

God's Chosen Kings

After God created the universe, He chose Adam as His viceroy, giving him dominion over Earth and all of its creatures. Adam was supposed to reign as the King of Earth, but when Adam rebelled against God by disobeying His command, his sin ruined much of what God had prepared for him. Graciously, God has promised salvation to rescue mankind from sin, and this promise of salvation includes the restoration of man's rule over Earth, "making us kings and priests" (Rev 1:6).

God demonstrated the rescue aspect of salvation when He redeemed the Israelites from Egypt, setting His children free from bondage. Then, at Sinai, God chose the Israelites to be His special people, to be above all other nations, and to serve Him as a nation of priests and kings. Thus, God made a covenant with them, instructing them how to serve Him.

Most of the Israelites of the first generation disobeyed God and failed His test. Consequently, they were disinherited, disqualified from entering the Promised Land, and left to wander and die in the wilderness. On the other hand, the Israelites of the second generation were obedient when tested, so God rewarded them with life and restored their inheritance in the Promised Land.

At times after the Israelites were established in their inheritance, they disobeyed God. Therefore He judged them, allowing other nations to come and oppress them. After a while, the Israelites would repent, and God would hear their prayers and relieve them from their oppression. This cycle of God's blessing and the Israelites' disobedience, followed by judgment and oppression, and then repentance and deliverance from oppression happened many times.

Eventually, the Israelites desired to be like other nations, having a human king to lead them. Granting their wish, God first chose Saul, and later David, to serve as His chosen kings.

Despite being God's chosen king, Saul was not a good example. Saul stopped seeking to please God, and his disobedience caused the loss of his kingdom inheritance.

On the other hand, David was also God's chosen king. Unlike his predecessor, David was a good example. He endeavored to please God with his whole heart and became one of Israel's greatest kings. As King David pursued God's will, he transformed the Israelites from an alliance of tribes into a powerful nation which completely subdued the Philistines, bringing rest to his kingdom (2Sam 8:1). Thus, David's obedience secured his kingdom inheritance for himself and his Seed forever.

Saul: a Bad Example of God's Chosen King

By all appearances, Saul was everything someone might look for in a king, but appearances can be deceiving. Saul ends up being a bad example for those who desire to serve God and earn His rewards. Indeed, God chose Saul to be Israel's first king and paved the way before him to make him successful. Even with everything going his way, Saul became disobedient and eventually lost the inheritance that God had given him.

Saul came from a good family, having ancestors who were "mighty and powerful" (and "wealthy," 1Sam 9:1). Saul is described as being tall and good-looking:

A choice and handsome [young man]. . . . There was not a more handsome person than [Saul] among the children of Israel. From his shoulders and upward he was taller than any of the people (1Sam 9:2).

Here, at Saul's introduction, he is the portrait of an ideal king.

The narrative which describes Saul looking for his father's lost livestock provides some insight into Saul's good character. Saul is an obedient son and diligent in his search for the lost donkeys. Saul displays good understanding when he explains to his father's servant that soon his father will leave his concern for the donkeys and start worrying about the safety of his son. Saul shows wisdom when he seeks to inquire of the Lord concerning the matter of the lost animals. Evidently, Saul has been well-trained, because he shows respect and cultural refinement when he is concerned that he has no gift to give the man of God (Samuel). In fact, Saul displays practical common sense when, on his way to meet Samuel, he stops and asks for directions from some young women (1Sam 9:3-13).

When God chooses¹ Saul, He tells Samuel to be looking for him at the feast:

Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines. . . . So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people" (1Sam 9:16-17).

Samuel obeys, anointing Saul to be Israel's first king.

In this narrative, Scripture makes very clear two important details concerning Saul. First, after Saul hears God's call and Samuel anoints² him to serve as "commander over the Lord's

¹ 1Sam 10:24; 2Sam 21:6.

² This word also occurs in 1Sam 10:1; 12:3, 5; 15:1, 7, 17; 24:6; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2Sam 1:14, 16, 21. The Hebrew word for "anointed" can also be translated "messiah."

inheritance” (1Sam 10:1), God gives Saul a new³ heart (1Sam 10:9). Clearly, Saul’s new heart seems to portray something similar to the divine work of regeneration of believers in the New Testament.

Second, after God gives Saul a new heart, the Holy Spirit of God comes upon Saul and enables him to prophesy along with the other prophets (1Sam 10:10-13). The fact that the Holy Spirit “came upon” Saul seems to be another indication that Saul is a believer. (Remember, the gift of the Holy Spirit permanently “indwelling” every believer is a blessing exclusive to the New Covenant).

At the appropriate time, Samuel introduces Saul as the King of the Israelites. The people are thrilled to have Saul for their new king:

“Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?” So all the people shouted and said, “Long live the king!” (1Sam 10:24).

Saul’s reign starts out very well. He is obedient to God’s instructions, and God gives him success, making him victorious over the Ammonites.

After only a year of being king, Saul faces a crucial test of obedience. The Philistines have gathered an army to fight with Israel. Samuel has instructed King Saul to wait at Gilgal for seven days until the time appointed for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifice (1Sam 13:8). After waiting for seven days, the soldiers become fearful and begin to scatter, so King Saul goes ahead and offers the sacrifice himself instead of waiting any longer for Samuel.

As soon as Saul has finished offering the sacrifice, Samuel arrives at the time appointed for the sacrifice. Samuel asks Saul, “What have you done?” King Saul begins to offer excuses for his misconduct. Unimpressed by these

³ Often translated “another,” the Hebrew word *'acher* conveys the idea of “one which follows a first one (a “second” one or a “new” one).” It seems that the author’s purpose is not to describe Saul’s justification by faith, but to confirm that he is indeed a believer yielding to God’s will.

rationalizations, Samuel expresses his great disappointment in Saul's disobedience:

You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever; but now, your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you (1Sam 13:13-14).

King Saul was foolish when he disobeyed God's command to wait for Samuel; he failed God's test when he overstepped his authority. Samuel informs Saul that his failure to obey God's will has cost him his kingdom. Furthermore, Samuel notifies Saul that God is seeking a replacement for him: God will look for "a man after His own heart" and will make that man king over His people, "because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you" (1Sam 13:14).

Note that, even after this pronouncement of judgment, King Saul does not confess his sin nor does he repent.

After this first failure, King Saul faces another test. God sends Samuel to give Saul His instructions. Samuel starts by reminding King Saul that his authority has come from God:

The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey'" (1Sam 15:1-3).

God's instructions are simple and clear: every Amalekite is to be killed and every living thing they own is to be destroyed.

Once again King Saul fails, because he does not completely obey God's commands. Although most of the Amalekites are dead, Saul does not kill their king, and he saves the best of their livestock.

But Saul and the people spared [King] Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed (1Sam 15:9).

God tells Samuel of the judgment which will fall on King Saul because of his disobedience to God's commands:

Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night (1Sam 15:10-11).

Then, Samuel comes to King Saul and asks these questions:

"What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? . . . Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?" (1Sam 15:14-19).

King Saul responds by blaming the people:

But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal (1Sam 15:21).

Blindly, Saul defends himself: "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD" (1Sam 15:20). Once again, Saul does not confess his sin; instead, he finds excuses for his actions.

Samuel explains that obedience must be the priority of God's chosen servants; subsequently, he pronounces a bitter judgment on King Saul:

Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from being king (1Sam 15:22-23).

Why does this judgment fall on King Saul? Saul is punished because of his disobedience, his rebellion, and his rejection of the word and will of God.

Saul suddenly becomes eager to confess his sin, but it is too late. Samuel repeats Saul's sentence: "you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel" (1Sam 15:26). Then Samuel explains that God will not change His mind concerning this judgment on King Saul (1Sam 15:29; cf. 1Chr 10:13-14).

What should a believer learn from the bad example of King Saul? First and most important, God's servants must always obey His instructions (commands, law, etc.). Second, even after a believer has failed to obey and has lost some of the rewards (inheritance) which God desires to give him, he must continue to obey in order to preserve the remaining rewards, those blessings he still possesses. Third, eventually there comes a point of no return, when a believer's rewards are lost; confessing one's sin will not reverse this loss.

God explains two related principles: a believer who has been sinful can begin to earn rewards; furthermore, a believer who has been righteous can still lose his rewards:

"But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the LORD God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"

"But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die" (Eze 18:21-24).

Remember, God is always fair; His ways are more reasonable than our ways:

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the LORD God. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the LORD God. “Therefore turn and live!” (Eze 18:30-32).

God offers a new heart and a new spirit to the one who believes and is reborn as a child in His family.

Even then, just like King Saul, every believer must choose whether or not to be obedient to God’s will, because his subsequent actions will determine whether he lives in God’s blessing or loses his inheritance (rewards).

Through parables, Jesus teaches that a believer can lose his rewards (Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27). In these parables, the responsibility entrusted to a servant who then serves unfaithfully is taken away from him and given to an obedient servant. Jesus explains: “For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” (Lk 19:26).

Jesus warns His disciples that seeking the things of this world will not profit them, but will instead cost them their “rewards” in the life to come:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Mt 16:24-27).

In this phrase “loses his own soul,” the Greek word *zēmioō*, translated “lose,” means “to be fined or penalized.”⁴ Christ is instructing His disciples, in the context of rewards, to deny themselves in this life so that they will be rewarded in the future. Otherwise, they will be penalized (suffer a fine) when He judges them according to their works.

Using the same Greek word, Paul assures the believer that, even if he “suffers fines” so great that he loses all of his reward, he will still remain “saved”:

If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1Cor 3:15).

David: a Good Example of God’s Chosen King

The best attributes of David’s kingship illustrate how God’s chosen kings are to serve Him. Specifically, David provides a good example for believers who desire to reign in the Kingdom of God, showing how they should seek God’s instruction, be obedient to His will (commands), and pursue God with a whole heart. Those believers whose lives exhibit the good characteristics exemplified in David’s life will also reign with Christ when God restores all things.

David Seeks God’s Instructions

David was the youngest of Jesse’s eight sons and, as a boy, his responsibility was to tend his father’s sheep. A shepherd

⁴ Donnegan, James, “ζημιόω,” *A New Greek and English Lexicon*, (Boston: Hilliard, Gray), 1834. When this verb is used in the active voice, it generally means “to cause damage, detriment, or loss . . . to fine, to impose a penalty, to punish.” In Luke 9:25, to “lose” (*apollymi*, to destroy, ruin) oneself is set in parallel to “be[ing] cast away” (*zēmioō*, to suffer a fine). Also see the discussion of this word and its context by Hubert Brooke, in *Personal Consecration: or, Conditions of Discipleship*, (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 119-128.

spends a lot of time in the wilderness, which sometimes can be very boring.

As a boy, David was probably very much like my own children, who hate to be bored. My children will do almost anything rather than be bored (at times they will even work). Sometimes any activity, even if it seems totally senseless, is preferred to boredom's monotony.

While David was tending his father's sheep in the wilderness, he had a lot of time on his hands. He could have wasted his time aimlessly throwing rocks. Instead, David learned to be diligent, fashioning a sling and becoming an expert, using it to throw rocks. Years later, he used his skill with a sling to defeat Goliath, helping the Israelites to win the battle against the Philistines.

During the many hours he spent as a shepherd, David also developed his skill as a musician and became well-known for his talent (1Sam 16:16-18); additionally, he became a poet. Most likely, he listened when his parents spoke about God and when the Law (the *Torah*,⁵ the five books of Moses) was read. David composed some of what he learned into songs, and some of his songs are preserved in the Book of Psalms. The Holy Spirit inspired David's Psalms to be instructional, prophetic, and soothing to the human soul.

One might think that with all of his knowledge about God and the Holy Spirit's influence upon him,⁶ David would always make the right decisions. Actually, many times he did what was right, but at other times he did not. A careful reading of the narrative of David's life reveals a discernable difference between the occasions when He did not make righteous decisions and the occasions when he did. Whenever David

⁵ "Lay up these words in your heart. . . . Teach them to your children . . . when you sit . . . when you walk . . . when you lie down. . . . that your days . . . may be multiplied in the land" (Dt 11:18-21).

⁶ "The Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1Sam 16:13).

seeks (“inquires”⁷) God’s instructions, if he obeys⁸ God, his actions are righteous and his endeavors are successful.

For example, David is not making good decisions the day he is forced to flee from the raging King Saul. Hastily, David stops at Nob, the location of God’s Tabernacle at that time, and meets Ahimelech the priest. At that moment, David has an opportunity to inquire of God concerning what he should do next, but he does not seek God’s instructions; instead, he lies to the priests (1Sam 21:1-9).⁹

David’s next move, escaping to the Philistine city named Gath, is another unwise decision. Although he is escaping the immediate jeopardy of King Saul’s royal spear, he is running into the clutches of Goliath’s relatives, who live in Gath. After entering the gates of Gath, he must then try to escape from the Philistines who want to avenge Goliath’s death.¹⁰

Furthermore, David’s indiscretions have disastrous results. Someone misinforms King Saul, declaring that the priests at Nob have helped David to escape, so Saul kills all of these priests and their families (1Sam 22:9-19; cf. 22:22). Nevertheless, one priest named Abiathar manages to escape Saul’s tantrum, and having no safe place, he goes to find David.

Abiathar joins David’s band of outcasts. Having a priest with him, David has an opportunity to inquire concerning God’s will when he hears that the Israelites in the city of Keilah are under attack. He asks Abiathar to inquire of God, “‘Shall I go and attack these Philistines?’ And the LORD said to

⁷ Instances of the Hebrew words *darash* and *sha'al* are used in the following passages to denote when David had an opportunity to “inquire” of God: 1Sam 22:10, 13, 15 (cf. 21:1-9); 23:2, 4-12; 30:7-8; 2Sam 2:1; 5:19, 23; 1Chr 13:1-3; 14:10, 14.

⁸ “hears and obeys”

⁹ In 1 Samuel 22:10-15, there is no indication that David inquired of God at Nob. Furthermore, Ahimelech denies that he inquired of God on David’s behalf. If Ahimelech had inquired of God, he certainly would have discovered David’s lie, that he was not on a royal errand but fleeing from Saul.

¹⁰ In Psalm 56, David expresses some of his thoughts after he escapes from Gath.

David, ‘Go attack the Philistines and save Keilah’” (1Sam 23:2-3). After David seeks God’s instructions, his campaign against the Philistines goes very well. David and his men defeat the Philistines, save the inhabitants of Keilah, and recover all of their possessions (1Sam 23:5).

Obviously, David is successful because he first inquires concerning God’s will for the city of Keilah, and then he follows God’s instructions. After this success, you might think that David would make a habit of always seeking God’s instructions before undertaking other actions. Unfortunately, it seems that in this regard David is a slow learner.

For example, David does not inquire of God before he goes to avenge Nabal for a foolish insult. David and his men have been protecting the Israelites living near the borders of other nations. Among the Israelites under their protection are the servants and flocks of a man named Nabal. In due course, David sends some of his men to ask Nabal for a gift of food. Selfishly, Nabal reviles David’s men and refuses to give them anything. When David hears of Nabal’s disrespectful treatment of his men, he tells them to ready their swords. It seems that they are going to impolitely introduce their swords to Nabal.

However, before David is able to track down the foolish Nabal,¹¹ his wise wife, Abigail, takes action. She knows how David’s men have protected her husband’s servants and flocks, and she has also heard how her husband has disrespected them. Quickly, Abigail loads some donkeys with supplies: 200 loaves of bread, two flasks of wine, five sheep, five measures of grain, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs. With this gift of provisions for David and his men, she sets out to find him.

When Abigail finds David, she begs forgiveness for her husband’s offense. Then she encourages David that God will reward him with “an enduring house because [he] fights the battles of the LORD” (1Sam 25:28). Next, she cautions David

¹¹ Nabal’s name is a pun; although it can mean “noble,” it can also mean “fool.”

against “shedding blood without cause” so that he will not later regret this vengeful act (1Sam 25:31).

David wisely listens to Abigail and thanks her for her sound advice. He then blesses her because she has kept him “from coming to bloodshed and from avenging [him]self” (1Sam 25:33). Not long afterwards, Nabal dies suddenly from a heart attack. Subsequently, David asks Abigail to become his wife. One lesson here is that godly men should be willing to listen to godly advice, even when it comes from a woman.

David eventually begins to understand the wisdom of inquiring of God and seeking His instruction. Once, while David and his men are away at a battle, the Amalekites come and conquer their home town, Ziklag. The Amalekites burn Ziklag and carry away the families and all their possessions. When David and his men discover all that they have lost, David inquires of God what he should do. God tells him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all” (1Sam 30:7-8). David and his men listen to God’s instructions. They pursue the Amalekites and overtake them, successfully recovering their families and all their possessions.

Not long after this, King Saul dies in a battle with the Philistines. David inquires of God to ask where he should live. God instructs him to return to Judah and live in the city of Hebron (2Sam 2:1). David listens to God’s instructions and, in due time, he is made King over all the tribes of Israel.

The news that David has become King of Israel upsets the Philistines, so they set their army in array against him in the Valley of Rephaim.

So David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?” And the LORD said to David, “Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand” (2Sam 5:19).

David follows God’s instructions, and God makes David victorious. David describes the battle, “The LORD broke through my enemies before me, like water breaks through [a dam]” (2Sam 5:20).

Soon after this first victory, the Philistines come a second time to attack King David in the Valley of Rephaim. “Therefore David inquired of the LORD” (2Sam 5:23). This time God instructs David not to make a frontal assault but to outflank them:

When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines (2Sam 5:24).

David follows God’s instructions and so soundly defeats the Philistines that they never regain their former strength.

Certainly, there were times in David’s life when he did not seek God concerning His will and did things his own way. However, unlike Saul, in each case David confesses his sin, and God forgives him. Even so, David’s sins¹² have disastrous results, plaguing him for the rest of his life. In spite of David’s faults, when he seeks God’s instructions, God gives him success.

David is Obedient to God’s Will

David learns to seek God’s instructions and to obey God’s will. Because of his obedience, God preserves David, making him victorious over his enemies. Sometimes, a difficult test of obedience arises when a believer knows God’s will and has an opportunity to ignore it. At times, David faces some difficult tests; after considering what God has revealed, David complies with God’s will and thus passes God’s tests.

David must have decided, while he was still very young, to be obedient to God’s will. Being the youngest of eight brothers, he probably was always being told what to do. Certainly, he knew that obeying his parents is God’s will. Twice, while taking care of his father’s sheep, David puts his own life at risk when the sheep are attacked, once by a lion and another time by a bear (1Sam 17:37). As David obeys his parents, he is

¹² The Bible records at least three sins of David: his lie to Ahimelech the priest, his sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite, and his sin of numbering of the people.

being faithful to God's will and passes these early tests of obedience.

David is also obedient when others have authority over him. After King Saul hears that David is a skillful musician, David is called to serve his king by playing music to comfort his troubled spirit. David submits to the king's authority. When King Saul becomes jealous of David's success and desires to kill him, David continues to serve the king, playing music to help soothe him. Twice while David is playing, Saul throws a spear at him, attempting to kill him, but David escapes unharmed (1Sam 18:11).

Now that Saul is unreasonable and has repeatedly tried to kill him, David escapes from the king's presence. Still, David submits to the authority of Jonathan, the crown prince, making this request: "If there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?" (1Sam 20:8).

Jonathan warns David after he discovers that Saul intends to kill him. In a tearful farewell, Jonathan blesses David: "Go in peace. . . . May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever" (1Sam 20:42). David flees to escape Saul's temper.

Saul is determined to kill David, "but God did not deliver [David] into his hand" (1Sam 23:14). With 3000 chosen men, Saul chases after David, who is now hiding in the wilderness of En Gedi (1Sam 24:2). While in hot pursuit of David, Saul stops in a cave to "cover his feet" (a euphemism for "relieving oneself").

Amusingly, David and some of his men are hiding in the deep recesses of the same cave. David's men beg him to seize this opportunity and kill his royal persecutor. Instead, David reaches out, cuts off the corner of Saul's robe, and allows the king to leave the cave "relieved" and unharmed (1Sam 24:2-7).

David restrains his men from killing Saul, stating, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD" (1Sam 24:6). Even though God has not given David a direct command, David is seeking to be

obedient to God's will. He understands that God has chosen Saul and anointed him to be Israel's king. Knowing that God has a purpose for Saul to fulfill, David is determined that he will not be disobedient to God's will by cutting short Saul's life.

After King Saul leaves the cave, David also comes out and calls him. Respectfully bowing down to the ground before him, he explains to Saul that, while others encouraged him to take this opportunity in the cave to kill Saul, instead of listening to them, he spared Saul's life. David holds up the cut-off corner of King Saul's robe to prove the truth of what he is saying.

King Saul responds to David, saying that God will reward his righteousness:

You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. . . . For when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day (1Sam 24:17-19).

Not long after David's display of mercy, Saul pursues David again. This time Saul and his 3000 chosen men chase David into the Wilderness of Ziph. When Saul's elite soldiers make camp for the night, after everyone has fallen asleep, David and Abishai walk stealthily into the camp. They locate King Saul, who is fast asleep. Abishai offers to take Saul's spear and strike him to the ground. Once again David shows mercy to Saul, explaining to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?" They take the king's spear and jug of water and leave the camp before any of the 3000 awake.

Once they are a safe distance from the army camp, David calls out to King Saul. Yet again, David demonstrates to him that there is "no evil in [his] hand" which would cause the king any harm (1Sam 26:18).

In all of these tests of obedience, whether keeping his father's sheep safe from wild animals or preserving the life of

his royal persecutor, David obeys the will of God, placing it ahead of his own interests, even when his safety is at risk.

David Pursues God with his Whole Heart

In the Bible, King David is purposefully set in contrast with King Saul. A significant point of this contrast is to show how differently Saul and David served God as His chosen kings. As previously mentioned, after Saul becomes king, he acts selfishly, pursuing his own interests instead of obeying God. On the other hand, after David is chosen, he obeys God and pursues His will with his whole heart, even while Saul is persecuting him and trying to kill him.

When God looked for a man to replace King Saul, He chose¹³ David, because he was pursuing His heart.¹⁴ David prays:

With my whole heart I have sought You;

Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! (Ps 119:10).

Later, God describes David as “My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart” (1Ki 14:8). Paul recounts God’s testimony concerning David: “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22; cf. 1Sam 13:14; Ps 89:20).

Even so, like all men, David sinned.¹⁵ In spite of David’s sins, God still commends him because he pursued God “with all his heart” to “do all God’s will.”

¹³ 1Sam 16:8-9.

¹⁴ In David’s story, nothing is mentioned about his justification. David’s belief and justification (that God had accounted his belief to him for righteousness) seem to be assumed in the narrative. Why is his belief assumed? Most likely, because God does not intend to use David’s story to illustrate the principles of belief and justification; these principles are already well illustrated in Abraham’s story. Instead, David’s story illustrates principles concerning God’s chosen king and how his faithful pursuit of God’s will is rewarded.

¹⁵ When David is confronted with his sin, he repents and confesses his sin, so God forgives him (2Sam 12:13).

God Rewards His Chosen King

David has been obedient to God's will and has passed His tests, so God has given David rest from his enemies. Now David displays his love and whole-hearted¹⁶ pursuit of God by expressing his desire to build a house for God. God is pleased with David and further rewards His chosen king.

While King David is enjoying rest from all his enemies, he realizes how unfair it is that he is dwelling in a beautiful palace of cedar while God's Ark of the Covenant¹⁷ does not have a permanent dwelling place. David decides that he will build a temple in Jerusalem to be God's house (2Sam 7:1-3).

Through the prophet Nathan, God responds to David:

Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt. . . . Have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?" (2Sam 7:5-7).

Can you hear the pleasure in God's voice, marveling that David would desire to do something which He has not even mentioned to anyone?

After hearing the desire of David's heart, God recounts the good that He has done for David. He has taken a lowly shepherd and made him ruler over His people. His presence has been with David. God has destroyed David's enemies. He has made David's name great among the men of the earth (2Sam 7:8-9). Now God is about to reward David, His chosen king, with an everlasting covenant which includes unconditional promises.

¹⁶ David has a "whole or perfect" heart with God (1Ki 11:4).

¹⁷ The Ark of the Covenant, also called the "Ark of God," was the golden chest in which Moses placed the stone Tables, a bowl of manna, and Aaron's rod (Heb 9:4). On top of the golden chest, two winged cherubim covered the mercy seat, which served as the throne of God, where He would meet with men (see Fig 9.2 on page 149).

Covenant with David

As a result of David's obedience, especially because of his pursuit of God's heart, God decides to reward him with the following promises, which are sealed with a covenant. First, God promises to establish a safe place for His people:

I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously (2Sam 7:10-11).

Second, God promises to establish David's royal house and make it a dynasty:

Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom (2Sam 7:11-12).

Third and fourth, God promises that David's seed will build God's house, and that He will establish the throne of his seed's kingdom forever:

He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My [covenant loyalty] shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you (2Sam 7:13-15).

Finally, God assures David that His covenant loyalty (*cheched*) will be everlasting and that his kingdom will not be taken away from him (as Saul's kingdom was taken away from him).

Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; and your throne shall be established forever (2Sam 7:16).

This is the everlasting covenant God made with David.¹⁸

¹⁸ "The LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt" (2Chr 13:5).

Covenant with the Royal Seed of David

Solomon, David's son, succeeds to his father's throne and rules as King of Israel. As David's "seed," Solomon is given the privilege which David desired: to build God's house in Jerusalem. However, some of the covenant promises which God gave to David look beyond his son Solomon to David's royal "Seed," the Messiah, who would be born the "son of David" (Mt 1:1).

In the book of Daniel, God describes the everlasting kingdom promised to the royal Seed of David:

And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed (Dan 7:13-14).

God keeps His promise to David when Jesus Christ, the prophesied "Seed of David," is born to be the King of the Jews. The wise men come to worship Jesus because He is born to be king (Mt 2:1-2). This is why King Herod tries to kill Him (Mt 2:3-18) and why, eventually, Jesus is accused, tortured, and crucified on the cross (Mt 27:37).

While being interrogated by the High Priest, Jesus refers to the prophecy of Daniel which speaks of His future "coming on the clouds of heaven" to be King of kings:

And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mt 26:63-64).

While Jesus was interrogated by Pilate, the Roman Governor in Jerusalem, He admitted the truth of the accusation that He is the King of the Jews:

Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

Jesus said to him, "It is as you say" (Mt 27:11).

"You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (Jn 18:37).

When Jesus was abused by the soldiers, they dressed Him in the attire of a king, beat Him, and mocked Him:

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus. . . . And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified (Mt 27:27-31).

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, Pilate instructed the soldiers to place a sign stating the reason He was put to death:

And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS (Mt 27:37).

So, Jesus Christ was convicted of being "King of the Jews," and for this reason He was put to death on the cross.

How does this fulfill God's promise to David that his Seed would have an everlasting kingdom? It does not fulfill the prophecy of His everlasting kingdom because that kingdom is still in the future. Christ came the first time to be the Savior of the world. When Christ comes the second time and establishes His Kingdom, the everlasting kingdom of the Seed of David will be fulfilled.

While standing before Pilate, Jesus explains that the authority for His kingdom will not come from this world:

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (Jn 18:36).

Jesus says that His kingdom is not from this world. Do not make this mistake: Jesus is not “spiritualizing” God's promises of an earthly kingdom. Jesus is clarifying that the authority for His Kingdom is from Heaven (thus Matthew regularly describes it as “the Kingdom of/from Heaven”). When it is time to establish the messianic Kingdom on Earth, God will do the necessary fighting.

Furthermore, on the day of His Ascension, He informs His disciples that the kingdom is still in the future and will be restored under the Father’s authority:

[His disciples] asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority (Acts 1:6-7).

One must keep in mind that Jesus became a man to fulfill all the prophecies written about the Messiah throughout the Old Testament (Mt 5:17). Therefore, Jesus Christ was born “the Son of Abraham” and “the Son of David” (Mt 1:1). The New Testament reveals that Jesus came the first time to be a sacrifice (the Son of Abraham) and He will come a second time to be King (the Son of David).

Not long after Pentecost, Peter addresses those in Jerusalem, quoting a Psalm which describes the Messiah becoming king through God the Father’s actions:

“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:34-36).

This portrait of Christ sitting on a throne with His enemies under His feet represents the fulfillment of God’s gospel

promise, first given in the *protoevangelium*. This promise is that the heel of the Seed of the woman will crush the head of the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15).

Later, when Peter heals a lame man in the name of Jesus Christ, he addresses the Jews who gather in amazement and directs their attention to the prophecies concerning Christ:

But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:18-21).

When Jesus returns, His presence will begin the “times of refreshing.” An initial “refreshing” of the earth will last 1000 years during Christ’s millennial Kingdom. Then, Christ’s Kingdom will reach its climax after God creates the New Earth and “makes all things new,” completely “refreshing” everything. At that time, God will establish the New Jerusalem and will grant His inheritance to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Everlasting Covenant with Chosen Kings

God offers an everlasting covenant and a kingdom to those “saints” who will dedicate themselves to serve Him.

Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him (Dan 7:27).

This covenant and everlasting kingdom is similar to those which God promised to King David: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the [covenant loyalty] of David” (Isa 55:3). As always, God is seeking for believers who will pursue His heart, so that He can reward them (2Chr 16:9).

During Christ's millennial Kingdom, God's faithful servants will begin their reign with Christ (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 20:4-6). After God creates the New Earth and "makes all things new," the New Jerusalem will be Christ's inheritance. Then Christ will reign forever, sharing His inheritance and rule over the New Earth with those faithful servants who have overcome this world (Rev 21:1-7).

Remember the maxim, "Many are called [to be chosen], but few are chosen"? Even though God chose both Saul and David to be kings over Israel, only David sought to please Him. Like Saul, most believers become full of selfishness and disrespect God's will; therefore, God will judge them and take away their kingdoms. In contrast, those believers who, like David, seek God's instructions, obey His commands, and pursue His will are pleasing to God, and He will reward them with an everlasting inheritance.

Just as God was searching for David, God is still searching for men and women who will listen to His instructions. He is looking for disciples who will remain obedient to His will even during persecution and suffering. He is seeking chosen kings who will pursue Him with whole hearts, so that He can reward them with everlasting kingdoms and the covenant loyalty He showed to David (Isa 55:3).

Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart! (Ps 119:2).

Glory in His holy name:
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD.
Seek the LORD and His strength,
Seek His face evermore! (1Chr 16:10-11).

[The LORD asks:]
Who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over [that kingdom]?
For who is like me?
And who will appoint me the time?
Who is that shepherd that will stand before me? (Jer 49:19 AV).