (v. 16).

C. The Child Dying and David Being Released

On the seventh day the child died and David was released (vv. 17-23). When David realized that the child had died, he

rose up from the ground, washed and anointed himself, changed his clothes, and went into the house of Jehovah and worshipped.

II. THE BIRTH OF SOLOMON

In verses 24 and 25 we have a word regarding the birth of Solomon.

A. David Comforting Bath-sheba His Wife, and She Bearing a Son

David comforted Bath-sheba his wife. She bore him a son, and he called his name Solomon, which means "peaceful" (v. 24a).

B. Jehovah Loving Solomon

Jehovah loved Solomon, sent word through Nathan the prophet, and called his name Jedidiah for Jehovah's sake (vv. 24b-25). The name Jedidiah means "beloved of Jehovah."

III. DAVID'S CONQUEST OVER THE CHILDREN OF AMMON

Verses 26 through 31 speak of David's conquest over the children of Ammon.

A. Through His Captain Joab

This conquest of the children of Ammon was through David's captain Joab (vv. 26-29).

B. Robbing the King of Ammon of His Crown

David robbed the king of Ammon of his crown, the weight of which was a talent of gold. David also brought forth the spoil of the city, a very great amount (v. 30).

C. David's Dealing with the Cities of the Children of Ammon

In dealing with the cities of the children of Ammon, David set the people under saws, iron cutting tools, and iron axes and made them pass through the brick kilns (v. 31).

IV. THE INCEST OF AMNON THE SON OF DAVID WITH HIS SISTER TAMAR

Second Samuel 13:1-22 is an account of the incest of Amnon the son of David with his sister Tamar.

A. Through the Craft of Jonadab, Amnon's Cousin

The incest of Amnon was carried out through the craft of Jonadab, Amnon's cousin (vv. 3-14).

B. Amnon Turning to Hate Tamar and Chasing Her Away

After committing incest with Tamar, Amnon turned to hate her and chased her away (vv. 15-19).

C. Tamar's Brother Absalom Discovering the Incest

Tamar's brother Absalom discovered the incest, and she remained in his house. When David heard about all these things, he was very angry. Absalom hated Amnon because of what he had done to his sister (vv. 20-22).

V. THE MURDER OF AMNON BY ABSALOM THE SON OF DAVID

Verses 23 through 39 are an account of the murder of Amnon by Absalom the son of David. This murder had been determined by Absalom since the day Amnon forced his sister (v. 32b).

A. By Conspiracy

Verses 23 through 29 indicate that the murder of Amnon by Absalom was carried out by a conspiracy.

B. Reported to David

According to verses 30 through 33, the murder of Amnon was reported to David.

C. David's Sons Lifting Up Their Voice and Weeping

David's sons lifted up their voice and wept, and David with all his servants also wept exceedingly (vv. 34-36).

D. Absalom Fleeing to the King of Geshur

Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur, and was in Geshur three years. David mourned for his son every day. Eventually, the spirit of David the king longed to go out to Absalom, for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead (vv. 37-39).

VI. JOAB'S DEVICE TO BRING ABSALOM BACK

Second Samuel 14:1-24 tells us of Joab's device to bring Absalom back.

A. Perceiving That David's Heart Was Set on Absalom

Joab perceived that David's heart was set on Absalom (v. 1).

B. Performing His Device through a Woman

Joab's device to bring Absalom back was performed through a woman (vv. 2-22).

C. Bringing Absalom Back from Geshur to Jerusalem

When David told Joab to bring Absalom back, Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem (v. 23).

D. David Not Letting Absalom See His Face

David did not let Absalom see his face but let him return to his own house (v. 24).

VII. ABSALOM'S BEAUTY AND CHILDREN

A. Being More Beautiful than All the People in Israel

Absalom was more beautiful than all the people in Israel. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him (vv. 25-26).

B. Having Three Sons and One Daughter of Beautiful Appearance

To Absalom were born three sons and one daughter, a woman of beautiful appearance (v. 27).

VIII. ABSALOM'S SEEKING TO SEE HIS FATHER DAVID

In verses 28 through 33 Absalom sought to see his father David.

A. After Dwelling in Jerusalem for Two Full Years

Absalom dwelt in Jerusalem for two full years and did not see his father's face (v. 28).

B. Through Joab

It was through Joab that Absalom eventually was able to see his father's face (vv. 29-32).

C. Brought to See His Father by Joab

Joab went to David and spoke to him. David called for Absalom, and Joab brought him to see his father (v. 33a).

D. His Father Kissing Him

Absalom bowed himself with his face to the ground before David the king, and then his father kissed him (v. 33b).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(14)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(8)

GOD'S PUNISHING JUDGMENT ON DAVID 2 SAMUEL 12:15b—20:26

(2)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 15:1—19:8a

IX. ABSALOM'S REVOLT

Second Samuel 15:1—19:8a is concerned with Absalom's revolt.

A. Preparing to Rebel

Absalom prepared to rebel by preparing for himself a chariot and horses and fifty men to run before him (15:1).

B. Stealing the Hearts of the People of Israel

Verses 2 through 6 describe how Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

C. Conspiring and Revolting to Be the King in Hebron

Absalom conspired and revolted to be the king in Hebron (vv. 7-12). Absalom asked David the king to let him go to Hebron to pay a vow which he had vowed to Jehovah, and the

king told him to go in peace (vv. 7-9). Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "When you hear the sound of the trumpet, you shall say, Absalom is king in Hebron" (v. 10). The conspiracy gained strength, and the people who were with Absalom increased continually (v. 12).

D. David with His Servants Fleeing to Escape from Absalom

Verses 13 through 23 tell us that David with his servants fled to escape from Absalom.

1. David Leaving Ten Concubines to Keep the House

David the king and all the people went forth, but he left ten concubines to keep the house (v. 16).

2. All the People Following Him and Passing Over toward the Way of the Wilderness

When the king went forth, all the people followed him, passing over toward the way of the wilderness (vv. 17-23).

E. David Devising a Plan against Absalom's Conspiracy

According to verses 24 through 37, David devised a plan against Absalom's conspiracy.

1. Asking the Priests, with the Ark of God, to Stay in Jerusalem to Collect Intelligence for Him

Zadok and all the Levites came to David, bearing the ark of God. David asked them to bring the ark back into the city of Jerusalem and to stay there to collect intelligence for him (vv. 24-29).

2. Going Up to the Mount of Olives

David went up the ascent to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went up. He had his head covered and went barefoot. All the people who were with him did the same thing, and they went up weeping (v. 30).

3. Praying to God, Asking That He Turn the Counsel of Ahithophel into Foolishness

When David heard that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, David said, "Turn, I pray, the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, O Jehovah." Then he came to the summit, where God was worshipped (vv. 31-32a).

4. Asking His Friend Hushai to Stay in the Palace

David asked his friend Hushai to stay in the palace and to work together with the priests to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for him (vv. 32b-37).

F. Ziba, Mephibosheth's Attendant, Coming to Meet David

In 16:1-4 Ziba, Mephibosheth's attendant, came to meet David.

1. Right after David Passed the Summit of the Mount of Olives

When David was a little past the summit of the Mount of Olives, Ziba came to meet him (v. 1a).

2. With Supplies of Food and Drink

Ziba brought with him supplies of food and drink to please David (vv. 1b-2).

3. To Gain All the Belongings of Mephibosheth by Deceiving

When David asked Ziba concerning his master's son, Ziba said that he was dwelling in Jerusalem, expecting that the house of Israel would restore to him the kingdom of his father. David then told Ziba that now all that belonged to Mephibosheth was his (vv. 3-4).

G. Shimei, a Man of the Family of the House of Saul, Coming Forth

In verses 5 through 14 Shimei, a man of the family of the house of Saul, came forth to King David.

1. David Coming to Bahurim

When David came to Bahurim, Shimei came forth from there (v. 5a).

2. Coming Forth to Curse David

Shimei was cursing as he came forth. He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David (vv. 5b-8).

3. Abishai the Son of Zeruiah Wanting to Take Off Shimei's Head

Abishai the son of Zeruiah wanted to take off Shimei's head (v. 9).

4. David's Answer to Abishai

David answered Abishai, saying, "If Jehovah has told him to curse David, who then can say, Why have you done so?… Now my son, who came forth from my body, seeks my life; how much more then this Benjaminite will do so. Leave him alone and let him curse, for Jehovah has told him to do so. It may be that Jehovah will look on the wrong done to me and that Jehovah will repay me with good for his cursing on this day" (vv. 10-12).

5. David and His Men Going on Their Way, and Shimei Going along the Hillside Opposite Him

While David and his men went on their way, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him, cursing, throwing stones at David, and casting dust upon him (v. 13).

6. David and All the People with Him Arriving Weary

David and all the people with him arrived weary, and he refreshed himself (v. 14).

H. Absalom Taking Jerusalem and Ruling There

Second Samuel 16:15—17:23 tells us that Absalom took Jerusalem and ruled there.

1. Hushai Pretending to Serve Absalom

As David had requested, his friend Hushai pretended to serve Absalom (16:15-19).

2. Ahithophel Giving an Evil Counsel

Ahithophel gave an evil counsel for Absalom to go in unto his father's concubines for the strengthening of all those who followed him (vv. 20-23).

3. Ahithophel Giving Another Inhuman Counsel

In 17:1-4 Ahithophel gave another inhuman counsel for Absalom to pursue after his father and kill him.

4. Hushai Defeating the Counsel of Ahithophel according to God's Ordination

Verses 5 through 22 reveal that Hushai defeated the counsel of Ahithophel according to God's ordination.

a. Annulling Ahithophel's Inhuman Counsel

Hushai annulled Ahithophel's inhuman counsel (vv. 5-14). Regarding this, verse 14 says, "Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel; for Jehovah had ordained the defeat of the good counsel of Ahithophel to the intent that Jehovah might bring evil upon Absalom."

b. With the Help of the Priests and Their Sons

Hushai defeated the counsel of Ahithophel with the help of the priests and their sons, who told David how to escape from his son Absalom (vv. 15-22).

5. Ahithophel Hanging Himself

When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he went back home and hanged himself (v. 23).

I. Absalom Being Defeated and Killed

Second Samuel 17:24—19:8a describes how Absalom was defeated and killed.

1. Absalom Pursuing after David

In 17:24-26 we see that Absalom pursued after David, camping in the land of Gilead.

2. Barzillai the Gileadite and Others Coming to Support David

Barzillai the Gileadite and others came to support David and the people who were with him (vv. 27-29).

3. David Organizing His Army and Sending Them to Fight against Absalom and His People

David organized his army and sent them to fight against Absalom and his people (18:1-5). When David told the people that he would surely go forth with them, they said that he would not go forth, for he was worth ten thousand of them. The king agreed, saying, "What seems best in your sight I will do" (v. 4a). Then David commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom" (v. 5a).

4. Absalom and His People Being Defeated by the Servants of David in a Forest

According to verses 6 through 8, Absalom and his people were defeated by the servants of David in a forest.

5. Absalom Being Killed

In 18:9—19:8a we have an account of the death of Absalom.

a. His Head Being Caught in the Branches of a Great Tree

Absalom, riding upon a mule, met the servants of David. The mule went under the tangled branches of a great tree, and Absalom's head was caught in the tree. He was left hanging between heaven and earth while the mule that was under him went on (v. 9).

b. A Certain Man Seeing This and Telling It to Joab

A certain man saw this and told Joab that he had just seen Absalom hanging from a tree (v. 10).

c. Joab Asking That Man Why He Did Not Strike Absalom Down to the Ground

Joab asked that man why he did not strike Absalom down to the ground (vv. 11-13). That man said that he would not put his hand against the son of the king, for the king had commanded that they take care of Absalom.

d. Joab Thrusting Three Staves through Absalom's Heart

Joab took three staves and thrust them through Absalom's heart while he was still alive in the midst of the tree, and the ten young men who carried Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, struck him, and killed him (vv. 14-15).

e. The People Throwing Absalom into a Great Pit in the Forest

Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel. Then they took Absalom and threw him into a great pit in the forest and cast up over him a very great mound of stones (vv. 16-17).

f. Absalom Having Raised Up a Pillar for Himself in the King's Valley

While Absalom was alive, he had taken a pillar which was in the king's valley and raised it up for himself, saying, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar by his own name, and it was called Absalom's Monument (v. 18).

g. Ahimaaz the Son of Zadok the High Priest Wanting to Announce the News to David

Ahimaaz the son of Zadok the high priest wanted to announce the news to David, but Joab prohibited him and asked the Cushite to do it. When the Cushite came to David,

he told the king that Jehovah had avenged him of all who had risen up against him (vv. 19-32).

h. David Being Much Concerned for His Son Absalom and Weeping Grievously at His Death

David was much concerned for his son Absalom, twice asking, "Is all well with the young man Absalom?" (vv. 29a, 32a). When he heard about Absalom's death, he wept grievously. "The king was badly shaken, and he went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he spoke thus, O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son!" (v. 33).

i. Joab Advising David to Comfort the People by Quieting Himself

In 19:1-8a Joab advised David to comfort the people by quieting himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(15)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(9)

GOD'S PUNISHING JUDGMENT ON DAVID 2 SAMUEL 12:15b—20:26

(3)

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 19:8b—20:26

In this message we will consider 19:8b—20:26.

X. THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENTS IN DAVID'S KINGDOM AFTER ABSALOM'S REVOLT

Second Samuel 19:8b-43 describes the peaceful settlements in David's kingdom after Absalom's revolt.

A. The People's Request for David's Return to His Kingship

In verses 8b through 15 we have the people's request for David's return to the kingship.

1. The People's Debate Resulting in the Request for David's Return

The people debated throughout all the tribes, and this debate resulted in the request for David to return to his kingship (vv. 8b-10).

2. David's Asking of the High Priests and the Captain of His Army

David asked the high priests and the captain of the army to persuade the people of Judah to bring King David back to his place (vv. 11-15). He sent word to Zadok and Abiathar, saying, "Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, seeing that the word of all Israel has come to the king at his house? You are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring the king back?" (vv. 11-12).

B. The Temporary Forgiveness of Shimei

Verses 16 through 23 are concerned with the temporary forgiveness of Shimei.

1. Shimei's Repentance and Welcome to David

First, we have Shimei's repentance and welcome of David (vv. 16-20). Shimei said to the king, "Let not my lord consider me guilty; and do not remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king went forth from Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart. For your servant knows that I have sinned; and I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down, to meet my lord the king" (vv. 19-20).

2. The Death Sentence on Shimei by Abishai the Captain of David and David's Temporary Forgiveness to Shimei for His Recovered Kingship

Abishai the captain of David declared that Shimei should be put to death for cursing Jehovah's anointed (v. 21). But David said to Abishai, "Should any man in Israel be put to death today? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" (v. 22). Then the king swore to Shimei that he would not die (v. 23).

C. David's Kind and Fair Arrangement for Mephibosheth

In verses 24 through 30 we see David's kind and fair arrangement for Mephibosheth. After Mephibosheth's vindi-

cation, David said that Mephibosheth and Ziba, his servant, would share the land.

D. David's Reward to Barzillai

In verses 31 through 39 there is an account of David's reward to Barzillai.

1. Barzillai's Provision of Food to David and His Escort to David

Barzillai, a very great man, had provided food to David and escorted him in crossing over the Jordan on the way back to his palace (vv. 31-32).

2. David Inviting Barzillai to Go with Him

David invited Barzillai to go with him and promised to take care of him in his old age in Jerusalem, but Barzillai turned David's reward from himself to his son Chimham (vv. 33-39). In reply to Barzillai's request, David said, "Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do with him what seems good in your sight; and whatever you wish for me to do, I will do for you" (v. 38).

E. Israel's Complaint over Judah in the Bringing Back of David to His Kingship

1. Israel's Claim

The men of Israel asked David why the men of Judah had stolen him away and brought him and his household over the Jordan along with the men of David (v. 41). Israel also claimed that they had ten parts in the king and that in David they had more than Judah (v. 43a).

2. Judah's Claim

Judah claimed more prevailingly that David was near of kin to them and that they had not eaten at all at David's expense and that David had not given them any gift (vv. 42, 43b). The claims of Israel and Judah show that the whole people warmly welcomed David in his returning to his kingship.

XI. THE REBELLION OF SHEBA

Second Samuel 20:1-22 is concerned with the rebellion of Sheba.

A. Sheba, a Man of Belial, a Benjaminite, Blowing the Trumpet

Sheba, a man of Belial (2 Cor. 6:15), a Benjaminite, blew the trumpet and said, "We have no portion in David, / Nor do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse. / Every man to his tents, O Israel!" (2 Sam. 20:1).

B. All the Men of Israel Leaving David and Following Sheba

All the men of Israel left David and followed Sheba, but the men of Judah clung to their king, from the Jordan to Jerusalem (v. 2).

C. David Shutting Up the Ten Concubines Defiled by His Son Absalom

David shut up the ten concubines defiled by his son Absalom until their death (v. 3).

D. David's Charge to Amasa

David charged Amasa to call the men of Judah to David in three days (v. 4). Amasa went out to call the men of Judah, but he delayed beyond the time that David appointed to him (v. 5).

E. David's Charge to Abishai to Pursue after Sheba

In verses 6 through 22 we have David's charge to Abishai to pursue after Sheba. David told Abishai that Sheba would do them more harm than Absalom did (v. 6).

1. The Men of Joab Going Out after Abishai

The men of Joab went out after Abishai, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, to pursue after Sheba (v. 7).

2. Joab's Killing of Amasa

Verses 8 through 13 speak of Joab's killing of Amasa. Amasa came to meet Joab and his followers, and Joab struck Amasa in his stomach with a sword and poured out his bowels onto the ground (vv. 8-10a). Then all the people turned to follow Joab and his brother Abishai to pursue after Sheba the rebel (vv. 10b-13).

3. Sheba Going On throughout All the Tribes of Israel

Sheba went on throughout all the tribes of Israel, and the people gathered together and went after him (v. 14).

4. Joab Going to Besiege Sheba

Joab went to besiege Sheba at Abel of Beth-maacah, casting up a siege mound against the city (v 15). A wise woman offered to Joab a way to kill Sheba, and Sheba was slain (vv. 16-22a). Joab then blew the trumpet to disperse the people from the city and returned to Jerusalem to David the king (v. 22b).

XII. THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

Verses 23 through 26 describe the re-establishment of the kingdom of David. Joab ruled over all the army of Israel (v. 23a); Benaiah the son of Jehoiada ruled over the Cherethites and the Pelethites (v. 23b); and Adoram ruled over the forced labor (v. 24a). Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder (v. 24b); Sheva was the scribe (v. 25a); Zadok and Abiathar were the high priests (v. 25b); and Ira the Jairite was an adviser to David (v. 26).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE HISTORY CONCERNING DAVID

(16)

CROWNED BY THE PEOPLE TO BE THE KING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THE EARTH 2 SAMUEL 2—24

(10)

THE LAST STAGE OF DAVID'S KINGSHIP 2 SAMUEL 21—24

Scripture Reading: 2 Sam. 21—24

In this message we will consider the last stage of David's kingship.

I. DAVID'S TAKING CARE OF THE FAMINE FOR THE PEOPLE

In 21:1-14 David took care of the famine for the people.

A. Inquiring of Jehovah

This famine lasted three years, and David inquired of Jehovah concerning it (v. 1a).

B. Finding Out the Reason for the Famine

David found out that the reason for the famine was Saul's breaking of the oath made by Israel with the Gibeonites. The famine was "because of Saul and because of his house of bloodshed, for he put those Gibeonites to death" (v. 1b). David called for the Gibeonites and spoke to them (v. 2a).

C. The Settlement of the Breaking of the Oath

For the settlement of the breaking of the oath, the

Gibeonites required seven descendants of Saul to be executed (vv. 2b-14a). David commanded the people to fulfill the requirement of the Gibeonites, and God responded to the people's entreaty for the land (v. 14b).

II. DAVID'S CONQUEST OVER THE PHILISTINES

Verses 15 through 22 speak of David's conquest over the Philistines.

A. David Becoming Faint

In fighting against the Philistines, David became faint, and was in danger of being killed by a giant of the Philistines (vv. 15-16).

B. Abishai and the People of Israel Defeating the Philistines

Abishai and the people of Israel defeated the Philistines and killed four of their giants (vv. 17-22).

III. DAVID'S THANKING AND PRAISING GOD IN A SONG

In chapter twenty-two David thanked and praised God in a song.

A. On the Day When Jehovah Delivered Him out of the Hand of All His Enemies

David spoke the words of this song to Jehovah on the day when Jehovah delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul (v. 1; Psa. 18, title).

B. This Song Becoming Psalm 18

This song of his, as his intimate talk to God, became Psalm 18 in the Psalms. The following points are the contents of this psalm.

1. Praising God

David praised God as his crag, fortress, Deliverer, rock, shield, horn of his salvation, high tower, refuge, and Savior (2 Sam. 22:2-6).

2. Thanking God for Hearing His Calling

David went on to thank God for hearing his calling and rescuing him from his calamity by His marvelous doings (vv. 7-20).

3. Considering His Righteousness, Perfection, Faithfulness, Cleanness, and Purity as the Cause of God's Salvation to Him

Verses 21 through 28 show us that David considered his righteousness, perfection, faithfulness, cleanness, and purity as the cause of God's salvation to him and that he considered God's salvation as a recompense to him.

4. Thanking God as His Lamp

David also thanked God as his lamp lighting up his darkness (v. 29).

5. Thanking God Whose Way Is Perfect

In the remainder of his song, David thanked God whose way is perfect; whose word is tried; who is the unique God, setting him on high places; whose condescending gentleness had made him great and had broadened the places of his steps, strengthening him to subdue his enemies, keeping him as the head of the nations, and making foreigners cringe to him and serve him; and who manifested salvation to His king and executed lovingkindness to His anointed, to David and to his seed (Christ) forever (vv. 30-51).

IV. THE LAST WORDS OF DAVID

In 23:1-7 we have the last words of David.

A. The Declaration of David the Son of Jesse

These words are the declaration of David the son of Jesse (v. 1b).

B. The Declaration of the Man Who Had Been Raised Up on High

Verse 1c says that these are the words of the man who

had been raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the one lovely (pleasant) in the psalms of Israel.

C. The Spirit of Jehovah Speaking through Him

In verse 2 David said that the Spirit of Jehovah spoke through him and that His word was on his tongue.

D. The Speaking of the God and the Rock of Israel to Him

David went on to declare that the God and the Rock of Israel spoke to him (v. 3a).

E. He, Typifying Christ, Ruling among Men Righteously with the Fear of God

Verse 3b says that David, typifying Christ, ruled among men righteously with the fear of God.

F. He, Typifying Christ, Being Like the Light of the Morning When the Sun Rises without Clouds

Typifying Christ, David was like the light of the morning when the sun rises without clouds, as when the tender grass sprouts up from the earth at the sun's shining after a rain (v. 4). When Christ rules among men righteously with the fear of God, He is like the light of the morning when the sun rises, as when the tender grass sprouts up from the earth at the sun's shining after a rain.

G. His House Being So with God

In verse 5a David continued by indicating that his house was so with God, for God had made an eternal covenant with him, ordered in all things and secure. Then David asked, "For all my salvation and all my desire, / Will He not indeed make them grow?" (v. 5b).

H. The Wicked Being Like Thorns to Be Thrust Away

David concluded by saying that the wicked will be like thorns to be thrust away and will be burned with fire in their place (vv. 6-7).

V. THE MIGHTY MEN OF DAVID

Verses 8 through 39 speak of the mighty men of David.

A. The First Three Mighty Men

The first three mighty men were Josheb-basshebeth, the chief of the captains, Eleazar, and Shammah (vv. 8-12).

B. The Second Three Mighty Men, Who Drew the Water from the Well of Bethlehem for David

The second three mighty men were those who drew water from the well of Bethlehem for David (vv. 13-23). Abishai, the chief of the three and the most honored among the thirty, became their leader, but he did not attain to the first three (vv. 18-19). Benaiah, more honored than the thirty but not attaining to the first three, was set by David over his guard (vv. 20-23).

C. The Thirty Mighty Men

Verses 24 through 39 give the names of the thirty mighty men. One of the thirty was Uriah, who was killed by David's conspiracy.

VI. THE LAST SIN OF DAVID

In chapter twenty-four and in 1 Chronicles 21 we have an account of the last sin of David.

A. The Anger of Jehovah against Israel

Again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel (2 Sam. 24:1a).

B. Satan's Moving David against Israel to Number Israel and Judah

Satan moved David against Israel to number Israel and Judah (vv. 1b-2; 1 Chron. 21:1). Satan's moving David to do this was permitted by God.

C. Joab's Disagreement with Numbering the People

Joab disagreed with numbering the people and said to David, "Now may Jehovah your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king may see it. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?" (2 Sam. 24:3).

D. Joab and the Captains of the Army Being Forced by David to Carry Out His Commission to Number the People

Joab and the captains of the army were forced by David to carry out his commission to number the people (vv. 4-9). The people were numbered throughout the country for nine months and twenty days. The total number of valiant men who drew the sword was 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 in Judah.

E. David's Repentance and Confession of His Sin

David repented and confessed his sin in numbering the people. His heart smote him, and he said to Jehovah, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, O Jehovah, put away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly" (v. 10).

F. God's Punishment through Gad the Prophet, David's Seer, in Three Choices

In verses 11 through 14 God's punishment came through Gad the prophet, David's seer. God offered David three choices: seven years of famine coming upon the land, fleeing before his adversaries for three months under their pursuing, and three days of pestilence in the land (v. 13). David, in a great strait, chose to fall into the hand of Jehovah, for His compassions are great, and was not willing to fall into the hand of man (v. 14).

G. God's Punishment over Israel with a Pestilence

Jehovah sent a pestilence in Israel, and 70,000 people died from Dan to Beer-sheba (v. 15).

H. God's Repenting of the Harm and David's Confession

In verses 16 and 17 we see God's repenting of the harm and David's confession. When the angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, Jehovah repented of the harm and said to the angel, "It is enough; now hold your hand" (v. 16b). When David saw the angel striking the people, he said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have acted wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against the house of my father" (v. 17).

I. David Building an Altar to Jehovah to Stay the Plague among the People

David built an altar to Jehovah to stay the plague among the people (vv. 18-25). David did this according to God's command through Gad the prophet (vv. 18-19). The altar was built on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (vv. 20-24), and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (v. 25a). Jehovah responded to the entreaty for the land (v. 25b), and the plague was stayed in Israel (v. 25c).

A CONCLUDING WORD TO THE LIFE-STUDY OF 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

First and 2 Samuel unveil to us, from the beginning, that God's accomplishment of His economy needs man's coordination and cooperation. The first illustration is Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She was seeking God and spontaneously coordinated and cooperated with God. This afforded God the way to replace the waning priesthood under Eli with a new priesthood raised up by God through her son Samuel.

Samuel, the issue of his mother Hannah's coordination and cooperation with God, became a faithful Nazarite according to his mother's desire for God and rendered to God the way to end the corrupted age of the judges and to bring in (1) the age of kingship to replace the governing ministry of the old priesthood and (2) the prophethood to replace the God-speaking ministry of the old priesthood.

David, being a man according to God's heart, afforded God the way to begin the age of kingship for the establishment of His kingdom on the earth for His coming Christ. But how regrettable it was that David, at a crucial time of the evil one's temptation, did not exercise strong control over his lust but indulged in it and committed a gross sin which offended God to the uttermost. This became the factor of the loss of eleven-twelfths of his God-given kingdom, which sowed the seed of Solomon's corruption, issuing in the loss of the God-given kingdom, and the seed of the corruption of his descendants in the kingship, issuing in the loss of the holy land and the captivity of the holy people in their dispersion to the whole world up to the present age.