

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 14

Day 1

Judges Chapter 13. Today we read the account of Samson. He was mainly known for delivering Israel from the Philistines. It is useful to compare Samson with Yeshua, and also learn lessons about ourselves. Samson was a physically strong man: his strength was the key to his victories over Israel's enemies. Despite his physical strength, he displayed much human weakness. This helps us to look at our own natural talents and the limits of our own response to the call of God. Samson demonstrates what the physically strongest of Israel's deliverers has achieved and, thereby, shows us our limits too. We might ridicule Samson, but we must also consider some of the things done in the name of Christianity over the years, where physical force was used unwisely. The Crusades are one example, forced baptisms of Jews, in the Spanish Inquisition, another. This was when Christianity, *as religion*, was advancing through the world, rather than led by the Spirit of God. There are other examples where so-called Christians have sought to advance the Gospel, or subdue the world, by force. This still goes on today. While we would not want to associate ourselves with Crusaders or the Spanish Inquisition, we are all capable, in some way, of misjudging the call of God, acting through human strength rather than by the prompting of the Spirit. As well as physical strength, there are other, more subtle, qualities that cause us to do things "in our own strength", including intellectual ability and monetary wealth. Our strength can be our weakness, if we have not learned to live through the leading of God's Holy Spirit. By contrast, consider the ministry of Yeshua, the only perfect Judge and Deliverer, who only ever said or did what the Father was doing.

Samson's birth and calling was announced in a very special way. He was to be a Nazirite from birth. Even his mother was not to drink any wine while she carried the baby. The rules for a Nazirite are in Numbers 6. Usually a person takes this special vow for a short period. In Samson's case it was for his entire life and he had no choice in the matter.

Chapter 14. As a young man, Samson, like many young men, was not always wise. As he grew up he sought to understand his calling, being obedient to the outward requirements of a Nazirite, but with inner struggles. He was a strong young man, and grew in reputation for his physical stature. Perhaps he had something of a swagger as he went down to the Philistines with his parents to find a wife. He ran into a big problem when he posed the riddle about the bees in the lion's carcass, but God delivered him by giving him courage and physical strength, despite his foolishness. At the same time, his Philistine wife was taken away from him, and given to his best man. This is a strange account for us to read in our day. Yet, if we pause to reflect a moment, the same principles apply to many of us

who are raised up for ministry. We may not be as noticeable to those around us, as Samson was, but, looking back, we might judge our own immaturity. We might consider how we behaved in the early parts of our ministry, making mistakes, perhaps swaggering a little. Did we find that God was patient with us covering up our mistakes? Perhaps we are more like Samson than we realize.

Chapter 15. Samson's strength was because the Spirit of the Lord came upon him at times of need. In this Chapter we find Samson taking revenge for the loss of his wife, but it was also God at work beginning to deliver Israel from the Philistines. We would not have expected it to be this way. We might have expected a powerful deliverance, but through different means. Through the lesson of Samson, we are learning the limits of what can be achieved through physical strength. The disciples once asked Yeshua if they should call down fire on those opposing Him. He rebuked them, asking what kind of spirit they had in them. Only Yeshua can bring perfect deliverance from our enemies in a way that is powerful, righteous, just and pure. All other deliverers will show human weakness even if, as in the case of Samson, God is with them for the victory. After Samson's great victory, Israel was at peace for 20 years, and he was their Judge.

Chapter 16. Samson's humanness became evident again and he was tempted to go down to Gaza, first to have relationship with a harlot and later to find a new wife, Delilah. After 20 years of peace, perhaps he thought himself invincible and the problem of the Philistines settled. After all, 20 years is a long time. After such time complacency can arise and one might forget the deliverance of God and the continuing need for His help. This is evident in the history of the entire world. There are times when a nation has cried out to God in need. He has heard the cry and brought deliverance. Years have then passed and God is forgotten. Victories are remembered but considered a work of man and not God. Complacency and pride creep in and this is soon followed by a further falling away from following God. In Samson's case he was to learn the hard lesson that he had not won victories by his physical strength alone, but through the power of God at work in him.

This Chapter is the familiar account of Samson being deceived by his wife, Delilah. He lost his strength when the Philistines cut his hair. His strength was *not* in his hair, but in God. His obedience to the Nazirite vow involved not cutting his hair, which symbolized his commitment to God. To give away the secret about his hair was to renege on his commitment to God, and so God's strength departed from him. Samson not only lost his hair, but he also lost his eyes. He, who was formerly feared, was then ridiculed by his enemies. Yet, even then, God was faithful to His commitment to Samson. When Samson cried out for help, a final victory was given. It took all this to prepare him for this final victory, but in victory he lost his life as well as destroying Israel's enemies.

Reflect on this. We, too, might take most of our life to grow into our ministry calling, with many mistakes along the way, even though we have sought to dedicate ourselves to God. We thank God that He shows, through Samson, that He will be faithful to His call upon our lives. Better, nevertheless, not to make such mistakes. This, too, we learn by studying the life of Samson.

Yeshua gave His life for us. His enemies may have thought that they triumphed, but His victory on the Cross was foreordained. He gave His life without making a single error of judgement. He was

obedient even to death on the Cross. God brought deliverance to Israel *despite* Samson. He brought, and still brings, deliverance *because of* Yeshua

Day 2

Chapter 17. Most of the Book of Judges focuses on the lives of the Judges themselves, rather than on the people of the Nation. Leadership of the Nation is an important key to the nation's standing with God. Through good leadership comes blessing to the entire Nation. Good leaders were raised up when the Nation as a whole had departed from God and, with those leaders, the people remained in God's protection. The history of a nation involves both individuals and the entire community – both the detail and the big picture.

God's plan, over all history, is to have a people for Himself, each person having a personal relationship with Him. The Torah of God is for the entire community, to keep them together as one, but its principles are primarily for individuals and families. In Chapter 17 we read the sad words, *in those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes*. If the people, both individually and as a community, had lived according to God's instructions through Moses, God would have been in their midst. He would have been their God and they would have been His people. The Tabernacle was erected at Shiloh and this was where God's Presence would be established at the centre of the Nation. Yet, they fell away by individuals and families. God did not want them to have a human king; it was His desire to be their God and King in constant fellowship with them. The same is true today. The wilderness years are still strong in the memory of Jews. When there is a yearning for restoration, it is the wilderness years that come to mind, when their walk with God was first established. Of course, we who know Yeshua as the only way to the Father, realize that *He* is now Shiloh. Coming to faith in Him is the end that God has in view for all His people. One day the true King will be on the throne of all Israel. His Name is Yeshua.

In the days of the Judges, when there was a turning away from God, people invented ideas of their own. In this Chapter we read about one of them. The Tabernacle at Shiloh was ignored and Micah instituted his own private shrine and his own personal Levite. The motive may have *seemed* good but it was simply a sign of how far consciousness of God had strayed. The same can be true in our day. There are many images and many forms of religion even in the Christian Church, but we must be careful that they are not our own human attempts at inventing something that is really a substitute for what God has ordained for fellowship with Him.

Chapter 18. Deception is like a wedge. A wedge has a thin end but gets thicker and thicker the further it is driven into a gap. The Tribe of Dan was named after Jacob's fifth son, by Rachel's maid Bilhah. The name *Dan* is linked to the word *judge*. Thus in the Book of Judges we read of an important incident with Dan. Jacob (Genesis 49:16) prophesied over Dan and said that he would be a judge of his people. Judging is sometimes by actions and not by words alone. Noah judged the world by his actions of building the Ark (Hebrews 11:7). Dan demonstrated God's judgement by his actions too. Unlike Noah, who was righteous, Dan shows the consequence of departing from God. He did not receive his allotted inheritance in the Promised Land, and neither does he appear in the list of the 144,000 of Revelation 7.

The thin end of the wedge was Micah's idolatry. This resulted in Dan entering into deception, adopting the Levite who had become the priest of a false religion. They moved to a territory in Israel that they chose for themselves, expanding the priesthood and setting up Micah's idol. Much later,

the entire Northern Kingdom of Israel would go into captivity and Dan would be lost among the nations. Dan remained under this false priesthood until that day, but Verses 31 and 32 also says that *all the time ... the house of God was in Shiloh*. This was a sad day for Israel. One of the Tribes had become totally idolatrous, thinking that they had a good idea for serving God. We must beware of this too. The same principle applies even in our day when a form of Christianity is merging with other religions and their practices. No deliverer was raised up for Dan. Dan had not fallen into the hands of physical enemies but had been seduced by spiritual enemies. The Tribe was allowed to do this so that we all might learn from their error. They are indeed a means by which God judges Israel, allowing us to judge ourselves by the consequences of their actions.

Chapter 19. It is helpful to reread Genesis 19 before you read this Chapter. Also have in mind what the Bible prophesies for Jerusalem in later years:

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (Revelation 11:8)

This passage from Revelation concerns the two witnesses at the end of the age, prophesying from Jerusalem to all nations.

Judges Chapter 19 contains the detailed account of a Levite who went to Bethlehem to find his adulterous concubine. Jebus was the city of the Jebusites, later to be renamed Jerusalem. It is just a short distance from Bethlehem. Rather than stay in Jebus, however, the Levite stayed as a guest in Gibeah. At this point, the account is very similar to the time when the two angels stayed with Lot in Sodom. Some men of Gibeah had become like the wicked men of Sodom, on which God poured out fire and brimstone. They abused, and left dead, the Levite's concubine. It is hard to understand what followed, when the Levite cut up the dead body, no doubt grief-stricken, and sent 12 parts, one to each Tribe. *Consider it, consider, and speak up!* said the Israelites to one another, and this event is recorded in our Bibles for us to consider today. Israel, then in their inheritance after many years in Egypt, was already becoming like Sodom. The warning is to be heeded for all generations, including the last generation on this earth, as we read in the Book of Revelation. The horrible event is intended to shock us and wake us up so that we will not be seduced into the ways of the world in the days of deception ahead. First Sodom, then Gibeah, finally Jerusalem and the entire world will become like Sodom and ripe for the same judgement. We are moving quickly towards those days.

Chapters 20 and 21. These two Chapters can be read together. They complete our reading of the Book of Judges, which ends with a repeat of the sad words, *in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes*. God's judgement comes in various ways. Whereas Fire and Brimstone came from Heaven to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Tribes of Israel were His means of judging Gibeah. Indeed, the entire Tribe of Benjamin was judged. All but Benjamin mourned for what had happened in Gibeah and so all the other Tribes rose up against Benjamin. It was civil war, brother against brother. Thousands were killed and cities were burned. The leaders inquired of God and God Himself directed them to bring judgement on Benjamin – *They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?"* The

Lord said, "Judah first!" Read the details for yourself. Following the battles, there was mourning for Benjamin and a means was found that the Tribe could be rebuilt and not lost from Israel.

As you consider this final account of the Book of Judges, remember that, as well as the detail, there is also the bigger picture. God, despite all, had a plan that would undoubtedly be fulfilled. All the pain and suffering of the fallen world that constantly diverted God's people from their walk with Him would finally fall upon Yeshua, from the Tribe of Judah. Indeed, it would be *Judah first!* in the greater victory over sin. Benjamin was not totally lost; out of Benjamin would come the great Apostle Paul, to bring the Gospel to the Gentile Nations! Pause and give praise to God for what He has done.

Day 3

Ruth Chapter 1. Today we will read one of the most popular books of the Old Testament (Tanakh). The story takes place in the time of the Judges, which ended with the sorrowful account of the war against Benjamin. It took place towards the end of the period of the Judges. It is a shaft of light and a ray of hope in the midst of darkness. God did not forget His Covenant with Israel and, just as He raised up Judges to bring Israel back to God, so He raised up a devout Gentile to be the great-grandmother of David the King, who began the kingly line to Yeshua HaMashiach. The story of Ruth is an account of a real incident in the lives of ordinary people, but it also contains types and shadows of what was to come. Most especially there is the kinsman redeemer, Boaz, who points to the great Redeemer Yeshua. See what else you can find as you read this story today.

When there is famine in the Land of Israel it is a time of judgement. Times were hard. Not all of the people were doing evil, despite the troubled Nation, but all came under the judgement. Elimelech and Naomi were two ordinary people in Bethlehem and crossed the Jordan to the Land of Moab to find food. In a symbolic way, this is like times when Israel was later in exile, and can be an encouragement even today, especially when the Nation is once more returning from exile. The sons were married and died. Their father also died, reminding us of passing generations. Then came the time for return to the Land. The Lord had begun to feed His people once more, and so Naomi determined to return to Bethlehem. The name Bethlehem comes from the Hebrew *Beit Lechem*, meaning *House of Bread*. There is, as we said, much symbolism, especially since we know that Yeshua, the *Bread of Life* was to be born in this little town to the south of Jerusalem. He is the Bread of Life and the Word of God made flesh. In our day there is, once more, a return of Israel from exile. The end of God's purposes will be a return to Him through Yeshua. The Book of Ruth, therefore, contains prophetic symbolism. It points to the end of the story of the kinsman redeemer as well as to the beginning.

There came a parting of the ways. It was understandable that Orpah desired to stay in her own country where she might remarry, but the statement of Ruth in verses 16 and 17 is a wonderful statement of faith and commitment – *your people shall be my people and your God, my God...* Previously, Moses had said that no Moabite should enter the community of God's people. Well, no Moabite did, because this commitment by Ruth entitled her to become a member of the Tribe of Judah, a true Jew. This has been said of her through all generations. She was a convert. A person is mainly identified by the God whom they serve and Ruth chose to serve the God of Israel; she became an Israelite. By contrast it was a sad moment for Orpah. It required faith to go with Ruth and Naomi, but instead she returned both to her people and to their false gods.

This is a day for Christians to carefully consider the foundations of their faith. Many are stirred by the story of Ruth as they realize that God of Israel is building the family of faith, Jew and Gentile together, the One New Man, the Israel of God joined by converts from the Gentile nations who cling to the God of Israel. Always the Church in the Gentile world was to be like Ruth, and faithful Jews are like Naomi. They cling, together in faith, to the One True God of Israel. Now, in our day, we are to cling more tightly and resist the deception of the world and its gods. Israel is once more returning from exile!

When they arrived in Bethlehem it was the beginning of the Barley Harvest, no doubt the season of Pesach.

Chapter 2. So begins the love story between Boaz and Ruth, beginning in the harvest fields, where Boaz showed kindness to her. Boaz was a relative of Naomi so Boaz was beginning to consider what must be done to restore this family in Bethlehem, and ensure that Elimelech's line would be preserved. As well as the human story, look for comparisons with the love story between Yeshua and His chosen bride. Another image is in Romans 11; it is of branches from both Jews and Gentiles that are grafted into the olive tree. The olive tree symbolizes the Israel of God grafted into Yeshua. Ephesians 2 gives a similar teaching and uses the terminology, *the One New Man*. Ephesians 4 uses the imagery of the family with Yeshua as Head. Yet another image is created in the Book written by Solomon entitled the Song of Songs. These illustrations, all through the Bible, are to teach us about the love story between Yeshua and His bride, illustrated meaningfully through the account of Ruth and Boaz.

Chapter 3. Marriages were traditionally arranged throughout Israel's history and so it was natural that Naomi would make some plans and so she instructed Ruth what she should do when she was in the harvest fields with Boaz. The other factor in this match-making was the responsibility of the kinsman redeemer. According to the instructions given by God through Moses, which we read in Torah, if a widow was childless, the nearest male relative should marry her so that she might bear children who would be accounted to the deceased husband. Boaz knew what should be done – no doubt he hoped that the responsibility would fall to him, now that he had met Ruth.

There is a wonderful hint of Yeshua in Ruth 3:9, where Ruth asks to be protected *under the wing* of Boaz. Recall what Yeshua said as He mourned for Jerusalem – how He longed to gather the Children of Israel under His wings. If only all Israel, like Ruth had understood Boaz to be, had accepted Yeshua as their Redeemer!

Before entering into the responsibility of kinsman redeemer, Boaz needed to check the matter out with a nearer relative.

Chapter 4. When the cities of Israel were established, they would have walls for protection and gates for entry. At these gates, the elders of the city would sit to consider matters of the law. The law itself was interpreted from the teaching of God through Moses (Torah). The elders continued the tradition of those that helped Moses to govern Israel in the wilderness journey, first appointed at the time of Jethro. Boaz met the near kinsman at the gate and discussed the matter before the elders. The near kinsman could not take responsibility for Ruth and, as was the custom of the time, a sandal was given and received as a confirmation of the agreement. In today's society, we might draw up a written agreement for this sort of transaction. Boaz was to marry Ruth and become the kinsman redeemer! Notice that redeeming the family also involved redeeming the *land* of the family. Again we have a picture of what is happening today when Yeshua the Redeemer will restore the Land of Israel to His people.

The blessing that was spoken in Verses 11 and 12 is the same as the blessings spoken over children in a Jewish family right to this day, usually during a Sabbath meal.

No author, playwright or film-maker has produced such a story as the one God wrote through the lives of Ruth and Boaz. He had concern for their well-being at that time, but also had a plan for the hundreds of years of history to Messiah. The short Book of Ruth ends abruptly with the key point of the story. We have been reading about Ruth and Naomi but suddenly attention turns to Obed, Jesse and David. We will read more about them in other books of the Bible. While ordinary human lives were moving forward day by day, God was also ensuring that His Covenant was secure. The last few Verses give the genealogy from Perez to David. This same genealogy is in Chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew, continued up to the birth of Yeshua.

Psalm 108. This Psalm has a prophetic insight into God's heart to redeem Israel from all nations. Read it carefully. It has applied to previous generations in Israel's history and also points to the end times. Notice the imagery of the kinsman redeemer in verse 9, where it speaks of casting a shoe over Edom. God, one day will gather His people from all nations.

Day 4

We will now begin the Books of Samuel. It is interesting to consider the classification of the Hebrew Bible to discover where these books are placed in Jewish tradition, and compare this with Christian tradition. The classification and ordering is somewhat different from the Christian arrangement of the Old Testament. The Tanakh is the Hebrew name for the Old Testament. The letter *T* is the first letter of *Torah*; the letter *N* is the first letter of *Neveim (Prophets)*; the *Kh* is the beginning of the word *Ketoveem*, the Hebrew word for *Writings*. This is the origin of the word *Tanakh*, and indicates the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible. *Torah*, the first five books are also known as the *Five Books of Moses*, since he is considered to be the chief writer of these books. The Prophets come next. Joshua and Judges are the first two books of the Prophets. Ruth appears next in the Christian Old Testament, but is considered to be a history book in Jewish tradition. Ruth is found much later in the Tanakh, as the fifth Book of the Writings. Reading Ruth after Judges, however, holds the account of Israel's history together. In the Neveim, the two Books of Samuel are combined as a single book and come straight after Judges.

1 Samuel Chapter 1. We have read about the way God brought Ruth into the family of Israel and how she would be the great-grandmother of King David. God was also working in another family to bring His prophetic Word to the nation. How strangely God works. No-one would have understood what He had in mind. It seemed that Samuel's mother Hannah would be childless. This reminds us of Sarah, Abraham's wife and the truth from Scripture that *nothing is impossible for God*. At the right time, God, having prepared Hannah, gave her a child that was to be dedicated back to Him.

Chapter 2. Hannah's prayer is recorded fully in the Bible. It is the prayer of one who has struggled in life but remained faithful to God. It is an exaltation of God that broke forth at the time of God's visitation. God deals with ordinary human beings in a sinful world and so tests us as He also prepares us. Hannah passed the test and the prayer of Hannah is a wonderful witness to this.

Samuel was not from the Tribe of Levi but he was still to minister with Eli in the Tabernacle at Shiloh, where he began to learn his calling even from a child. Meanwhile Eli's sons were not good examples of the Priestly ministry, nor did Eli govern them well. Eli was in the line from Aaron, ministering with the same responsibility that they had in the wilderness, but now in the Tabernacle at Shiloh. We might recall how God prepared the Priesthood at the time of Aaron and how even Aaron's sons were killed because of their careless ministry. It was no less important that Eli and his sons should minister at Shiloh according to all Moses instructions. While Samuel was being prepared as a Prophet to Israel, God was about to judge the Priestly family of Eli.

Chapter 3. Samuel's first prophecy was a difficult one to deliver, but he would have more challenges ahead as he became a Judge and Prophet to the entire Nation of Israel. This Chapter contains a wonderful account of His call and how Samuel answered. It seemed that God had gone silent in Israel, but He was simply making preparations for the time that He would begin to speak again and here was His chosen vessel, the boy Samuel. God was about to do something in Israel that would be hard to believe (Verse 11), but first Samuel had to deliver a message to Eli. Judgement was to begin

with the Priesthood. Samuel was cautious when he took God's message to Eli but, as it turned out, Eli fully accepted that it was the Lord who had sent him.

Chapter 4. Samuel grew and was ready for his ministry to bring the Word of God to Israel. It was not by chance, that when Samuel was grown, it was the very time that the Philistines rose against Israel. Recall that Israel's history is linked, through blessing or curse, to the Covenant made at Sinai and the commitment made at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. All this is in accord with Deuteronomy 27 to 29. So, it was surely God who chose His time to stir the Philistines up against Israel. This was also the time for judgement on the house of Eli. It was a sad day when the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines. *Ichabod* was written over Israel that day – the glory had departed: it was God bringing judgement upon the Nation.

Day 5

Chapter 5. God not only brought grief to His people when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant – He also put fear into the Philistines themselves. First He demonstrated that gods of stone are no gods and brought the image of Dagon crashing down. Then he put fear among the Philistines in all the cities. God was stirring the whole area, not only Israel.

Chapter 6. It may seem naïve to us that the Philistines thought that they could please God by trying to appease Him with gifts of golden tumours and rats, but this is what happens wherever men and women do not know the One True God. The same goes on today, when people imagine that God is present in animals, stones and trees, and where they seek to create images out of their imagination that represent these things. They adorn Temples of many countries even in our day. Israel was singled out as a Nation and given the Ten Commandments, which forbade such things. That makes it even sadder that Israel fell, time and again, into the idolatry of the surrounding nations. The Ark was sent back to Israel on a cart, and was received at Beth Shemesh. The Philistines feared the God of Israel even if they did not fear Israel.

Chapter 7. The Israelites knew that the Ark of the Covenant was not God, but they did know that it had a central place in the Tabernacle and was to be treated with great care. They enlisted Abinadab and his son to care for it. As it turned out, it remained in Kirjath Jearim for 20 years. This was a long period of mourning for Israel. During that time, Samuel restored order and reverence to Israel, and God maintained peace for them against the Philistines all the years of Samuel's ministry.

Chapter 8. Unfortunately, when Samuel was old, his sons were not suited to the ministry of Judging Israel. Thus began another sad era for the Nation. They wanted to be like all the other nations and have a king. God had taught Israel, through Moses (Deuteronomy 17), what a king of Israel should be like. He had foreseen this day. It was, nevertheless, a sad day because God knew that the people had rejected Him and not Samuel. Samuel warned them what would happen when they elected a king. They were not content to serve the unseen God of Israel and wanted to serve a human being – so it would inevitably go wrong and they would live to regret it

Day 6

Chapter 9. God selected the first king. He needed to show Israel the limitations of the flesh. Later, He would choose another King and show that He was more concerned with the heart than with external appearance – something that we should continue to note in our own lives and ministries. He chose Saul, who was a tall handsome young man, who would appeal to people who looked chiefly for physical attributes. Saul did not know that he was to be king. The need to search for the donkeys seemed an everyday incident – until he met Samuel. Something of Saul’s character is revealed through the incident - he tried to find a seer to help him find the donkeys. Later in his life he would go to a greater extreme by consulting a medium, but the symptoms were evident even now that Saul was not going to be a strong leader. Samuel did not know that Saul was His choice for King until God told him. Then he prepared to obey God, and hosted Saul at a grand meal, before taking him aside to tell him God’s plans.

Chapter 10 The Hebrew word for *prophet* is *navee*. The word is from the same root as *aviv*, which means *spring of water*. A prophet is likened to a spring: the Word of God is rising up inside him as if from a well. Saul was anointed by Samuel and the Holy Spirit came upon him to change his heart. This was a foreshadowing of the New Covenant, though the Spirit of God did not indwell Saul permanently, as we shall see. Nevertheless, he experienced what seems to have been the bubbling over of the Spirit as in the other Prophets, rather like the gift of tongues that is experienced among believers today. Perhaps Saul was offered the gift of God’s Spirit but he was not able to maintain a walk in the Spirit sufficiently to become the King that Israel needed. After the time of Saul God would find a man after His own heart to be King, and there would be other good Kings as well as bad ones. Nevertheless, through all the Kings of Israel and Judah we learn that God alone is the perfect King. Not until the coming of Yeshua did the perfect King come to Israel. We still wait for the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

The people were gathered: in due order Saul was identified as King – but he was hiding behind some equipment! Thus began the dubious reign of the first King of Israel with the resounding cry of, “Long live the king!”

Chapter 11. It was not long before a group of men came together who doubted the appointment of Saul, but Saul managed to put fear into them. He also led a defeat of an uprising of the Ammonites. This united the people and so they gathered at Gilgal, where Joshua had established his headquarters before the conquest of Canaan. Here were erected 12 stones to remind Israel of the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 4 and 5). Saul was confirmed King of Israel in this place where the nation had first gathered.

Chapter 12. Samuel’s speech to Israel was a mixture of hope and warning. First he asked if he owed anyone anything. He had served Israel well and there was no complaint against him. Then, like other leaders before him, he reviewed the history of Israel and how God had helped them. He reminded

them that if they set their heart to obey God, despite the evil of wanting a King, then God would still bless them, but he also reminded them that they had done evil and warned them of the consequences of departing from God. God sent a physical sign to confirm Samuel's words. God would help them if they would walk His way, but temptation lay ahead and they were likely to go down wrong paths because of a poor human leader whom they had appointed as King.

Day 7

A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

1 Chronicles Chapters 1-9. We will read from several Books in parallel to keep all of Israel's history together. Chronicles is an accurate record of Israel's history, including the genealogies that were known and remembered. Chapters 1-9 of the First Book of Chronicles takes us up to the time of Saul, also mentioning the line of Judah up to King David. Read these Chapters today. There is a lot to read but the content will be familiar to you. You can read the Chapters reasonably quickly but, on the other hand, don't skim-read so that you miss anything that the Holy Spirit may want to highlight for you. It is important to recall the history that has brought us to this point.
