

# Bible Lessons



“Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Luke 16:10-11

*Volume 54, No 2*

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*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 54

April • May • June

No 2

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*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.  
In this issue: Reflections contributed by Harlan Sorrell, Darrell Johnson,  
LaDawna Adams, Fari Matthews, and Sarah L. Herron.*

### NOTICE

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## PROLOGUE

Because of extenuating circumstances, Sister Angela Gellenbeck, the author of the recent Bible Study Lessons, felt impressed to seek out help in writing the lessons for this quarter. After seeking an agreement of prayer, she felt impressed to call the wife of Brother Clifford Cole and asked for a conference call with them. When she broached the subject, Brother Clifford's response was, "Well, the Lord has been giving me a series of topics, but I didn't know the purpose for them." Those topics are found in this Sunday School quarterly.

Upon completion of the lessons, it was deemed best, with the input of Sister Angela and others, to make each lesson cover two Sundays. Therefore, the theme for this quarter, "A Series of Small Steps Can Lead Away from God," will actually cover two quarters. Freedom is given to each Sunday School teacher on how to break up the discussion—whether to read the scriptures the first Sunday only or to read all the scriptures both Sundays. May the Lord give each one direction.

As events and life happenings have unfolded, we now see more fully why the Lord impressed Sister Angela to seek out temporary relief of the duties involved in writing these lessons. Before this quarter went to print, Sister Angela suffered what appears to have been a light stroke. Some abilities are returning to her, but please continue to pray for her and her husband Dan's health, as well as for the strength of their family as they help them during this time.

—The Editorial Staff

## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS 2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER 2022

### *A Series of Small Steps Can Lead Away from God*

Not long ago I saw a demonstration where someone turned their outstretched hand from palm up to palm down without seeming to rotate their wrist. Through a series of six simple arm moves, their face up palm changed to downward facing without visibly rotating their wrist. You may have seen this demonstration before, but I had not. After doing it myself a few times, I began to understand the mechanics of the moves, and it made perfect sense. Shortly after learning the palm up to palm down trick, I came across a passage of scripture that reminded me of the series of small steps that took the kingdom of Israel from the glory of the Jordan-crossing clear down to their captivity. They started out with the greatest of kings, God himself, and could never be conquered in battle when they depended solely on Him. They ended up, however, completely defeated and in a foreign land where the earthly king they once desired so much could do them no good. We can look back over history and see how the seemingly insignificant decisions of certain people had such a profound effect on the whole. The theme for this quarter will take us through the phases God's chosen people went through, as decisions were made one step at a time. What can we learn from history?

—Clifford Cole

**APRIL 3 AND APRIL 10, 2022**

### **GOD KNEW ISRAEL WOULD WANT A KING**

**Deuteronomy 17:14** When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me;

**15** Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

**16** But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

**17** Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

**18** And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites:

**19** And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

**20** That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: *And see if there be any wicked way in me,* and lead me in the way everlasting. —**Psalms 139:23-24**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God knows the nature of man and understands the pull of the world on the flesh and minds of mankind. He knew that His people would want an earthly king, so He gave them specific instructions clear back in Deuteronomy that would help guide them and safeguard them from destruction.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Deuteronomy 17:14** “The land”: the land of Canaan. God intended them to not have just a portion, but the whole of the land. This land was a land flowing with milk and honey, the best this earth had to offer! Compare it with the wilderness they had just come through where manna was required to sustain them for forty years.

**Deuteronomy 17:15** “King”: a form of government where a

monarch rules over the entire land and has absolute and final authority.

**Deuteronomy 17:16, 17** “Multiply”: to increase, be full of. Notice the word “multiply” was used in reference to horses, wives, and to silver and gold.

**Deuteronomy 17:18** “Sitteth”: to sit down, as to judge, in quiet, and in ease. All of these, among other root forms, are found in the original word yashab. Note the phrases “to judge,” “in quiet,” and “in ease.”

**Deuteronomy 17:18** “Law”: a precept or statute, especially the Decalogue or Pentateuch: The law of God given to Moses.

**Deuteronomy 17:19** “Read”: to call out, to properly address, mention, preach, proclaim, pronounce, publish, and to say.

**Deuteronomy 17:20** “Lifted up”: exalt self, haughty, lofty, loud, presumptuous, proud, and *breed worms*. Yes, that’s right – breed worms! I was startled when I read it at the end of the string of words in this definition when researching the root word, rum (*pronounced room*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

This passage of scripture was a set of instructions to the people of Israel and their eventual earthly king. First, God dealt with the proper manner of choosing a king. Second, God gave a specific list of instructions to the future king that would give him the best chance of success – not just personal success as a king, but for the kingdom as a whole. Last, but not least, the instructions were given “to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.” Our actions have consequences, don’t they? These consequences affect not only us but also all those around us and all who follow us in succeeding generations – even to the end of time. We can look at any period of history, in any part of the world, to see this pattern play out. Thankfully, anyone can have a fresh start with God, which is what God wants for everyone. What God doesn’t do, however, is undo history and the sorrows that have already happened.

—Clifford Cole

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Does God understand what a person or group of people may desire in the future? If so, how is He able to know this?
2. Why was it significant that God's people would want an earthly king? Why did God set the time period of the Israelites wanting a king some time off in the future and not in their immediate future?
3. What was the excuse that God said Israel would use in wanting a king?
4. How did God say they should go about choosing a king?
5. Would it be okay for Israel to import a king from somewhere else? Why or why not?
6. Who did God prefer to choose the king? Why?
7. What were the specific instructions from God to prospective kings? Were any of these things important? If so, why?
8. What warnings did God have for the king if he disobeyed any of the instructions concerning kings?
9. What blessings did God have for obedience regarding kings?

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

This first lesson is a springboard for the subtopics we find in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. We will deal with each of the areas found in these subtopics in the succeeding lessons. One of the main things to consider while studying Israel and their kings in this series of lessons is how small decisions all along the way ultimately affected decisions later on.

Isn't it interesting how progressive decisions work in our daily lives? Consider the time you decided to take a vacation. The first decision was to take time off work to go on a trip. The second decision was, "Where do we go for vacation?" The third decision involved the method of transportation. After that there were decisions on where to stay, what to see, what activities to do, where to eat, etc. One decision literally led to another decision, then another, and another. The decisions later down the line would not have happened at all if the first decision had not been made to go on a vacation. Finally, after you arrived back home, you may have reflected on the trip and decided if it was enjoyable or just something you endured. Hopefully, you concluded that it was well

worth the effort and something you would enjoy thinking about for a long time!

Our decision to live for the Lord follows a pattern similar to the many other decisions we make in life. First, we consider our ways, then we turn to the Lord and repent. We accept Jesus' forgiveness and start down a new path. Our initial decision to follow the Lord leads to subsequent decisions that eventually accumulate into a lifetime of serving the Lord. Our eventual end when we serve the Lord is remarkably different than those who decide not to follow the Lord. Isn't it amazing how one decision can affect the final outcome?

*Lord, I thank you for the opportunity you afford me to make the right decision to begin anew with you, and for your desire and grace to help bring "a good and expected end"!*

—Clifford Cole

## REFLECTIONS

It was not God's will or original plan that Israel should have an earthly king. He wanted to be their King and rule and lead them according to His own good plan and way. God's way has always been best. But we read in 1 Samuel, chapter 8, how that the people asked for a king "that we also may be like all the nations."

God has always desired a holy people, called out from the world and its ways and separated unto Himself. This fact was not only true in Old Testament times but also under the New Testament dispensation (see Deuteronomy 14:2, 1 Peter 2:9, etc.). There has always been great danger in God's people desiring to "be like all the nations." God's church is a "called out" society – a "holy nation."

When people choose to make a fallible man their king, they subject themselves to the risk of much oppression and sorrow. In 1 Samuel 8:10-18, Samuel warned the children of Israel about what would be the consequences of their choice. "Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "Nay; but we will have a king over us" (verse 19).

God knew that fallible man is easily corrupted. It is very easy for a man placed in a position of power and authority to become covetous, self-serving, proud, and to turn aside from following the commandments of the Lord. Similar events have transpired over and



over throughout history, not only in the secular realm but also in the ecclesiastical.

When the early morning church began to exalt men to rank and position, they ceased to be led by the Spirit and Word of God. This started them down a path that eventually led to popery (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The result was 1260 years of spiritual oppression and religious tyranny.

But thank God, the “time of refreshing” came when the Scripture were once again recognized as the rule of faith, Jesus as King of kings and Lord of all, and His Spirit as our administrative paraclete. Once again men were awakened to the truth that, through Christ, they have “access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18).

God has given us a perfect king (see Isaiah 32:1-2). In Him we can all take refuge from the storms of life. He is the water of life for our thirsty souls. He is our Rock – our stability in a troublesome, changing world. We can fully trust Him because He has never led anyone astray. We have His own promise: “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Let us follow and serve Him alone.

– Harlan Sorrell

## **APRIL 17 AND APRIL 24, 2022**

### **ELI’S WICKED SONS DEFILE THE PRIESTHOOD**

**1 Samuel 2:12** Now the sons of Eli *were* sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

**13** And the priests' custom with the people *was, that*, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;

**14** And he struck *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.

**15** Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

**16** And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give *it me* now: and if not, I will take *it* by force.

**17** Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

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

**23** And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

**24** Nay, my sons; for *it is* no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress.

**25** If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

**27** And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

**28** And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

**29** Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded *in my* habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

**30** Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? —**1 Samuel 2:25a**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Eli, the high priest, had two sons who helped him with priestly duties in the tabernacle. Unfortunately, Eli failed somewhere along the way to impress upon his sons the same fear of God he had. Despite a clear and stern warning from a man of God sent expressly to give Eli a chance to make necessary corrections, Eli could not bring himself to properly reign in his sons' behavior. The result is that Eli's sons caused others to abhor the offering of the LORD.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**1 Samuel 2:12** "Sons of Belial": first, "sons of" refers to offspring of, young one, youth. Secondly, "Belial" means without profit, worthlessness, evil, naughty, ungodly, wicked.

**1 Samuel 2:13** "Seething": boil, to be sodden. This was the way God had commanded the children of Israel to cook the meat during the sacrifice.

**1 Samuel 2:13** "Fleshhook": to draw up; a fork.

**1 Samuel 2:17** "Abhorred": to scorn, to abhor, give occasion to blaspheme, contemn, despise, to provoke.

**1 Samuel 2:22** "Lay": in this context, the sons of Eli practiced gross immorality [fornication] with women who possibly had employment about the tabernacle. (*Adam Clarke*)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

We know very little of the high priest Eli before this passage in the scripture, except that he was of the line of Levites who had been put into the priesthood when the children of Israel first started their desert wanderings years before. We also know that by the time we hear of Eli's sons' great wickedness that Eli himself was an old man. It's hard to know for sure what led Eli's sons down the wrong path, but God put the blame squarely on Eli for not reigning them in, especially since they were included in the priesthood.

—Clifford Cole

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why are Eli's sons referred to as "sons of Belial"?
2. Why does the scripture say that Eli's sons "knew not the LORD" immediately after stating they were "sons of Belial"?
3. List the sins that God charged Eli's sons with.
4. What did God hold Eli responsible for in regard to his sons' transgressions?
5. Why did God hold Eli accountable for the actions of his sons?
6. What would have been our reaction as worshipers at the tabernacle if we had been fully aware of what Eli's sons were doing?
7. How could Eli have been more successful in training up his sons to have the proper fear of God on their hearts?
8. Was it fair for God to decide to punish Eli and his sons for their wrongdoing at the tabernacle?
9. The scriptures claim that Eli's sons caused men to "abhor the offering of the LORD." Eli also told his sons that, "ye make the LORD'S people to transgress." How can one person's wrongdoing influence others to do wrong also?
10. What was the punishment God decided to meet out to Eli, his sons, and the succeeding generations of their priestly line?

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

The story of the high priest, Eli, and his two evil sons is sad indeed! One has to wonder what could have been done to prevent such an outcome. If Eli had only made a few adjustments early on in his sons' childhood, we might have read a totally different narrative. Alas, because of Eli's lack of parenting many had to suffer – many were charged with transgression, some of whom might not have sinned had the circumstances at the tabernacle been what they should have been.

It could be argued that Eli might have done all that was humanly possible regarding his sons. Didn't he try to warn them that what they were doing was wrong and that they were causing others to sin also? The other side to that coin, however, is that God will not hold anyone responsible for what they cannot help or alter. In this case,

God warned Eli in very clear terms that he needed to make a change. He also gave out dire descriptions of the punishment intended if His warnings were not heeded.

This portion of scripture is a sober warning to me of how my own neglect can easily multiply to transgressions in others far, far down the line! There is a term called *generational sins*. What one person or generation allows in a small degree can easily be carried on by the next person or generation, sometimes to a larger extent. In Eli's case, it's possible that there was some form of laxness in Eli's personal life that transferred to his sons in a greater degree. It is even possible that this laxness was present only in his later years – we simply don't know. Just to give Eli the greatest benefit of the doubt, let's assume his error regarding his sons' training was only present in his old age. It didn't matter with God. Eli was still held responsible and was expected to do something about it.

What if Eli had come to the conclusion that there was nothing to be done with his sons because of his advanced age, his sons' stubbornness, etc., etc.? Would not his best course of action have been to come to God in prayer, admit his own failings, outline his sons' sins, and ask God to somehow help him do what needed to be done regarding his sons? We don't, however, hear anything about Eli's effort to remedy the situation except for his warnings to his sons. If the scripture had mentioned that Eli prayed often about his concern for his sons, or had told of Eli fasting regarding this matter, we might very well have read a different ending. The scripture mentions many accounts of folks getting under a real burden with prayer and fasting. The outcome in these instances is remarkable! One such story is embedded in the story we are discussing right now – Samuel's mother was a praying woman. She even fasted in her deep burden and grief. God heard her prayers!

As if the problem of Eli's sons and their punishment was not enough, we read where others outside Eli's household transgressed because of Eli's sons' wrongs. Folks abhorred and resented the offering of the LORD because of what Eli's sons were doing with the offering – roasting their portion of the flesh instead of boiling it. The meat was taken from the people while the fat was still present, presumably because the fat was desirable for their taste. Additionally, some form of prostitution was going on at the tabernacle. Historians believe Eli's sons were the instigator of these

gross misdeeds. Can you imagine how this affected the women and the families of the women involved? This alone might have caused many a devout heart to stay at home and worship rather than go to the temple. Eli told his sons, “ye make the LORD’S people to transgress.”

God’s question to Eli was, “Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering...and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” inferring that Eli benefited in some way by the transgressions of his sons. The LORD felt Eli was honoring his sons more than God. The LORD used very strong words, “kicking at the sacrifice and offerings.” There is a lot rolled into what God says.

*Lord, I invite your Holy Spirit to teach me the full significance of what can be learned from Eli and his sons!*

—Clifford Cole

## REFLECTIONS

There is a paradoxical nature to leadership. The Holy Scriptures set the tone and the perimeters. *“If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” “And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”* This is the template for effective leadership in any area—but specifically in spiritual matters. To misunderstand and misrepresent this vital truth is to set oneself up for failure. There is no other option.

To be anything other than a servant-leader is an abuse of the position and an abuse of power. A good leader must first be a good follower. He must understand how it feels to be led. He must understand the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical impact of his decisions and the toll that the decisions will have on those who follow him. Only then can he govern properly.

Everyone in leadership has a grave responsibility. They represent God’s authority, and as his representative they are held to a high standard, as well they should be. This responsibility comes with benefits and consequences.

People often pursue positions of authority based on the status and benefits associated with it. Some utilize it properly while others become obsessed with the glory and abuse their power. We’ve all heard of dictators and political oligarchies that have enriched

themselves at the expense of those they were meant to serve. We've heard of high-profile religious leaders who have duped the people and benefited from the spoils of their followers' ignorance.

But none of this escapes the eye of an Almighty God. Nothing circumvents his judgment. Those who violate may enjoy the benefits of their position momentarily but must eventually bear the consequences of their actions. There is always a price to pay, and in due time God's justice demands recompense.

—Darrell Johnson

## MAY 1 AND MAY 8, 2022

### THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL ASK FOR A KING

**1 Samuel 8:1** And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

**2** Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba.

**3** And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

**4** Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

**5** And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

**6** But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

**7** And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

**8** According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

**9** Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

**MEMORY VERSE:** When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. —**Deuteronomy 12:29-30**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Samuel, for some reason, followed a path similar to Eli in raising up his two sons. When he was old, he made his sons judges in Beersheba. His sons, “Walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.” This was all the excuse the elders needed to request that Samuel “make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” This grieved Samuel. He took it to the LORD in prayer. God told him, “...they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” God instructed Samuel to “hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them.”

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

**1 Samuel 8:3** “Lucre”: plunder, unjust gain, covetousness, profit.  
“Bribe”: a donation, gift, present, reward. In this context, it is inferred that the donor of the gift sought to purchase favor unjustly.  
“Pervert”: to stretch or spread out; by implication to bend away or deflect. Overthrow, put away, turn aside, wrest, cause to yield.  
“Judgment”: to pronounce a verdict. A sentence or formal decree in human or divine law, individually or collectively; determination, discretion, and to measure.

**1 Samuel 8:9** “Protest solemnly”: to duplicate or repeat, testify, admonish, charge, call to record, stand upright, give warning, and to witness.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Samuel was brought to the tabernacle as a very young boy and was dedicated to the LORD’S service at that time by his mother. While still a boy, the LORD appeared to Samuel one night with a stern warning for Eli regarding the impending punishment of Eli, his



sons, and their future generations. I Samuel 3:19-21 then tells us that Samuel grew in favor with God and man. “The LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.” As time went on Samuel had two sons, Joel and Abiah. Samuel made them judges in Beersheba, following the pattern of Eli setting his sons up to be priests. Another unfortunate similarity between the two families was the evil tendencies of both sets of sons. While the wicked behavior of Eli’s sons brought about the capture of the ark of the LORD, Samuel’s sons’ actions caused the elders of Israel to demand that Samuel make them a king to rule over them.

—Clifford Cole

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. Who made Samuel judge over Israel?
2. Who made the two sons of Samuel judges?
3. Is it possible that Samuel’s sons could have compared themselves to Eli’s sons and felt justified so long as they didn’t commit fornication and do the other things that got Eli’s sons in trouble?
4. What did the elders of Israel think of the judgeship of Samuel?
5. The elders also had an opinion of Samuel’s two sons as judges. What was this opinion?
6. Did the elders of Israel have any grounds for dissatisfaction with the way Samuel’s two sons judged the land?
7. Does our legitimate dissatisfaction give us license to “fix our problem” in the best way we see fit?
8. What solution to a very real problem did the elders of Israel come up with?
9. Why did the elders’ solution trouble Samuel?
10. Why do you suppose the LORD let the elders of Israel have their way in getting a king?
11. How could the elders believe their solution to the problem wasn’t going to be worse than their original problem?
12. Looking back at history, how do you feel the elders’ solution worked out in the end?
13. What can we learn from the mistakes of Eli, Samuel, and the elders of Israel?

## LIFE APPLICATION

The way a unique situation is handled directly affects similar instances that follow. Our legal system in the United States is carried out, in part, by a method called precedent. Precedent means, “An act or instance that may be used as an example in dealing with subsequent similar instances. A judicial decision that is binding on other equal or lower courts in the same jurisdiction as to its conclusion on a point of law and may also be persuasive to courts in other jurisdictions, in subsequent cases involving sufficiently similar facts. Convention or custom arising from long practice” (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English language, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*).

When considering Bible history, we find many instances of precedent predetermining courses of action. Once a king was set up in Israel, there was always a king – at least until the captivity. Following the custom, or precedent, of other nations, the king of Israel was expected to pass his kingdom down to his eldest son. This pattern held true for the most part unless God stepped in and made adjustments.

Another example of precedent in the Bible stipulated where any particular Israelite lived. Each tribe had a prescribed area, or lot, to call home. If a young man wanted to marry, he was encouraged to seek out a bride from his own tribe to help perpetuate the strength and inheritance of his tribe.

One might ask, “How does precedent come into the conversation regarding Eli, Samuel, and the elders of Israel”? Precedent is not only a legal method; it is also part of human nature. II Corinthians 10:12 admonishes us to not compare ourselves among ourselves, and not to measure ourselves by ourselves. This warning is not an idle one. The LORD knows that it is all too easy to follow along with what we see as “normal.” Precedent is set all too easily when we allow human wisdom to rationalize and justify our thoughts and actions.

In the case of Eli and Samuel, Samuel was all too familiar with the parenting style of Eli and followed it to some degree because of this familiarity. The result was far less than desirable. The elders of Israel came to the unfortunate unanimous conclusion that it would be far better to choose a king than to suffer under the evil dictates of young judges that took bribes and perverted judgement. It’s easy to sympathize with the elders’ plight, but their solution of copying the

methods of the heathen was ill-founded, ill-advised, and ill-fated.

We read in Revelation 2:1-4 that the church of Ephesus could not bear them who were evil, had patience, labored, did not faint, yet were warned that God had somewhat against them because they had lost their first love. If the devil can't get us to copy the bad habits of someone, he will try to get us to lose the fervency of our love for God! Could this have been the problem with the elders of Israel when they "had it to the full" with the evil sons of Samuel? They decided to take matters in their own hands and fix their problem once and for all. Their love for the LORD grew cold enough that they set forth their own plan as best despite the warning to not do so.

*LORD, help me to not follow any wrong path, no matter how familiar it may be to me. Dear God, help me to maintain a fervent love for you, so that in my human efforts to escape the current painful situation I don't choose another equally erroneous path.*

—Clifford Cole

## REFLECTIONS

"And God gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalms 106:15).

The Israelites murmured against the daily manna given and lusted after flesh to eat. "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a great plague. And he called the name of that place Kib'roth-hat-ta'a-vah: because they buried the people that lusted" (Numbers 11:33). The results are always costly when we contend for our own ways.

King David was also caught in a damaging situation when he desired to number the people of Israel. "Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host" (2 Samuel 24: 4). Because of David's insistence (and disobedience), the Lord "sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men" (2 Samuel 24:15). Once again, lives were lost because the demands of the king were outside of the will of God.

Israel did not prosper as well when they decided to have a king rule over them. Their desires were always at the behest of whoever

was ruling at the time. We see the many times the pendulum swayed back and forth. A good, righteous king was succeeded by a wicked king, then followed by a righteous king, and so on. This resulted in the people of God being unstable and in a constant turmoil.

We can learn a lesson by remembering that God's ways are always higher than our ways. He knows the perfect solution for all of life's perplexing circumstances. The results are always successful when we can learn to keep our hands off and allow God to work. 'Stand still and let God move.'

—LaDawna Adams

## MAY 15 AND MAY 22, 2022

### THE ELDERS WARNED OF HAVING A KING

**1 Samuel 8:10** And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

**11** And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.

**12** And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

**13** And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.

**14** And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants.

**15** And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

**16** And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.

**17** He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

**18** And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

**19** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

**20** 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.

**21** And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

**22** And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. —**Psalms 106:15**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God instructed Samuel to honor the elders' wishes regarding a king. Samuel, however, warned the elders in great detail what it would be like once they had their king. The list is long. Samuel told them they would end up regretting their decision but God would not hear them in that day.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**1 Samuel 8:12** “To ear his ground”: to cut in, plow.

**1 Samuel 8:15, 17** “Take the tenth”: to take a tithe, similarly to what was done for the service of the Lord in the tabernacle. This new tenth that would be taken for the king would be in *addition* to the tenth taken for the LORD’S service, not as a *replacement* tithe.

**1 Samuel 8:14, 16** “Even the best of them” and “your goodliest young men”: when used as an adverb – beautiful, precious, wealth, well-favored.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The Bible isn't clear on how long some of the elders of Israel may have pined for a “real king” such as the nations around them had. We can assume, however, that by the time they approached Samuel they had reached a boiling point. Samuel was old. Perhaps he was delegating more and more to his two wayward sons. Or perhaps his sons were simply getting bolder in their bribe taking and perversion

of justice. Whatever the case, both Samuel and the LORD took the elders seriously in their request for a king.

—Clifford Cole

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Describe what it would have felt like to be abused by the sons of Samuel.
2. Did the elders have a legitimate cause for concern and complaint?
3. In retrospect, what could the elders have done instead of demanding a king?
4. How is it that the chain of errors on Eli's part, Samuel's part, and the elder's part could culminate in such a radical change in civil government?
5. The LORD'S original design was that His people would be governed by a theocracy, a form of government in which God was recognized as the supreme civil ruler of the state, and His laws are taken as the statute-book of the kingdom. God did not desire His people to be ruled by a monarchy, where supreme power is wielded by a single person with absolute personal authority. Why would God desire a theocracy for His people and not a monarchy?
6. What advantages, if any, does either form of government have over the other?
7. Once a monarchy was established, why did the LORD say that He would not hear them when the monarchy became oppressive?
8. How can the principal given in the memory verse for this lesson apply to our decisions in life today?
9. Who all is affected when someone is given the desires of their heart but leanness is given to their soul?
10. Is it fair that "chains of errors" seem to exist in the world today?
11. Why does God allow the "chain of error" principle?
12. What are some other examples in world history that illustrate how decisions made long ago affect the current generation?

## LIFE APPLICATION

King Saul began his rule on a small scale but soon found it necessary to levy taxes, raise and maintain an army, obtain manpower to keep the monarchy going, etc. If we look ahead to Solomon and his son, Rehoboam, we read that the financial and emotional burden on Israel became more than they could bear. We will get to that in a later lesson, but we can safely say for now that God knew what He was talking about when He warned Israel what would happen if they had a king.

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.” Suppose, for the sake of discussion, that the elders of Israel were excellent parents. This could have encouraged their justification in condemning Samuel’s lack of parenting success. Despite being warned what would happen with a monarchy, the elders could only see the fault of Samuel and his sons and not see their own fault in demanding a king! It’s so easy to look at another’s fault and not see our own lack in other areas.

The elders had all of their ducks in a row regarding their desire for a king. First, they pointed out that Samuel was old, inferring that something could happen to him at any time to remove him from the scene. They seemed to respect Samuel but feared he might die before long. Second, they pointed out major faults with Samuel’s sons. Their assessment was correct, unfortunately. Third, they had already decided the best way to handle the situation was to get a king. They could have brought their complaints and simply asked that Samuel and the LORD help them in the best way possible, but alas, they didn’t. Fourth, when given all the reasons they would regret having a king, they refused and said, “Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we may be like the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” When reasoned with, the elders threw back all of their own reasons.

When we begin defending our own thinking or reasoning to the Lord, we may win the argument in our own minds but lose the battle in the end because of not being in a position to receive God’s full blessing and protection. Example: Suppose there was a worship service where some folks felt like it was a little out of order. What could happen if the concern eventually reached a point where it was

decided there were too many “out of order” services and the ministry was asked to “fix the problem”? This seems like a far-out scenario, but it happened a little over one hundred years ago among those who formally held Holy Spirit leadership as precious. They decided to form pulpit committees. There are several other examples from that era of “problems being fixed,” but suffice it to say that history is capable of repeating itself if we are not mindful and prayerful.

*Lord, help us to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”*

—Clifford Cole

## REFLECTIONS

You may have seen or heard this story. A young person sets their heart on someone who is not good for them and is warned—often by their parents, sometimes by others who have their best interests at heart—to stay away from a situation that can only lead to heartache. Yet, the infatuation is so great that heeding the voice of experience and warning isn't an option at all and as time progresses, it becomes evident that the path chosen has led to loss, despair, and such entanglements that it is difficult to see a way out. Or perhaps you've seen others, both young and old, with a sweet salvation experience cautioned against pursuing a career path, a job position, or even a seemingly benign passion that slowly begins to take precedence over their walk with God, and their love for Him slowly regresses, many times to the point of completely burning out.

What causes human beings—knowing we have the choice to submit to God and receive all the blessings He has in store for us—decide to choose other paths that so often lead to destruction? Is it impatience? Perhaps, the Israelite elders were tired of waiting on God to fight their battles, having Him always come to the rescue at the seemingly last minute! Or maybe they felt the need to fit in with the other nations around them and thought a monarchy would make them a bit like everyone else. Was it the need to be in control? Suppose knowing that Samuel wouldn't be with them much longer and they couldn't trust his sons, they felt a king would be the best protection they could get going forward. Whatever the reasons, you can be sure that they originated not from God, but from their own emotions and reasonings.



Recently, our congregation has been warned about the human heart, the seat of our desires, and how it can lead us astray, and how our mind, our intellect, and thoughts can be so far from what God intends for us. With that warning still so fresh in my mind, and then reading through this lesson, I heard a few lines from "God's Way Is Best" by Brother Charles Naylor playing in my head over and over:

*God's way is best; heart, cease thy struggling  
To see and know and understand;  
Forsake thy fears and doubts, but trusting,  
Submit thyself into His hand.*

—Fari Matthews

**MAY 29 AND JUNE 5, 2022**

### **KING DAVID'S WIVES, WEALTH, AND HORSES**

**2 Samuel 5:12** And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

**13** And David took *him* more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

**2 Samuel 8:3** David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

**4** And David took from him a thousand *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots.

**2 Samuel 12:7** And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

**8** And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

**9** Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the

LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

**10** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

**11** Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

**27** And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

**28** Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

**29** And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

**30** And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof *was* a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was *set* on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

**2 Samuel 24:2** For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which *was* with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

**3** And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see *it*: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?

**4** Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

**9** And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah *were* five hundred thousand men.

**10** And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I

have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

**14** And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

**15** So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see *it*: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? —**2 Samuel 24:3**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God blessed King David with great military victories and much wealth resulting from these conquests. David also had several wives and concubines, common in that era of time among kings. All of this wealth and success brought unique challenges and great difficulties to David, however. The larger question to consider is: Exactly what did David pass on to the next generation, besides his great wealth? What mindsets and habits would King Solomon regard as normal and good?

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**2 Samuel 8:4** “Hough”: to pluck up, hamstring, or exterminate. “reserve”: to leave, cause to abound, or to preserve.

**2 Samuel 12:30** “A talent of gold with the precious stones”: the commentators Albert Barnes and Adam Clarke state that the weight of this crown is calculated to be equal to 100 to 125 pounds. Adam Clarke believes that what could have been intended, since this weight was too much to wear on the king’s head, is that the gold *with* the precious stones and jewels was the equivalent in value to 100 to 125 pounds of gold.

**2 Samuel 12:8** “Thy master’s house”: Adam Clarke stated that David would have been given all of King Saul’s possessions, even his wives and concubines. This was sure proof that he had all legal rights as the new king.

**2 Samuel 24:2** “Number ye the people”: provide an accurate

count of the fighting men.

**2 Samuel 24:15** “From the morning even to the time appointed”: from morning to the time of the assembly, time of the evening sacrifice at three o’clock in the afternoon (*Albert Barnes*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

David did not seek to be king of Israel, but since it was now the lot of Israel to have a king, the LORD sought out a man “after his own heart.” He found such a man in David, the young shepherd boy. After King Saul died, David came to the throne of Israel. Not only did David inherit all of King Saul’s estate, God blessed David with the bounty of all the conquered wealth of neighboring kingdoms. Historians believe that King David was the second wealthiest king in that part of history, second only to King Solomon that reigned immediately after him. It would be difficult for any man to not have his head turned by such wealth and blessing, and such was the case with King David. He coveted Uriah’s wife, despite the wives he already had. He also numbered Israel in the later part of his reign and paid with the lives of 70,000 innocent Israelites. The horses he reserved for his chariots, along with his great wealth, could not bring back the life of Uriah nor of the 70,000 lost to the pestilence sent from God.

—Clifford Cole

## DISCUSSION:

1. David and his men were on the run for thirteen years after he was first anointed king by Samuel. What were the main differences between the difficulties David suffered the first thirteen years and the difficulties he faced after coming to the throne?
2. The first few verses of this lesson illustrate the almost exponential growth of King David’s wealth. David handled this well, but what new problems did this create for him?
3. David “houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots.” What could be some of the reasons David saved enough horses for a hundred chariots?
4. Do you think David was in more danger out on the battlefield or

- safe at home letting others fight the LORD'S battles?
5. David took extreme measures to conceal his sin with Bathsheba. God, through Nathan the prophet, called him out on it, though. What might have caused David to think he could get away with the sin of having Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, put in the hottest part of the battle to promote his death?
  6. The story immediately after David's affair with Bathsheba involves Joab, David's general, telling David it would be best if he came out to finish the battle lest he, Joab, should get all the credit. Here again, David had been at home while Joab and the army carried on. What pattern do you see in David's behavior regarding warfare? Was it justified?
  7. What do you think was David's reasoning when he ordered Joab to number Israel for the purpose of future military campaigns?
  8. What do you think went through Joab's mind before he tried to persuade his king to not number Israel? Could the situation have been handled any better, given the circumstances?
  9. Seventy thousand (70,000) people of Israel died of a pestilence because of David's sin in numbering Israel. How was God justified in bringing this punishment? How is God justified in any bad thing He allows to happen as a result of sin?

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

Success has its hazards, as is so amply brought out by the example of King David's mistakes and sins. While David was running for his life the first thirteen years after being anointed king, the LORD delivered him from many dangers. For a few years after coming to the throne, God gave him victory in battle time and again. As kingly duties seemed to demand him to, however, David eventually retired from warfare to a large degree. This is evident from the few scriptures mentioned in this lesson. Unfortunately, David's semi-retirement from warfare and lack of physical danger on the battlefield did not protect him in the battles of the heart and mind. In fact, David's failure to be on the battlefield when he should have been probably contributed heavily in his failure with Bathsheba. It is sad how often similar missteps have tripped up powerful men and women of high office and rank down through the ages. When things get a little softer on the flesh, it is an almost sure thing that we will

face the temptations that come with ease and power!

The multiple wives and concubines, the stables of horses and chariots, the gold, silver, and jewels, and all the other measures of immense wealth David acquired after coming to the throne of Israel only added to the weight of royal responsibilities. If David's wives and concubines had alone been sufficient to keep David from his sin with Bathsheba, the outcome would have been different. If horses and chariots had been the answer to David's troubles, we would have surely heard about it. While David did not glory in the riches the LORD had entrusted to him, this wealth never seemed to protect him from inward struggles. His trust had to remain fixed in the One source that could always deliver his feet out of the snare – God himself.

David donated a large sum of money and building materials toward the eventual construction of the temple. However, the large wealth that was left over passed down to the next generation. Most of this inheritance went to King Solomon, as successor to the throne. We, as a society, do not condemn children inheriting what their parents obtained. There is a caution worth mentioning, however, that is worded well in the saying, "The father buys, the son builds, the grandchild sells, and his son begs." This actually happened with King David and succeeding generations. David started amassing the wealth, Solomon increased it and built the temple, Solomon's son started the process of losing the great wealth of his father and grandfather, and the generations following eventually lost it all when they went into captivity.

Several years ago, I worked for a large family-owned business that had started a nationwide expansion when I hired on. The owner, Mr. Doane, was an elderly gentleman who was in the "building" phase of the family wealth. My guess is that he had inherited some money initially and had enlarged upon it by adding production facilities in several states. I happened to see Mr. Doane's son one day during a tour of the local facilities. The tour went through the office where I worked. Everyone in the tour group seemed to be very interested in what was going on – except for Mr. Doane's son. He tagged along in the rear with an air that seemed to say, "I wish I were on the golf course!" I was not aware then that most third-generation family-owned businesses either failed or sold out. Just for the record, the business I worked for changed owners a few years after I left the

company. The son I saw at the end of the line in the tour probably took his money and ran. Have you seen a similar thing happen?

Thankfully, the “shirtsleeves-to-shirtsleeves in three generations” described above doesn’t have to play out in like manner. I am aware of some families who choose to raise their children differently, despite the fact that they have great wealth. The Green family, who owns Hobby Lobby, Mardell’s, and the Museum of the Bible, is a good example of the second generation continuing the first generation’s purpose. The founder of Hobby Lobby, David Green, is a preacher’s son from a poor background. David’s sons grew up working instead of just getting a large allowance. Brothers’ Steve, Phillip, and Dan Gellenbeck can tell you much more about this family since they grew up with the Green boys. Time has yet to bear out how the third generation of the Green family will handle the business that has been handed down to them.

I recently read of several billionaires who have decided against leaving their children all of their wealth. Warren Buffet plans to leave only 15 percent to his children. The rest goes to charity. Bill Gates is leaving \$10 million to each of his three children and doing something else with the other \$80-plus billion (billion with a “B”). Bill’s children only get a small fraction of his total wealth. George Lucas, who sold the Star Wars franchise to Disney in 2012, has pledged to donate at least half of his \$4 billion wealth. His four children will still get a sizable sum, but not all of it. Mark Zuckerberg and his wife plan to give away 99 percent of their shares in Facebook over their lifetimes. They currently are worth about \$45 billion. I could list several others but will let you research this at your convenience if it is of interest. Some of the wealthiest folks around realize the pull money can have in the wrong direction.

Again, David is remembered as being “a man after God’s own heart.” He is one of the examples I look up to when I face difficulties. The words and psalms he wrote have been such an inspiration to countless people for well over two thousand years. Our earthly examples sometimes made mistakes that they had to pray through. David’s missteps seemed to come *because* of his position and wealth rather than from a lack of these things. Perhaps the saddest aspect of this fact is that his children either had to overcome these same short comings or be ruined by them. It is often accurately said, “What we don’t overcome, we pass on.”

In the passing of wealth to our children the most valuable commodity is a legacy of godliness and true wisdom. The proverbs of Solomon have a lot to say about this. Have you considered leaving some last words of wisdom in your will to your heirs?

*Lord, help me to not merely leave temporal wealth to my children that could damage or destroy them if not handled properly, but more importantly, may I leave them with the true riches that will last eternally!*

—Clifford Cole

## REFLECTIONS

After David fell into the sin of adultery and had Uriah killed, God said that the sword would never depart from his house. This was seemingly a curse, but in reality, a blessing. David's best years were not the ones in which he was safe and secure. The years of running from King Saul taught him to trust God and to be vigilant. The Lord chose to place David into very difficult circumstances again and again so that he wouldn't fall back into these sins.

It is human nature to want ease and pleasure, but these types of circumstances produce soft soldiers. Soft soldiers may look good in a parade, but you'd not want them beside you in the battle. May we have understanding that the adversity we face, and perhaps even pray to have removed from our lives, can actually be the means by which we will be made ready for the future, and ultimately it will make us ready to stand in that last day.

—Sarah Herron

## JUNE 12 AND JUNE 19, 2022

### DAVID, THE LAW OF GOD, AND THE ARK

**1 Chronicles 13:1** And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, *and* with every leader.

**2** And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, *If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their*



cities *and* suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:

**3** And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.

**4** And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

**5** So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjathjearim.

**6** And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, *that is*, to Kirjathjearim, which *belonged* to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth *between* the cherubims, whose name is called *on it*.

**7** And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart.

**8** And David and all Israel played before God with all *their* might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

**9** And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

**10** And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

**11** And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perezuzza to this day.

**12** And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God *home* to me?

**13** So David brought not the ark *home* to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite.

**14** And the ark of God remained with the family of Obededom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had.

**1 Chronicles 15:1** And *David* made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.

**2** Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.

**3** And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.

**11** And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab,

**12** And said unto them, Ye *are* the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, *both* ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto *the place that* I have prepared for it.

**13** For because ye *did it* not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

**14** So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

**15** And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD.

**25** So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom with joy.

**26** And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Ye *are* the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, *both* ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto *the place that* I have prepared for it. For because ye *did it* not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

—1 Chronicles 15:12-13

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** David had a longing to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem, "...for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul. And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people." Unfortunately, Uzza died when he put forth his hand to steady the ark. The ark of God was carried to the house of Obededom until David learned how to transport it properly.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**1 Chronicles 13:1** “Consulted”: took advice.

**1 Chronicles 13:3** “Ark of our God”: the ark of the covenant that Moses had constructed in the wilderness years before. The ark contained the stone tables with the Ten Commandments, a pot of manna, and Aaron’s staff. Two cherubim faced each other on the lid of the ark.

**1 Chronicles 13:11** “Perezuzza”: breach of Uzza, the place where Uzza died before the LORD. “Breach”: infraction or violation of a law or obligation.

**1 Chronicles 15:13** “Due order”: formal decree, divine law, ordinance.

**1 Chronicles 15:15** “Staves”: poles that God had commanded Moses to use to carry the ark. The staves, or poles, were to be inserted through special rings on the four corners of the ark so that four consecrated priests could carry the ark.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The ark of God had been captured by the Philistines years before when Eli’s two sons had carried the ark into battle to rally the troops. After the LORD had punished every Philistine city the ark was taken, the Philistines decided to put the ark in a new cart pulled by two cows. The cows took the ark on a straight course to Bethshemesh of Israel. When the men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark, the LORD smote many of the place “with a great slaughter.” The Bethshemeshites sent word to Kirjathjaerim to come get the ark. The ark was then brought to the house of Abinadab where it remained until David brought it to Jerusalem.

—Clifford Cole

## DISCUSSION:

1. David consulted with the military captains and the civilian leaders about his intentions to carry the ark of God to Jerusalem. Was it wise to seek counsel like this? What verse comes to mind regarding the seeking of counsel?
2. Who thought it was a good idea to bring the ark to Jerusalem? Who thought it not best to do so?

3. What reason did David give for bringing the ark to Jerusalem?
4. Why did David have the ark carried in a new cart?
5. How did David learn to carry the ark in this manner?
6. What was the correct method for transporting the ark?
7. Why did the LORD smite Uzza when he put out his hand to steady the ark when the oxen stumbled?
8. Why didn't the Philistines die immediately when they transported the ark by cart?
9. Did David immediately realize why Uzza was killed?
10. How do you think David learned the proper way to transport the ark?
11. What did David mean by saying, "We sought him not after the due order"?
12. How important is it that we "seek him after the due order"?

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

King David had a noble motive in bringing the ark of God to the new capital city of Jerusalem. He reminded folks "that they had not inquired at it in the days of Saul." The decision was unanimous among all Israel that this was a good venture, "...for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people."

There is a saying that says, "The right thing can be done the wrong way." David wanted to do the right thing, but possibly because of the twenty-year-old example of the Philistines successfully transporting the ark by a new cart, he assumed that another new cart would work just fine. David forgot to inquire of the LORD, however, on how he should carry the ark. He learned the hard way that it always pays to inquire of the LORD. If David had only read the instructions given to Moses by the LORD, he would have had all the instructions he needed to do it right the first time.

We are not told exactly how David discovered that the priests were supposed to carry the ark, and that they were to use staves inserted through the four hoops. What we do know is that before the second attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem he told the priests, "We sought him not after the due order." We also know that many years before God had specifically instructed the future kings of Israel in this manner: "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his

kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

God’s instructions can never be overlooked or ignored successfully. Even with the best of intentions, doing the right thing the wrong way will always bring about undesirable consequences. There is a reason God gave proper instructions to future kings way back in Deuteronomy. Included in the instructions was a specific command that the king write a copy of the law, have it by him, and read it.

To give David the greatest benefit of doubt, let’s assume he did have a copy of the law by him and that he read it daily. Let’s also assume that God did put His sanction on moving the ark to Jerusalem. Despite feeling clear about the overall goal of moving the ark, David failed to get specific understanding about *how* to move it. The best source for finding out was right there in Deuteronomy all along.

*Lord, please help me do the right thing for the right reason in the right way!*

—Clifford Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Today’s lesson is indeed a sobering one! There are those who say it doesn’t matter how we worship God, just as long as we are sincere and our heart is in it. But Uzza was, unquestionably, very sincere and had his heart in what he was doing for God. Yet, his sincere effort did not turn out well for him.

As Christians, it is vitally important that we be guided by the Word and the Spirit of God. “These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in

this manner be killed.” Revelation 11:4-5. (See also Zechariah 4:1-6.)

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are incapable of properly interpreting and applying the Word of God. Our fallible human reasoning will cause us to apply the right thing, God’s Word, in the wrong way. Human reasoning is the cause for the great diversity of religious sects and societies. Most all of them base their faith on the Word of God, but because of a lack of being completely emptied of self-will and filled with the Spirit of God, they misinterpret and misapply the Word in various ways that suit their own understanding. We’re instructed to, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). Let us ever remember that the “...way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). And, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 16:25).

Jesus instructed His apostles, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). That command seems simple enough to understand, does it not? So, what were they supposed to do? just take off and go wherever they felt inclined to go and start preaching the gospel? No. He also instructed them, “But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). And, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13-14). The Spirit of truth will give direct revelation regarding the right way to apply the Word of Truth. The Spirit and the Word always agree, and any application of the Word with which the Spirit is not in agreement is a wrong application.

In Acts 16:6-7, we find that Paul and Silas “were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,” and, “After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.” While the Word said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” the Spirit said, “Don’t go there right now.” Thus, we see the importance of Holy Spirit leadership in doing the right thing in the right way!

– Harlan Sorrell

JUNE 26 AND JULY 3, 2022

## THE HORSES AND CHARIOTS OF ABSALOM AND ADONIJAH

**1 Samuel 8:10** And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

**11** And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.

**2 Samuel 15:1** And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

**2** And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.

**3** And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.

**4** Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

**5** And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

**6** And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

**13** And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

**14** And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

**1 Kings 1:1** Now king David was old *and* stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.

**5** Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

**6** And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also *was a very goodly man*; and *his mother* bare him after Absalom.

**7** And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped *him*.

**8** But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which *belonged* to David, were not with Adonijah.

**9** And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which *is* by Enrogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants:

**10** But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

**32** And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

**33** The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon:

**34** And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

**35** Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. —**Zechariah 9:9**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Two of David's sons, Absalom and Adonijah, took it upon themselves to usurp their father's throne on two different occasions about eight years apart. Both young men used fifty horses and chariots, with runners going before them. Absalom used the horses and chariots a while before his bid for his father's throne while Adonijah used them during his attempt. During Adonijah's uprising, David realized it was time to appoint Solomon king. He commanded that Solomon be put on the royal mule and brought down to Gihon to be crowned there.



## WORD DEFINITIONS

**2 Samuel 15:6** “Stole the hearts”: carried away by stealth the will, intellect, consent, and understanding.

**1 Kings 1:5** “Son of Haggith”: Absalom and Adonijah’s mother, Haggith, was a daughter of King Talmai, king of Geshur.

**1 Kings 1:8** “Benaiah”: one of the mighty men of David. He had formally killed two lion-like men of Moab, killed a lion in a snowy pit, and killed a 7’6” tall Egyptian with the giants’ own spear while only having a staff for his own protection. “Shimei, and Rei”: It is thought these two were David’s brothers. “Mighty men which *belonged* to David”: most likely the company of 600, originally formed during David’s early wanderings.

**1 Kings 1:9** “Slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle”: part of a royal feast, in reference to an inauguration. Abiathar the priest was with Adonijah, giving the feast the effect of being sanctioned by God.

**1 Kings 1:33** “Mule”: a cross between a male donkey and a female horse. Since donkeys have 62 chromosomes and horses have 64 chromosomes, the mule hybrid has 63 chromosomes. Having only 63 chromosomes renders a mule sterile. Mules are valued for their hardiness, strength, and intelligence.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Since both Absalom and Adonijah’s maternal grandfather was the foreign King Talmai of Geshur, they naturally enlarged upon and took advantage of the horses and chariots David had at their disposal. After all, most other kings utilized horses and chariots, so why couldn’t they – even if their father obeyed the LORD in not doing so? While David rode only a mule, these two dashing young men exploited the glamor and prestige of horses, chariots, and fifty runners. Solomon, however, was given David’s mule to ride when it came time to put him on the throne.

—Clifford Cole

## DISCUSSION:

1. We only know of Absalom and Adonijah using horses, chariots, and runners. None of their brothers are recorded as doing so.

Why is this?

2. Absalom and Adonijah’s grandfather, King Talmai, most likely would have used horses and chariots since it was common in all the neighboring nations. What thoughts would you guess these young men had of their father’s refusal to use horses and chariots, especially since he chose to own them?
3. Could it be argued that David did no wrong by having horses and chariots as long as he did not “use” them?
4. How could things progress from David’s mere ownership of horses and chariots to his son’s using them against him?
5. What differences are there between horses and chariots and one lone royal mule?
6. Why did David put Solomon on the royal mule when it came time for him to ascend to the throne?
7. We know nothing of the LORD commanding against the use of mules, a cross between a horse and a donkey. Could mules possibly be “pushing” the line a little regarding God’s commandment?
8. Who do we read of riding into town on the back of colt, the foal of an ass?
9. What did God want to get across with the prophecy of Jesus riding a colt, the foal of an ass?

### LIFE APPLICATION

Mules and donkeys are interesting animals. They’re not as flashy or beautiful as horses, but many folks love mules and donkeys for what they are – hard to spook, hardy, and tough.

Bible historians point out that kings rode horses into town in time of war and rode donkeys or mules as a sign of peace. The meaning was not lost on those who saw Absalom and Adonijah with their horses and chariots. It signified a direct challenge to the current king, David. When David put Solomon on the royal mule for his coronation ride folks understood that Solomon was acting as a king should, not as an usurper of the throne.

**Note:** *The full text of Life Application and Reflections will be contained in the third quarter, July 3, 2022, lesson.*



