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In the Beginning **King David**

There are few people in the Old Testament to whom more narrative is devoted than King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, a “man after [God’s] own heart.” His unreserved faith in God was remarkably displayed in his confrontation with Goliath, and this early episode was characteristic of his devotion to the cause of Jehovah. In this he forms a lovely representation of King Jesus who would follow many centuries later. David’s earnestness, his fervency of spirit and his acceptance of the chastisements of God form a wonderful part of the “cloud of witnesses” urging us to fidelity, zeal and enthusiasm for the greater work of the spirit we are privileged to share. This remarkable life and its lessons are the theme of the present issue.

David’s battle with Goliath is probably the best known and most endearing story of his career. Not as well known is that this episode also has a prophetic meaning, explored in the article “David and Goliath.” “The Star of David and the Star of Bethlehem” explores the history of the ancient “Star of David,” and an intriguing, far reaching prophecy of Balaam. In “Saul, Jonathan, and David” are sweet lessons respecting love and devotion, and warnings concerning jealousy and intrigue. David had several wives, none more famous than Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. The men prominent in her life, and lessons from their examples, are examined in “Nine Men in the Life of Bathsheba.”

The greatest threat to David’s kingdom was the revolt of his own son, Absalom. “The Revolt of Absalom” suggests this wrenching drama prefigured the Jewish refusal to accept their divinely crowned King Jesus. The most distressing episode of David’s career was his sin respecting Uriah and Bathsheba. The Bible does not refrain from revealing the weaknesses of even its most heroic figures. But David’s heart was shown in his thorough repentance and humiliation, as elucidated in the article “Nathan the Prophet.”

David composed many psalms, among them the two well known Messianic Psalms 2 and 110. Their meaning respecting King David and King Jesus are examined in the article “Two Psalms of David.” Lastly, “The Bethlehem Trilogy” considers three Old Testament narratives highlighting the importance of Bethlehem, later the birthplace of King David and his successor, King Jesus.

David And Goliath

Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. -- 1 Samuel 17:45

The story of David's victory over Goliath is famous and perhaps the most endearing of stories about this valiant leader, who was "a man after his [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). Some years ago we heard a discourse about this familiar subject which opened our appreciation to a prophetic meaning in this episode. The speaker proposed that Goliath, the tall giant plated in metallic armor but felled by a single stone, was a picture of the giant metallic image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, also felled by a single stone. This view is the basis for the treatment following.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream is recorded in Daniel 2:31-35, and its interpretation in verses 37-45. The image in this dream had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron. These represented, respectively, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The feet and ten toes of the image were a mixture of iron and clay, showing that the Roman Empire would break into a variety of governments (iron) mixed with the religious element, the Roman Catholic Church. At last a stone "cut out without hands" -- Christ and his elect who are separated from this world through the holy spirit -- would smite the image at the feet, causing it to crash, fragment, and blow away with the wind "like the chaff of the summer threshingfloor" (Daniel 2:34,35). The stone then grew into a great mountain which filled the earth, just as the Kingdom of Christ, which brings low the kingdoms of this world, will fill the world.

The various prophecies, dreams, and visions of Daniel are unified in their teachings from chapter to chapter. This leads us to conclude the image in Daniel 2 endures for the "seven times" spoken of in Daniel 4. In the vision of Daniel 7 four beasts represent the same as the four parts of the image in Daniel 2. The time which would pass in the rule of these four empires would be the same as represented in the "seven times" King Nebuchadnezzar conducted himself as a beast in Daniel 4 -- namely, 2,520 years.

Thus the demise of the image commenced in 1914, at the conclusion of 2,520 years of Gentile authority over Israel, beginning with 607 B.C. (There is an earlier parallel also, dating from the fall and dispersion of the ten-tribe kingdom in the north, followed 2,520 years later with the Napoleonic Wars which wreaked a preliminary devastation, magnified in World War I. These dates would be *ca.* 722 B.C. to 1799 A.D.)

The Description of Goliath

"There went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him" (1 Samuel 17:4-7).

The metals mentioned are brass and iron, the two strongest of the four in Daniel 2. These two metals were used to symbolize the strength of the powers which would oppress and dominate Israel, and in fact Greece (through Antiochus Epiphanes) and Rome (which destroyed their

nation, capital city, and temple) were the greatest oppressors of Israel of all the four empires. In Daniel 4 the bands restraining the growth of the tree during the “seven times” of beastly conduct were made of brass and iron, and when Moses predicted this coming punishment he used the same metals: “I will punish you seven times more for your sins ... I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass” (Leviticus 26:18,19).

Psalms 107:10-16 refers to the same period, during which the Israelites are brought low because of their rebellion, and are “bound in affliction and iron” (verse 10). At last God breaks “the gates of brass, and cut[s] the bars of iron in sunder” (verse 16) and allows Israel’s national aspirations to sprout again, as occurred following World War I. All of this which Christ does for Israel was foreshadowed centuries ago by the temporary relief Cyrus brought to Israel when he freed Israel from bondage, breaking “in pieces the gates of brass, and cut[ting] in sunder the bars of iron” (Isaiah 45:2).

The Predicate for David’s Faith

When David volunteered to fight the Philistine champion his elders were incredulous. “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth” (1 Samuel 17:33). This was an understandable concern, but David was undaunted. From his previous experience he had learned how strong was the Lord’s protecting care.

“And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

David represents the Lord’s people, the saints, who will overcome the powers of this world and, together with Christ, establish a universal kingdom of righteousness. The Lord’s people can look back over history and see that God delivered his people from the “Lion” and “Bear” -- Babylon and Medo-Persia -- and the remaining governments, although stronger, will similarly fall to the power of the Spirit.

In all of our triumphs over the enemies of faith, we can be confident that “hitherto hath the LORD helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12), and he will give us the necessary victory. We cannot be sure in what way the Lord will deliver us, or what trials, wounds, and apparent defeats we may endure before the final victory, but victory at last is assured.

David’s Weapons

After donning Saul’s armor at the behest of the king, he realized it was unsuitable. He was not accustomed to it, and chose to rely upon his familiar implements and his faith in God. He chose “five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag” (1 Samuel 17:40), and proceeded with his sling in hand. Five is a number identified with the New Creation, as for example the five wise virgins of the parable, and these five stones relate jointly to the stone cut out without hands in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

These stones had been smoothed over time by the running brook, just as the saints have been

polished and refined in their spiritual graces by the power of the truth running over and around them during their lifetimes. These are instruments to be used of the shepherd, and stored in his bag until the necessary time.

Probably the difference in the sites of impact in the David narrative and the Daniel narrative show a different perspective about the impact of God's power upon the kingdoms of this world. In Daniel the blow is struck at the feet, showing the relative time frame of the impact, late in the age, against the last powers representing the collective image of Gentile authority. In David's experience the weapons express the force of the truth as the active agent. After the giant was felled David removed his head with a sword, reminding us of the weapon Christ uses in Revelation 19:15 in the climax of this age, at the end of the harvest. But the initial impact of the stone was in the forehead, which normally protects the center of thought, suggesting again the truth as the essential offensive weapon which brings low the kingdoms of this world.

Goliath's Disdain

As the Philistine champion approached, preceded by his shield bearer, he looked about for his adversary and saw only a small, ruddy lad. "He disdained him, for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance" (1 Samuel 17:42). Some challenge! It seemed so pitiful as to insult his dignity. "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" (1 Samuel 17:43). So the kingdoms of this world will be in unbelief to suppose they could be upstaged by the motley remnant of Christ's faithful, as they appear to others. The rhetorical question of Goliath -- "Am I a dog?" -- actually does assist the identification of the symbols, for dogs are elsewhere used to represent Gentiles, and Goliath represents the Gentile kingdoms (Matthew 15:26; Luke 16:21; Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15).

He cursed David by his gods, and repaid the indignity of David's approach with his threat to "give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Samuel 17:44). But David was undaunted. No intimidation shook his frame. He boldly replied with his confidence in God: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied," and he returned the threat without hesitation. "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45,46).

He followed these confident words with quick action. "David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine" (verse 48). He removed one stone from his bag, which was sufficient for the task. The stone sunk into the exposed forehead of his enemy who fell face down upon the earth and was shortly thereafter relieved of his head by his own sword.

Goliath's taunts of 40 days had ended (1 Samuel 17:16). As so often in Scripture a period of 40 represents an age of testing and trial (see the article "Saul, Jonathan, and David" in this issue), so here the 40 days of taunting may refer to the Gospel age, during which the Gentile powers have proudly presented themselves as powerful defenders of the present order of Satan.

Goliath's Armor

The last part of the image in Daniel 2, the iron mixed with clay, represents the mixture of the political systems with the ecclesiastical power, the Church of Rome. That system is identified with the number 666 in Revelation 13:18, and Goliath's description bears similar numbers. His iron spearhead weighed 600 shekels, and his height was just over 6 cubits (1 Samuel 17:4-7). His armor was of brass, and his spear of iron, the two metals describing the nails and teeth of the Roman beast in Daniel 7:19. The weight of his coat of mail was 5,000 shekels, as though to suggest he represents the counterfeit kingdom of Christ.

In all it was a foreboding sight, and terrified the Israelites to whom he approached: "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (1 Samuel 17:24). This is compatible with the exclamation of Revelation 13:4, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" The might of the powers of Europe in league with the Papal See was an imposing sight, and appeared invincible. "Behold now behemoth ... his strength is in his loins ... His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron" (Job 40:15-18). But he that made all things "can make his sword to approach unto him" and vanquish even such enemies (verse 19).

David's Reward

In the aftermath of his victory David received the adulation of all Israel, became their champion against the Philistines, and received riches from the king. So Christ and his body members will be acclaimed the greatest heroes against the enemies of righteousness, endowed with wonderful riches in their spiritual inheritance, and receive the adulation of the world. But David's motive was not self honor. He heard the travesty of Goliath's assault upon the honor of the God of Israel, and in simple faith declared there was a God in Israel, and he would be known in a victory over this imposing enemy. So there are great things in store for the simple ones of faith who look to the Lord for victory, which comes not by pride or self-reliance, but by the strength of God on their behalf.

David knew victory would come. He did not know what he might suffer in the process, and seemed little concerned for that. He would have many occasions to suffer in the years following, but never did the God of Israel permit him to be defeated by the sword of his enemies. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked" (Psalm 91:7,8).

The Star of David and the Star of Bethlehem

I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. -- Numbers 24:17

Carl Hagensick

Distinguished by its elegant simplicity, the blue Star of David has graced the flag of Israel since the nation's birth in 1948. Far older than that, archaeologists have found first century carvings of the star in the ruins of the synagogue at Capernaum. Still more ancient findings trace the symbol back to at least the time of King Solomon. Therefore, it may well have been appropriately titled, "The Star of David."

The six-pointed star is simply formed by two intertwined triangles set in apposition to each other. It is the purpose of this article to examine the origin and possible meaning of the symbol and the role it may have played in prophecy.

Origin of the Symbol

There are many theories as to the origin of the symbol. Some trace it to Gentile origins. This seems highly unlikely in light of the antiquity of the archaeological findings. Other believe it arose from an occult symbol. This also is not credible since it is found frequently in the ruins of ancient synagogues.

The historic name of the symbol is Magen David (the Shield of David) and Solomon's Seal (supposedly the design on Solomon's signet ring). In a well researched article, "Is the Star of David Kosher?" in the magazine *Petach Tikvah* (Volume 16, Number 4), David Chaimberlin suggests that it was the first and last letters of David's name (the Hebrew character *daleth*, which in ancient Hebrew was shaped like a triangle) placed in reverse overlapping positions.

A more appealing suggestion lies in the great aim of David to rule over a united kingdom of Israel. After the death of his predecessor, Saul, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were the only ones to come under the hegemony of David. The other ten remained loyal to the house of Saul for some seven years.

It was only during the last 33 years of David's reign and the forty years of Solomon's rule that all twelve tribes were reunited, before being divided in the schism of Jeroboam shortly after the accession to the throne of Solomon's son Rehoboam. As a triangle is the architectural form for strength, so David envisioned a strong union between these two Jewish kingdoms. The intertwining of the triangles further suggests this close-knit bond. Additionally, the six-pointed star thus formed has twelve external line segments, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

The Star in Prophecy

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17).

This prophecy of Balaam has been interpreted by both Jewish and Christian scholars over the

centuries as applying to either David or Jesus, or to both. The *Targum of Onkelos* translates the whole passage thus: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but he is not near. When a king shall arise from the house of Jacob, and the Messiah be anointed from the house of Israel, he shall slay the princes of Moab, and rule over all the children of men."

The Jewish scholar Moses ben Maimon gave it a dual application. "I shall see him, but not now. This is **David**. -- I shall behold him, but not now. This is the king **Messiah**. -- A Star shall come out of Jacob. This is **David**. -- And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. This is the king **Messiah**. -- And shall smite the corners of Moab. This is **David** (as it is written, 2 Samuel 8:2: 'And he smote Moab, casting them down to the ground.') -- And shall destroy all the children of Sheth. This is the king **Messiah** (of whom it is written, Psalm 72:8, 'He shall have dominion from sea to sea')." Both the great Maimonides and Rabbi Ben Ezra agree with this interpretation.

Certainly Genesis 49:10 applies the scepter to both David and Jesus, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." This dual application seems supported also in Revelation 22:16. "I and the twelve apostles have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

All agree, however, that if there be a dual significance to the prophecy, the application to King David is only prototypical, the emphasis being on the Messiah, of whom David is but a picture.

In the second century, some sixty years after the Roman armies under Titus overthrew Jerusalem, a revolt against the Roman government in Judea was fomented under the leadership of Simon bar Kosiba. The leading rabbi of the time, Rabbi Akiba, drummed up support for the rebel leader by changing his name to Bar Cochba, "son of the star" and proclaiming him to be the Messianic fulfillment of the prophecy of Balaam.

Initially successful to the extent of driving the armies of the Roman general Hadrian completely out of Judea, Bar Cochba retreated, allowing the occupying forces to regroup, re-enter Palestine and defeat the guerrilla leader in a massive slaughter both in Jerusalem and at the Herodium fortress near Bethlehem.

The Star of Bethlehem

John Gill, in his commentary, suggests that Numbers 24:17 could be better rendered: "When a star steers its course unto Jacob, then a scepter-bearer shall rise up unto Israel." This would indicate that the star would be an index finger pointing to the prophesied owner of the scepter, the right to the government of Israel. Thus it is natural to look for an application of the Balaam prophecy to the star which guided the Magi to the manger where Jesus was born¹

As the Magi came from the East, so Balaam was a prophet who lived in Pethor, on the west bank of the Euphrates, and journeyed from the Northeast to deliver his prophecy in the plains of trans-Jordan. As the "Star of David" may well have been the coat of arms on the shields of David's forces (as the title "Magen David" or shield of David suggests), and would have marked his military coming, so the star of Bethlehem marked the coming of the greater than David.

The Magi were supposedly followers of Zarathustra (Zoroaster). Both Darius and Cyrus were thought to be Zoroastrians and thus the influence of both the prophecies of Balaam and of Daniel may have been known by these leaders. The religion arose in the city of Harat, now in Afghanistan near the Iranian border. The leader of the group bore the title of Rab-Mag, or Chief

Magi (wise man), a post filled by Daniel (Daniel 2:48) and later by Nergalsharezar in the time of Zedekiah (Jeremiah 39:13).

Noting the similarities between the star of Balaam's prophecy and the star the Magi followed, the commentator Lange writes: "The star which the wise men from the East saw and which led them to the newborn king of the Jews, clearly refers to the prophecy of Balaam. It was not the [literal] star which he foretold, which he saw, but not nigh. That star was Christ. The Star which appeared to them announced that the star which Balaam foretold had now risen out of Jacob in the birth of the king of the Jews. These Magi, like Balaam, were from the East. They were engaged in similar pursuits, devoting their lives to the study of science, men whose disposition would lead them to study eagerly the revelation made to the people of God scattered widely throughout the known world. They would naturally be drawn to the predictions of Balaam, one of their own class from their own country. God unfolded to their minds, which were already filled with a longing for the star out of Jacob foretold by Balaam, the meaning of the star which proclaimed the fulfillment of Balaam's prophecy" (*Lange's Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 143).

The Prophecy of Balaam

The prophecy of Balaam (Numbers 24:17-24) which treats first King David, and then more importantly King Jesus, gives a thumbnail sketch of Jewish history from the conquest of Canaan to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. The prophecy is easily identifiable in four sections, each opening with the expression, "and [he] took up his parable."

Section 1 -- Verses 17-19. The emphasis here appears to be mainly on King David, whose conquest of Moab is narrated in 2 Samuel 8:1, 2 and of Edom in 2 Samuel 8:14. David, in his poem celebrating this victory, seems to refer to the latter part of verse 18 when he writes in Psalm 60:12, "Through God we will do valiantly for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." The term "children of Sheth" is somewhat ambiguous, some applying it to Seth as, through Noah, being the progenitor of the human race and showing eventual Jewish dominion over the entire world. Others apply it to a Moabite king whose name has been lost, and still others to the Egyptian Pharaoh Shethi, also known as Egyptus. Verse 19 may refer to the expansionist policies of David, completed by Solomon, to bring the kingdom of Israel to the apex of its glory.

Section 2 -- Verse 20. This verse looks backward from the time of Balaam to Israel's first battle of the Exodus. This battle at Rephidim is narrated in Exodus 17. Though the victory there was great, it was only partial and Moses commanded the people to completely wipe out the Amalekites (Deuteronomy 25:19). A second failure to obey this command came in the days of King Saul (1 Samuel 15:8, 9). David further decimated their ranks (1 Samuel 27:8,9). The residue were slain in the days of Hezekiah (1 Chronicles 4:41-43).

Section 3 -- Verses 21, 22. This section covers the time period from Balaam's day forward to the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel. They appear to be identified with the Midianites since Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, is called both a Midianite and a Kenite (Exodus 3:1; Judges 1:16). From the fact that the Kenites are included in the list of tribes to be dispossessed by Israel in Genesis 15, but not in the list of those to be conquered after the crossing of Jordan, we may conclude that their homeland was east of the Jordan river. Most scholars place the main encampment of the Kenites near present day Eilat, at the north end of the Red Sea. Since the above facts are in apparent conflict with each other, it is most probable that the name was not a tribal distinction, but rather refers to their trade, the word "Kenite" meaning artisan or craftsman. Thus they would settle wherever the trade routes plied their traffic, including the main caravan routes which went through either Seir or Damascus. In the days of the divided kingdom,

they would have been active particularly in the northern kingdom. Thus, this passage ends with their being taken captive by Assyria.

Section 4 -- Verses 23, 24. Now the prophetic vision of Balaam leaps many years into the future, to a time when none who witnessed the Assyrian captivity would still be alive, to a time when the prophet asks, "Who shall live when God doeth this?" He deals with the destruction of the Assyrian empire, which became absorbed successively by the Babylonians, the Medes and the Persians. This conquest, we are told, would come at the hands of "the ships of Chittim."

Chittim (a son of Javan, associated with Greece) is positively identified in the Apocrypha. "And it happened, after that Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Chettiim, had smitten Darius king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece" (1 Maccabees 1:1). This is further confirmed in 1 Maccabees 8:5, "Besides this, how they had discomfited in battle Philip and Perseus, king of the Citims, with other that lifted up themselves against them, and had overcome them."

Thus we progress rapidly to the third of the universal empires seen in the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel (Daniel 2 and 7). These empires are further identified as being those who would "afflict Eber," the ancestor from whom the Hebrews derived their name. Jumping still farther forward, Balaam concludes that Greece (and Rome which conquered it) would also "perish forever."

This would come when the great antitypical David, the Messiah of Israel, would stand on behalf of Daniel's people, the descendants of Israel, in the end times of history (Daniel 12:1). Then the star of Balaam and the star of Bethlehem will arise as "the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings" to inaugurate his kingdom of universal peace and justice (Malachi 4:2).

1. For a comprehensive treatment of the star of Bethlehem, please see *Beauties of the Truth*, Volume 1, Number 2, December 1980.

Saul, Jonathan, and David

*The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
-- 1 Samuel 18:1*

Donald Holliday

Before Israel received its first king, the nation “did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines 40 years” (Judges 13:1). Saul, David, and Solomon were Israel’s first three kings and each of them reigned for 40 years.

That these four periods of time were the same length is significant. The number 40 in the Bible generally denotes a period of trial and testing. These four periods picture four “ages” where testing occurs:

- The 40-year Philistine oppression during the period of the judges corresponds to the first world before the flood. Man was placed on trial for life and failed the test. Satan and his allies held men in bondage and oppressed them; sin and death reigned unchallenged: “Death reigned from Adam to Moses” (Romans 5:14).
- The reign of Saul corresponds to the Jewish age, a time when Israel, God’s chosen people, were also on trial. Although Saul’s reign started well, it quickly deteriorated. God’s typical people failed their test. Instead of turning to the Lord in faith when besieged by enemies, they usually fled in fear. “When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait ... then the people did hide themselves in caves” (1 Samuel 13:6).
- The reign of David corresponds to the Gospel age, a time when God’s son and the church (spiritual Israel) are on trial. This is pictured in God’s rejection of Saul in favor of another: “Thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart” said the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 13:14) before David had even been born. The reign of Solomon corresponds to the Millennial age, a time when resurrected mankind will be on trial for life. Under the reign of The Christ -- the greater than Solomon -- the world will be taught righteousness. Those who pass the test of that age will “enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

While considerable attention is usually given to Saul and David, it is instructive to see how Saul’s son Jonathan also fits into this picture.

Saul

The Philistines had a great advantage over Israel: they possessed the secret of smelting iron. In battle an iron sword could completely sever one made of bronze. In fact only two swords existed in Israel, one possessed by Saul and the other by Jonathan (1 Samuel 13:19-22). No military victory could be obtained over the Philistines by literal sword. The Israelites had none.

When Saul was anointed king, it is said that “there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than [Saul]; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people” (1 Samuel 9:2). And in his first battle, Saul acknowledges that “today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel” (1 Samuel 11:13). The victory was the Lord’s, not Saul’s.

But we all know that this fine example of faith failed. When Goliath, a man head and shoulders over all his people, challenged Israel to choose a man to wage a personal fight with him, he clearly expected this man to be Saul. But Saul knew the spirit of the Lord had departed from him and he had no desire to die at the hand of Goliath.

The people and their first king had missed the point of all those distressing years of the judges. They had only to turn to the Lord with their whole heart and he would deliver them. Again and again he heard their cry and he found someone to lead them to victory in his might. It was, for example, “the sword of the LORD, and of Gideon” (Judges 7:18).

We read that the Lord left certain enemies in the land to “prove Israel, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses” (Judges 3:4). But Israel “did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the LORD their God” (verse 7).

Jonathan

Jonathan was very different from his father. In every experience Jonathan displays a sterling character. If Saul does nothing because he’s lost his faith, Jonathan always steps out in full assurance that the Lord will bless him. At a time when Saul had reigned just two years we find him with 2,000 chosen men and Jonathan with 1,000. Yet it was Jonathan who smote the garrison of the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:3). In reaction to this provocation, the Philistines came up against these 3,000 men of Israel with 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore (verse 5). The people fled.

Saul had lost his faith. In the next chapter where Saul rests under a pomegranate tree, Jonathan and his armor bearer take on the Philistines. This was not foolishness; it was faith: “Let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us, for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few” (1 Samuel 14:6).

The odds were impossible from the standpoint of human reckoning, but human reckoning takes no notice of the Lord and his might. In fact with the Lord on Jonathan’s side the odds were now heavily against the Philistines. Just two men, and faith, and the Lord, and “there was trembling in the host in the field, and among all the people, the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked” (1 Samuel 14:15). The result was that the Philistines killed each other.

Many years later, at the end of his 40-year reign, Saul died battling these same Philistines. He had achieved absolutely nothing by his reign. He left the land as he had found it, still under the oppressive hand of a great foe.

This was exactly the story of the Jewish age, the age of the Law. Sin and death continued to reign and to oppress mankind. In the battle that claimed Saul’s life, Jonathan, still by his father’s side, also died. But he left behind those wonderful memorials to the power and victory of faith which were made so much grander when contrasted to the failure of the power of the flesh.

David

David was thirty years old when he began to reign (2 Samuel 5:4). This means he had not yet been born when Saul began his reign. It also means that Jonathan was **much** older than David since we find Jonathan commanding men at Saul’s right hand at the beginning of his reign and having one of only two swords in all Israel. Samuel’s prophetic statement that God wanted

someone after his own heart concerned not faithful Jonathan, who was already on the scene, but someone who had not yet been born. And Jonathan said to David, “The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever” (1 Samuel 20:42). When Goliath challenged Israel and that nation’s tallest man cowered in fear, it was little David who said, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Samuel 17:26).

Eliab, David’s oldest brother, was annoyed by this display of simple faith. To Eliab, David was obviously blind to the realities of the situation. But David was showing a simple trust in the Lord’s ability to do the impossible wherever and whenever He wished. We all know what happened. David’s pebble from the brook found its mark just as individual promises of God personally selected from the brook of living water stand ready for our times of need when Satan assails. We remember how the Lord Jesus in the wilderness of temptation, when confronted by the adversary’s challenge, placed the pebble in the sling of faith and hurled it with the force of total conviction: “It is written” (Matthew 4:4,7,10). A “thus saith the Lord” is more than enough.

Jonathan undoubtedly saw everything that happened between David and Goliath on that fateful day and how it must have warmed his heart! This little lad shared the same faith, was equally convinced that the fierceness of the opposition meant nothing when you had the power of the Lord God on your side. David had the same zeal, the same attitude, the same total trust in God. Jonathan himself would undoubtedly have gone up against Goliath if not prevented by his father Saul.

When we see the animosity Saul expressed toward David, we are reminded of the hatred the leaders of the Jewish age had toward the antitypical David. Those of natural Israel in the time of our Lord were not men of faith. They were proud of their own ability, proud of their meticulous care in keeping the rituals of the Law. When confronted with one after God’s own heart, they eventually killed him.

But the “soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Samuel 18:1). What beautiful words, for the faith of Jonathan illustrates for us the faith of all those worthy ones of old who “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness ... waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11:33,34). There were, of course, occasions when Saul’s anger was directed at Jonathan to the point where he tried to kill him (1 Samuel 20:30-33).

Jonathan, a much older man than David, was embraced in a loving union with the much younger man. Jonathan recognized that it was young David that God had favored. Though Jonathan would be the natural successor to his father, he recognized in the young man the choice of the Lord and that he would be the next king, not himself. So he did a remarkable thing: he stripped himself of his robe, his garments, his bow, and belt and placed them upon David (1 Samuel 18:4). It was the highest honor he could bestow upon David.

Clothing possesses something of a wearer’s personality, so in giving clothing the wearer gives himself symbolically to the other. To receive any part of the dress that had been worn by a sovereign or his son and heir was deemed the highest honor that could be bestowed upon a subject. This is nicely illustrated in Esther 6:8,9, when the king’s apparel was to be placed upon the man that the king delighted to honor.

So full was the heart of Jonathan with the one desire to honor and acknowledge the will of God that he at once bowed to this choice of the Lord. If this was the Lord’s choice, then it was Jonathan’s choice too. What a wonderful attitude. Would we have been as ready to stand back for

others to take high privilege? Most assuredly yes, if we have the right heart attitude.

Beautifully expressed was the Jonathan spirit in John the Baptist, greatest of the worthies of old: "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28-30). Simeon too, in the temple: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:29,30).

David refused to wear Saul's armor in the face of Goliath. It did not fit him. It was the armor of the works of the flesh and would have weighed him down, inhibited him, rather than helped him in any way. That is also what the flesh does to us. It weighs us down and limits us. But David accepted Jonathan's robe of faith. Jonathan gave all that he possessed, but David had nothing to give in return except his esteem and love (1 Samuel 20:17). The Ancient Worthies have left us their lives as an example and encouragement. For these gifts we can make no return except to wear worthily these garments of courage and trust in the service of God.

Jonathan also gave David his sword, that precious sword symbolizing the spirit of the promises of the word of God. It was not a gift for the faint-hearted. Saul had a similar sword but forgot that it must be grasped with faith. Jonathan demonstrated just what that sword could do in the hands of one who trusts in the Lord's power. The Lord may use thousands or he may use just one to achieve his victories. He is not limited by the power of the flesh.

We, brethren, now have the sword of Jonathan, and his bow, and his girdle. Why are they entrusted to us? Because the Lord sees that we have the ability to take him at his word and to go forth in the certain knowledge that he that is for us is far greater than all those that be arrayed against us. In trusting hands these are the most devastating weapons this earth has ever known. And God has put them into our hands so that they may be used in the continual battle with the enemies of the soul.

"And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul" (2 Samuel 22:1). If we are properly exercised, at the end of our course we shall be able, like David, to sing this song of victory given to us by the Lord.

Nine Men in the Life of Bathsheba

Lessons from the Great and the Small

*Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? --
2 Samuel 11:3*

Lives are often defined by those with whom we come in contact. Bathsheba is a good example. There is little we know of her life and character from the Scriptural account. We have no direct information concerning her character, either for good or for bad. She only figures directly in four incidents in the Bible: her illegitimate liaison with King David (2 Samuel 11), her reaction to the death of her firstborn (2 Samuel 12), her plea for the kingship for her son Solomon (2 Kings 1), and her intercession on behalf of Adonijah in the matter of Abishag (2 Kings 2).

However, we do know a certain amount about her family. The small cameo roles they play in the Bible help us flesh out a more accurate picture of Bathsheba herself. She came from one of the most prominent families in Israel. Both her father and first husband were in the elite palace guard and her grandfather served as the chief political adviser to King David. In this study we touch briefly on nine men whose lives impacted Bathsheba's.

Eliam, Her Father

The father of Bathsheba was Eliam (2 Samuel 11:3), also known as Ammiel (1 Chronicles 3:5). He was ranked as one of the thirty-seven "mighty men of David" (2 Samuel 23:34) and thus would have been a frequent guest at the palace. Other than this we know little of him, except for the fact that he had a daughter and gave her a name.

It is worthy of note that she was not known as Bathsheba when she was born. Her birth name was Bathshua (1 Chronicles 3:5). It was not unusual among the Israelites to have a name change. Frequently this was done at the ceremony we know as Bar-Mitzvah or Bat-Mitzvah at about the age of twelve. The first name reflected the feelings of the parents at the time of her birth, while the second reflected her own character and, in particular, her relationship to the law.

Her birth name, Bathshua, means "daughter of my prosperity" (compare Strong's #1340 and #7771). The name by which we know her, Bathsheba, signifies "daughter of an oath" (Strong's #1339) and is often used of the oath-bound covenant made with Abraham.

In this transition of names we note a progress in her father's appreciation of her. Though he first names her in honor of his own prominent and prosperous position in the kingdom of David, his values later change and he honors her by calling her the "daughter of the oath" or "daughter of the oath-bound covenant." It is a lesson for each of us to apprise spiritual growth as superior to material prosperity at all times.

Ahithophel, Her Grandfather

Ahithophel was the chief counselor of David and ranked even above the priests Abiathar and Jehoiada (1 Chronicles 27:33,34). So wise were his counsels that it was said of him, it “was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom” (2 Samuel 16:23).

When Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel switched sides and became Absalom’s counselor. He gave two pieces of strategic advice to Absalom. The first was to publicly take possession of the king’s harem, thus showing himself to be mightier than the king (2 Samuel 16:21,22). His second advice was to immediately pursue David and kill him while he was in flight from Absalom in disarray (2 Samuel 17:1,2). David was able to thwart this advice by having his trusted confidante, Hushai, pretend to be a traitor and warn Absalom that David was lying in wait to ambush Absalom’s troops. When Absalom followed the advice of Hushai rather than Ahithophel, the latter went to his home town of Giloh and hung himself. David speaks of the remorse he had for Ahithophel’s treason in moving expressions in Psalm 55:12-14.

Though we cannot know the motivation for Ahithophel’s counsel to take the harem of David, one possible motive is obvious. As the patriarch of Bathsheba’s family he must have felt shamed and betrayed by David when the king took his granddaughter, another man’s wife, and had her husband killed in battle. He may have even felt justified in his advice in light of Nathan’s prophecy that this would happen (2 Samuel 12:11). Revenge may have been at least part of his motivation. This, too, provides a powerful lesson for us today -- “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord” (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30).

Machir, Her Brother

Machir plays two bit roles in the saga of David. In the bitter squabbling after King Saul’s death many men made the mistake of trying to win the king’s favor by proclaiming themselves enemies of Saul and his house. In exasperation, David finally asked, “Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I might show the kindness of God unto him?” (2 Samuel 9:3). He is informed that the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth, a cripple, is still living. “Where is he?” asked David. “He is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar” (verse 4). It must have taken great courage for Machir to befriend a potential heir of the throne at that particular point of time.

The next incident is in connection with the rebellion of Absalom. His grandfather, Ahithophel, had correctly assayed the situation when he said that David was fleeing in disarray. The king had been thoroughly humiliated and had to go across the Jordan, to the mountain fortress of Mahanaim. He knew he would have to regroup there but was without supplies to arm, garrison, and feed his men. How it must have delighted the discouraged king’s heart to see an entire caravan of supplies already being delivered from Amman through the intervention of Machir (2 Samuel 17:27-29).

Even though his father had switched allegiance to Absalom, Machir would remain loyal to the king, even as he remained loyal to the house of Jonathan when others in Israel were distancing themselves from the house of Saul. Machir, like Barnabas in the New Testament, would always be the friend of the friendless, supporting the cause of the unpopular. Paul summarizes the lesson for us in Hebrews 10:32, 33, “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”

Uriah, Her First Husband

It is hard to imagine a more noble and loyal character than that of Uriah. Although a Hittite by nationality, he was obviously at least a second generation Jew by religion for his name contains the *iah* suffix for Jehovah and means the flame [or light] of Jehovah. Five other Israelites in the Bible bear the same name. Like his father-in-law, he was one of David's "mighty men" (2 Samuel 23:39), a list so exclusive that it does not even include the name of Joab, the general of David's forces and Uriah's commander in battle.

His loyalty was not only to his king and the nation but he showed a fierce personal loyalty to Joab (2 Samuel 11:11). How ironic it is that Joab is the one who is shortly commissioned to arrange for the death of Uriah (verses 14, 15).

The lesson Uriah brings to us is again one of priorities, placing the work of God ahead of personal pleasure, even the legitimate joys of life. The singleness of purpose and zeal for the Lord's cause which Uriah showed are seldom found, either in his day or ours.

David, Her Second Husband

David was "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 13:14) yet in this one incident he breaks over half of the ten commandments. This becomes the only liability charged against him at his death (1 Kings 15:5).

The account of the sin poses a few interesting questions. Since she was the granddaughter of his closest adviser, the daughter of one top soldier and the wife of another, why did he need to inquire who she was? The answer probably includes at least three ingredients: 1) the instance takes place "in an eveningtide" when daylight was departing and he could see only a vague picture; 2) although he may have known her personally he would have only seen her covered with the traditional vail and loose clothing which would not have revealed her beauty; and 3) there was some distance, both vertically and horizontally, separating the king's palace from surrounding homes.

Would he not have recognized the name of Uriah, when given, as a trusted soldier? Undoubtedly yes! It had become customary, however, for kings to have their own way and exclude themselves from the law. Evidently David was becoming accustomed to the perks of his office and had begun multiplying his wives and concubines (2 Samuel 5:13). This is also suggested by two parts of the narrative of his sin with Bathsheba. 2 Samuel 11:1 says at the time "when kings went out to battle ... David tarried at Jerusalem." We find him here rising from his bed "at eventide," a time when others are only beginning to think about retiring to their beds, suggesting he had spent some time in the afternoon at ease. These all suggest a natural moral laxity that comes with prosperity.

Why was Bathsheba bathing so publicly? She probably did not consider it public. The middle eastern houses had roofs with walls that came to about waist height. David could view her because the height of the king's house was so much greater that the shallow walls did not protect her from his view. The bathing was probably not the usual bath for cleanliness, but a ritual bath connected with the uncleanness that was upon a woman for seven days after her menstrual period (Leviticus 15:25-33). This is suggested in verse four of the narrative where that point is probably mentioned to further prove she had not become impregnated by Uriah or anyone else.

The account does not indicate her reaction to his proposal. She is not painted as seductive or

aggressive, although she may have been a willing participant, perhaps considering it her obligation to a king who could demand concubines at will. Despite the heinousness of the sin, Bathsheba not only became a wife (rather than a concubine), but the favored of all his wives.

Nathan, Her Accuser

The twelfth chapter of second Samuel delineates Nathan's confrontation with David concerning his crime. The story of the ewe lamb was an ideal tool for inducing David to judge himself. The effect produced complete repentance as is beautifully shown in the 51st Psalm which David wrote to show his heart's feelings. There is no reason to suppose Bathsheba felt differently.

Nathan was a common Hebrew name (meaning gift), so he may be different than "Nathan of Zobah," father of another of David's top soldiers, Igal (2 Samuel 23:36). It is also uncertain whether he was the brother of a later captain in David's forces, Joel (1 Chronicles 11:38). Possibly he was the father of two of Solomon's chieftans, Azariah and Zabud (1 Kings 4:5) though it is more likely they were children of Solomon's brother Nathan.

Although in this story Nathan is a messenger of gloom to David and Bathsheba, he remains a trusted adviser to both of them. By his intervention Solomon acceded to the throne at David's death instead of Adonijah (1 Kings 1:11). It is noteworthy that he addressed Bathsheba on this matter first, before going directly to David. Perhaps for this reason Brother Russell suggests Bathsheba had chosen Nathan to be the tutor of Solomon (*Reprints*, pp. 5701 and 4286).

In any event, we see in Nathan a faithful prophet, biased neither for or against the one to whom he is sent, but totally concerned with conveying the message of Jehovah.

Her First Son

The child which David sired in sin was born with an incurable disease. (The word translated "very sick" in 2 Samuel 12:15 is translated "incurable" in five of its nine usages in the Old Testament.) David fasted and prayed for the life of the child. When he died at the age of seven days, David immediately laid aside the garments of repentance and mourning and broke his fast. This change of manner is noted in 2 Samuel 12:20, "Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat."

Notice that he not only changed his appearance, but that he went into the house of the Lord and "worshipped." Rather than accusing God of taking the life of his son, or being bitter for the punishment, he accepted the discipline of the Lord. There is no reason to think Bathsheba felt differently.

Solomon, Her Second Son

Like Bathsheba herself, her second son was given two names. In his case, however, both were given at birth -- one by David (notice the masculine pronoun in 2 Samuel 12:24) and the other by Nathan. Nathan named him Jedidiah, meaning "beloved of Jehovah," though some commentators take it as "pardoned by Jehovah" (2 Samuel 12:25). David named him Solomon (verse 24), meaning "peaceful." The two names taken together present a beautiful thought -- "I have peace because I am still beloved and have received pardon for my sins."

We know little of Bathsheba the mother. She may have delegated much of his education to Nathan the prophet. We do know of her desire for him to accede to the throne from the account in 1 Kings, chapter one.

The last chapter of the book of Proverbs is attributed to a king named Lemuel. Though some take him to be an unknown monarch of a nearby country, most commentators agree with the ancient Jewish rabbis in identifying the name Lemuel (along with the Agur of chapter 30) as pen names for Solomon. If so, the first verse of that chapter is worthy of note: “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.”

This would ascribe the entire chapter of this prophecy to Bathsheba and an analysis of the chapter seems to confirm this view. As a mother, one desirous of his exaltation, she would know her son better than anyone else. In this prophecy she zeroes in on Solomon’s two greatest weaknesses: wine and women. In verses four through seven she admonishes him that “it is not for kings to drink wine.” The remainder of the chapter gives a job description of the kind of wife she would desire for Solomon. The indication is of a mother’s intense care for her child and a keen eye for his weaknesses which need attention.

Nathan, Her Third Son

Nathan is the first child Bathsheba could name. Her first child died before a name was given and the second was named successively by David and Nathan the prophet. The name she chose gives an insight into her character. Very likely it was in honor of her friend and counselor, Nathan the prophet. Yet this was the very man who had pronounced the death sentence of God on her firstborn.

How few would have the moral fortitude both to accept such a harsh pronouncement and to honor the one delivering it by naming the first child they are privileged to name with his name. Would that we could each value our critics so dearly as to appreciate the words they speak even when, perhaps specially when, they are contrary to our actions and reproofs of them!

God’s forgiveness of the sin of David and Bathsheba is further highlighted by the fact that both the mother and step-father of Jesus come from their lineage. Joseph is a descendant of Solomon (Matthew 1:6, 16) and Nathan is an ancestor of Mary (Luke 3:31).

Summary

Thus, though we know little of Bathsheba directly, from the men surrounding her we get a view of a faithful woman of Israel who is unfortunately known mostly by her one sinful act. We begin to view her as a woman of prominence, a faithful mother, a humble penitent, a wise prophetess, and a favored wife of the “man after God’s own heart.”

The Revolt of Absalom **Pictures a Revolt Against Jesus**

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! -- 2 Samuel 18:33

David Rice

The tears of David over his beloved but rebellious Absalom in the aftermath of his tragedy remind us of the tears Jesus' shed over his beloved but wayward Israel in prospect of the approaching tragedy. "When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

The revolt of Absalom against David was a revolt against the divinely appointed king. We believe this had typical meaning respecting Christ, who was divinely invested with royal authority at his resurrection. After Christ had been victoriously seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3), and Christ's power and authority as the Jewish messiah was taking root among the faithful, another element in Judaism refused to appreciate the new rulership and revolted against it. They endeavored to reestablish the independence of Israel under a different authority, and revolted from the Roman yoke.

This revolt opened in the year 66 A.D., and though remnants held out until the fall of Masada in 73 A.D., the strength of the revolt was broken when Rome took Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and burned the sacred temple. However, this revolt appeared successful in the early stages, as victories by the rebels overcame the Roman legions. Similarly the revolt of Absalom was initially victorious, but gradually succumbed.

Absalom's demise came as he fled on an ass, but his thick, abundant hair, caught in the branches of an oak tree where he was held fast, made him easy prey for Joab. Hair in the Scriptures - frequently represents religious devotion, as for example the uncut hair was an emblem of the Nazarite vows. Probably in the case of Absalom the symbol refers to Israel's adherence to the formalities and "rudiments" of the Mosaic Law, while missing the point and purpose of the Law, which was to lead them to Christ.

Centuries earlier when Jacob was returning to Canaan, he obliged his party to fidelity to God at an oak tree in Shechem (Genesis 35:4). This was the same location Joshua used to affirm Israel's loyalty to the Mosaic Law after he brought the Israelites into the promised land. "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak" (Joshua 24:25,26). Thus the oak tree is associated with Israel's attachment to the law. Probably Absalom's entrapment in an oak tree symbolizes this attachment to the letter of the law, which blinded them to the weightier matters of the spirit of the law.

Their table of blessing, which was intended as a wonderful advantage, became to them "a snare, and a trap, and stumblingblock" (Romans 11:9). It held them fast in their traditions, and proved

their undoing. Rather than secure its blessing by receiving the divinely appointed leader the law predicted, they held fast the Mosaic ordinances while rejecting the “greater than Moses” who offered release from their burdens.

Absalom was a wonderfully handsome man, as his sibling sister Tamar was a lovely woman (2 Samuel 13:1). “In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year’s end that he polled it ...), he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king’s weight” (2 Samuel 14:25,26). So the natural Israelites saw great beauty in the prospect urged by the rebels to restore the former independence and ancient glory of Israel. However, they had overlooked the true loveliness of spirit manifested in our Lord. According to their expectations, “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). They were instead unduly attracted to earthly charms of old national aspirations.

As King David triumphed over Absalom’s rebellion, so King Jesus triumphed over Israel’s rebellion. Christianity would flourish, but the Jewish leaders, as they feared, would lose “both our place and nation” (John 11:48). Jesus had warned his disciples that the few years of their ministry to Israel would scarce suffice before he and his power came against the nation who opposed the new king: “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” (Matthew 10:23).

Barzillai

One of the men who assisted David’s cause was Barzillai, an elderly man of substance who lived in Gilead, east of the Jordan River. The account is found in 2 Samuel 19:31-40. Barzillai had given supplies and encouragement to David’s men, and as a reward David offered to bring him back to Jerusalem with the royal entourage where he would be fed and housed by the king. Barzillai appreciated the offer but urged that he was now very old and elected to live his few remaining years in his familiar heritage. He gave his age as “fourscore” -- 80 years old.

Probably Barzillai represents those of faith who assisted the new cause, but who did not themselves join the new King Jesus in all the benefits he offered because they belonged to the age past and its prospects, and had earthly hopes. Like Simeon in the temple, they appreciated the advent of the new king. But their reward will be in the earthly resurrection, and they will serve the new king not in Heavenly Jerusalem but in the kingdom on earth. Not receiving the atonement as body members of Christ, they did not relocate across the Jordan, passing from the Adamic condemnation to a new abode in Christ. They remained east of the Jordan, and will have a grand role to play as agents of the king in the earthly realm.

His age, 80, is consistent with this picture. Eight, the base of this number, is elsewhere associated with the Ancient Worthies, an earthly class who come into their reward during the Millennial Kingdom which follows the seven stages of the Church. Thus Micah 5:5 speaks of the saints as seven kings (the idiom is shepherds, rulers) and the ancient worthies as eight princes.

But though Barzillai deferred the honors of the king for himself -- “How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?” (2 Samuel 19:34) -- he was solicitous for his younger associate Chimham. “But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee” (2 Samuel 19:37,38). So those who shared the faith of

the Ancient Worthies, but lived beyond them into the opportunities of the Gospel age, were received with full favor by the new king.

“Chimham,” Strong’s #SH3643, is derived from #SH3642 which is translated “long,” as to long or pine for something. It is a fitting name for those of faith who longed for the appearance of the seed of blessing and the fruition of the promises fulfilled in him. “Barzillai,” Strong’s #SH1271, means “iron hearted,” suggesting the stout faithfulness of the ancient worthies.

Mephibosheth

Another player in this drama is a man named Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, David’s dear friend and companion. For the sake of his affection for Jonathan, King David wished to show kindness to Mephibosheth. Just as in the pair discussed above, Barzillai and Chimham, probably Jonathan and Mephibosheth also represent, respectively, the ancient worthies and the members of Christ. (Respecting Jonathan as a figure of the ancient worthies, see this issue’s companion article “Saul, Jonathan, and David.”)

When Mephibosheth was five years of age he was dropped by his nurse and incurred a lasting lameness, but was nevertheless adopted in King David’s household and nourished at the king’s table (2 Samuel 4:4, 9:7). “As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king’s sons” (2 Samuel 9:11). As the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth represented those accepted by Christ out of a Jewish heritage, and the lameness of this young adherent probably represents the lameness of many of the early Jewish Christians whose attraction to the law limited their full mobility in the “liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Galatians 5:1).

Mephibosheth is pointed out to David by Saul’s servant Ziba, who says he lived in Lodebar, from where David sent to fetch him (2 Samuel 9:4,5). Of Lodebar, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* says “(without pasture), a place named with Mahanaim, Rogelim and other transjordanic towns (2 Samuel 17:27) and therefore no doubt on the east side of the Jordan.” Thus Mephibosheth, whose heritage was with Saul and Jonathan, came from the east of Jordan where Barzillai lived. They - represent classes drawn from the same background.

Mephibosheth pledged his fealty to David (2 Samuel 9:6), which is consistent with him representing a class from the Jewish heritage which pledged its loyalty to Messiah, Jesus. However, as the narrative unfolds there is occasion for some concern about his fidelity to the king’s cause during the revolt of Absalom. Just so, many of the Christians drawn from a Jewish background may have had pulls of affection for the Jewish system revolting against Rome. These needed Christ’s words of warning, reminding them of Lot and Lot’s wife who had attachments to Sodom, as some of the Jews would have attachments to Jerusalem. “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed ... Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:29-32).

Ziba, the Servant

The charge against Mephibosheth came from Ziba, who had been a servant of Saul, and who continued in the service of the house of Mephibosheth. “All that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth” (2 Samuel 9:12). Probably Ziba represents Gentile believers who had held an inferior position to the Israelites as regards their spiritual privileges. Ziba was a good man and was loyal to David. But during the rebellion of Absalom he had occasion to wonder about the integrity of his master Mephibosheth.

During the rebellion Ziba had nourished David's men. "Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him [David], with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine" (2 Samuel 16:1). These supplies represent the spiritual nourishment for David's band, who represent spiritual Christians. They were for "the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink" (2 Samuel 16:2).

The bread and vine products are easy to identify with the memorial emblems, and the summer (harvest) fruits probably identify with the new doctrines of the gospel which then nourished the saints. Ziba evidently represents Gentile believers, fervent in support of their new king Jesus. Many of them first approached God through association with the hopes of Israel, even though at the time they held inferior privileges and rights, much as the Syrophenician woman who recognized she did not share the rights of the "children," Israel (Mark 7:28).

So there was Ziba in the hour of need, but where was Mephibosheth? "And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father" (2 Samuel 16:3). Probably this expresses the concern Gentile Christians had for some of their Jewish brethren -- would they join the nationalists rebelling against Rome?

In response, "Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king" (2 Samuel 16:4). In other words, Ziba received the blessings assigned to Mephibosheth, just as the Gentiles received the blessings assigned by heritage to the Israelites.

However, the concerns about Mephibosheth proved exaggerated as David, and presumably Ziba, later recognized. When Mephibosheth met David in the aftermath, he had "neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace" (2 Samuel 19:24) -- a testimony that his sympathies were with David.

"And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?" (verse 25). It was a reasonable question. Mephibosheth explained that Ziba had not spoken correctly about him, and though the intent of his reply is a little confusing, evidently his lameness prevented him from fully expressing his loyalty as he wished (verses 26, 27). He submitted himself to whatever judgment King David would render in the case. David had already given Ziba Mephibosheth's heritage, but in light of these developments he modified his judgment, and said "thou and Ziba divide the land" (verse 29). Just so, the Jewish and Gentile brethren became joint-heirs of a rich inheritance in Christ. Ziba was no more merely a servant, and Mephibosheth did not lose his privileges.

Sheba, the Benjamite

When David returned with his brethren of the Tribe of Judah, representatives of ten other tribes asserted they had equal rights to the king as part of Israel and a contention grew up between the contingents. It resulted in a cleavage, with Sheba, of Benjamin (the tribe of former king Saul), rising to lead ten tribes in revolt. David recognized that this was potentially a greater threat to the kingdom than Absalom's revolt had been (2 Samuel 19:41 to 20:22).

If Absalom's revolt pictured the zealots' revolt to establish the old Jewish state in 66-70 A.D., this second rebellion, to reestablish the old Benjamite authority, evidently represents a second effort to restore the Kingdom of Israel. This would fit the rebellion led by the false messiah Bar-

Kochba.

This revolt was even stronger than the first. Nevertheless, it proved abortive with its collapse in 135 A.D., just 65 years after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Isaiah 7:8 contains a prophecy of a 65-year period in which “Ephraim” -- ancient head of the ten tribes -- “shall ... be broken, that it be not a people.” By 135 A.D. the former nation of Israel had been broken and scattered.

The name of this putative leader, “Sheba the son of Bichri” (2 Samuel 20:7), speaks of the heritage of Israel which led them to this time of decision and crisis. Sheba, Strong’s #7652, means “seven,” and by extension, as reflected in the related word Shaba, Strong’s #7650, an oath or covenant. “To seven oneself, i.e., swear (as if by repeating a declaration seven times): -- adjure, charge (by an oath, with an oath) ... take an oath.”

Bichri, Strong’s #SH1075, means youthful in the sense of a fresh birth. It is derived from Strong’s #SH1069, “to burst the womb, i.e., ... bear or make early fruit ... to give the birthright.” Thus “Sheba the son of Bichri” speaks of Israel, God’s covenant people, who at the first advent were ready to “come to birth,” if only they would, and receive the birthright promised so long ago to their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But the prophet Hosea predicted centuries earlier that at this moment of decision the matter would not go well for Israel. “The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children (Hosea 13:13).” The young nation would not cooperate with God’s program and the result would be a still born child. In further metaphors, “an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels ... she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces” (verses 15,16).

David’s Conciliatory Posture

In the aftermath of Absalom’s revolt David took a conciliatory posture toward the military leader of the revolt. He was a man named Amasa. “And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man’s son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruah Joab’s mother” (2 Samuel 17:25). Many of the prominent players in the drama were intertwined in family relationships, just as all the Jewish players were interrelated in the Jewish age harvest, coming from the same “household” of Jewish faith.

David was eager for a healing to the breach in the nation and generously offered Amasa the chief position in his own forces. He urged Amasa to accept this wonderfully generous offer by appealing to his familial relationship. “Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh?” (2 Samuel 19:13).

Similarly, those who survived the Jewish revolt climaxing in 70 A.D., if they were contrite, chastened by the experience and recognized the power of the new king (Matthew 26:64), could still embrace Christ and receive positions of honor and dignity in the high calling. Christ would still respect their heritage in the Law of Moses and make them instruments of praise if they would commit to his service.

Amasa complied: “And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants” (2 Samuel 19:14).

However, Amasa subsequently wavered, and lost his privileges. He was given the opportunity of showing his loyalty by resisting the ensuing rebellion of Sheba but deferred to exercise prompt obedience and subsequently lost his life (2 Samuel 20:4-12).

The rebellion of Sheba came to an end at the town of Abel (2 Samuel 20:15). Is there a connection here to the retribution upon Israel for the "blood of Abel" -- a figure of Christ -- which cried "from the ground" for satisfaction? (Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 11:4; 12:24).

The lesson of Amasa, a leader in Israel, was reflected also in the more lowly Shimei, the Benjamite who had cursed David during Absalom's rebellion. He was generously forgiven when David returned in triumph, but through subsequent infidelity he lost his life also (2 Samuel 16:5-13, 19:16-23; 1 Kings 2:38-46).

Hosea's Lovely Prospects

But the mercy of the new king is unbounded. As Joseph forgave his brothers, so Christ will forgive Israel and the people will turn to him with full devotion. Gone will be the opportunity of heavenly glory, but they will yet be used by Jesus to spread the kingdom worldwide.

"O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity ... say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips ... for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy" (Hosea 14:1-3).

Then, God promises, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon" (Hosea 14:4-7).

Nathan the Prophet **A Trusted Advisor**

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. -- Psalm 51:1, superscription

Michael Nekora

There are five Nathans in the Old Testament. One was a prophet who counseled both King David and King Solomon. He is frequently identified as Nathan the prophet -- the Hebrew word means inspired man -- perhaps to distinguish him from Nathan the son of David. It is possible David named one of his sons Nathan because of the esteem he had for this outstanding man of God.

We are told that the "first and last" acts of David are written in the book of Nathan the prophet (1 Chronicles 29:29) and that the "first and last" acts of Solomon are written in the book of Nathan the prophet (2 Chronicles 9:29). If this last statement is literally true, Nathan must have lived long into the reign of Solomon which would imply that he was considerably younger than David. Although our Bible does not contain a "book of Nathan," some of what we have in Kings and Chronicles might well have come from him.

At about the mid-point of his reign the Scriptures say David is at rest. He thinks about where he's living and where the Lord is "living": "The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee" (2 Samuel 7:2,3). Without instruction to the contrary, any prophet of the Lord would support such a desire to honor God. But Nathan's enthusiasm was premature. That night the Lord told Nathan to tell the king he would not be permitted to build the house of God. That would be a project for his son who would inherit the throne after him, though at that time no one knew that son had not yet been born (2 Samuel 7:12,13).

It seems a bit strange to be told David was at rest because the next several chapters describe wars Israel fought against various enemies of the nation. Israel won all of these wars. However, David did not lead the army himself; he delegated that job to his general Joab. He stayed in Jerusalem and allowed his mind to wander: "David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon" (2 Samuel 11:1,2).

Bathsheba

Bathsheba's husband was fighting in Israel's army; she was home alone. David is attracted to her and soon Bathsheba is pregnant by David. Acts have consequences, and the consequences of David's terrible lapse in judgment were just beginning. Of course the palace staff knew what was happening. The account says David "sent and enquired after the woman" and that he "sent messengers and took her." Yet he, like countless powerful people before and since, thinks any problem can be covered up. He summons Uriah, Bath-sheba's husband, from battle and urges him to spend the night with his wife. Uriah refuses out of respect for his comrades still fighting on the battlefield. David becomes desperate. He throws a party for Uriah and gets him drunk. Still Uriah refuses to go to his own home and his wife.

What began as a terrible lapse in judgment progresses to an absolutely inconceivable level of evil. David decides Uriah must die. He asks Uriah to carry a sealed message to Joab. The message is brief: "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die" (2 Samuel 11:15). Joab does so and Uriah dies. After a suitable period of mourning for her husband, Bathsheba becomes David's wife.

Those around David say nothing. What could they say? He is blind in his need to satisfy his own desires no matter what the cost might be to others. He is the king, and kings generally do not limit themselves. If anyone around David were to say something critical, it would probably not do anything except bring one's palace career to an end.

Prophets don't worry about their careers. God sends Nathan to David to bring him to his senses. Nathan knows a frontal attack will not work because David is in full denial of any wrongdoing on his part. So Nathan begins by telling a story to the unsuspecting king. The story describes a rich man with many flocks and herds who takes a poor man's only ewe lamb and kills it to feed a visitor. What does David think about that? "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity" (2 Samuel 12:5,6). We can only imagine the thunderclap of shock that hit David when Nathan pointed at him and said, "Thou art the man!" Judgment has come from David's own mouth: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

The law required a life for a life (Exodus 21:23). David may at that moment even think he is going to die, probably on the spot. But he immediately confesses his guilt, seeing for the first time the enormous consequences of what he has done: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Samuel 12:13,14). The life-for-a-life principle was invoked, but it was not David's life that was taken but that of the unborn child within Bathsheba.

We can commend David's quickness to confess his sin and seek forgiveness. But acts always have consequences. Whether we do wrong blindly or deliberately, eventually there is a price to be paid. David was no exception. Although God did not take David's life, there were many consequences he personally suffered because of his terrible acts:

1. *You will never live in peace* (2 Samuel 12:10). David had nothing but trouble from that moment until he died. Bathsheba's grandfather, Ahithophel, one of David's trusted counselors, later worked against him and even told Absalom he would kill David for him (2 Samuel 17:2).
2. *Evil will come out of your own house* (verse 11). In chapter 13 one of David's sons rapes one of his daughters; then the daughter's full brother murders the rapist who is his half-brother. As with David's own sin, sexual immorality is again followed by murder, but this time in David's own house.
3. *Your wives will be defiled openly* (verse 11). In 2 Samuel 16:22 his concubines were defiled by his son Absalom as a show of power in front of all Israel.
4. *Bathsheba's child shall die* (verse 14). It did.

There are people who sow wild oats and who, after sowing them, seem surprised when they get a crop of wild oats. Lie and you will be lied to. Show no respect for others and others will show no respect for you. God does not insulate us from the consequences of our acts. If he did, we would learn nothing from them.

Psalm 51

David is called the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1). The Hebrew word rendered psalmist means “a song to be accompanied with instrumental music” (Strong’s Concordance). In other places this Hebrew word is rendered as songs or singing. David was a musician and was originally brought to the court of Saul because he was a “cunning” player of the harp (1 Samuel 16:16). Fifty-four of the 150 psalms are identified in the superscriptions as psalms of David. We are not sure how trustworthy these superscriptions are, though they are known to be quite old. In the English Bible they appear in fine print much like an editorial comment, but in the French Bible they are given verse numbers of their own like holy writ. This provides an extra challenge to translators if psalm verse numbers must be accurately translated between English and French.

We do know David wrote many of the psalms. Jesus identified him as the author of Psalm 110 when he said, “David himself saith in the book of Psalms ...” (Luke 20:42). In 2 Samuel 22 we have the words of a song David spoke unto the Lord. It is an almost word-for-word duplicate of Psalm 18 which is identified as a “Psalm of David” in the superscription. It would be a part of David’s character, after going through this terrible experience, to turn to poetry to express his contrition of heart. The superscription suggests Psalm 51 was the result.

Space limitations preclude a verse-by-verse examination of Psalm 51. But in it David asks for God’s mercy and acknowledges his great sin: “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (verses 2-4). David asks for what we all want: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me” (verses 10, 11).

Solomon

Sometime after Bath-sheba’s newborn died, she conceived and “bare [David] a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah [Hebrew: beloved of Jah]” (2 Samuel 12:24,25). McClintock and Strong suggest that verse 25 could be read as “He sent him [Solomon] into the hand of Nathan” to be the child’s educator (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, vol. 6, p. 856).

Because David had a number of wives and concubines, the palace was a place of intrigue. Those who thought they commanded a following among the people were emboldened to seize power directly if they could not get it indirectly. Absalom was one who was so inclined and he possessed one natural advantage compared to the others: he was incredibly handsome. “But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him” (2 Samuel 14:25).

Eventually Absalom seized the throne in a coup and nearly succeeded in overthrowing his father. But in a battle where 20,000 died, Absalom became caught in an oak as he tried to flee and was slain by the ever faithful Joab (2 Samuel 18:6-17). As time passed David became weaker and seemingly unconcerned about the question of royal succession. Adonijah, another of his sons, is

the next to try to seize the throne. This time Joab allies himself with the pretender, a mistake that would later cost him his life. As Adonijah is busy making sacrifice with his close allies by the stone of Zohelath in preparation for seizing the throne by force, Nathan discovers the plot and makes a counter-move: “Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not?” (1 Kings 1:11).

Nathan tells Bath-sheba to go in to David and have him confirm that Solomon is David’s choice to reign, not Adonijah, and that when the two of them are speaking, Nathan himself will go in to confirm it. The two of them carry out their plan, David confirms it is his intent to have Solomon reign, and immediately Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest make it official. The strategy worked: “Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon” (1 Kings 1:39).

When news of this counter-coup reached the feasting ones at Adonijah’s “inaugural,” they realized the precarious position they were in. Fear seized them; those who thought they had all the power suddenly had none. Soon after Solomon ascended the throne Adonijah was executed as was Joab (see 1 Kings 1 and 2).

This intervention by Nathan the prophet to insure that Solomon would be king rather than Adonijah was the last we hear of him. He conducted himself with integrity and as a good ambassador of God. He did not shrink from doing God’s will even when others around him were quite willing to make any number of compromises to retain temporal advantage. Nathan stands as a paragon of virtue and worthy of emulation by those who likewise consider themselves God’s people.

“O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise” (Psalm 51:15).

Two Psalms of David **A Famous King, A More Famous Successor**

I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. -- Psalm 2:6

The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. -- Psalm 110:5

Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, though widely separated in the book of Psalms, are both Messianic Psalms of David. The latter says in the superscription "A Psalm of David," and the context bears out that it was about this famous king, and his more famous successor Jesus. Acts 4:25 explicitly attributes the former to "thy servant David." Both psalms are applied to Jesus by New Testament writers. Both are similar in that they speak of Messiah vested with royal authority subduing his enemies and both are famous psalms well known and well discussed.

Psalm 2

Both Psalm 2 and 110 refer to Christ entering his royal honors at his resurrection. "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2:7). In the Hebrew language, as in the Greek, the word for begotten is used either for begetting or birth, and could be rendered "generated." It is rendered "begotten" here in most translations probably because the active agent is Jehovah, generally supposed to represent the dominant male gender as opposed to the female (though of course the difference in gender does not truly apply to spirit beings).

The analogy in this text, however, is not to begetting, as though the subject were an embryo. The subject is a son, and the "generating" is represented as complete. Literally, as applied to David, it signifies David's authority as a divinely appointed king ruling from Zion, which was David's seat of authority. "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (verse 6).

The Israelites had a favored position before Jehovah: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalm 82:6). How much more was David favored, as the anointed leader of Israel. "Thou art my father, my God" said David, and God said of David, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (Psalm 89:26, 27). So David was placed in authority over his neighbors, and ruled over them.

As applied to the greater David, Messiah, it pertains to his resurrection when he was highly exalted above all other powers. "God hath ... raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee ... now no more to return to corruption" (Acts 13:33,34).

Smiting of the Nations

Verses 8 and 9 are the natural consequences of this raising to power. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

One key to understanding the Divine Plan of the Ages is to recognize there are two separate and distinct ages of redemption -- the Gospel age for the selection of the spiritual class and the Millennial age for the gathering of all others into Christ. The words of Psalm 2 apply to both

ages, and at the outset of each there are different kings opposing the rule of the anointed one.

Acts 4:26,27 speaks of the royal opposers at the first advent: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.” These enemies, both Jewish and Roman, were to be broken under the power of the newly exalted king. His disciples would do “not only ... this which is done to the fig tree [cursed and shriveled], but also ... this mountain ... [shall] be cast into the sea” (Matthew 21:21). Both the Jewish state (the fig tree) and the Roman empire (the mountain) were swept away to allow the growth of Christianity. (Compare Revelation 8:7, 8, which describes these judgments.)

The judgments of this psalm are applied again at the close of the Gospel age, as the Millennial kingdom becomes established in the earth. “He that overcometh and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Revelation 2:26,27).

In both cases the leaders of this world are advised to submit quickly to the new power, to avoid the severe blows otherwise necessary. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little” (Psalm 2:10-12). Those who submitted to King David quickly were spared much difficulty, and such powers as bent to the advance of Christianity, or now bend to the authority of the incoming kingdom of Christ, meet correspondingly less severity in the transition.

Revelation testifies that awesome force will be employed to dislodge the powers that be, reticent to recognize the situation and yield gracefully. “Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron [breaking the power of nations]: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15).

Psalm 110

The resurrection of Christ is referenced in this psalm as elucidated in the New Testament. Paul combines the testimony of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 as finding fulfillment together at the raising of Christ. “Christ glorified [honored] not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek” (Hebrews 5:5,6).

Paul’s point is that Jesus entered upon his heavenly high priestly duties as Melchizedek when he was raised to heaven and now, with everlasting life, is a priest “for ever” -- unlike the Levitical priests who were replaced generation after generation because of death. Jesus, since his resurrection, is “made ... after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec ... of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” (Hebrews 7:16,17,8, citing Psalm 110:4).

Melchizedek

The mention of Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 is the first mention of this historical personage since the account in Genesis 14. The original Melchizedek was King of Salem, which many regard as the same urban area which later was known as Jeru-Salem. The name Melchizedek comes from two parts, Melchi (king) and Zedek (righteous). Paul comments how fitting this description is of Christ, "being by interpretation [meaning of the name] King of righteousness, and after that also [by title] King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Hebrews 7:2).

Later kings of Jerusalem did not emulate the godliness of Melchizedek, but retained titles that were essentially the same. When Joshua defeated the king of Jerusalem, his name was Adonizedek (Joshua 10:1). Adoni (lord) has replaced Melchi (king), but it uses the same concept as the name in Genesis 14. Probably like the name Abimelech (father-king), it was used by successive rulers generation after generation.

The first godly king of Jerusalem we have record of, after the time of Melchizedek, is David -- the very one to whom the promise was given, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." It is an appropriate title for David, a righteous king who as ruler of Jerusalem was a successor of the original Melchizedek, and prototype of the greater Melchizedek to come.

Melchizedek in Genesis 14 was both a king and a priest. These offices are combined also in Christ, but in the days of King David they were separated. In a sense David did do priestly things -- he brought the ark of the covenant back to a place of dignity and reverence, secured the worship of Jehovah among the people, and prepared for the building of the temple. In this way he combined the services of both offices perhaps as much as any Judean king could.

But, literally, he was not and could not be an officiating priest under the law, as that privilege was assigned to the Levitical tribe, specifically to the sons of Aaron. However, combining the title of David (king, Melchi) with the name of the officiating priest (Zadok, or Zdk since Hebrew has no vowels), produces the name Melchi-zdk, or Melchizedek. Like Zerubbabel and Joshua much later, David and Zadok jointly comprised a picture of our great Melchizedek priest, Jesus (Zechariah 3:8, 4:7).

Smiting the Nations

Psalm 110, just as Psalm 2, speaks of the king ruling from Zion and subduing his enemies. Jehovah is the one who offered this privileged authority: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (verse 1). Also, as in Psalm 2, the rod would break his enemies. "The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." David did this in a typical way during his reign over his neighboring Gentile kingdoms, subduing and then ruling them. Jesus did this also by successively subduing Judea and Rome and then ruling through conversion (compare Psalm 45:5 and Revelation 6:2). But the fullest application of this promise is in the present transition from the Kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of Christ, during the *parousia* (Christ's presence).

Verse 3 speaks of the willingness of the youth in King David's realm to support his campaigns by joining his military ranks. The thought is expressed more clearly in the NIV than in the King James translation: "Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth." As David's warriors stood valiantly on his side, so the early disciples were arrayed in loyal support of Jesus' conquests

through conversion. Now, beyond the veil, in the close of the harvest, the risen saints are “arrayed in holy majesty” beside our conquering king. “The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Revelation 19:14).

By this force all opposing powers will be defeated “in the day of his wrath ... [when] he shall wound the heads over many countries” (verses 5, 6). Nothing will impede the progress of this mighty victor. As warriors wearied of pursuit and battle might refresh themselves at a nearby brook and thus be sustained and refreshed, so our triumphant Lord will not succumb to any fatigue or discouragement in his campaign. “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law” (Isaiah 42:4).

The Bethlehem Trilogy

Samuel said to Saul ... now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart ... to be captain over his people. -- 1 Samuel 13:13,14

Jacob had prophesied centuries before King David that “Shiloh” and his predecessor rulers would come from the tribe of Judah. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:10, cf. 1 Chronicles 11:1). Shiloh means “tranquil,” by implication “secure or successful,” and was understood as a designation of the coming Messiah (*Strong's Concordance*, #7886 and #7951).

Judah's selection for this privilege of spawning the tribe of regal authority is referred to in 1 Chronicles 5:1,2. Reuben had disqualified himself from the privileges of his firstborn status by his conduct, and evidently Simeon and Levi by their cruelty in the matter of Dinah. Judah was the next in line, and though the birthright went to Joseph as a special reward, “the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright,” and certain privileges thus fell to Judah. Also, he had exemplified a spirit a little nobler than the others. Judah convinced his brothers to spare Joseph (Genesis 37:26), and later offered himself as security for his youngest brother (hGenesis 44:18-34).

However, Saul, the first king of Israel, had been chosen from the tribe of Benjamin rather than Judah. As are most things in the divine program, this was done probably for a variety of wise reasons. Saul was head and shoulders above his fellows, whereas his successor David was a less commanding presence but with a better heart loyalty to Jehovah, which was a lesson to Israel ever after of the importance of moral and spiritual values over physical stature and outward appearance. Saul and his rejection also formed a type or figure that Israel would be rejected for its unfaithfulness at the end of the Jewish age, in deference to the David class selected during the Gospel age.

But there was also a very practical reason why an appointment from the line of Judah was in abeyance when Saul became King. The genealogy from David to Judah given in the Scriptures is Judah–Pharez–Hezron–Ram–Aminadab–Nahshon–Salmon–Boaz–Obed–Jesse–David. Thus David was the tenth generation starting with Pharez. Pharez was a son of Judah through a sordid affair with Judah's daughter-in-law, and probably fell under the proscription of Deuteronomy 23:2, which lasts until the tenth generation. David would have been that tenth generation, thus the proscription ended, and he was chosen king.

The Transfer from Benjamin to Judah

This transfer of authority from Benjamin to Judah, from Saul to David, was probably one reason for the inclusion of three narratives -- the last two in Judges and the one in Ruth -- which precede the anointing of Israel's first king. These narratives refer to Bethlehem, the birthplace of King David, as though to show the significance of Bethlehem and establish the appropriateness of King David's dynasty arising from the same location. These three narratives have sometimes been referred to as the “Bethlehem Trilogy.”

The first concerns Micah of Ephraim and a Levite from Bethlehem (Judges 17 and 18) whom Micah induced to be a kind of domestic priest for his family. Subsequently 600 men of Dan on their way to seek a better home in the north forcibly persuaded the Levite to serve them instead. He did, and as his services and worship were impure, it explains how it came to be that this

portion of the tribe of Dan, who had given up on their original heritage of land appointed through Joshua, became accustomed to an idolatrous form of worship which they stayed with thereafter, “until the day of the captivity of the land” (Judges 18:30). This episode must have been early in the period of Judges, for the Levite at issue evidently was “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses” (Judges 18:30, NIV, Rotherham, unlike the King James version which gives “Manasseh”).

The second concerns a Levite of Ephraim who had a concubine from Bethlehem (Judges 19 to 21). She became the subject of lethal abuse by a band of evil men of Gibeah in the land of Benjamin. The crime was widely publicized, but the tribe of Benjamin refused to turn over the offenders and instead resisted their brethren by armed force. The Israelites sought divine counsel, and “Jehovah said, Judah shall go up first” (Judges 20:18). After two setbacks they triumphed and the tribe of Benjamin was nearly extinguished. Probably later Jewish readers of this narrative saw in it a foreshadowing of the struggles between David (of Bethlehem in Judah) and Saul (of Gibeah in Benjamin), that David at first would suffer adversities at the hand of Saul, but subsequently triumph, and the house of Saul be nearly extinguished. This episode also must have been early in the period of Judges, for at this time “Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before [the ark of the covenant] in those days” (Judges 20:28).

The third narrative forms the book of Ruth, whose husband was the son of Elimelech of Bethlehem of Judah. Because of a famine in the area he went to Moab where his sons Mahlon and Chilion married Moabite women, one of whom was Ruth. All three men died, and Elimelech’s widow Naomi subsequently returned to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law Ruth who would not allow Naomi to be alone. Ruth subsequently was taken to wife by prosperous Boaz. The book closes with the happy announcement of the birth of their child Obed, who became the father of Jesse, the father of King David. This episode also must have been in the earlier part of the period of Judges, for Boaz, the husband of Ruth, was the son of Rahab of Jericho.

All three of these narratives unfolded substantially before the narrative concerning Samson, the last of the actual judges referred to in the “Book of Judges.” The Book of Samuel which follows after Ruth thus connects to the time of Samson, who was contemporary with Samuel, though the story of Samuel necessarily involves recounting the experiences of Eli, whose death coincided with the Philistine oppression from which Samson and Samuel consecutively would deliver Israel.

The Genealogy of Messiah

Naturally the pedigree of such a prominent personage as King David would be significant, and we have his descent from Judah specified in detail, as noted above. But the pedigree of his successor Jesus was even more important to demonstrate, in order to show him a just claimant to the promises affirmed to David and his posterity. To King David God had promised, “There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel” (1 Kings 9:5), and this assurance constituted the “sure mercies of David” (Acts 13:34; Psalm 89:1-4).

Both Matthew and Luke record the genealogy of Jesus to demonstrate that Jesus had the proper foundation to be the Jewish Messiah. Matthew, who was writing for a Jewish audience, traces Jesus’ ancestry back to David, and further, back to Abraham (Matthew 1:1), both of whom receive special mention. Luke, writing to a largely Gentile audience, takes Jesus’ ancestry back to Adam, the father of all.

Matthew specifies that from Abraham to David, David to the captivity, and the captivity to Jesus,

were equally 14 generations. This is significant to Matthew because he recognized that the numerical value of the name “David” -- *daleth-vau-daleth* in Hebrew -- was 14. (*Daleth* is the fourth letter of the alphabet, *vau* the sixth, and 4+6+4=14). In order to secure these equivalent numbers some reduction of generations was necessary at least in the second case, for comparing Matthew’s list with the Old Testament shows he omitted kings Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, who would constitute three extra generations between David and the captivity. Perhaps Matthew did this based on Exodus 34:7, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children ... unto the third and to the fourth generation.” Immediately before these three kings, wicked Athaliah had reigned as a usurper. Amaziah would have been the third generation following, or the fourth if reckoned inclusively.

The third span of generations, from the captivity to Jesus, covers close to 600 years, about 43 years per generation for 14 generations, which seems an unusually long average age, though not impossible, for that part of man’s history. It is certainly briefer than Luke’s list, though we have no records to compare name by name to check whether there is some abbreviation in this part of Matthew’s list.

Why the Differences?

Comparing the lists of Matthew and Luke, it is apparent that the lists do not coincide in the period from Jesus back to King David. This is generally explained by understanding Matthew’s genealogy goes backward from Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, and Luke’s genealogy goes backward from Heli, the father of Mary, the biological mother of Jesus.

This is true, but it explains only part of the disparity. Notice that both genealogies come together in two prominent names during this otherwise disparate part of the lists, namely Salathiel and Zerubbabel (Matthew 1:12, Luke 3:27, using the Old Testament spelling). Why, then, do the lists diverge again before Salathiel? Matthew gives the father of Salathiel as Jehoiachin, but Luke lists Neri. Can they both be the father of the same person?

Only if they are both the father in a different sense. One would be the actual father, and the other the father-in-law, that is, the father of Salathiel’s mother. Jehoiachin is the actual father of Salathiel (the Old Testament genealogy says so), leaving Neri to be the father-in-law of Salathiel. But why did Luke list the father-in-law Neri in this case, rather than the true father Jehoiachin?

--MATTHEW--	--LUKE--
Jehoiachin	Neri
Salathiel	Salathiel
Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel
----	----
Matthan	Heli
Joseph	Joseph
Jesus	Jesus

By making this choice Luke elucidated a parallel between Zerubbabel and Jesus. On the left are the names in these two parts of the genealogies (using the more familiar Old Testament spellings). Both evangelists list Joseph, whom we know to be the legal guardian of Jesus but not the biological father. Matthew then gives Matthan, the father of Joseph, whereas Luke gives Heli, the father of Mary, accounting for the divergence at this point.

The lists come back into synch with Zerubbabel, who was a forefather equally of both Joseph and Mary through different sons. This is not something manipulated by Luke, but guided by providence. It is remarkable that Zerubbabel, in whom the two branches of genealogy come together, was himself a type of the coming Christ who is the focus of the genealogy (Zechariah 4:6-10).

In this list Salathiel, the “father” of Zerubbabel, is in parallel with Joseph, the “father” of Jesus. In fact Salathiel was not the biological father of Zerubbabel, just as Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus. We learn from 1 Chronicles 3:19 that the father of Zerubbabel was Pedaiah, who was the brother of Salathiel (1 Chronicles 3:17,18). Evidently Salathiel died early, and Pedaiah his brother raised up a child for his brother according to the Levirate Law.

Back one generation, Matthew lists Jehoiachin as the father of Salathiel, whereas Luke lists Neri. The actual father of Salathiel (and Pedaiah) was indeed King Jehoiachin. Evidently Luke has deliberately chosen to continue the parallel he observed, Neri being the father of Salathiel’s mother, just as Heli was the father of Jesus’ mother.

Solomon and Nathan

It is sometimes supposed that since Matthew takes us back to David through Solomon, and Luke takes us back to David through Nathan -- two different sons of King David -- that Joseph was descended from Solomon, but Mary from Nathan. In fact this is a misunderstanding of the genealogy. Both Joseph and Mary are equally descended from Zerubbabel, and thus equally descended from both Solomon and Nathan -- Solomon through Salathiel’s father, and Nathan through Salathiel’s mother.

The Son of David

At last the promised son of David, the promised seed of Abraham, the promised seed of the woman Eve, did appear, and as the prophet Micah predicted long ago, he came from Bethlehem. “Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

The name Bethlehem means “house of bread,” a fitting birthplace for the redeemer of the world, the “bread of God” who was represented in the “bread from heaven” in the wilderness. “The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (John 6:33).

And, wonder of wonders, we have the privilege of joining with him in his heritage, “joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). The reader may recall in the article on “The Revolt of Absalom” the mention of Chimham, the younger associate of Barzillai. Chimham went to Jerusalem to be nourished at the table of King David, representing our privilege of sitting at the table of spiritual blessings with our King Jesus. A later reference says the “habitation of Chimham ... is by Bethlehem” (Jeremiah 41:17), representing our inheritance at the side of our Lord Jesus from Bethlehem. This is the great honor of the faithful.

Poems and Short Features

A Lesson from David's Life

"Don't be under any illusion . . . a man's harvest in life will depend entirely on what he sows. He that sows to his own flesh , from out of the flesh shall reap decay and ruin, but he that sows to the spirit, from out of the spirit shall reap life eternal" (Galatians 6:7,8; Psalms 51:10, Phillips, modified).

We could be deceived:

- The seed is so small. We could doubt that the small seeds that are planted could have a harvest of anything. What power could there be in such a small object, placed under dirt?
- The growth is not immediately noticeable. It takes time to generate.
- The sprout is not impressive. The first signs of life look so vulnerable and inconsequential.
- A season of rain and sunlight is necessary for full growth before the fruit appears and then ripens.

Choices can be small and seemingly unimportant. A choice is more than just a thought, It is the powerful combination of a thought with the intent to act, the combination of belief and action. In the positive form, it is the combination of faith and works. In the negative form, it is the combination of twisted perception and unbalanced behavior.

The effects of our choices are not immediately noticeable. But repeated choices create small habits. They are like cobwebs that can be swept away, just as a sprout can be easily uprooted. But it time these sprouts of habit become strong. They grow roots. They start to bear fruit in our lives. The fruit will be nutritious or poisonous depending on the kind of seed-choice that was originally sown. Only the choices we encourage and allow to continue in our lives will make it.

J. Thompson

Trials

Our trials and difficulties are not . . . to be esteemed the results of divine carelessness in respect to our interests, but as the outworking of divine providence for our good, Those who are able to view the matter from this standpoint are thus enabled to learn some of the best and most helpful of life's lessons, and are thereby prepared for the glorious things coming; whereas those who allow faith to falter in times of trial, and who will walk with the Lord and have confidence in him only when they are the recipients of marvelous favors, are correspondingly weak and correspondingly unprepared for the kingdom.

Reprints, p. 3004

In the Hand of God

The Church in the hand of God is the Church in the hand of Divine power. She will be a crown of glory and a thing of beauty, gloriously reflecting to all eternity the workmanship of our God. How glorious it will be! How beautiful! The Lord Jehovah will set these precious jewels, one reflecting upon another in that crown of glory and diadem of beauty, with the Lord himself. . The Church is to be displayed before men as "a thing of beauty and a joy forever," God's handiwork. What a glorious prospect!

Quiet Waters Christian Devotions

News and Views

WORLD NEWS

Religious

Vatican officials worry that the American bishops challenged the church's view of itself as an institution not temporal but eternal, answering less to exigent circumstances than to longstanding tradition, and compelled to govern itself. The American bishops were responding to the child sexual abuse crisis in an almost secular, political fashion: rewriting rules, confessing fault and acknowledging that they might need outsiders to keep them honest. To some Vatican officials, that represented an astonishing departure from church custom and theology and a disturbing precedent. The Vatican ... sees itself as the guardian of a universal institution with established practices that transcend a given set of circumstances. "The church is aware that it lost control over the last decade of its discipline," one Vatican official said. But, the official said, the Vatican remained concerned about going too far in response to extraordinary circumstances in one country -- about making sweeping changes that could ripple through the world, in ways that might not be predictable. "The major concern and business of Rome is the universal church," the official said. "The concern for the universal church always prevails over a problem that is passing through it."

-- New York Times, 10/19/2002

Two gunman identified by police as Islamic militants shot dead seven Pakistani Christians execution-style, then escaped. It was the eighth major attack against Western or Christian targets in Pakistan in 2002. The attack, which police said was well-planned, showed that the al Qaeda network is still vibrant. Karachi police chief Kamal Shah called it an act of terrorism possibly linked with other attacks which began with the murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. The pair in the recent killing burst into the Institute for Peace and Justice, a Christian welfare association, tied eight staff members to chairs, then gagged them. They were then shot from close range.

-- Pakistani press report, 9/26/2002

September 11, 2001 is often called a day that changed everything. But when it comes to how Americans practice religion, it didn't change much of anything. Despite a brief surge -- churches, synagogues and other spiritual centers were packed with 25% more people immediately after Sept. 11 -- attendance subsided within weeks. A year after the fact, churches from coast to coast report that their pews are back to normal occupancy, and in some cases attendance has actually slipped. The post-Sept. 11 spiritual "bubble" underscores what seems to be an immutable fact. Despite periodic peaks and dips, the percentage of Americans who say they regularly attend church has remained steady for decades. Nationwide, the proportion of churchgoers has settled back to about 40%, according to a study by Barna Research Group, which studies religion.

-- Wall Street Journal, 9/11/2002

After nearly 2,000 years, historical evidence for the existence of Jesus has come to light literally written in stone. An inscription has been found on an ancient bone box, called an ossuary, that reads "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." This container provides the only New Testament-era mention of the central figure of Christianity and is the first-ever archaeological discovery to corroborate Biblical references to Jesus. The Aramaic words etched on the box's side show a cursive form of writing used only from about 10 to 70 A.D., according to noted paleographer André Lemaire of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (popularly known as the Sorbonne University) in Paris, who verified the inscription's authenticity.

-- Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov/Dec 2002

Freedom of religion is under severe attack in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. On October 5, the state's Chief Minister passed an ordinance making it illegal to convert someone to another religion through force, fraud or allurements. Offenders face a possible three-year prison term and a fine of 50,000 rupees. However, if the person converted is a Dalit, a member of the so-called untouchable caste, punishment may include four years in prison and a 100,000-rupee fine (around \$2,000). While the ordinance does not define the terms "force, fraud or allurements," even Christian education or the promise of spiritual blessings may be grounds for accusation. Leaders of anti-Christian organizations welcome the ordinance and demand similar legislation for every other state of India.

-- Press release from All India Christian Council, 10/10/2002

Social

The World Health Organization today identified 10 major health risks it said accounted for up to 40 percent of the 56 million deaths around the world each year. The 10 risks are lack of food, [sexually transmitted disease], high blood pressure, smoking, alcohol, unsafe water or sanitation, high cholesterol, nutritional deficiencies, obesity, and indoor smoke from cooking or heating fires, predominantly in Africa and South Asia. "The potential improvements in global health are much greater than generally realized," the report said. "Extra years of healthy life expectancy could be gained for populations in all countries within the next decade" by addressing these problems with urgency. Of the 191 countries included in the report, the data indicates that the average number of years spent in good health ranges from 28.7 years in Angola to 73.6 years in Japan. In most Western European countries, people can expect to spend about 70 years in good health.

-- New York Times, 10/31/2002

From Africa to Latin America, coffee farmers have been hit hard by a glut that has sent wholesale prices tumbling to their lowest levels in real terms in more than 100 years. The 25 million families who depend on coffee for jobs face an economic and social crisis similar to America's Dust Bowl in the 1930s. In Columbia and Kenya, coffee growers have begun planting drug crops.

-- Los Angeles Times, 10/5/2002

According to a new report by the Josephson Institute of Ethics cheating, stealing and lying by high school students have continued their alarming, decade-long upward spiral. A survey of 12,000 high school students showed that students admitting they cheated on an exam at least once in the past year jumped from 61% in 1992 to 74% in 2002; the number who stole something from a store within the past 12 months rose from 31% to 38%, while the percentage who say they lied to their teachers and parents also increased substantially. Michael Josephson, president of the Josephson Institute of Ethics, said: "The evidence is that a willingness to cheat has become the norm and that parents, teachers, coaches and even religious educators have not been able to stem the tide. The scary thing is that so many kids are entering the workforce to become corporate executives, politicians, airplane mechanics and nuclear inspectors with the dispositions and skills of cheaters and thieves."

-- Josephson Institute press release, 10/22/2002

In a scathing report this month, the nation's most respected scientific society, the National Academy of Sciences, debunked the use of polygraphs [so-called "lie detectors"] to catch spies and screen employees. The study called polygraph tests so flawed as to be "a danger to national security." But even before reviewing the rigorous assessment, a wide range of police and federal security agencies now say they have no plans to abandon the device. Overconfidence in the polygraph actually reduces security because many loyal employees are judged deceptive while most spies escape notice, the report noted.

-- Los Angeles Times, 10/14/2002

Civil

U.S. President George W. Bush has won unprecedented discretion from Congress to wage war on Iraq. Throughout American history, presidents have tussled with Congress. But the past year has seen a fundamental shift of power to the White House, the biggest in at least a generation. The most important reason behind this result was the attack on America on September 11, 2001. It intensified the White House's conviction that it needed more control to deal with the terrorist threat. The result is a president who has the ability to move swiftly on matters as important as war and civil liberties. Mr. Bush's assertion of a new doctrine of pre-emptive military strikes takes presidential war-making power to new heights. That's because the trigger for action is classified intelligence that he is empowered to keep from the public. "It's a new wrinkle to the Imperial Presidency," says historian Arthur Schlesinger.

-- Wall Street Journal, 10/22/2002

Violence killed 1.6 million people in 2000, matching tuberculosis and surpassing malaria in their death tolls, according to a new World Health Organization report that attempts for the first time to quantify brutality. Researchers found that violent fatalities represent about 3% of all deaths in the world. The scope of violence proved far greater than they expected. Suicide accounted for 50% of the violent deaths, homicide for 30% and war for 20%, the report says. The highest suicide rates were found in Eastern Europe, in regions undergoing political and economic upheaval and plagued by alcoholism. In some countries, researchers say, health-care expenditures tied to violence account for as much as 5% of gross domestic product.

-- World Health Organization report, 10/3/2002

The bomb attacks in Bali that killed almost 200 people resembled the attacks on the World Trade Center towers. Islamic ultra terrorists struck carefully selected, symbolic targets full of innocent - civilians. Far from striking major governmental or military targets, the terrorists have been reduced to sloven assassinations and to the calculated mass murder of young people. Bali is traditionally and overwhelmingly Hindu, and the terrorists' ultimate vision is even more hostile toward Hindus than toward Christians. The extremists want a purely Muslim empire in the region. And Bali's success at attracting tourist dollars has been the envy of less-affluent, Muslim portions of the country. With a few devastating blasts, the terrorists managed to strike against Western "corruption" and against successful Hindus who threaten the terrorists' vision of a pure, Islamic state.

-- Dow Jones news service, 10/15/2002

North Korean officials reportedly admitted to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly during his Oct. 3-5 visit to Pyongyang that Pyongyang has an active nuclear program. According to a U.S. State Department report, North Korea blamed the United States and said U.S. actions had nullified the 1994 Agreed Framework that promised internationally financed light water reactors in exchange for Pyongyang's pledge to end its nuclear program. Russian diplomatic sources added more detail to the recent exchange, claiming Pyongyang said it was natural for North Korea to have a nuclear program since Washington had labeled the country part of the axis of evil.

-- Stratfor.com, 10/21/2002

The gas used in the Moscow theatre siege assault was a recently developed neuro-paralytic agent likely to cause permanent mental disability or death, according to medical experts treating the victims. Over 100 people died from exposure to the chemical, including hostages taken by the Chechan extremists. Russian official confirmed in private to diplomats the use of an "incapacitating, intoxicating gas" believed to render victims inactive within 15 seconds. The effects were to cause first loss of consciousness, then problems with breathing and blood circulation.

-- Financial Times, 10/28/2002

Financial

As corporate bankruptcies mount to record sizes, tens of thousands of laid-off workers are finding themselves without severance pay, no health-insurance coverage and worthless retirement plans. Since the beginning of 2001, more than 60,000 companies have sought bankruptcy protection, and the number of affected employees is rising fast. In 2001, the 10 largest companies filing for bankruptcy reported employing about 140,500 people. The top 10 in 2002 employed 444,600. Normally, employers offer a host of benefits that soften the blow for employees who lose their jobs. But bankruptcy changes all the rules. In many cases, workers have to get in line with other unsecured creditors for severance benefits, a process that can leave them with mere pennies on the dollars they are owed.

-- Wall Street Journal, 9/30/2002

For decades inflation was the bogeyman in rich countries. But now some economists reckon that deflation, or falling prices, may be a more serious threat -- in America and Europe as well as Japan. Particularly worrying is the rise in borrowing by American households to finance purchases of houses, cars or luxury goods. Deflation would swell the real burden of these debts, forcing consumers to cut their spending. Germany now runs a serious risk of following Japan into deflation. If deflation reflects a slump in demand and excess capacity, it can be dangerous, as it was in the 1930s, triggering a downward spiral of demand and prices. If deflation causes real debts to swell, debtors may have to cut spending and sell assets to meet their payments. This can unleash a vicious spiral of falling incomes, asset prices and rising real debt. America's corporate sector is already suffering deflation, with the price deflator of non-financial businesses falling in the past year for the first time since the second world war. Many firms that borrowed heavily in the late 1990s, expecting rapid revenue growth to finance their debts, are now in trouble.

-- The Economist, 10/10/2002

Israel

Lebanon has launched a large project north of Metullah, the Israeli border town, to divert the flow of water of the Wazzani River so that it would not reach Israel. Until now, Lebanon was seen setting up to pump water to supply local farmers at another location. The news report included footage of large diameter pipes and bulldozers damming up the flow of the water. Israeli officials have said that if it were completed the diversion would be considered an act of war.

-- Israel Television Channel Two news, 9/12/2002

The increased government deficits to pay the cost of the intifada and other defense spending will substantially raise the proportion of government spending to a record 55% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). By international standards, this makes Israel's government the largest and most expensive in the world. It also runs counter to the trend in Israel's economy in the 1990s, when the ratio of government spending to GDP declined. Israel now heads the global list of big government spenders. Government spending exceeds 50% of GDP in only three countries: Sweden, Greece, and France. Government spending is only 30-40% of GDP in most developed countries. In the US, government spending is 30.4% of GDP. The ratio is 36.9% in Japan, 38.4% in Britain, and 45.7% in Germany.

-- Globes, 10/23/2002

Immigration to Israel from the United States is up sharply from last year, but total immigration figures are down. Deputy Immigration Minister Yuli Edelstein (Yisrael B'Aliyah) reported that he had reached a "historic agreement" on October 20th that would grant "immigration basket" benefits not only to new olim (immigrants) from the former Soviet Union and South America, but also to those who arrive from elsewhere, including the U.S. and Western Europe. He said that the basket of benefits for new immigrants reaches a total of 35,000-50,000 shekels (approx. \$7,400-10,500), depending on the size of the family. "We know that the former Soviet Union is not a bottomless pit for new immigrants," he said, "and that if Prime Minister Sharon's goal of a million new olim over the next few years is to become a reality, we have to look elsewhere -- and North America and Europe are the likely places."

-- Arutz 7, 10/21/2002

Work began September 24 on preparing the ground for Ashkelon's seawater desalination plant, which is to be the biggest of its kind in the world. The Ashkelon plant is to produce 100 million cubic meters a year of pure drinking water. The project is costing around NIS 1 billion (US \$206,504,904). It is expected that the cost of producing one cubic meter of desalinated seawater, using the Israeli-developed and refined reverse osmosis system, will be around NIS 2.40 (US \$0.52). [Future] projects are planned which would raise the total amount produced by desalination units to over 700 million cubic meters per annum. Consecutive winters of less than average rainfall have left the nation's three main natural water resources severely depleted. The crisis highlighted the problems of being totally dependent on the vagaries of the weather to ensure reliable supplies of water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial purposes, and left the decision-makers with virtually no alternative but to push seawater desalination.

-- The Jerusalem Post, 9/25/ 2002

Book Review

***Jewish Culture & Customs*, Steve Herzig. Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr NJ 08099. 1997. 141 pp.**

Every area of Orthodox Jewish life is filled with rich symbolism and special meaning. From meals, clothing, and figures of speech, to worship, holidays, and weddings, there are hundreds of fascinating traditions that date as far back as two or three thousand years. The Jewish father, Tevye, proclaims, "Without our traditions we would be like a fiddler on the roof!"

Jesus chided the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law for making their traditions more important than the people or God's law. Christians who consider Israel to be God's chosen earthly people (Zechariah 2:8) will find a better understanding of both the historical and modern Jew a helpful supplement to a study of the Old Testament and the gospels.

Steve Herzig was born an Orthodox Jew and converted to Christianity when he was 18. His book is a collection of articles written for a periodical devoted to promoting Christian understanding of Israel's place in the plan of God. Although by conversion an evangelical Christian, Herzig does not promote Jewish conversion in general. He does promote the essential understanding of Jewish thought in order to fully appreciate the message that Jesus brought to the Jewish people of his day.

The value of Herzig's book is its brevity and special treatise on certain elements: the evolution of modern Judaism; the geographical and physical diversities within the Jewish race; the differences between the Hasidim, the Orthodox, and the modern Jew. I found particularly interesting the discussion of Rabbi Hillel, arguably the most influential Jew in history, who taught and influenced the Jewish world of the first century BC and AD. Hillel lived and taught during the years when Herod ruled Jerusalem which was a time when rivalries arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Another interesting discussion concerns the conflict over the Torah (the five books of Moses) and the Talmud (the Rabbinical interpretation).

While some elements of Herzig's evangelical Christian beliefs affect his applications of Scripture, the crux of his book is worthwhile for its insights into the colorful world of Judaism and Jewish life.

-- Len Griehs