

# Under The Fig Tree



## WEEK 15

### Day 1

This week we will study the lives of Saul and David. This is the beginning of the history of Israel's Kings. It is a long history, which leads us up to the time of Yeshua, preparing the way for Him. If it were not for human sin, the history could be foreshortened, but hard lessons had to be learned, and this took time. Israel needed to learn that they could not govern themselves. They asked for a King like the other nations and that was the beginning of the problem. We, too, need to learn from the experiences of Israel. When God created Adam and Eve there were just two people on the earth. They failed to trust God fully and so the first exile took place – banishment from the Garden of Eden. Israel also suffered exile when they were banished for a time from the Promised Land. First two people, Adam and Eve, then an entire nation, so that we might all learn what God requires of His people.

Now the entire world is open to the Gospel message, and the Bible is available so that we can learn from the years of Israel's experience. God is still building His covenant community and will, one day, rule and reign through King Yeshua when all is finally restored. Six thousand years of history are behind us and now is the time to prepare. So let us listen to God as we study together. Our studies will also weave through the Prophets and the Writings as well as the books of history. There is much detail to consider, but remember to fix your mind on the ultimate reason for God's teaching – that we will humble ourselves and realize our need of our Saviour, so that we might be with Him forever in the *Eternal Kingdom*.

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1 Samuel Chapter 13. A year passed, and Saul established Himself as King, then another year. Two short years and trouble began. Recall that, after the time of Joshua, the Promised Land was not fully settled. Some of Israel's enemies remained and God said that He would use them to test Israel. The Philistines were prominent at the time of Saul. Through Saul's son, Jonathan, the Philistines were stirred up for battle. Saul needed help. He knew he needed God's help, but failed to follow the commands of God regarding the sacrifice. He was headstrong and fearful. Saul was a big man physically, but a weak man in his actions. This reminds us of another physically strong man, Samson, who brought trouble on himself through unwise dealings with Philistines. Now Saul was in trouble too, but in Saul's case he was in trouble with God, as well as with the Philistines. No sooner was he established as King than the kingdom was taken from him! Saul was not the kind of King that God had in mind, and Israel needed to learn that God looks on the heart and not on the outward appearance. Another King was chosen of a different character, who would also be a type and shadow of Yeshua. Meanwhile, Saul prepared for battle with rudimentary weapons.

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Chapter 14. Jonathan led the first assault against the Philistines with a small group of men. Through his success, Saul's confidence grew and he rallied the Israelites. He knew his need of God's help and indeed God did give victory to Saul. Even so, Saul's poor judgement was evident and he made a rash oath that nearly resulted in the death of his son, but the men of Israel reasoned with him. In the Land flowing with milk and honey, Jonathan had eaten some honey. Perhaps this was in his mind as he ate it, also remembering all of God's promises to Israel. Both Saul and Jonathan should both have remembered God's promises in this day of victory, but it only took a short silence from God to reveal the unreliable nature of Saul. Nevertheless, for the time being, God gave peace to Israel and subdued the Philistines.

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Chapter 15. Recall that, after the time of Joshua, a remnant of Israel's enemies was left in the Land and God said that He would use them to test Israel. Now came a test for Saul. God declared that it was time for the punishment of the Amalekites to be completed. Thus began a sad day for Saul and all Israel. Saul was shown to be a weak King and God regretted making him King. Samuel was full of sorrow and sought the Lord, who gave him a message for Saul. Saul had not completely destroyed Amalek. He had been told that their presence was to be forever removed from the earth, but he compromised. Because of his compromise, the Kingdom was torn from him. Verses 22 and 23 show what God wanted from Saul. Above all he wanted obedience. Sacrifice and offering were given to Israel as a means of atonement when sin had been committed, but obedience is better than sacrifice, says the Lord; better obedience because then there is no need for sacrifice.

Before he was King, Saul wanted to consult a seer to find his father's lost donkeys. Later, this same tendency led to his consulting a medium. Saul tended to seek help from the wrong source when in

difficulty. When God was silent after Saul had prayed (Chapter 14), Saul cast lots, even though he was not told to do this by God. God saw these tendencies and declared that the foundation of Saul's disobedience was like rebellion and like witchcraft. God was looking into the heart of David at this time, and Saul was soon to lose the Kingdom to a much more reliable young man.

Many of us have tendencies to compromise as Saul did. In human thinking, why should God want the Amalekites to be completely destroyed? We would have done the same in Saul's place. The lesson to learn is that whoever has been given God's authority, must do exactly what He tells them. If He chooses a King, then God must rule through him. He is not to act independently or under his own initiative, or seek guidance from the wrong source. God's ways are not our ways, and so listening to God is essential. One day the entire world and all its people will be judged. This is revealed in the Book of Revelation. On that day Yeshua will sit on the Great White Throne as King of Israel. Not one person will be lost who is counted among His people. Everyone else will, without compromise, be banished from the Kingdom of Heaven. Saul was not capable of being this King of Israel, and neither are we. The incident with the Amalekites teaches us this above all else. Some hard lessons have been learned because Israel desired a King like the other nations.

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Chapter 16. When Ruth clung closely to Naomi and returned to Bethlehem, God already had the future in mind. A King would be born in Bethlehem named David. David's heart would be such that God would train him for leadership while he cared for sheep. While David was growing up He would also demonstrate, through Saul, the type of King he did *not* want. At this point, David entered centre stage in Israel's history; much is written about him in the Bible for us to study. God uses David to prepare the way for Yeshua, who was also born in Bethlehem, about 1000 years later. David had become a man after God's own heart and Samuel was sent to find him and to anoint him. No-one, not even Samuel, could see what God saw in David's heart. Samuel was obedient and God's will was made known in the selection process, when Samuel visited Jesse and considered his sons, one by one.

Meanwhile, Saul needed help and David was called into his household. God's Spirit departed from him – His Spirit had been given to Him when he had been anointed to be King in the same way that David now had been. Saul needed David to sooth his anxious mind through music, while, at the same time, God was beginning to prepare David to be King.

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## Day 2

Some Psalms of David. David was a man after God's own heart. He wrote many Psalms. These Psalms are the foundation of worship in every Jewish home and in every Synagogue to this day, and they are the inspiration behind many Christian hymns. David's Psalms were written through the seasons of his life. They were written in the valleys, the wilderness and on the mountaintops of his experience. They, therefore, capture the whole of human experience. They are also prophetic in nature. David's kingly reign foreshadowed that of Yeshua and so many of his experiences became prophecies that would be fulfilled by Yeshua. We will read some of the Psalms parallel to our reading of the biblical account of David. They are evidence of his heart before God. Let us, therefore, pause and read some of these Psalms. This young man was called out of the sheepfolds to be prepared as King. Some of the Psalms were written early in his life and some later, but all display the heart that God saw in him from his childhood.

Psalms 8. David must have spent many days and nights out in the countryside under a clear sky. When he observed what God had created and considered his own humanity, he worshipped God who had made him and who had endowed him with dignity. How small we are yet how wonderful that God has chosen us for glory and honour.

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Psalms 15. Jesse was David's father. We do not know much about him, but it is reasonable to assume that he taught his sons well, so that they knew the teaching handed down through Moses. David knew the beauty of Torah and shows this through his Psalms. He knew the heart of God through this teaching, and he knew how to be secure in the framework of God's teaching. This Psalm is a sample of his response to God's teaching. He knew the importance of an upright life and of fear of the Lord.

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Psalms 19. According to Moses' instructions, a King of Israel must write himself a copy of Torah. David would know the value of this. He knew that all God's teaching was perfect and sought to understand what God had revealed. This Psalm begins with a meditation upon the firmness and certainty of God's laws in creation. It goes on to conclude that all God's teaching is perfect. It ends with the insight that God understands even more about us than we understand ourselves, and will help us in all things, from the great to the small. David knew God's love for him; he also knew his need of God's help at the deepest level.

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Psalms 23. This Psalm reflects what David learned as a shepherd. He knew what it was to care for sheep and he knew that the same principles applied to God's care for His people. It was in caring for sheep that David learned how to care for people, and also how to depend on God in this. It was from the sheepfold that he was called to be King. One of the ministries in the Church is that of pastor. David is the model of what a pastor means – one who cares for the Lord's flock, protects them and leads them to good pasture, all in obedience to the Lord and not on his own independent initiative.

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## Day 3

1 Samuel Chapter 17. When the spies went into Canaan, all but Joshua and Caleb were afraid of the giants. This led to Israel wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. A remnant of the Canaanite people was left in the Land, after the time of Joshua, and they were to be a test for Israel. When Goliath, a man more than 9 feet tall, stood before the armies of Israel in the Valley of Elah, they should have remembered the lesson of the wilderness, but generations had passed. Fear gripped the Israelites, just as it had done their forefathers. How the world loves a champion. Let the champion fight for us and it will be as if we had fought him ourselves! So it was, that the Philistines hid behind their champion and the Israelites could not find a man to respond to the challenge - until young David appeared on the scene.

Everything has to be tested, even the future King. Saul had failed the test, but here was David facing a new challenge. He had learned to trust God against the beasts of the field, and so had no doubts when he saw the great giant. How wonderful it is to have simple child-like trust in the Lord. Human logic may let us down, but God is always faithful, and David knew it. Why he chose five stones instead of one, we do not know. One thought is that the number five is associated with the grace of God. Another possibility, as is often the case, is that we have more than enough for the task ahead of us: to have more than enough gives us confidence for the battle. Whatever the reason, we know that David only needed one stone and the giant was stunned. The giant had challenged not just David: he had also issued a challenge to the God of Israel. He had threatened to feed David's dead body to the birds of the air, but he lost his own head instead.

There is a picture in Revelation 19:17 that reminds us of this battle between David and Goliath. In the end days the world system will grow like a giant all around us, but the Lord will defeat His enemies, who will fall like Goliath did. God will also call for the birds of the air to devour the carcasses of those slaughtered. Beware, all the world, of the mighty acts of God still to come! On whose side will you stand when the great giants rise up in the world to challenge the people of the Living God?

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Chapter 18. Madness and jealousy overcame Saul even though David did nothing to deserve Saul's hate. God had departed from Saul and was with David, just as Samuel had prophesied. David became known throughout all Israel, for his conquests. Saul would have killed him if he was able to do so, but God would not allow this. David went on from strength to strength. The brotherly love between Jonathan and David is a touching part of the story. Jonathan would have been Saul's successor as King in human thinking, but he recognized and accepted that David was God's choice. Their friendship was a wonderful part of the developing story.

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Chapter 19. Notice that, in Verse 9, a distressing spirit from the Lord came upon Saul. This spirit was sent directly by Yahweh, the God of Israel. Time and again, throughout the Bible, we find that it is God who sends the agents of judgement to Israel. It is by His direct action and not by default. This is what He told Moses that He would do (Deuteronomy 27-29, for example). We find this principle in the Prophets. For example, in Ezekiel 33:2, where God is explaining the call of the watchman, God

refers to the time when *He* sends the sword upon the Land. Nothing was outside God's initiative when Saul received an evil spirit. What a sad day it was for the first King of Israel to be so rejected by God!

Jonathan interceded for David when Saul sought to kill him, but he tried to kill him again when he saw that God had made David victorious against the Philistines. First he tried to kill him with a spear, and then he sought to hunt him down. God was with David and, in various ways he was saved from Saul's jealous wrath. It is touching that the old man, Samuel, was still available for counsel. How much the people of God need elder statesmen to be in the community in times of need – even Kings of Israel!

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Chapter 20. It is truly amazing that we have such detail in our Bibles as we find here. We have records of conversations that took place 3000 years ago as if they were written yesterday. What other nation has kept such records of its history?

God established a pure brotherly love between Jonathan and David and now it was strategic in the events that were developing. According to the custom handed down by Moses, Saul celebrated the New Moon Festival. David should have been there. Jonathan made excuses for him, but this made his father angry. Saul even tried to kill Jonathan with a spear, just as he had tried to do to David. His madness was increasing. Jonathan gave the agreed signal to David in the field where he hid, that his life was now in even more danger. David now had to flee for his life. There was a deeply emotional parting with Jonathan. David became an exile.

Remember that God had not lost control. David was learning to trust God all through these circumstances. It was a time of testing and of preparation. We can see this in hindsight more easily than David could living each moment. Like Jacob before him, who needed to meet God afresh at Peniel in order to become the person God intended, so David needed to discover how God would preserve him from the deepest difficulties.

David wrote many Psalms that speak of the depths of trouble where He found God's deliverance. These Psalms became prophecies about Yeshua who suffered even more deeply, as He fulfilled the calling to be the perfect King of Israel.

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Psalms 35. This is one of David's Psalms written out of the experience of being pursued by enemies, emphasizing his trust in God. Such trust is learned by experience and not through human philosophy.

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Psalms 22. There were times when David felt abandoned by God. We do not know the agonies that he went through and whether he wrote literally or figuratively about how he felt. Read this Psalm and discover the depths of his anguish, but also the confidence in God. When he asked God why he had been forsaken, it was a question from a Hebraic mindset, knowing the answer. He knew that he was not forsaken, even though the circumstances seemed to indicate that he had been abandoned. How could he ask God why he was forsaken, if he knew that God was close enough to hear his

prayer? The experience of David was turned into a Psalm that was totally inspired, because it was accurately fulfilled on the Cross, where Yeshua asked the same question of God. Yeshua, in using the words of the Psalm, was also indicating to those who witnessed His Crucifixion that indeed He is the Messiah who came from the line of David, according to all the Prophecies. This was considered, by the Jews, to be a Messianic Psalm. His hearers would have known why He asked, from the Cross, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* David prepared the way for Yeshua as well as for his own reign as King of Israel.

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## Day 4

1 Samuel Chapter 21. David's life was unique, but there are parallels in our own lives. David was being prepared as a man of God - we are being prepared too. Like David, we will have experiences in the valleys and on the mountaintops. What do we do in times of difficulty? How do we respond to God when He seems silent? What is our response when God delivers us and restores us? Human nature is naturally sinful and causes us internal struggles on our road of discipleship, so God puts His people in situations that test us and ultimately strengthen us spiritually. It may be a long process, but it is necessary. This is a New Testament principle as well as an Old Testament principle. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of this – *God deals with you as sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?...if you are without chastening...then you are illegitimate and not sons* (Hebrews 12:3-13). Preparation of God's people is through the experiences that they go through and how they respond. The principles are the same for us all, only the detail will be different for each of us.

In David's case he was sent out into the wildernesses and caves of Judah, and even spent some time among the Philistines. All this was to increase his ability to live closely to God, and prepare him for the Kingdom. Saul was in pursuit of David, mad and unpredictable. David first went to Nob, and there ate some showbread. He also retrieved Goliath's sword. From his actions we know that he was in a desperate situation. When he went to Gath he acted out madness so that he would not be harmed.

Could you write a Psalm as a result of your experiences before God? David did and we have a glimpse into his heart when we read the Psalms written in these times of trouble.

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Psalm 34. This Psalm was written when David pretended madness in Gath. Imagine yourself in the hands of the most ruthless of people and need help. Would you respond with a Psalm like this?

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Chapter 22. David hid in a cave in Adullam. This is in a hilly region towards the south of Judah near the Dead Sea. David came from nearby Bethlehem and would have taken his sheep from place to place in this region. He would have known the area very well. No doubt God prepared him for this time when he would be hiding from Saul. David was well known among the Israelites because of his victory against Goliath and for other victories against the Philistines. Other men in need knew that he would be a trustworthy leader and gathered together with him at Adullam. From there David and the 400 men went from place to place helped through God's word to him through Gad the Prophet.

A man named Doeg had been with the Priests at Nob, when David had sought refuge there. Doeg went back to Saul and informed him of David's whereabouts. This incensed Saul. He took revenge on both the Priests and others from the City of Nob. This led to discontent among his own men and it would also bring punishment from God in due time. David was in peril of his life from the mad King Saul.

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Psalm 52. David wrote this Psalm when he heard that Doeg had stirred up Saul by informing him of his time in Nob, and how the Priests had helped him. It speaks of God's justice and how those who do wrong will be punished.

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Psalm 57. This Psalm was written when David fled from Saul to the cave. Perhaps the shelter of the cave was a reminder of the safety in God's arms. This Psalm came out of an experience of severe danger. We often write verses from these Psalms on posters and put them on our walls. Verse 11 is used in this way – *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be above all the earth.* Perhaps, by associating it with the circumstance in which the verse was written, we will find the verse even more wonderful to apply to our own lives. Remember, too, the parallel in the life of Yeshua, who went down to the pit of Hell for us, in a much darker place than King David. David's praise of God in adversity is like the praise of Yeshua through all His trials.

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## Day 5

1 Samuel Chapter 23. David's heart for his people was stirred when he heard that the Philistines were raiding the City of Keilah. He did not act rashly like Saul would have done, but enquired of God so that he was sure of the victory. Saul, by contrast, no longer with the Spirit of God to guide him, was determined to pursue David. This foolish King pursued a man who was protected by God while being prepared for the Kingdom. Saul was not even wise enough to realize that such reckless behavior would eventually turn his own people away from him. Already Jonathan and David were close friends and now they made a firm covenant together. Next followed a period in the wilderness for David and his men.

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Psalm 63. This Psalm was written in the wilderness. The wilderness is a special place for God to meet with His people. For 40 years Israel walked with God through the wilderness in preparation for the Promised Land. Yeshua spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness after His baptism. In the wilderness there are only bare essentials for life and times when miracles are needed for provision of food and water. Contrast this with the life in the affluent nations today. Sometimes the more we have, the less we seem to need God. That is why a wilderness experience or a time of fasting is useful to bring us back to God. This is where God teaches us in a special way. Read David's Psalm and see how it encourages you through dry experiences in life.

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Chapter 24. En Gedi is a beautiful place to visit today. The Israeli Government has made a small national park there. One can walk up into the same hills where David hid from Saul, see the wild mountain goats and picnic at a picturesque waterfall. One sees the crags and caves where David hid from Saul. In one of the caves – we do not know which – Saul laid down his outer garment to attend to his needs. On the corner of his garment were the tassels, or *tzitzit*, which Moses commanded the men of Israel to wear, to help them to remember the Torah. David cut off the corner of Saul's garment and, possibly, one of these tassels was attached. He could have killed Saul at that time, but his conscience stirred. He cut off a sign of Saul's authority to show that he had the power to do this. God had spoken to David and said that Saul was put in his power to do what he wanted. This was a test, and David showed remorse to have even cut the garment of the anointed King. Even Saul's heart was touched by this. He knew that David was indeed to be King, and that he was more honourable than himself. Unstable though he had become, there seemed to be love for David deep within him, but fear and jealousy had driven him to uncontrollable madness.

Chapter 25. The death of Samuel takes up just one verse. He was among Israel's greatest leaders. No wrong is spoken of him. He was given a specific ministry. He stayed within the bounds of that ministry and did all that was asked of him. He was an elder statesman in Israel to his death. We have read the account of his life from his birth to his death and come to know him as if he lived in our day. It is fitting to pause and reflect on his life and thank God for such men.

The account of David takes us on to another incident. Carmel is a mountain range to the north west of Israel overlooking, to the east, the plain of Armageddon. This is the area where Deborah had lived and also where Gideon chose his 300. To the west, Carmel overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. It is

where Elijah would later challenge the prophets of Baal. David was living off the land; he needed to find food for his men. They moved north from the Judean wilderness to where there was food to spare, but found opposition to their request for help. Nabal stirred David to take revenge, but Abigail interceded for her husband, and David was thankful. Abigail seemed to care more for the honour of David than for her own husband. There are lessons here relating the ministry of intercession. Often the wrath of God is appeased through the intercession of His people. This incident is a human example of intercession in which we also see another characteristic of God, that Paul the Apostle knew well: *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* (Romans 12:19) David left judgement to the Lord and, indeed, Nabal died at the hand of the Lord soon after.

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Psalm 58. This is one of the Psalms where David shows his understanding of the vengeance of God against the wicked. These are hard teachings from the Bible, but David learned, through his experiences, that God is judge and that there are times of vengeance. Saul had shown weakness in this very area and lost the Kingdom as a result.

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## Day 6

1 Samuel Chapter 26. David had the opportunity, for a second time, to kill Saul. Humanly, it would seem that he had every right. Saul pursued him once more and sought to kill David. David had learned his lesson in the cave where he cut the corner from Saul's garment, so he simply demonstrated that he could have killed Saul while he slept. David had, by now, been in the wilderness for some time with his men, and they too were trained for battle. One day the Kingdom would be in David's hands and he would need mighty men to rule with him. Each of them would have had a personal story of how God prepared them, just as we have had in the days leading up to Yeshua's return to this earth to take up His Kingdom.

David knew that it was not yet time and the Kingdom was to be in Saul's hands until it was the right time, so he was not prepared to usurp authority. *Do good to those who hate you* (Matthew 5:44) was Yeshua's command to us all. The result is often that our enemies melt away before us, even respecting us for doing good in response to their evil intent. Saul repented before David and accepted that David was more worthy of the Kingdom than he had been.

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Psalms 54. This Psalm was written after the incident with Saul when the Ziphites stirred him to pursue David to the Wilderness of Ziph. Here is confirmation of exactly what was in David's heart as he, once more, spared Saul's life. David's reliance on God was increasing all the time.

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1 Samuel Chapter 27. It was not time for David to become King and here is a reason. Out of many experiences, David's faith had grown, but still there was more to be accomplished in him. He still feared for his life. He had hid in caves, in the wilderness and in other areas of the Land of Israel. Now he found refuge among the Philistines. As we read the story of David, we are very conscious of both the human story and of God's oversight. Perhaps we perceive this more in hindsight, because we now have the entire account, while David and his men lived through these circumstances day by day. It is the same for us as we go day by day through various trials. When we come out of the trials we know that God was with us, but each new circumstance is a different lesson. We need to grow through a variety of experiences just as David did, not knowing the end from the beginning, but learning that God always has the end in view.

David settled in Ziklag, previously a Philistine City. He took the opportunity to destroy some of the Cities of these people whom God had ordained should not inhabit Canaan. A remnant had been left at the time of Joshua. He managed to convince the Philistines that he was really on their side and had been warring against Judah, not them.

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Chapter 28. David was in a strategic situation when the Philistines again rose up for war against Israel. He was trusted by Achish to join them for the fight. We do not know what would have happened had David been prevented from this. He prepared as if to go to war against his own people and was willing to go forward in the Philistine ranks. Saul was nearing the end of his reign and became desperate. It was at this time that the tendency to seek inappropriate spiritual guidance

was revealed once more. He went to a medium at Endor, someone who should not have been allowed to live among the Israelites. He disguised himself and asked her to call Samuel up from the dead. This incident is hard to understand, but it demonstrates that there are supernatural powers available that we must not seek to use. Samuel reminded Saul that his Kingdom had been taken from him, and now was the time for God to do this. Saul was distraught. What a terrible situation for anyone to get themselves into. It all began in what seemed like a minor disobedience when he sought to find a seer, but that is always the way with sin leading to evil. His first errors now were reaping their full justice at the Hand of God. A sad day was about to occur, when the first King of Israel would die on the Mountains of Gilboa. God had stirred up the Philistines for this very reason. Stand in awe of Him all you His people!

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## Day 7

### A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Let us read some more of the Psalms of David today and recall how God prepared him for the Kingdom. He is preparing you too. See what the Holy Spirit says to you as you meditate upon the Psalms in the light of the life of David.

Psalm 56. This was written when David was among the Philistines in Gath. Imagine living among this ruthless people, whom you have fought in battle, while, at the same time needing to escape from mad King Saul. Could we write such a Psalm? It should be possible to write Psalms that reflect our own personal experiences of God.

Psalm 59. This Psalm was written at the time when Saul first pursued David (Chapter 19). It was when he sent men to his house to find him. Saul's daughter, Michal, was David's wife. She put an image in David's bed with goat's hair on its head, to give David time to escape.

Psalm 142. This was written when David was hiding in one of the caves in Judah.

Psalm 145. Here is a great song of praise. Such praise is the result of the way God prepares a man after His own heart. It does not come easily!

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