

THE JUDGES and KINGS : SAMSON, DAVID, SOLOMON, HEZEKIAH, JEROBOAM

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5. Samson

- 5-1 A Character Study Of Samson
- 5-2 Samson And Deja Vu
 - 5-2-1 Repetition In Biblical Narratives
 - 5-2-2 Samson And Job
 - 5-2-3 Samson And Gideon
 - 5-2-4 Samson And Solomon
 - 5-2-5 Samson And David
- 5-3 Samson's Marriage (Judges 14:1 - 15:8)
- 5-4 Samson At Lehi (Judges 15:9 - 20)
- 5-5 Samson In Gaza (Judges 16: 1-3)
- 5-6 Samson And Delilah (Judges 16:4-21)
- 5-7 The Death Of Samson (Judges 16:23 - 30)
- 5-8 Samson A Type Of Christ

6. David

- 6.1 David And Goliath
- 6-2 David And Jonathan
 - 6-2-1 David And Jonathan
 - 6-2-2 David's Lament Over Jonathan
 - 6-2-3 Jonathan's Relationship With Saul
 - 6-2-4 The Love Of David For Jonathan
 - 6-2-5 David And Michal
 - 6-2-6 Jonathan And Christ
- 6-3 David And Saul
 - 6-3-1 The Persecution Of David As A Type Of Christ
 - 6-3-2 David And Saul
- 6-4 David And Bathsheba
 - 6-4-1 David Our Example
 - 6-4-2 Bathsheba: Saint or Sinner?
 - 6-4-3 David's Sin With Bathsheba
 - 6-4-4 David's Repentance
- 6-5 A Character Study Of David

7. Solomon

- 7-1 Solomon As A Type Of Christ
- 7-2 Solomon And The Temple

- 7-3 Solomon And Women
 - 7-3-1 Solomon's Wives
 - 7-3-2 The Song Of Solomon
 - 7-3-3 Psalm 45
 - 7-3-4 Sin Never Satisfies
- 7-4 Solomon And David
 - 7-4-1 Parental Expectation
 - 7-4-2 Solomon And David
- 7-5 Solomon: What Went Wrong?
 - 7-5-1 Solomon's Apostacy
 - 7-5-2 Solomon's Attitude To The Kingdom
 - 7-5-3 Solomon's Self-Justification
 - 7-5-4 Solomon's Attitude To Being King
 - 7-5-5 Solomon And Pride
 - 7-5-6 Solomon's Materialism And Self-fulfilment
 - 7-5-7 Solomon And Wisdom
 - 7-5-8 The Mind Of Solomon
- 8. Jeroboam, Hezekiah, Isaiah
 - 8-1 The Character Of Jeroboam
 - 8-2 Hezekiah: Faith And Weakness
 - 8-3 The Ministry And Personal Life of Isaiah

Chapter 5: SAMSON

5.1 A Character Study Of Samson

Biblical history is unlike any other national history of a people in that it seems to emphasize the spiritual weakness of Israel. The heroes are nearly all flawed- and that, surely, is so as to give us realistic inspiration to rise up to their spirit, knowing how flawed we also are. And yet there's a tendency amongst some of us to idealize these men, in the same way as the Catholic and Orthodox churches portray them as white faced, haloed saints. Judaism has done the same. Despite the evident weaknesses of Samson (and other judges, e.g. Gideon) as revealed in the inspired record, later Jewish commentary sought to idealize them. Take Ecclesiasticus 46:11,12: "The judges too... all men whose hearts were never disloyal, who never turned their backs on the Lord...". Perhaps the psychological basis for this tendency is that we simply don't want to be personally challenged by the fact that heroes of faith were *so* much like us...

We know, or we ought to, how weak our moral judgment is, how prone we are to forget the degree to which God has justified us from our sins. This weakness is seen in the difficulty we have in analyzing the characters we read of in Scripture. For example, from reading the record of Lot in Genesis, it would seem that Lot was a materialistic, weak, faithless man who is shown to be the exact opposite to Abraham, who is held up as the example of real faith. Yet in the New Testament record, Peter points out that Lot was a righteous man. We are therefore left to conclude that the Genesis record is highlighting the weaker aspects of Lot's character, without commenting on the good points. We may have the same sort of surprise when we read in Hebrews 11 that Samson was a man of outstanding faith- yet the record we are reading at the moment in Judges seems framed to paint Samson as a womanizer, a man who lacked self-control and who only came to God in times of dire personal need.

But just imagine if only the negative incidents in our own lives, over a period of 20 (or 40?) years, were recorded. Anyone reading it would conclude that we were a complete hypocrite to claim to have any hope of salvation. In our self-examination, we sometimes see only this negative record; we fail to see that God has justified us, that in His record book, we are ranked among the faithful, as Samson was in Hebrews 11. Any character study of Samson needs to bear this in mind. Samson, over 40 years of service, courted a girl not in the faith and tried to marry her; once went to a prostitute in Gaza; and had an on-and-off relationship with a worthless woman in Sorek for a few months (?). And yet he seems to have lived the rest of his life full of faith and zeal- although I say this not in any way minimizing the mistakes he made. This is hardly evidence that Samson was the renegade sex-maniac that he is sometimes made out to be.

Samson's Aim

Samson lived at a time when Israel were hopelessly weak. His great desire was to do the work of the promised seed, who would save Israel from their enemies. He resented the Philistine domination and sought, single-handed, to overcome it in faith, not only for himself, but for his weaker brethren. As predestiny would have it, in recognition of his zeal for these things, he came from Zorah (13:2), 'the hornet'- a symbol of the Divine power that would drive the foreign tribes out of the land, as Samson dedicated himself to do (Dt. 7:20). And his father's name, Manoah, meant "rest", or inheritance (cp. Josh. 1:13,15). Samson-ben-Manoah was therefore Samson, the son of the promised inheritance.

Jud. 17-21 contain various pictures of and insights into the apostasy of the tribe of Dan, providing the backdrop for a character study of Samson. These chapters seem chronologically out of place; they belong before the Samson story. 18:30 speaks of Jonathan the grandson of Moses, and 20:28 of Phinehas the grandson of Aaron (cp. Num. 25:11), which would place these events at the beginning of the period of the Judges, once Israel had first settled in the land. Dan's apostasy is suggested by the way in which he is omitted from the tribes of the new Israel in Rev. 7. Zorah, Samson's home town, was originally Judah's inheritance (Josh. 15:33-36), but they spurned it, and passed it to Dan (Josh. 19:41), who also weren't interested; for they migrated to the north and took over the land belonging to the less warlike Sidonians (Jud. 18:2,7-10). Their selfishness is reflected by the way they chide with him: "What is this that thou hast done *unto us*?" (15:11). "They had become reconciled to the dominion of sin since it did not appear to do much harm. They could still grow their crops etc." . It is even possible that his parents had elements of weakness in them; for his name doesn't include the 'Yah' prefix, and 'Samson' ('splendour of the sun') may be a reference to the nearby town of Beth Shemesh ('house of the sun-god'). It could be argued that because the father was responsible for his son's marriage partner (12:9; 14:2; 15:2; Gen. 24:3-9; Neh. 10:30), therefore Samson's father was equally guilty for Samson's 'marriage out'. Many of the commands against intermarriage were directed to parents, commanding them not to give their children in intermarriage. All the Judges were preceded by a period of Israel prostituting themselves to the surrounding nations (Jud. 2:16-19); and this was evidently true of the period in which Samson grew up. From this apostate tribe and background came Samson. The way his own people angrily rebuked him that "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are lords over us?" (15:11) was tacit recognition of the depth of their apostasy. They seemed to have no regret that they were fulfilling the many earlier prophecies that they would be dominated by their enemies if they were disobedient to Yahweh. The fact that Israel were dominated throughout Samson's life by the Philistines is proof enough that they were apostate at this time (13:1; cp. 15:20; 16:31).

Yet Lev. 26:3-8 had promised dramatic success against their enemies *on the basis of* obedience to the Law. The fact Samson had this power was therefore proof that he really was reckoned by God as zealously obedient to the Law; and yet he was like this in the midst of a sadly apostate Israel. This character study of Samson takes this view of his strength. This is in itself no mean achievement: to rise to a level of spirituality much higher than that achieved by the surrounding brotherhood. When Paul spoke of us shining as lights in a dark world, in " a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15), he was using language which Moses had earlier used of how apostate Israel were the " crooked and perverse generation" (Dt. 32:5). The point of his allusion may have been that despite the darkness and apostacy of the surrounding brotherhood, we must all the same shine with the constancy of the stars.

His motivation for this came from God's word. Joshua's final exhortation to Israel contains a passage which reads as some kind of prophecy of Samson. It is proof enough that Samson is to be read as a symbol of Israel: " Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses...that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you (true in Samson's time)...but cleave unto the Lord your God...no man hath been able to stand before you (this was Samson)...one man of you shall chase a thousand (cp. Jud. 15:16): for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you (this was exactly true of Samson in Jud. 15:18)...take good heed unto yourselves...else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and make marriages with them (as Samson did), and go in unto them, and they to you (cp. Jud. 15:1; 16:, where Samson went in to the Philistine women): know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you (cp. 16:20); but they shall be snares and traps unto you (Delilah!)...and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish" (Josh. 23:6-13). This passage would associate Samson's God-given strength and victory over the Philistines with his obedience to God's word. It was not that Samson was just an arbitrary tool in God's hand. We will see in our later notes that frequently the things Samson says and does are full of allusion to various passages in the Law, and also earlier incidents recorded in Judges which would have been known to him probably as the oral word of God. We will also see that Samson was possessed of a finely tuned conscience. The first instance of this is when we read how the Spirit of Yahweh troubled him (Heb.) from time to time in the camp of Dan, in the very places where his people had earlier failed to follow up the victories of Joshua-Jesus by their spiritual laziness (13:25).

There is further evidence, from later Scripture, that Samson's zeal was born from the word. A character study of Samson needs to consider what later Scripture implies about him. It seems that Jeremiah was one of several later characters who found inspiration in Samson, and alluded to him in their prayers to God, seeing the similarities between his spirit and theirs:

" O Yahweh [Samson only used the Yahweh Name at the end of his life], thou knowest: remember me [as Samson asked to be remembered for good, 16:28], and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors [" that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines" , 16:28]...know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke [the Philistines doubtless mocked Yahweh as well as Samson]. Thy words were found, and I did eat them [cp. Samson loving the word and eating the honey which he " found" in the lion]: and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...I sat not in the assembly of the mockers...I sat alone because of thy hand [Samson's separation from an apostate Israel]...why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable?" [the finality of his blindness] (Jer. 15:15-17). If these connections are valid, Samson's love of the word was a very big part of his life.

The Strength Of Samson

Samson's zeal to deliver Israel was confirmed by God, in that he was given gifts of Holy Spirit in order to enable him to deliver Israel. However, this doesn't mean that he himself was a man rippling with muscle. The Philistines wanted to find out the *secret* of his strength; it wasn't that he had such evidently bulging muscles that the answer was self-evident. He told Delilah that if his head were shaved, he would be like any other man (16:17). He was therefore just an ordinary man, made strong by the Father after the pattern of the Saviour he typified. The stress is on the way in which the Spirit came upon Samson (14:6,19; 15:14), as it did on other judges (3:10; 6:34; 11:29). "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" (Zech. 4:6) may be referring to these incidents; demonstrating that when God's spirit acts on a man, it is not human muscle at all that operates. He is even listed amongst those who out of weakness were made strong (Heb. 11:34). A character study of Samson must remember this about him. This could suggest that he was even weaker than a normal man; or it could be a reference to the way in which out of his final spiritual weakness and degradation he was so wonderfully strengthened (16:28). It should be noted that his strength was not somehow magically associated with his hair; his strength went from him because Yahweh departed from him (16:19,20). He had to beg his own people not to try to kill him themselves (even whilst he had long hair), because he knew that the strength he had was only for certain specific purposes- i.e., to deliver God's people from the Philistines (15:12). When he was strolling in the Timnath vineyards, a lion came across him (15:5 AVmg.). It was only after it roared against him that the Spirit came upon him and enabled him to kill it. He had to take the first nervous steps towards that lion in faith, and then the Spirit came upon him and confirmed his actions. The fact he didn't tell his parents what he had done may not only indicate his humility, but also suggests he was not naturally a strong man. To say he had just killed a lion would seem ridiculous (14:6). The Spirit likewise came upon him to kill the Philistines in Lehi (15:14). It wasn't a permanent strength. This is in harmony with the way in which the Spirit was used in the NT. The Spirit came upon the apostles and they were filled up with it, as it were, and then drained of it once the work was done; and had to be filled with it again when the next eventuality arose. Indeed, the word *baptizo* strictly means 'to fill and thereby submerge'; hence the use of the term in classical Greek concerning the sinking of ships or the filling of a bottle. Therefore the idea of baptism with Holy Spirit could simply be describing a temporary filling of the Apostles with power in order to achieve certain specific aims. If this is indeed how Samson experienced his fillings with the Spirit, it throws new light on the way he allowed Delilah to apparently suck information out of him. She asked for the secret of his strength; he knew she would betray him; he told her; she betrayed him, which meant a group of Philistine warriors came and hid themselves in the house (full known to Samson); and he then rose up and killed them, using the gift of God's Spirit. He was so sure that God would use him in this way, that he thought he could do anything in order to entice Philistine warriors into his presence- even if it involved gratifying his own flesh. The way he threw away the jawbone after killing 1000 Philistines at Lehi may suggest that he felt that now he had done the job, the instrument was useless; and he begged the Lord to give him drink. He knew that now he was an ordinary man again (15:18). It must be emphasized, in line with this understanding of Samson's strength, that his strength was not tied up in his hair. He only ground in the prison a short time, until the great sacrifice was offered to Dagon in thanks for Samson's capture. In that time, his hair grew- but not very long, in such a short time (no more than months, 16:22,23). The growth of his hair is to be associated with his renewed determination to keep the Nazarite vow. He was reckoned by God as a lifelong Nazarite (15:7); the time when his hair was cut was therefore overlooked by God. His zealous repentance and desire to respond to the gracious way in which God still recognized him as a

lifelong Nazarite, although he wasn't one, inspired him to a real faith and repentance. It was this, not the fact he had some hair again, which led to God empowering him to destroy the palace of Dagon.

The Weakness Of Samson

It would be simplistic for a character study of Samson to see Samson as some kind of sex maniac-cum-believer. He was a man of faith who, amidst a weak and indifferent brotherhood, tried to rise up to the spirit of Messiah in delivering Israel from their spiritual enemies. In order to devote himself to this, it seems that he chose the single life. In common with others who trod that path of zeal (e.g. Timothy and possibly Hezekiah), he couldn't maintain it all the time. He stumbled, and his stumbling in this area resulted in him reasoning that the end (i.e. the work he was doing) justified the means, and that therefore he could do God's work in a way which in fact gratified his own flesh. He had to learn the spirit of the cross-carrying Christ; the lesson of the whole burnt offering: that the *whole* of a man's life must be affected by the cross- not just those parts which we are willing to surrender ⁽¹⁾. We can't mix the service of God with the service of self. There is no third road. Because Samson failed to realize this (until the end), he was a man who in many ways never quite made it; he never quite lived up to the spiritual potential which he had. Although he was to be the beginning of serious deliverance of Israel from the Philistines (13:5), the whole story of Samson is prefaced by the fact that during the 40 years of Samson's' ministry (15:20 + 16:31), " the Lord delivered (Israel) into the hand of the Philistines" (13:1). It is emphasized in 14:4 that " at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel" ; and the men of Judah chode with him: " Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?" (15:11). The point is hammered home in 15:20: " He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years" . God's intention was that Samson was to deliver Israel from the Philistines; but somehow he never rose up to it. They remained under the Philistines, even during his ministry. He made a few sporadic attempts in red hot personal zeal, confirmed by God, to deliver Israel. But he never rose up to the potential level that God had prepared for him in prospect. And yet for all this, he was accepted in the final analysis as a man of faith. It may be possible to understand that the breaking of his Nazariteship was yet another way in which he never lived up to his God-given potential ⁽²⁾. He was " a Nazarite unto God from the womb to the day of his death" (13:7). Yet he broke the Nazarite vow by touching dead bodies and having his hair shaven (Num. 6:6). This may mean that he chose to break God's ideal intention for him, to take a lower and lower level of service to God until actually he had slipped away altogether. However, it may be that God counted *his desire* for the high standard of Nazariteship to him. He saw him as if this never happened, in the same way as He saw Abraham as if he had offered up Isaac, even though ultimately he didn't (Heb. 11:17; James 2:21). Intention, not the human strength of will to do the act, seems to be what God earnestly looks for.

As a final note on the aim and purpose of Samson's life, reflect how the Angel declared that he would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Jud. 13:5). Yet he died with the Philistines firmly in control over Israel. This was potentially possible in the Angelic plan; but he didn't live up to what had been made possible in prospect. Significantly, Samson's mother omitted to repeat this part of the Angel's conversation when she relayed the incident to her husband (Jud. 13:7)- perhaps because she didn't believe that her child would be capable of this. And perhaps this was a factor in his failure to achieve what God had intended for him.

Notes

(1) See *Taking Up The Cross*.

(2) It may be fair comment on the character of Samson that he was a man who never quite made it, and therefore didn't achieve the potential deliverance which would have been possible. However, this must dovetail with the fact that Israel's deliverance at the hands of the judges was related to their crying to Yahweh in faith and repentance (Neh. 9:27,28). It seems that they did precious little of this during the time of Samson, from what we know of them from the record. Therefore Samson didn't deliver them as far as he potentially could have done. And yet in God's perfect planning, this worked together with the fact that Samson himself limited the deliverance he could achieve by his moral weakness.

5.2 Samson And Deja Vu

5-2-1 Repetition In Biblical Narratives

The phenomena of situations repeating within and between human lives has been noticed by many. Plutarch wrote twenty three volumes in his series *Parallel Lives*, comparing the amazing similarities between the life experiences of characters like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. We can discern the same between Biblical characters. It will be apparent to any regular Bible reader that there is a tremendous repetition within the Biblical narratives. Individuals tend to go through very similar experiences, and often the same words are used in the descriptions of the experience or their response to it. Some of these similarities are so specific and humanly unlikely to be replicated that one can only conclude that there was a higher power over-ruling their situations. It may be that the Angels work in human lives according to some kind of Divine pattern, and this accounts for the sense of repetition and *deja vu*. But it may also be because it is God's intention that we meditate upon the lives of previous servants to the point where we see their experiences coming through, in principle, in our own lives; and we are urged on to a like victory as they attained. Consider the following of many possible examples of this repetition in Biblical narratives:

- The way Saul returns from pursuing David because of a rumour of invasion is so similar to Rabshakeh's retreat from Jerusalem after rumours of incursions (1 Sam. 23:27). As Samuel tarried longer than Saul expected, so Amasa "tarried longer than the set time which [David] had appointed him" (2 Sam. 20:5).

- The history of Joseph contains many strange echoes within it, as the essence of issues as well as specific circumstances are repeated. Thus a false story was given credibility and Joseph was imprisoned on the basis of false evidence involving his garment; his brothers misused another garment of Joseph to tell a false story about him. And the story of Tamar is interjected in Genesis 38, also including a garment story. Indeed, there's a pattern of episodes being duplicated throughout the Joseph story. Twice Joseph is put in a dungeon- once by his brothers, another time by Potiphar; the dreams are in pairs; Joseph twice asks that Benjamin accompany the brothers; the brothers visit Egypt twice and both times they are given two audiences with Joseph. And within the recorded dialogues there is repetition and duplication; thus the brothers explain twice why it would be impossible to return without Benjamin; they are twice accused of spying.

- Asa's faith was rewarded when he faced a massive Ethiopian army; but some years later, God repeated the situation. A huge Israelite army faced him; and instead of trusting in Yahweh, he gave the temple treasures to Syria so that they would come and fight the battle for him. And God wasn't slow to point out how circumstances had repeated, but this time Asa had failed the test: " Were not the Ethiopians and Lubims a huge host...? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand... herein you have done foolishly:

therefore from henceforth you shall have wars" (2 Chron. 16:8,9). The "wars" God brought upon Asa weren't merely punishments; they were yet further opportunities for Asa to face the same situations, and overcome them with faith. And God likewise works in our lives.

- The incidents involving Moses and Jacob meeting women at a well are evidently intended to be seen as reflecting some unseen Heavenly template.

- When Joshua was leading the Israelite army, he was given victory because Moses kept his arms outstretched in prayer. Later, circumstances repeated, so that Joshua had the opportunity to make the same effort for others as had been made for him. For Joshua had to keep his hand stretched out, until his men had destroyed all the men of Ai (Josh. 8:26). And throughout life, this occurs for us- a situation wherein we were shown grace repeats, in essence, so that we have a chance to show the same grace to others which we received.

- The Ephraimites came over as offended because they weren't invited to fight in a battle, even though they had shown no inclination; and they did this with both Gideon and Jephthah (Jud. 8:1; 12:1)

- Mephibosheth eating at David's table is somehow similar to Jehoiachin being raised to eat at that of the king of Babylon.

- The similarities between the David / Nabal / Abigail experience and those of Jacob, whilst he too kept flocks (1 Sam. 25:35 = Gen. 32:20; 25:18 = Gen. 32:13; 25:27 = Gen. 33:11).

- The way Abigail asked David to remember her for good when he came in his kingdom, knowing that he was perfect and suffering unjustly....is exactly the spirit of the thief on the cross. And David like Jesus responds that he has "accepted thy person" (1 Sam. 25).

- Judah and his brothers sent Joseph's blood stained coat to Jacob. It's recorded that they invited their father to "discern, pray, whether it is your son's robe or not. And he recognized it, and said: It is my son's robe" (Gen. 37:32,33). The very same Hebrew words are used in Gen. 38:25,26 in describing how Tamar *sent* to Judah saying '*Discern, pray, whose are these, the signet and the cords and the staff. And Judah recognized them and said...*'. The whole point of the similarities is to show how God sought to teach Judah how his father Jacob had felt. Note the parallels between the he-goat in Gen. 37:31 and the "kid of the goats" of Gen. 38:17-20; "and he refused to be comforted" of Gen. 37:35 is a designed contrast with how "Judah was comforted" (Gen. 38:12).

- God created a great wind with which He brought Jonah and his fellows to their knees in Jonah 1:4. God later creates another great wind with which to teach Jonah something else (Jonah 4:8). Jonah ought to have perceived the same hand of the same God at work with him. Jonah's life "ebbed away" inside the fish (Jonah 2:8)- and a very similar word is used about his experience as he sat under the gourd (Jonah 4:8). In the fish, Jonah prayed that God would save his life, and was heard. But when he was made to feel the same again, he instead prayed God to take away his life. Perhaps this shows that even when we respond well to circumstances, those same circumstances may repeat in order to test us as to whether we will continue to make that right response.

- Joash did right before God whilst the priest Jehoiada was alive, and then apostasized; Uzziah did likewise, with Zechariah the priest (2 Chron. 24:2; 26:5). He didn't reflect upon

the personal implications of Divine history. And we too must appreciate that there are Bible characters whose experiences are framed in terms directly relevant to us- for our learning. Interestingly, straight after Jehoiada died, the princes of the land came to Joash with a request, which he wrongly listened to. This has great similarities with the tragic mistake made by Rehoboam after Solomon died (2 Chron. 10:3,4 cp. 24:17). So Joash was given chance after chance to be directed back to previous examples and be instructed by them- but he went on in his own way.

- The genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. Thus both Arphachsad and Shelah each lived 403 years after the births of the eldest sons; Shelah, Peleg and Serug were each 30 when their first sons were born. Abraham and Shem both had sons at 100 years old (Gen. 11:10). And it is the very nature of Christian fellowship that God has arranged that our human lives likewise have elements of amazing similarity of pattern.

- The way Peter was given a vision and asked to eat what he had previously thought unclean has many similarities with Ezekiel going through a similar experience (Ez. 4:10-14 cp. Acts 10:14).
- In 2 Kings 5:9, Elisha sat in his house and messengers from a powerful man, Naaman the leper, came to him; and displayed an amazing calm before them. This situation repeated in 2 Kings 6:32, where Elisha again sits in his house and the messengers of an aggressive King came to him. The theme of lepers recurs in this latter context also (2 Kings 7:3). And in 2 Kings 5:18 we read of Naaman as a man upon whose arm a King (of Syria) leaned; and we find one of those sent to Elisha the second time was likewise "a lord upon whose hand the King (of Israel) leaned (2 Kings 7:2).
- Obadiah faithfully hid Yahweh's prophets, at the risk of his life (1 Kings 18:13); but when tested again in this matter, he was fearful to appear to Ahab to have been hiding Elijah's location (1 Kings 18:10-12). We can pass the test at one stage in our lives, and yet when the same test repeats later, we may still fail.
- There's a repeated circumstance of a woman promised in marriage to a man being given to another- in the lives of Samson and David (1 Sam. 18:19).
- David sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him, and they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail's grace and wisdom saved him from (1 Sam. 25). And yet the same situation repeated in its essence when he sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed (2 Sam. 10:3). Again, David got angry- but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he did get into an impossible fight... from which by grace God delivered him. Could it not be that David failed to learn from his previous experience...?
- The signs done by Moses before Pharaoh have evident connection with the later plagues brought upon him- they were all "that you may know" (Ex. 7:17 etc.). The staff, stretched out right hand, snakes, the rod "swallowing" the serpent rods of Egypt (symbols of Pharaoh- Ez. 29:3-5; 32:2) just as the Egyptians were to be swallowed at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12), leprosy / boils, water / blood all repeat. The signs were thus both an encouragement to believe as well as a warning of judgment to come. Pharaoh was presented with the possibility of either faith, or destruction. Note in passing that God's hardening of that man's heart didn't mean that He made no effort to save him nor appeal to him.

- The experience of Moses at the burning bush was to prepare him for God's later revelation to him at Sinai. The bush is called the *seneh*, three times in the same sentence (Ex. 3:2)- and the Hebrew strongly suggests the word 'Sinai'.
- Balaam is a classic example. His eyes were opened to the Angel blocking his way, and when he realized how he had closed his spiritual vision to the Angel trying to stop him going to Balak, he fell down on his face (Num. 22:31). But when he is later given a vision of Balak's judgment, the vision which Balaam didn't want to see, he describes himself as "the man whose eye was closed" and yet had to see the vision with his eyes open (Num. 24:3,4 RV). He didn't learn the lesson. He closed his eyes so as not to see the vision, and yet God forced him to open his eyes and see it. And again, he fell down upon his face (Num. 24:4,16 RV), as he had when the Angel blocked his path earlier. He wouldn't learn his lesson, he wouldn't perceive how circumstances were being repeated in God's desperate effort to get him to repent.
- Joseph was told to arise and take Jesus to Egypt; and he arose from sleep and did it. And the same double 'arising' occurred when he left Egypt to return to Israel (Mt 2:13,14 cp. 20,21).
- The disciples' eyes were heavy and they fell asleep at the critical moment. But earlier, "having remained awake", the same disciples were blessed with a vision of the Lord's glory (Lk. 9:32 RVmg.). If they had remained awake in the garden, they would have seen the Lord being glorified by Angelic visitation. But they didn't perceive how the circumstances were repeating, and thus didn't find the strength and inspiration which was potentially prepared for them through the similarity of circumstance.
- Saul's vision of Jesus occurred with others present who didn't perceive vital parts of the vision- just as in the case of Daniel (Dan. 10:7).
- David's experience of having friends within the court of Saul prepared him for having friends within the court of Absalom, when both those men were hunting him (2 Sam. 15:35).
- Samuel as a child had to tell Eli of God's rejection of him, and replacement of him with someone else. This prepared Samuel for doing this very same thing years later, with Saul (1 Sam. 15:16); and to some extent, he too failed in ways similar to Eli, and was in a sense replaced. Whilst it's impossible to attach meaning to events at the time they happen, they potentially prepare us for later use by God if we are willing to be used.
- The Shunamite woman stood "in the door", i.e. on the threshold, when Elisha gave her the message that she would have a child (2 Kings 4:15). This was surely to help her see the similarities with Abraham and Sarah in the tent door, who were given the same message; and they like the Shunamite woman almost lost and then 'received back' the promised son.
- David was tested by God in the matter of sparing the life of his enemy Saul- and he came through the test with flying colours (1 Sam. 26). But soon afterwards, he was tested again in the same area in the matter of Nabal- and he initially failed, intent as he was to take the life of his enemy Nabal (1 Sam. 28). Thus a circumstance can repeat over a matter in which we were previously successful- and we can still fail that test.
- God gave a prophecy about Tyre the generation before Judah went into exile for 70 years. He said that Tyre would be forgotten for 70 years and then would be visited by Yahweh and

revived (Is. 23:17). Surely this was in order to prepare those who had ears to hear to the fact that if God could operate like this with Tyre, how much more could He revive and "visit" His beloved people after 70 years.

- Especially do we find the essence of the Red Sea deliverance repeated in life after life, situation after situation, in Israel's history. This happens to the extent that some of the Psalms can speak as if we were there present; and Paul stresses how that passage through water remains a type of the baptism of every believer to this day (1 Cor. 10:1). Take for example how just as Yahweh confounded Israel's enemies at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24), so He did in Deborah's victory over Sisera (Jud. 4:15); and "not one was left" (Jud. 4:16), just as happened with the Egyptians (Ex. 14:28).

For other examples of repetition in Biblical narratives see 2 Kings 7:9,11,16; 2 Sam. 10:3 [cp. David sending his men to Nabal- but he doesn't learn the lesson this time]; 1 Chron. 7:22 [cp. Jacob being comforted by his sons over the loss of Joseph]; Benaiah killed a lion in order to prepare him for killing two lionlike men (1 Chron. 11:22); Peter, James and John were asleep at the transfiguration, but became "fully awake" and therefore beheld the Lord's glory (Lk. 9:32)- they feel asleep in Gethsemane, and didn't learn from the transfiguration experience.

An extended example of this repetition in Biblical narratives is to be found in the remarkable parallels between the sufferings of Stephen and the Lord Jesus, as tabulated by M. Ashton:

The Lord Jesus

Stephen

Acts 2:22

Acts 6:8

Luke 4:22

Acts 6:10

Mark 12:13

Acts 6:11

Luke 20:20

Acts 6:12

Matthew 26:59

Acts 6:13

Matthew 26:61

Acts 6:14

Matthew 26:65

Acts 6:11

Mark 15:20

Acts 7:57,58

Mark 14:62

Acts 7:56

Realizing, sensing how he was living out the sufferings of his Lord, all this really motivated Stephen; when he asked for forgiveness for his tormentors and asked for his spirit to be received (7:59,60), he was so evidently reflecting the words of the Lord in His time of final agony and spiritual and physical extension (Lk. 23:34,46). He saw the similarities between his sufferings and those of the Lord; and therefore he went ahead and let the spirit of the Lord

Jesus live in him. He personalized those words of the Lord which he already well knew, and made them his own.

The record of Samson has a large number of these repetition in Biblical narrative. They are situations where he was connected into the experience of those who had gone before:

- Manoah's desire to detain the Angel (13:15 cp. 6:18; Gen. 18:5)
- " The child grew, and the Lord blessed him" (13:24 cp. Samuel, John, the Lord Jesus- all chosen from the womb)
- The dissapointment of Samson's parents cp. that of Esau's (14:3 cp. Gen. 26:35; 27:46; 28:1)
- Judah also did wrong in Timnath (14:1) with a woman, and was deceived and shamed by her (15:1 = Gen. 38:17). Earlier Scripture, which it seems Samson well knew and appreciated, was crying out to Samson to take heed. But he was blind to the real import of it all.
- Samson slaying Philistines with a jawbone suggests Shamgar slaying Philistines with an ox goad (15:15 cp. 3:31).
- Samson dying of thirst crying desperately for water recalls Hagar's experience (15:19 cp. Gen. 21:19).
- Samson in a foreign city " compassed in" by his enemies recalls Paul (Acts 9:24), David (Ps. 118:10-12; 1 Sam. 23:26), the spies in Jericho .
- Samson suddenly called up out of the prison house (16:25) cp. Joseph (Gen. 41:14), John (Mt. 14:9).
- Gentiles praising their gods, mocking Yahweh, and then suddenly being destroyed (16:24) was a scene repeated in Dan. 5:4.

The Samson record seems to be framed to repeat the experiences of those who had gone before him: Job, Jacob and Gideon.

Relevance For Us

One can also recount such instances of repetition in the narratives of our own lives. Our experiences connect with those of Biblical characters- and thus the Biblical records become alive and intensely personal for each of us. Further, we see similarities in patterns and experiences between our lives and those of others contemporary with us. This is surely to enable the principle of 2 Cor. 1:4- that if we suffer anything, it is so that we can mediate comfort to those who suffer as we do. To go into our shells and not do this not only makes our own sufferings harder, but frustrates the very purpose of them. The repeating similarities between our lives and those of others also reveal to us that God at times arranges for us to suffer from our *alter ego*- persons who behave similarly to us, and who through those similarities cause us suffering. In this way we are taught the error of our ways, both past and present. It seems that Jacob the deceiver suffered in this way from Laban the deceiver- in

order to teach him and cause his spiritual growth. For example, as Jacob deceived his blind father relating to an important family matter, so Laban deceived Jacob in the darkness of the wedding night. And Jacob learnt from this- whereas Laban [so it seems] just didn't "get it". Indeed, so many themes repeated in Jacob's life in order to teach him. For example, when he first meets Rachel, there are three other flocks of sheep waiting to be watered (Gen. 29:2); but the implication of Gen. 29:10 is that Jacob rolled away the stone from the well and watered them and ignored the other three flocks. But did not this stone return upon his own head when God rolled away the reproach of the other three women in Jacob's life (Leah and the two servant girls) but not that of Rachel, who initially remained barren?

The repetition of circumstance in our lives is not only to teach us, but to make sure that we learnt the lesson- for what teacher doesn't give pupils exercises to practice the theory they've learnt? It seems that Joseph, acting on God's behalf and as a type of Christ, manipulated circumstances so that his brothers would have *deja vu* experiences. Thus he sets things up to tempt them with freedom if they again betray their younger brother (Benjamin) and are thoughtless to their father's pain. The united, frank and open response of the brothers (Gen. 44:13,16,17) showed how they had indeed learnt their lesson.

All this makes sense of how Biblical characters are indeed "types of us". Once we realize that our lives are being overruled to have similarities with *them*, then we come to Scripture with a far greater personal verve for understanding and insight. Ray Foster put it so well: "Typology is rather more than a matter of literary style: it is a re-calling or re-presentation of the past event so that it becomes a contemporary *kairos*, calling men into obedience and response *now*" (1). Supremely is all this relevant to the connections between our own experiences and those of the Lord Jesus. We see men like Paul having their lives moulded in order to fellowship with the sufferings of Christ (2). There were some aspects in which Paul had to chose to fill up what was still lacking of his experience of Christ's sufferings (Col. 1:24). But there were others in which Paul's life was set up by God as a reflection of Christ's- e.g. they were born within a year or so of each other, and it seems Paul also went into exile (in Tarsus) as a baby, fleeing persecution in Israel.

Notes

(1) R.S. Foster, *The Restoration of Israel* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970) p. 82.

(2) See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Jesus and Paul: Parallel Lives* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

5-2-2 Samson And Job

In the time of his humbling and mocking, in the wake of years of spiritual self-assurance, Job set such a clear prototype of Samson that Samson surely must have realized this, as he ground in the prison house. Job too suffered from blindness in his afflictions (Job 11:20; 17:5; 19:8; 30:12).

Job's last words

Job 30:1 mocked by youth

Samson at his end

Judges 16:26

Job 30:6 The wicked dwell in the rocks	Judges 15:8
Job 30:9 " Now I am their song, yes, I am their byword"	Judges 16:25
Job 30:11 " He hath loosed my cord and afflicted me"	In Judges 16:8 the same word is used of the cords with which Samson was bound, and which the Philistines loosed. Only a few weeks later (?) God was afflicting him through Delilah (16:19)
Job 30:12 " Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet...they mar my path, they set forward my calamity" . This indicates Job's poor eyesight and how the youth abused him.	This is exactly what happened to Samson. The lad made him dance, according to Jewish tradition, by poking Samson with sticks (16:25,26)
Job 30:17 " My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest" .	Both Samson and Job came to fellowship something of the Lord's future cross: the unnatural darkness, the pierced bones, the constant ache of sinews: as Samson ground and danced, and as the Lord heaved Himself up and down on His sinews to breathe.
Job 30:19 " He hath cast me into the mire (sometimes an idiom for prison), and I am become like dust and ashes" .	As Samson in prison came to be like an ordinary man (dust and ashes; 16:11).
Job 30:20 " I cry unto thee...I stand up"	Samson cried to Yahweh, standing up (16:28)
Job 30:24 " Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave"	Samson likewise would have come to the hope of personal resurrection.

According to Samson's appreciation of these links, so he would have reaped encouragement and hope. Job's last words were followed by a final humbling, and then the glorious justification of himself and the judgment of his enemies, to culminate in his future resurrection. One hopes that Samson saw the point and grasped hold of the hope offered (consider how the Lord's words to Peter in Jn. 21:13 would have offered him tremendous comfort in Acts 12:8, if he appreciated them).

And this is not all. There were other words in Job which would have so comforted Samson at the end: " Behold, God is strong...he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous...and if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity...but the hypocrites in heart...*cry not* (as Samson did) when he bindeth them" (Job 36:5-13).

5-2-3 Samson And Gideon

Manoah's desire to detain the Angel and offer sacrifice (13:15) was exactly that of Gideon (6:18). His belief after he had seen the Angel ascend (13:20 = 6:21), and his subsequent fear, were again expressed in the words of Gideon (13:21,22 cp. 6:22). As Gideon was, perhaps subconsciously, the hero of Manoah, so Samson followed his father's spirituality in this. It seems he lived out parental expectation, and imbibed the spirituality of his father without making it his own. Born and raised believers, beware.

As the Spirit came upon Gideon (6:34), so it is described as coming upon Samson (14:6). It seems that the incident in ch. 15, where Samson visits his wife with a kid and uses this as an excuse to kill many Philistines, was planned by him to reflect Gideon's zeal. The way Gideon brought a kid to Yahweh (6:19) may reflect how Samson came with a kid (15:1). He then takes 300 foxes and puts firebrands in their tails. Why 300? Surely this was in conscious imitation of how Gideon took 300 men and put firebrands in their hands, and with them destroyed God's enemies (7:16). The connection between the faithful 300 and the foxes could suggest that in Samson's eyes, he didn't even have one faithful Israelite to support him; he had to use animals instead. It may be that as Gideon " went down" to destroy God's enemies (7:9), so Samson justified his 'going down' to the Philistines to take their women, as well as to destroy their warriors (14:1,5,7,10). As Gideon was somehow 'separate from his brethren' in his zeal, so was Samson. And yet Samson seems to have copied just the externalities of Gideon ⁽⁴⁾; not the real spirit. And therefore as Gideon foolishly multiplied women to himself in the spiritual weakness of his middle age, so perhaps Samson saw justification for his attitude. 'If heroic Gideon could indulge the flesh in this area, I surely can'. He fell into our common trap: to compare ourselves amongst ourselves, to measure ourselves against human standards as we find them among the contemporary brotherhood (2 Cor. 10:12). Saul should have realized that Samson, like him, idolized Gideon, but only on a surface level- and should have taken the lesson. But he didn't see the points we've made in this paragraph. He could have done, but he didn't bother. And so with us. The word supplies us the potential power to overcome. It can often happen that the daily readings are almost purpose-designed for our present situation. Yet if we neglect to read them- that help lies untapped.

When Samson decided to attack Gaza by going into a harlot's house, he may have been consciously imitating the way the spies played their part in Jericho's destruction (16:1). And yet it was once again only a surface imitation. He fell for the 'little of both' syndrome, justifying it under the guise of Scriptural examples. He had done this in his youth; he " went down" to take a Philistine girl for wife (14:1,5,7,10); and yet by doing so he was seeking an opportunity to slay Philistines. He may well have had in mind the sustained emphasis on the fact that Gideon went *down* to destroy the Midianites (Jud. 7:9,10,11,24). He went down morally and physically, and yet he justified this by thinking that as Gideon went down physically, so would he. Such is the complexity of the process of temptation. And all this is written for our learning. Significantly, the major temptations within the Lord's mind- as far

as we can tell from the record of the wilderness temptations- was to misinterpret Scripture to His own ends; to soften the cross.

Jacob

" Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (13:18) is exactly the Angelic words to Jacob (Gen. 32:29). Their subsequent fear (13:22), cp. Gen. 32:20. The seven day marriage feast, associated with a deceitful father in law offering the sister of the desired bride in marriage (14:12), this is all the same as Jacob experienced (Gen. 29:27)- right down to the fact that the younger sister was fairer (15:2 cp. Gen. 29:16,17). Samson should have learnt from the evident similarities with Jacob; but like Jacob, still trusted his own strength.

Notes

(1) Saul did the same when he prohibited the men to eat anything while they were pursuing the Philistines (1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 1 Sam. 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 1 Sam. 14:24,28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5). He may have followed Samson's weak side when at this same time he demanded to be avenged of his enemies (1 Sam. 14:24); yet this wasn't Samson at his best (15:7; 16:28). See too *Devotion: A Caveat* for more discussion of this tendency.

5-2-4 Samson And Solomon

Solomon was evidently fascinated by Samson. His writings contain many allusions to him. Thus he speaks of how he found " more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares, and her hands as bands (" fetters" , RSV): whoso pleaseth God shall escape her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26). His constant warnings about the danger of the Gentile (AV " strange") woman are all commands to learn from the example of Samson. All these passages allude to Samson (e.g. 5:20; 6:26-28; 7:21-27). Often the Proverbs allude to characters in Israel's history. The references to a wise son rejoicing his father and mother (Prov. 23:25) and saddening them by his folly shout for application to Samson. The warnings about not *looking* at a strange woman recall how Samson *saw* the Philistine girl in Timnath and the prostitute in Gaza (14:1; 16:1). The wicked woman lying in wait to kill the simple man (Prov. 23:25-27) is a clear enough reference to Delilah and her henchmen lying in wait in the bedroom. And yet, for all this reflection upon Samson, Solomon went and did *par excellence* according to Samson's well-studied folly. And we can do the same, in principle. There is this vast distance between knowledge and belief.

There is an undoubted connection between the record of Solomon *catching* the *foxes* and using them to destroy *vineyards* (15:4,5) and Song 2:15, where Solomon suggests that he and his girl go and catch the foxes that destroy the vineyards. He seems to have had Samson in mind. And yet both he and his Gentile girlfriend owned vineyards (Song 1:6; 8:11,12), and both were concerned that the fruit would not be damaged (Song 2:13,15; 6:11; 7:12). However, the implication from Solomon's maybe careless allusion was that in fact he was in the position of the Philistines, worrying about the effect of Samson's foxes.

There is further comment on Samson and Solomon in [Samson And Delilah](#).

Not only do circumstances repeat between the lives of God's children, but also within our lives. We may pass through a very similar experience more than once. The human chances of this ever happening again were remote. But the similarity and repetition may be so that we learn the lesson we failed to learn; or it could even be a punishment for not learning the

lessons we should have learned. Again, Samson's life demonstrates this. The lion roared against him as the Philistines did (14:5 s.w. 15:14); and not least in the uncanny similarities between the way his first wife enticed him and wrung his secrets from him, and the way 40 years later another worthless woman did the same to him (14:15-17 = 16:5,15,16). He just didn't see the similarities, or if he did, he didn't learn any lessons. Admittedly, it's far easier for us, presented with the records as they are, spanning 40 years within a few pages.

5-2-5 Samson And David

The point of all this is that God intends us to make character studies of those He has carefully recorded in the word. And that doesn't only mean at Bible Schools. Job, Samson, Jacob...these men must live in our lives and meditation, to the end we may find the spirit of the Lord Himself in our daily experience. Samson is one of those whose record is evidently designed for meditation. This is why there are so many open ended questions of interpretation of his actions and character- e.g., as to whether he was justified in seeking a Philistine wife as part of seeking an occasion against the Philistines. There is no lack of evidence that later Bible characters found inspiration in Samson, especially in their weakness. Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:12,13 = Jud. 16:19,28); Jeremiah (commented on in *Samson: General Introduction*), Nehemiah (16:28 = Neh. 13:22,31), and not least David, another zealot with middle age lust problems (Ps. 118:10-12 = Jud. 16:2). The Spirit came on David as it did on Samson (1 Sam. 16:13); they were both empowered to kill lions, whilst keeping the fact a secret. And in both those acts they were taught that they would deliver God's people from the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Indeed, David's confident words that God would deliver him from the Philistines were evidently inspired by Samson, the renowned one-man deliverer from Philistine armies. Both Samson and David wrought "great salvation" for Israel (1 Sam. 19:5 cp. Jud. 15:18). As Samson was characterized by his love of that riddle (the word occurs nine times in 14:12-19, and 15:16 Heb. is also some kind of riddle), so David uses the same word to describe how he chose to put forth a riddle (Ps. 78:2). Psalm 3 is full of reference to Samson's fight at Lehi. It was also written at a time when David was betrayed by his own people:

" Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him'" - the thoughts of the Israelites as they delivered the bound Samson to the Philistines

" But you are a shield around me" - how it must have seemed to a spectator

" To the Lord I cry aloud" - as Samson did

" I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me" - huge armies against one solitary man is a clear reference to Samson at Lehi

" Strike all my enemies the jaw bone" (Ps. 3:7 Heb.)- it could imply 'with the jaw bone'. The Hebrew for 'jaw bone' is the same as in Jud. 15:16.

5.3 Samson's Marriage (Judges 14:1 - 15:8)

The whole question of Samson's marriage is overshadowed by the fact that " It was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines" (14:4); He used this incident to begin to raise up Samson as a Judge of Israel (2:16,18; 1 Chron. 17:10). This is surely one of Scripture's purposeful ambiguities, designed to provoke us to meditation: it is unclear

whether " he" refers to Samson or Yahweh. There are a number of other passages which mention how " it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. And yet this would require that God almost made Samson have a desire for that woman. This may not be impossible- it may be that Paul's God-given " thorn in the flesh" was a similar forbidden passion. It would be an example of God leading into temptation (Mt. 6:13). However, it is more likely that God worked through Samson's wrong desires, through his human weakness, to bring about God's purpose and glory.

Samson's Aim

The context of Samson's marriage does seem to suggest that Samson himself sought occasion against the Philistines; for the Spirit of the Lord had been troubling his conscience as to why the people of Dan had not followed up Joshua's victories, and had allowed themselves to be overrun by the uncircumcised (13:25 Heb.). The only other references to " troubled" are in Gen. 41:8; Ps. 77:4; Dan. 2:1,3. The Spirit of God worked with Samson's spirit, so that it was troubled as he went for his solitary walks of meditation. It was no accident that he was buried in the very place where his conscience was first awakened (16:31); he maybe asked for this burial place, to show he had at last returned to his innocent spiritual beginnings. He is described as wanting to " take" a wife; this Hebrew word is 51 times translated 'take away', 31 times 'fetch'. He evidently didn't intend to live there with her; he wanted her to come and live with him in the Israelite encampment, four miles up in the hills from the valley where she lived. She was 'right in his eyes' (14:3 AVmg.) not for beauty but in the sense that 'she suits my purpose' (Heb.). The same Hebrew is used not concerning beauty but rather utility in 1 Sam. 18:20; 2 Sam. 17:4; 1 Kings 9:12. The way in which Samson set up the riddle, almost expecting that they might tease it out of him through his wife, the way in which he agreed that if they did this, he would give them the clothes of 30 Philistines... it all suggests that Samson set the whole thing up to seek an opportunity against the Philistines. They had to declare the riddle " and find it out" (15:12). This would indicate that they had to actually find the carcass of a lion with honey in it. They plowed behind his wife as a heifer, and so were led by her to Samson's secret place of meditation where the dead lion was (15:18). He speaks to his wife as if she should expect that he was closer to his Hebrew parents than to her: " I haven't even explained it (the riddle) to my father or mother', he replied, 'So why should I explain it to you?'" (15:16 NIV). Gen. 2:24 taught that a man must leave his parents and cleave to his wife in marriage; she must be closer to him than them. It could be that by saying this, Samson was reminding her that he didn't see their relationship as full marriage; he was only using her (cp. how he 'used' a Philistine as his best man, 14:20). Yet he did what only days before had been unthinkable: he told her his finest and most personal secret, which he wouldn't even tell his dear parents. Such is the fickleness of our nature. And yet there seems reason to think that somehow Samson foresaw his possible failure, and arranged to use the situation to forward God's work. It could even be that the girl was party to Samson's plan; she may have appeared to have a genuine interest in Samson's spiritual aims. The Philistines themselves realized this when they chode with Samson's wife that they had been called to the wedding 'to have our possession taken away' (14:15 Heb.). They saw the aim of Samson's marriage: to dispossess them and take their possession for Israel. It seems no accident that he chose Timnath, 'a portion assigned'- to Israel. This was part of the land promised to Dan, but which they had allowed the Philistines to overrun (Josh. 19:43,47). And Samson would have seen himself as 'Samson-of-Zorah', the hornet- symbol of the Egyptian tribes which drove out

the Canaanites in preparation for Israel's later victories (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12). We get the picture of Samson and his parents walking the four miles down into the valley, and Samson goes off for a wander in the vineyards. The vineyard was a symbol of Israel (Ps. 80:15; Is. 1:8; 5:7; 27:2; Jer. 12:10; Mt. 21:41). This may have been already evident to Samson from Gen. 49:11; although most likely the symbol of Israel as God's vineyard was already established by his time. Conscious that Timnath was the 'portion assigned' to Dan and yet they had failed, Samson meditates there in the vineyards, a symbol of Israel, the people who should have been there. Inheriting Philistine vineyards was one of the blessings promised (Dt. 6:11) and initially obtained by Joshua-Jesus (Josh. 24:13). And yet those vineyards were now back in Philistine control. A lion suddenly appeared and roared against him (14:5), just as the Philistines later would (15:14). The lion was a common symbol of Israel's enemies. The Spirit came upon Samson and he overcame it, in evident symbol to him that he really could deliver Israel from the Philistines. There is every reason to think that Samson appreciated all this symbology. And yet did Samson ultimately slay the lion of the Philistines and bring the promised blessings of honey to Israel (cp. Ex. 3:8; Dt. 8:8 etc.)? No, not really. He achieved some tokenistic success against their warriors; but Israel remained enslaved (15:20). He didn't live up to that potential which God had enabled him to achieve. And yet although it may seem that his life was wasted, in that he didn't really bring much deliverance for anyone- the whole process of it saved him personally. Those whose families and converts have turned away from the Faith will identify with this comfort.

However, it must be recognized that God did in fact send the lion against Samson. He did this in order to go along with Samson's symbolic thoughts, and this may afford some justification for Samson's marriage. He was there, wandering in those vineyards, meditating how they were representative of the blessings which belonged to Israel, and yet they were now in the hands of God's enemies. And then, God furthers the parable: He sends a lion, symbolic of the Philistines, and Samson is given power to overcome him. And further, when Samson returned to the carcass to meditate deeper on 'the fallen one' (14:8 doesn't use the usual word for 'carcass'- s.w. " fall" Prov. 29:16; Ez. 26:15; 27:27; 31:13), " behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion" (14:8). The Hebrew for " swarm" is normally used (124 times) about a congregation of people, often God's people Israel. And the Hebrew for 'Bee' is 'Deborah', a celebrated earlier judge. God was surely teaching him that through his victory over the Philistine lion, God's people would be inspired to be faithful, and would therefore be able to enjoy the promised blessing of honey, taken out of the Philistines. Samson saw all this; for he " took" (Heb. is usually used in the sense of 'to take dominion over') the honey, partook himself, and shared it with others. In all this there is a detailed type of the Lord's representative sacrifice on the cross. On the cross, He won the victory over the lion of the devil (1 Pet. 5:8 cp. Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8 may allude to Samson's victory). This enabled us to be empowered to partake the Kingdom blessings. As Samson walked away from the carcass some days after killing it (14:8 Heb. " a time" = 'days'- three days?), with the honey in his hands, eating it and offering it to others, so the Lord left the empty tomb. The way he ate and gave to his parents and *they also ate* without him telling them where he got it from (14:9) is a clear reversal of what happened in Eden (Gen. 3:6; doubtless Eve didn't tell Adam either where the fruit came from): but here the fruits of spiritual victory rather than failure were enjoyed and shared. The promised blessings of honey were conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 32:13 cp. Ps. 81:16), although granted in prospect (Dt. 32:13). Israel at Samson's time were disobedient and therefore didn't have the Kingdom blessings. And yet the whole acted parable taught that through the supreme zeal of one lonely man, into whose struggle not even his parents could enter (14:6,16), the blessings of obedience could be

brought to the disobedient multitude of God's people. And here we have the essence of the Gospel.

And Samson knew all this, rising up to an anticipation of the Gospel which few in the OT must have reached. This allows us to view Samson's marriage more positively. He went down to the valley of Ashkelon, the very place that Joshua had conquered but Judah had been unable to drive out the Philistines from (1:18,19), and slew 30 warriors. And then later he used the whole situation as an opportunity to burn up the corn and vineyards of the Philistines (15:5), in conscious allusion to how the law stipulated that a man who did this to his Israelite neighbour must make retribution (Ex. 22:5). He was emphasizing that these people were *not* his neighbours, they were not in covenant relationship, and he openly showed that he treated them accordingly. Likewise he took vengeance on the Philistines (15:5; 16:28), when the Law taught that Israel were not to take vengeance (same word) *on each other* (Lev. 19:18), but could do so on their enemies (Num. 31:2; Dt. 32:43 cp. Josh. 10:13). Note, in passing, how he set those foxes up as cherubim- a ball of whirling fire coming in judgment upon the Philistines. The fox was a symbol of apostate Israel in later Scripture (Ez. 13:4); perhaps Samson made the same connection, and wanted to symbolize how through his faith and insight, weak Israel could be turned into the cherubim of God in bringing judgment on the Philistines and deliverance for themselves. The way he used their tails to bring such destruction may have been a reference to Dt. 28:13,44, where apostate Israel, suffering for their sins as they were in Samson's time, are described with the same word: they would be the tail of the nations. He saw that he was the one who could bring salvation and blessing to Israel. His riddle spoke of how " Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (14:14). " The eater" (Heb. 'the devourer') and " the strong" not only referred to the lion, but more essentially to Samson himself. The same basic word for 'eater' is used as a verb to describe how Samson 'ate' / 'devoured' the honey from the lion (14:9). And years later the Philistines realized how Samson's riddle described himself: for they rejoiced that " the destroyer (devourer) of our country" was now overcome (16:24). Samson saw that through his God-given strength he could bring forth the honey of blessing to Israel.

And yet although this was what was possible, Samson never fulfilled it. He never quite killed the lion, and therefore God's people at this time lived under the Philistine yoke throughout his life (15:20), never enjoying the blessings which were potentially possible. Places like Zorah and Eshtaol are associated again with apostasy and Philistine domination (18:2,8,11; 2 Chron. 28:18). Samson was but a blip on the screen of general failure and unspirituality in the Israel of God. And yet although Samson limited God in saving Israel, through it all, he himself was saved (yet so as by fire).

Mixed Motives

But whilst the above case for Samson's spiritual commitment can be made, there is evidence galore that his motives were mixed in this matter of Samson's marriage. Consider: why did he as a Nazarite go for a walk in vineyards, among the forbidden fruit (cp. Christians in demanding careers, watching television, reading novels...)? This was typical of him: a great zeal and understanding, mixed with a desire to walk as close to the edge as possible, and to ultimately have a little of both. He had a fascination with vineyards, which the record brings out. Like an ex-alcoholic staring at the bottles in the shop 'just out of interest', so Samson fooled about with what was forbidden- just as we all tend to. He later teased Delilah to tie him with seven "withs", the Hebrew word implying made from a vine. He just would mess with the forbidden. The way he burnt up those vineyards in 15:5 may have been as a result of

realizing that the answer lay in total devotion and rooting out of temptation; cutting out the eye that offends. He burnt those vineyards in a desire to be "blameless from the Philistines" (15:3 AVmg.). The same word is translated unpunished, guiltless, innocent, clean, acquitted; as if he knew he had sinned, but believed that by further fighting of Philistines he could gain his forgiveness. He had to be brought to the shame of Gaza Prison to learn that forgiveness was by absolute faith, not works and hatred of this present world. He seems angry that he had let himself fall too deeply for that Philistine girl (14:19), and "utterly hated her" (15:2). And yet this human anger may also have been mixed with a more righteous anger, in that to give his wife to another was adultery, and it happened that they carried out (perhaps unconsciously?) the punishment for adultery which the law required (Lev 20:14; 21:9). He realized that the Philistines had led him into sin, and he just wanted to destroy the source of his temptation. And yet he then lost that good conscience; he smote the Philistines hip and thigh with a great slaughter, alluding to the sacrifices (s.w. "shoulder" Ex. 29:22; Lev. 9:21; 1 Sam. 9:24; Ez. 24:4- nearly all usages of this word in Samson's Bible referred to the "shoulder" of the sacrifices), as if he was offering them as a sacrifice to Yahweh; and then "went *down* (again!!) and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam" (15:8). You don't go down if you are going up to the top of a rock. But perhaps spiritually he 'went down', to dwell in isolation from the people he was supposed to be judging / leading, in the rocks. Dwelling in the rocks is associated with a bad conscience in Is. 2:21 and 57:5. Yet for all this, God counted him as having judged Israel 20 years at this stage (15:20); even though there was this evident break when he simply ran away from his people. The way they tie him up and he begs them not to kill him (15:12,13) hardly sounds like Samson judging them. And yet this was his desire, and this is what God imputed to him (15:20), in the same way as he was a Nazarite to God (i.e. in God's eyes?) all his life (13:7)- although he broke his Nazariteship by contact with dead bodies (14:19; 15:15 cp. Num. 6:6) ⁽¹⁾and probably by drinking wine at his wedding (14:10 "feast" = 'drinking', Heb.). This was not only imputed righteousness, but God counting the essential intentions of a weak willed man to him as if he had actually achieved what he fain would do.

So Samson had a mixed conscience when he slew the lion. He was in the vineyards, the very place where he shouldn't have been as a Nazarite, although he justified it by spiritual and even Biblical reasoning. He then burns up those vineyards in order to have a blameless conscience. He then loses that good conscience and cowers in the rocks. And then later he goes to the valley of Sorek (Heb. 'the vine') and forges a relationship with another worthless woman (16:4). Samson's marriage looks less acceptable in this context. So he returned to his old desire to walk near the forbidden fruit. His purges of conscience were temporary, and he returned to the old haunts and ways. When he slew the thirty men at Ashkelon, as he seemed to have planned right at the start in his seeking occasion against the Philistines, he was "burning with anger" (14:19 NIV). His motive was partly bitterness and the revenge of a man humiliated and deceived by a woman; but his slaughter of the Philistines was also done in faith (Heb. 11:32-34), with God given strength to confirm his faith. And yet in the days leading up to this, as "she cried the whole seven days of the feast" (14:17 NIV), she daily "pressed him" (14:17). This is the very same Hebrew word used in many passages to describe how an apostate, Gentile-loving Israel would be pressed / oppressed by their enemies (Dt. 28:53,57; Jer. 19:9; Is. 51:13). Samson was in some sense apostate at this time, yet he had faith and was strongly motivated; and for this he was blessed by God with strength to defeat the Philistines. The daughters of the Philistines *hate* God's people (2 Sam. 1:20; Ez. 16:27,57). The Ezekiel passages stress the paradox: that Israel (whom Samson represented) loved the women who hated them. And yet Samson also despised the uncircumcised Philistines (15:18), as he had been brought up to (14:3). He knew they hated him and yet he

loved them and yet he hated them- all this shows the complexity of human nature, and describes our attitude to the world and the things of the flesh. And yet the only real answer is to *cut off* the flesh; to gouge out the eye that offends; not to comfortably go along with the fact that we have such a love:hate relationship with the flesh. For we cannot serve two masters; we can only ultimately love one. The Lord we serve is in many ways a demanding Lord.

Samson's marriage reflects a spiritual brinkmanship which was his spiritual undoing, however. For the same word is used concerning how Delilah later vexed him unto death with her words (16:16), and then Samson rose up and slew the Philistines with God's help. The same word is used concerning how the Gentile enemies of an apostate Israel would afflict them (Dt. 28:55,57). Yet at this very same time, Samson had faith. But there came a time- there had to come a time, for the sake of Samson's eternal salvation- when this having a little of both had to be ended.

We surely all feel an identity with this. And yet his situation was serious; we know the final terrible humiliation it resulted in. And our position is likewise serious. No wonder the Lord taught us of gouging out eyes (a Samson allusion?), and Paul speaks of putting to death the passions of flesh. There is no other way. The old nature will be destroyed at judgment day, so we might as well destroy it now. God will vindicate Himself against sin in us; if we go through the putting-to-death process now, then there will be the eternity of the Kingdom in God's nature. If we don't, God will put it to death for us in the process of destruction which will follow judgment- and we will die eternally. There is a powerful, powerful logic in this, if only we would apprehend it.

The Lust Of The Flesh

Samson really loved that girl (14:3,17; 15:1,7,11), even though he also hated her (15:2; he must have gone through this process again with Delilah in the time that led up to her final betrayal). This true love for her makes Samson's marriages look more questionable. When Samson "smote the Philistines hip and thigh" and burnt up their corn, he commented that "as they did unto me, so have I done unto them" (15:11). If we ask 'What exactly did they do to him? What did they kill and burn of his?', the answer must be 'His wife'. He perhaps felt that she was worth hundreds of them, and the burning of their livelihood, leaving famine in its wake, was what they had done to him emotionally. Yet it is curious how he loved the Philistines and yet hated them. She is described as a "woman" (14:7), using a word which means an older, married woman (s.w. 14:15 "wife") rather than a maiden. She had seen something of life, and therefore the fact Samson loved her suggests that it was a serious relationship. His action was quite contrary to the spirit of the Law: that marriage with the local tribes was categorically prohibited (Ex. 34:16; Dt. 7:3,4; 1 Kings 11:2). Joshua's warning that those who married the surrounding tribes would find them "a snare and a trap for you... thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12,13 RSV) was fulfilled in Samson being tied up and blinded by Delilah; and yet it also had an element of fulfillment with his wife. The similarity is such as to suggest that Samson's marriage out of the Truth was definitely wrong because it was a fulfillment of the words of Josh. 23. "Is there *never* a woman among the daughters of thy brethren...that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" (14:3) implies that she wasn't the first one; he had often got involved with Philistine girls down in the valley, despite his conscience for Yahweh troubling him as he walked alone on the heights (13:25 Heb.) ⁽²⁾. Samson gave no good answer to his parents: simply "Get her for me; for she is right in mine eyes" (14:3, repeated in 14:7 for emphasis- he really did fall for

the lust of the eyes). This insistence rather than explanation would suggest a bad conscience in Samson. Likewise he crowd only shouted out the more when asked why and for what crime they wished to crucify Jesus (Mt. 27:23). The process of marriage involved Samson in participating in the traditions of the surrounding tribes (this is emphasized: 14:10,11; 15:20). The "feasting" was strictly 'drinking' (Heb.)- and Samson the Nazarite attended this. Even if he didn't partake, he was placing himself directly in temptations' way.

It is emphasized that Samson "went *down*" to her (14:1,5,7,10), as if his literal descent to her in the valley was also a retrograde step spiritually. Samson's marriage was wrong. And so it was. And yet his hero Gideon (see *Samson And Deja Vu*) had likewise 'gone down', the record emphasizes, to liberate Israel from their enemies (7:9,10,11,24). In view of the other examples of Samson consciously imitating Gideon, it is likely that he was seeking an opportunity to deliver Israel from the Philistines. And yet he mixed his motivations. He loved the girl, he wanted to gratify his flesh with the forbidden fruit. He loved the world, and thereby became in some sense an enemy of God (James 4:4). But then he loved Gideon, he loved the holiness of Yahweh, he hated the world and the Philistines, he loved Israel, weak as they were, and wanted to deliver them from their spiritual bondage. And instead of casting him off as a man of such divided heart that he was not worthy of God's covenant love, God worked with him. And by using a purposeful ambiguity, He has recorded this for us in such a way as unites God's desire for Israel's deliverance with that of Samson: "It was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines" (14:4). The "he" can be read as both God and Samson; they both had the same desire, and God worked with mixed up Samson to this end. Working all this out from the evidence presented in the record is hard work. The fact a man does something "of the Lord" doesn't mean that he is guiltless. In the same context of God's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, men who did things "of the Lord" were punished for what they did (Dt. 2:30; 1 Sam. 2:25; 2 Chron. 22:7; 25:20).

All this may seem a quagmire of evidence that it is almost impossible to put in place and reach a fair conclusion as to Samson's spiritual motivation in the matter of Samson's marriage. And yet the complexity of Samson is only a reflection of the complexity of our own failures; every failure is the result of a long process of complex desire and counter-desire, with the flesh winning the day under cover of some kind of spirituality. God responded to the complexity of Samson's spirituality by the complexity of His dealings with him and Israel. He delivered Israel to the hand of the Philistines during the forty years of Samson's judgeship (13:1), and yet through Samson He also delivered Israel out of their hand (2:16,18). Yet God only "began to deliver" them through Samson (13:5), although the potential was there for total deliverance (2:16,18). God worked both for and against Israel at this time, in reflection of how Samson their intended Saviour had a similar struggle between the Spirit and flesh, never completely coming down on the side of either. And so often we are like Samson; we never completely lose faith, like Israel we eat the bread of Heaven daily and yet rise up and worship our golden calf as part of a supposed service of Yahweh. We can serve God and mammon, even though from the Lord's perspective actually we only serve mammon. And yet we can drift on like this for years. It lead Samson to be eyeless in Gaza in his 60s, and only then did he learn. We may fail that kind of final, desperate attempt to reform us. Samson is written for our learning. Total commitment is the answer, the only answer; cutting off the flesh, putting it to death, living out day by day the process we went through at baptism.

The Nudges Of God

The record of Samson shows God nudging him time and again, and Samson taking no notice; God flashing red lights, and Samson time and again driving through them. The way that Delilah betrays him regarding his hair is perhaps the most poignant example; but actually it's a theme throughout Samson's life. The incident of Samson and the slain lion, and honey forming in the carcass, must surely have had point and purpose. The record isn't there simply to pad out a story. Samson discovered a congregation (Heb. *'edat*) of bees- *deborim* , in Hebrew. The judge Deborah would've been fairly recent history for Samson; she would have been the heroine of anyone like Samson, who also arose to save Israel from their enemies at that time. Surely he was being gently led to reflect that there were a whole congregation of Deborahs ['bees'] around, and he should eat of them. And yet Samson went his loner road, and suffered the consequences of it- rather like Elijah, who was in denial of the fact there were actually at least another 7000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Or perhaps Samson was simply being asked to execute his deliverance of Israel after the pattern of Deborah, to 'eat' of her, to fellowship her example and spirit. But he chose not to 'get it'; as we so often do in the countless nudges and prods which God gives us in daily life.

Notes

(1) " Hip on thigh" is apparently a better rendering, implying hand to hand combat. This would serve to emphasize his contact with the dead bodies, as he hurled them to the ground one by one. And yet the Spirit of Yahweh came upon him to enable this- a breach of the letter of the Nazarite law.

(2) " Is there *never* a woman among the daughters of thy brethren" (14:3) could mean that Samson had a number of relationships with Israelite girls but never hit it off with any of them. This may have been because he was a spiritual man in the midst of a sadly apostate Israel. "...among the daughters of *thy brethren*" could suggest that Samson was a generation above the marriageable girls. Does this imply Samson stayed single for the Lord? The incident relating to Samson's marriage could have happened at any time during the first 20 years in which he judged Israel (15:20).

5.4 Samson At Lehi (Judges 15:9 - 20)

In this incident of Samson at Lehi we have many of the themes of Samson's life epitomized. Samson's spiritual strength was once again somewhat weak. He says that he had killed Philistines because " I merely did to them what they did to me" (15:11 NIV). There was no mention of the fact that he was seeking occasion against God's enemies (even though he was speaking to Hebrews). He passed off his actions as pure revenge- which on one level, was all they were. The Philistines had earlier said that they wanted to take Samson " to do to him as he did to us" (15:10). And Samson replies in the same primitive way: that he only did to them what they did to him. It seems that Samson spoke to them on their level. And yet when the Philistines came upon Samson, roaring against him like the lion in 14:5, God's Spirit once again came upon him in confirmation of his faith. Israel at this time were evidently unspiritual; hence they were dominated by the Philistines (15:12). The way they came to bind Samson has suggestions of Legion (Lk. 8:29); perhaps they considered him to be mentally ill, and attributed his strength to fits? Or worse, did they consider the work of the Spirit of God to deliver them to be that of demons? If so, Samson was typifying the Lord's later experience (Mt. 12:24-27). The way Jesus spoke of himself in this context as the stronger than the strong man (cp. Samson) encourages this view. And yet the strong man who was bound, i.e. the devil, can also be seen as a reference to Samson. Again, we are left with a difficult question: Was Samson telling them the truth when he said that his motive at Lehi was purely personal revenge? Or were they so unspiritual that he spoke to them on their level, even though at other times he pleaded with them to quit their idolatry (2:16-19)? Or were his motives simply hopelessly mixed? Within him was a burning desire to do God's work; he was the one faithful Israelite who could chase 1,000; and yet in the company of his unspiritual brethren, he let his

human side come out, and wrapped up his zeal for the Lord in human terms- even though there was some truth in how he expressed it. This kind of thing can so easily happen in our Christian experience; we bring out the worst in each other.

And yet despite such cruel rejection at the hands of his weak brethren, there is reason to think that Samson was not just out for personal glory when he slew those thousand men. Samson grabbed a jaw-bone and exalted that with *that* he had slain a thousand men at Lehi. This was a conscious allusion to Josh. 23:10 (and Lev. 26:8): " One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you" . It could be that he counted the bodies, or counted each man he slew, consciously trying to get up to 1,000 in order to fulfill the prophecy. Samson doesn't say that he alone killed the thousand men; he did it with the jaw-bone (coming from a Hebrew root meaning 'soft', 'weak'). It has been pointed out that this jaw bone is one of the seven weak things which are mentioned in Judges as being the tools of God's salvation: left handed man (3:21); an ox goad (3:31); a woman (4:4); a nail (4:21); a piece of a millstone (9:53); a pitcher and trumpet (7:20). God's people are likened to an ass frequently (Gen. 49:11,14; Is. 1:3; Jer. 2:24; Hos. 8:9; Lk. 13:15; 14:5). The first two references would have been known to Samson at Lehi; and he may have reflected that the fact the firstborn of an ass must be redeemed by a lamb was prophetic of how Messiah would save all His otherwise condemned people (Ex. 13:13; 34:20). Could it not be that despite their cruel betrayal of him and utter faithlessness, dear Samson felt he was living out a kind of acted parable of what was possible for Israel: that through his zeal, and in his hands, the weak people of God could achieve the great victory over thousands which Moses and Joshua had earlier foretold? In this he was a superb type of the Lord.

In the actual slaughter of the Philistines at Timnath, we are again left with questions as to the pureness of Samson's motives. His request for water in that dry place was abundantly answered- in the same way as Yahweh had responded to exactly the same request from a faithless Israel in the desert (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:2-13). And the way he names the well after the miraculous provision of water, and the way presumably the opened well remained (15:19), has links with pseudo-Israelite Hagar (Gen. 16:19). And yet even in these similarities, it must be noted that there was a certain spiritual culture in Samson's prayer. He didn't make a direct, crude demand for water. He placed his situation before God, and left it to Him to respond as He knew best. This is a feature of many spiritual prayers: not to crudely, directly ask for the obvious; but to simply inform the Almighty of the situation, in faith ⁽¹⁾. Samson's victory song at Lehi smacks of personal vengeance: there is little suggestion of the humble servant merely doing God's will:

" With a donkey's jaw-bone

I have made donkeys of them.

With a donkey's jaw-bone

I have killed a thousand men"

(15:16 NIV).

Samson at Lehi saw them as unclean asses; and yet he loved their women. And yet in the midst of this almost arrogance, he cries: " I thirst" , and so exhibits something of the spirit of Christ in His final hour of agony and ultimate conquest on the cross (Jn. 19:28). And yet

again, it must be considered that the Lord's words there must be read in the context of His other Johanine references to thirst (Jn. 4:14,15; 6:35). He was expressing the spiritual thirst He felt, as a man on the brink of the ultimate spiritual failure, and saw this expressed in the literal desire He had for moisture. On the cross He was the root out of the dry ground. Samson's thirst occurred at a time of unspirituality in the midst of great victory. The Lord in His final spiritual crisis, feeling spiritually forsaken by the Father, fearing He had sinned (Ps. 22:1-6), may therefore have feared Samson had been an all too accurate prototype.

Notes

(1) See *The Essence Of Prayer*. Examples include: Gen. 19:24; 2 Chron. 14:11; Ps. 3:1-4; 142:1,2; Jn. 11:21,22; 1 Kings 19:10 cp. Rom. 11:2,3; Ps. 106:44 cp. Is. 64:3.

5.5 Samson In Gaza (Judges 16: 1-3)

The way this passage starts with " Then" is one of several classic conjunctions which occur in the Biblical record. The " But" of Acts 5:1 is another. After the spiritual and personal glory of the fight at Lehi, " Then..." Samson goes to Gaza and sees a whore. It may not have happened immediately afterwards (n.b. 15:20), but it seems purposefully placed where it is in the record. A similar example occurs in 14:19,20 cp. 15:1: after repenting of his marriage with the Philistine girl and using his failure as an opportunity to seek occasion against God's enemies, Samson then relents and lets his human love for the girl take him over, and he goes to visit and sleep with her. And again in 16:3, we see Samson repentant as he lies there at midnight, and he rises up and in the spirit of the Lord's cross, carries away the gate of his enemies. And then, " it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman..." (16:4). He simply couldn't keep up the level of spiritual intensity which he fain would have. And again, we know much about this problem ⁽¹⁾. And yet Samson went to Gaza conscious that his people had failed to drive out the tribes (Josh. 11:22). Judah had captured it in Joshua's strength (1:18), but had let the Philistines return. So Samson chose Gaza from spiritual motives; and yet he schemed out his plan to enable him to gratify his flesh.

We have elsewhere demonstrated (*Samson And Jesus*) how Samson at this time reflected something of the spirit and victory of the Lord Jesus on the cross. And yet once again, as with the fight at Lehi, there was a strong unspiritual element in Samson in Gaza at this time. He schemed to have a little of both; to please his flesh, and yet also do the work of God. It seems that his conscience once again pricked him about this. " He went in to spend the night" with the prostitute, " But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors..." (16:1,3 NIV) ⁽²⁾. If he went in to spend the night there, he presumably entered the house at around 7 or 8. He had what he wanted, and then lay there thinking, the record seems to suggest, and decided to not lay there all night as he planned, but get up and do God's work. Whilst it is unrecorded, surely there were prayers of deep and fervent repentance as he lay there? His conscience likewise seems to have struck him after he attempted to marry the Philistine girl, and also when he burnt up the vineyards. And so again here. He may have justified his behaviour by reference back (in his deep subconscious, maybe) to how the spies sought to destroy Jericho by entering the city and lodging with a whore. The way he chose to destroy the Philistines at the end by bringing down the posts of their temple (16:29,30) has some connection with the way he chose to take up the posts of Gaza. Perhaps he remembered his earlier failure and repentance in Gaza, and now he was

back there (16:21), he repented again and wished to replicate his earlier repentance and victory for the Lord.

The Psychology Of Samson

It's inevitable that the record of Samson in Gaza prompts us to reflect upon the psychology of Samson as a womanizer. Why are some men womanizers? Why was Samson a womanizer? The psychological basis for womanizing has been summarized like this: " Some men are womanizers and what is wrong with them is that they have issues with commitment and intimacy that they refuse to deal with and escape into a fantasy relationship with another women time after time. Other men though are seeking something they feel is missing in their primary relationship - understanding, excitement in bed, a woman that is challenging to them" . To that I'd add that most womanizers I know are simply very lonely men. Another psychologist comments: " Womanizers ...often claim to have a high sex drive and a lust for sexual variety. Their therapists say such men often don't like women or even sex. Womanizers have a disease or an addiction, in which they see women as the enemy. They think of " being a real man" as escaping a woman's control and as being someone who can powerfully manipulate and deceive women. Like a rapist, he seeks power and superiority" . How does all this apply to Samson?

If Samson in Gaza had been all rippling muscle, Delilah would not have had to ask where his strength lay. His strength was from God, not from his muscles. And yet he would've been perceived as a " real man" , a strong man... it was just enigmatic to everyone, how this was, when an ordinary man acted so strong. Perhaps the Heb. 11 comment that he was " out of weakness made strong" implies he was actually quite wimpy. And so, perhaps he acted up to how others perceived him. He indulged the 'woman thing' because that's what heroic 'strong men' of his time were supposed to do. He felt he had to act *as if* he had a strong libido, when perhaps he didn't. And of course he was lonely... the picture of the young man wandering off from his parents when they were on their way down to talk with his first wife... meeting a lion... here's the very cameo of a lonely man. And his special calling from God would've made him lonely. This would have led to his problem with intimacy with others, in an Israel of cowards and semi-spirituality. He wasn't much understood by anyone... David had Jonathan, Gideon had Phurah, but Samson apparently had nobody at all. His whole behaviour with women, Delilah especially but actually all the recorded women in his life, speaks of a man who relished " escaping a woman's control and ... being someone who can powerfully manipulate and deceive women" .

But the bottom line is that Samson in Gaza sinned. Reflecting upon the psychology of Samson, we can understand *why* he was a womanizer. But we too are lonely, not understood by our world or even our own brotherhood, we too try to act up to the expectations and images which others place upon us... but this doesn't justify us! This is the lesson of Samson. Sin is sin, even if our own faith and spiritual commitment has placed us in a situation where the loneliness and lack of being understood of itself creates a psychological situation which leads to temptation. Falling to that temptation, even if like Samson in Gaza we preserve our faith and commitment in our deepest heart, isn't justifiable- and we shall pay the price for it.

Notes

(1) See *Enduring To The End*.

(2) " Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight" (16:3 AV) gives a different picture: of Samson 'laying' with her as a man lays with a woman, and then getting up and going out to do God's work. The interplay between sexuality and spirituality was never stronger.

5.6 Samson And Delilah (Judges 16:4-21)

The purpose of this final tragic incident was to bring Samson to a final realization that there was no third way in the service of Yahweh: it's all or nothing. The Lord worked through Samson's 'little of both' syndrome. The Lord Jesus read the Samson record this way: He recommended that we too tear our eyes out to stop us stumbling from the path of total devotion (Mk. 9:47). We all know how the story turns out. And it's one of those parts of Scripture which I for one don't reading. I don't want to go on from chapter 15 to chapter 16. I know what's coming, and I'd rather not be reminded of the whole tragic sequence. And yet it's there, absolutely for our learning. And *Samson should have already learnt*. As his first wife had vexed her with her words to tease his secret from him, so Delilah did. As the Philistines laid wait for Samson as he lay with the whore in Gaza (16:2), so they laid wait in Delilah's bedroom (16:9). He had already repented of using God's service as an excuse for satisfying his own flesh in the incident with the Gaza prostitute. He had bitterly walked away from his first Philistine wife. He burnt down the vineyards, recalling how he had foolishly strolled in them as a Nazarite. He must have looked back and seen how he had played with fire. And now, he goes and does it all again. He goes to the valley of Sorek, 'choice vines', and Samson falls for Delilah, 'the vine'. He went down to the vineyards again; the Nazarite tried to take fire into his bosom again. It has been suggested from the way the Philistine lords are described as coming up to her, and the way in which she speaks of " the Philistines" (16:18-20), that she was in fact an apostate Israelitess. And thus he justified himself.

And yet there was a fire within Samson at this time. The thongs burst from him as when string comes close to a flame (16:9). This is similar to the scene in 15:14 , where because the Spirit was upon him, Samson became like a burning fire which snapped his bonds. In the next two occasions when Samson broke his bands (16:12,14), this description doesn't occur. It may be that although the fire of the Spirit was within him, Samson came to feel that he, of his *own* ability, was doing the miracles: " *he* snapped the ropes off his arms..." (16:12). There is even a sense of unjustified, egoistic sarcasm in the way he gets the Philistines to tie him with flimsy pieces of grass and then breaks them off and kills them. Likewise when he kills the thirty Philistines and brings their armour (14:19 " spoil" only s.w. 'armour' 2 Sam. 2:21-23) as well as their clothes to the young men. He did the outward actions, but the inner awareness that all his ability was only of God slipped away. And his tragic path can so easily be ours.

The Samson: Delilah Relationship

We have seen earlier that Samson was well into spiritual brinkmanship. It had characterized his life, according to the selection of incidents the record presents us with. The sequence of events is worth listing:

Delilah asked Samson to tell her his closest secret,

then Delilah bound Samson as he asked

Samson awakes from a deep sleep with Delilah

Delilah playfully afflicts Samson while he is bound and Samson overcomes Delilah (16:19 implies this happened each time)

then Samson realizes Delilah has betrayed him

and the Philistine warriors were there waiting in the bedroom.

Then Samson goes out of the bedroom, shakes himself and kills them.

Then Delilah says Samson doesn't really love her

and they repeat the experience.

This is the classic material for love:hate relationships. At first sight, Samson appears an incomprehensible fool. But more extended meditation reveals the human likelihood of it all. She would've convincingly repented and asked for one last chance- time and again. It is hard not to interpret his sleeping exhausted with her and then the bondage session as some kind of sex game. And yet Samson thought he was strong enough to cope with it, as did Solomon years later. He may even have had some kind of desire to simply mock the Philistines when he suggested they should tie him up with seven pieces of grass. He seems to somehow have known that his first wife would wangle his secret from him and betray him, and thus he would have the opportunity to kill Philistines- even though he didn't intend to open his heart to her (14:16). And now the same happened. He seems to have known that she would betray him, although he evidently thought better of her; for he was deeply in love with her. He initially says: " If *they* bind me..." (16:7), but changes this to " If *thou*..." (16:13); he knew beforehand that she would betray him, although couldn't admit it to himself. And so we see the complexity of Samson's situation. It was not that his telling of the secret to Delilah was necessarily a sin in itself. He trusted her and yet knew on another level she would betray him. This is just a psychological condition. It helps explain why the Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him (Jn. 6:64), and yet how He could really trust in Judas as his own familiar friend, confide in him (Ps. 41:9), tell him that he would sit with the other eleven on thrones in the Kingdom (Mt. 19:28). This was ever a serious contradiction for me, until considering the Samson : Delilah relationship in depth. A man can know something about someone on one level, but act and feel towards them in a quite different way than this knowledge requires. In the same way, it was in one sense true that the Jews "knew not whence I come" (Jn. 8:24,14 RV) and yet in another sense they knew perfectly well the Divine origin of Jesus (Jn. 7:28). David likewise must have known Absalom's deceit; but he chose not to see it, for love's sake. "They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things [just as Absalom did in the gate]...but I, as a deaf man, heard not" (Ps. 38:12,13). Paul surely knew how Corinth despised him, how little they knew and believed, and as he himself said, the more he loved them, the less they loved him. And yet in all honesty he could say: "As ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence *and in your love to us*" (2 Cor. 8:7). Yet the more abundantly he loved them, the less they loved him- not the more abundantly. Yet he saw them as loving him abundantly. One also gets the sense that the Gibeonites' deception was somehow guessed by the elders of Israel, but against their better judgment they disregarded the telltale signs (Josh. 9:7). Or Amasa, taking no heed to the sword in Joab's hand...against his better judgment, surely (2 Sam. 20:10). This is a feature of human nature;

and for me so far, the contradictions evident in the Jesus : Judas relationship and the Samson : Delilah relationship are only explicable for me by realizing this. The whole thing is an eloquent essay in the Lord's humanity and the depth of His 'in-loveness' with Judas the traitor. And this Lord is our Lord, the same yesterday and today. Our self-knowledge will be deepened by realizing that we too have this spiritual schizophrenia: it's not that we are spiritual one day and unspiritual the next. We are both flesh and spirit at the very same moment. Appreciation of this will help us cope with the more evident failures of our brethren. It doesn't necessarily mean that they must be written off as totally unspiritual and insincere because of acts and attitudes of evident unspirituality. The Spirit is still there, at the very same moment. Think of how Samson slept with a whore until midnight, and then in faith rose up and was granted the Spirit to perform a great act of Christ-like, cross-like victory over the enemies of God's people.

Samson retained his faith, for we have shown that all his victories over the Philistines were a result of God responding to his faith. And yet he was weak at the same time. Yet he seems to have come to *assume* that he had faith, and that God would never leave or forsake him. Samson tells Delilah that if he is bound with grass, he will be weak " like one man" (16:7 Avmg.). This is surely an allusion to passages like Lev. 26:8 and Josh. 23:10- that one man would chase many. Samson implies that he fights like he is many men; he appropriated those blessings to himself. He came to assume he had faith. Lifetime Christians have the same tendency, with the joy and vigour of first faith now far back in time. Samson had been bound before and had burst those bonds (15:13); he seems to have assumed that one past deliverance was an automatic guarantee of future ones. His great zeal for the Lord's work seems to have lead him to chose the single life; and yet he evidently was in the habit of occasional affairs (14:3 " is there never...."), using prostitutes and having on and off relationships with women like Delilah. Samson thought his devotion and the appalling apostacy of his brethren kind of justified it. Note how Timothy and Hezekiah seem to likewise have stumbled in their commitment to the single life.

The way Samson asked Delilah to fasten the hair of his head with a nail and then try to have mastery over him is a parody of what would have been a well known incident: Deborah's mastery over Barak (4:21). This would indicate that Scripture was never far from his mind. In Samson's relationship with Delilah, he got closer and closer to the edge. Samson tells Delilah to bind him, then he gets closer to showing his hand: he asks her to do something to his hair. And then, he falls to the final folly. It could even be that after the previous teasings he left her completely (16:14 " he went away")- after the pattern of his previous twinges of conscience concerning his first wife, his love of vineyards, his lying with the whore in Gaza... But he evidently returned to her. The Philistines are described as " abiding" in Delilah's house (16:9)- a word normally used in the sense of 'permanently living'. It would seem that Samson didn't permanently live with her, but occasionally visited her, until at the end he was happy to live with her (she pressed him " daily"), co-habiting with her other Philistine lovers. With his hair shaven, he 'went out, as at other times'- deciding bitterly that he had really had enough, and once again he would walk out on her, this time for good, and would 'shake himself' and take a hold on himself. But this time it was too late.

Strength And Hair

The question arises: why did Samson tell Delilah that if his hair was cut, he would become weak? Surely he must have known within him that she would do it, in line with past experience? He went out as before to fight the Philistines, surely aware that he had been

shaved, and yet assuming God would still be with him. He had come to realize that his long hair was not the real source of his strength, on some kind of metaphysical level. He saw that his strength was from the Spirit of God, not long hair or Nazariteship. He went out knowing, presumably, that his hair had been shaven, and yet still assumed he would have God's strength. And even when his hair began to grow again, he still had to pray for strength (16:28). He fell into the downward spiral of reductionism. He figured that if his hair was shaved, well it was no big deal. He was supposed to be a Nazarite all the days of his life, and yet perhaps he came to reason that because he had touched plenty of dead bodies, he therefore needed to be shaved anyway (Num. 6:9). He thought that therefore God would accept him in principle as a Nazarite even though he had broken the letter of Nazariteship, and therefore losing his hair was only a surface level indicator of spirituality.

And yet there is also good reason to think that there was an association in Samson's mind between his hair and his God-given strength. For why did he "tell her all his heart" by saying that if he were shaved, he would lose his strength? And of course, when his hair was cut off, then his strength went. Samson saw a link between being a Nazarite and having strength (16:17). When Samson went outside from Delilah and shook himself as he usually did, was he not shaking his hair free before attacking the Philistines, as if he saw in his hair the source of his strength? However, this must all be balanced against the evidence in the previous paragraph, that Samson originally realized that his strength came from God, not his hair. Whilst he even had this realization, theoretically, when he gave Delilah the possibility of shaving him, he also at this time had the conception that his strength was associated with his hair length. I would suggest that this can be resolved by understanding that although his strength was not in his hair, this is how Samson came to see it. And therefore God went along with this view, and treated Samson *as if* his strength was in his hair. And therefore He departed from him when he allowed his hair to be shaved. If Samson had really told Delilah the truth about the source of his strength, he would have said: 'Faith, causing the Spirit of God to come upon me to do His work'. Samson knew this, and therefore he allowed her to shave him; and yet it was also true that in his heart of hearts, he also at the same time believed that his hair was the source of his strength. So he was the victim of reductionism, as well as tokenism. He came to see the mere possession of long hair as a sign of spirituality. And yet at the same time he reduced and reduced the real meaning of Nazariteship to nothing. Difficult as this analysis may be to grasp, I really believe that it has much to teach us; for the latter day brotherhood is afflicted with exactly these same problems.

The way Samson was so deeply sleeping on Delilah's knees that he didn't feel them shave him, and then he went out and shook himself (16:20; this seems a fair translation)- all this could suggest he was drunk. There is no concrete evidence for this, but his love of vineyards would suggest he had a yearning for the forbidden fruit. He had broken the Nazarite vow by touching dead bodies, he obviously thought that having unshaven hair was only tokenistic and irrelevant to the real spirit of Nazariteship, and therefore he may have reasoned that alcohol was also another tokenism. Thus his reductionism destroyed him (almost). Perhaps it was brought about by a misunderstanding of God's waiving of the Nazarite ban on touching dead bodies; for after all, God had made Samson a Nazarite, and then empowered him to go and kill Philistines in personal combat, thereby touching dead bodies. So God waived one principle for a more important one; and yet Samson abused this, taking the principle far further than God intended, to the point that he ended up justifying sin as righteousness.

The Shame Of Rejection

" He did not know that the Lord had left him" (16:20) is the depth of spiritual tragedy. The Lord Jesus may have had this in mind when He spoke of how the rejected would not know what hour He would come upon them (Rev. 3:3). Samson went through the experience of rejection at the Lord's hands in advance of the actual judgment seat. He was set grinding in the prison- a figure which was later picked up as representative of the unbeliever generally (Is. 42:7; 61:1; 1 Pet. 3:19). He was as it were delivered to satan, that he might learn (1 Tim. 1:20); his own wickedness corrected him (Jer. 2:19). And this finally brought him to himself. His experience was a pattern for the apostate Israel whom he loved. Yahweh forsaking His people is associated with them cutting off their hair in Jer. 7:29- an evident allusion to Samson's shame. As the Philistines rejoiced over Samson and praised their god for their victory, so Babylon was to do years later, as Zedekiah like Samson had his eyes put out.

The shame of the final fight is graciously unrecorded. The events of 16:19-21 seem a little out of sequence. It would seem that Delilah awoke Samson, and he thought he would go outside, shake himself and kill the Philistines whom he was sure were in wait. But she started to tease him as before in their games of bondage; but this time, " she began to subdue him, and he began to weaken" (16:19 LXX; one meaning of 'Delilah' is 'the one who weakens'). " Began" is a strange translation; it is often translated to profane / humble. She spiritually abused him. And then she called the Philistines. He was powerless, physically, beneath that woman, and was therefore no match for them. The fact she was physically stronger than him when the Spirit of the Lord left him is proof enough that he was not a physically strong man in his own right. The way the apostate woman subdued him physically, in the name of a love / sex game, would have remained in his memory. He, the strong man of Israel, had been conquered by a worthless woman. His humiliation was to be typical of Israel's: " children are their oppressors (cp. the young lad at the feast?), women rule over them" (Is. 3:12). It is quite possible that Peter had Samson in mind, when he wrote of how " they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness...they themselves are the servants of corruption: *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world...they are again *entangled* therein, and overcome..." (2 Pet. 2:18-20). Samson had been spiritually overcome, and therefore physically he was overcome and brought in bondage.

Eyeless in Gaza

Joshua's prophecy that those who married the surrounding women would find them " a snare and a trap for you, a scourge in your sides, and thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12,13 RSV) was fulfilled in Samson's relationship with Delilah. But the similarity is such that surely Samson must have been aware of it, when he asked Delilah to tie him up with cords. Joshua's words were not too distant history and surely Samson knew them. This is Samson at his darkest. He was mixing up his sex game with Delilah with Joshua's words. Joshua had said that these women would tie up the Israelite man if they married them. Samson didn't marry her; it is possible that she was a renegade Israelite, not a Gentile; and he wanted to show that actually Samson could handle a bit of fun with Delilah without really breaking the spirit of Joshua's words. And so as he broke those bands each time to go out and kill some more Philistine warriors, he doubtless felt he was still in spiritual control. Solomon made exactly the same mistake; he took foreign wives. And the record comments: " of the nations concerning which the Lord had said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for *surely* they will turn away your heart...and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:1-3). The implication is that Solomon took those wives thinking 'Well, I know the law says they will surely turn away my heart, but actually they

won't, I can handle it'; and he didn't handle it. Solomon seems to have realized, in the bitterness of Ecclesiastes, that he had made the same mistake as Samson: " I find more bitter than death [i.e. it would be better to be dead than be in this position] the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26). These were surely Samson's thoughts in those eyeless weeks in Gaza: better to have died than to have been snared by Gentile women. He let her snare him, conscious of the allusion to Joshua's words; and thought he could break free from the relationship at will. But in the end, he couldn't. Any form of sin is by nature addictive. The only way of dealing with it is to break completely. The Lord taught this when He spoke of the need to gouge out the eye that offends our spirituality. And He was alluding to how Samson's eyes were 'picked out' (Young), " gouged out" (16:21 RSV). We either do it to ourselves, or the Lord will do it to us. He will have the conquest over sin in our existence, ultimately. Either we work with Him in this, and thereby remain with Him eternally; or we foolishly resist Him, and He has His way against our will, and in doing so destroys us. With a logic like this, any sacrifice is logically given. But more than logic. If we *truly love* the Lord God and His Son, the desire to give, to serve for nothing, will render this logical encouragement unnecessary.

5.7 The Death Of Samson (Judges 16:23 - 30)

A read through all the recorded words of Samson will reveal a growing humility and spirituality. " Suffer me that I may... that I may" (16:26) reflects a courtesy and humility distinctly lacking in his previous recorded speech. His growth came to its intended climax in the repentance and final peak of spirituality which he achieved in his time of dying. He was made weak by Delilah, and yet out of weakness he was made strong by pure faith (Heb. 11:34). Paul, Job, Jacob, Moses, the Lord Himself, all reached their spiritual pinnacle at the end. And so surely with us. Like Paul and the crucified thief, Samson by his death came to a deep realization of the reality of judgment to come: " Remember me" (16:28) must be read in this context. It carries the connotation of 'remember me for good and therefore forgive me at the judgment' in Ps. 25:6,7; Lk. 23:46. It seems that Nehemiah was inspired by this at his end (16:28 = Neh. 13:22,31; did he too come to a finer realization of his failures at the end?). " Remember me" was a cry only used prior to Samson by men in weakness: Gen. 15:8; Josh. 7:7; Jud. 6:22 (Gideon, Samson's hero, had used it). Yet now Samson appropriates it to himself in faith that he will be mercifully treated at the judgment. And his example in turn inspired Nehemiah. The intensity of Samson's repentance was quite something. It must have inspired Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:11), who like Samson was bound (16:21) and humbled (16:5,16,19 AVmg.)- and then repented with a like intensity. And Zedekiah went through the same basic experience, of capture by his enemies, having his eyes put out, his capture attributed to false gods; and he likewise repented (2 Kings 25:7).

Not only did Samson at his death repent. He reached a very high level of appreciation of the grace of God, and the principles through which He articulates this grace. The record seems to suggest there was a link between the growth of his hair, and God giving him strength again. This doesn't mean that there was some metaphysical link between his strength and his hair. Rather does it show how God responded to his faith and *what was behind the growth of his hair*, and therefore gave him strength to destroy the Philistines. It would seem that Samson decided to keep the Nazarite vow again. He was in no position to offer the inaugatory sacrifice which the law required; and yet he threw himself upon God's grace, trusting that his zeal would be accepted by God; that he, the sinner and failure and shamer of Yahweh, could

be allowed to make that special act of devotion in Nazariteship. And he was accepted in this, as witnessed by the great power of the death of Samson.

Samson's desire to die with the Philistines could be read as suicidal (16:30). In this case, he had elements of weakness at the end, and yet he was accepted as dying in faith. Or it could be understood that he wanted to die because he believed that through his death, he would achieve God's plan for taking the gates of his enemies. In this case he would have had the spirit of Christ. Samson's death plea for vengeance against the Philistines for his two eyes (16:28) sounds woefully human. Indeed, the RSV and RVmg. speak of him asking for vengeance "for one of my two eyes", as if he felt that even if God gave the destruction he asked for, this would only half avenge him. This would indicate a real bitterness, an unGodly hatred of both sinner and sin. In some ways, for all the intensity of weeping before God in repentance (16:28 LXX), Samson had not progressed much from his attitude in 15:7, over 20 years before- where he once again had admitted that his motive for 'seeking occasion against the Philistines' was partly just personal revenge. The spirit of not avenging oneself but leaving it to God to do was evidently something he never quite rose up to in his life (Rom. 12:19). "That I may be *at once* avenged of the Philistines *for my two eyes*" seems to be quite without any desire for the vindication of God's Name. Although it seems to me it was wrong, and betrayed some unspirituality, yet it is taken as the epitome of the desire of all the faithful for vindication through the coming of Christ (Rev. 6:10).

However, it could be argued that he had earlier taken vengeance on the Philistines (15:5), knowing that the Law taught that Israel were not to take vengeance (same word) *on each other* (Lev. 19:18), but could do so on their enemies (Num. 31:2; Dt. 32:43 cp. Josh. 10:13). He was thus treating the Philistines as out of covenant relationship, whereas his weak brethren were all too willing to forget the fundamental difference between them. We would surely be happier if Samson had asked if God would let him take vengeance on God's behalf against God's enemies. This was surely in Samson's mind, but the shame of the loss of his eyes was all too humanly strong within him. I can only conclude that therefore it would seem that he died with this weakness still conquered: a desire for personal retribution against the Philistines. Jacob and Paul likewise died with some weaknesses evidently still showing; and there is not one of us who will die with every weakness conquered. And yet, without wishing to inspire any complacency but rather a thankful appreciation of God's grace, the point must be made that they were all graciously accepted by a loving Father. Samson's death was died in faith, and at his time of dying he had been made strong out of weakness, on account of his faith (Heb. 11:32-34). "Let me ('my soul', AVmg.) die with the Philistines" (16:30) was surely a recognition that in his heart he had been a Philistine, for all his hatred of them and despising of them as uncircumcised, and thus outside the covenant (15:18). It could be that he was too hard on himself: for even at his weakest, Delilah had observed that his heart wasn't with her: it was somewhere else, i.e. with the God of Israel (16:15). Yet Samson wanted to receive the just desert for his life: to die with the Philistines. His mind may well have been on Scripture as he died: on Joshua 23:10,11, which spoke of how one man would chase a thousand (he had earlier appropriated this to himself in 16:7)- *if* Israel took good heed to their *souls* (AVmg.). And perhaps Samson realized that he hadn't taken good heed to his soul, and therefore had ultimately been unable to chase a thousand men. And yet he died in faith, even though with a deeply appreciated recognition of his sinfulness. As with Paul and Jacob, deep recognition of personal sinfulness was a feature of their spiritual maturity. And as with Jacob, Job and Moses, Samson seems to have reached a progressively higher appreciation of the Name of God. His calling on Yahweh Elohim at the end, weeping before Him, was the first

and only time he ever used that title; and the first time we actually read the covenant Name on his lips (cp. 15:18).

God patiently worked through the weakness of Samson to achieve not only a great final victory over the Philistines, but also Samson's own salvation. The way Samson asked the lad to guide him to the pillars in the Philistine language, learnt in his mis-spent relationships with women, the way he knew the architectural structure of the Dagon-temple, where presumably he had been in his earlier love-hate affair with the Philistines- God didn't reject him for these earlier failures, but worked with him, making use of the knowledge and experience which Samson had picked up along the road of earlier failure. This is how God works with us, too- if only we would have the humility to realize it. And the least we can do is to replicate it in our dealings with our failing brethren.

5.8 Samson A Type Of Christ

There is no doubt that we are intended to see Samson as a type of Christ. All the Judges in some way prefigured the Lord; for they were "saviours" raised up to deliver God's weak and failing people in pure grace, when according to God's own word, they should have received the due punishment of rejection (Neh. 9:27,28). He who delivered "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15) was typified by all those earlier deliverers of God's people from bondage (cp. Mt. 1:21). The "great salvation" of Heb. 2:3 which the Lord achieved was foreshadowed by the great deliverance wrought by Samson (15:18). He would have meditated upon the promises of the seed, that he was to deliver Israel from their enemies, and to possess the gate of his enemies. When Samson took away the gates of Gaza, he surely saw himself as being that seed. The way he openly "sought occasion" against the Lord's enemies was therefore perhaps a self-conscious desire to in some sense do what the promised seed would do.

Consider the more obvious points of contact between Samson and Jesus which make Samson a type of Christ:

- The birth of both of them was foretold by an Angel
- at a time when Israel had been handed over to their enemies.
- The record of Samson's birth frequently uses the phrases "the man" and "the woman" (e.g. 13:10,11), as if to send the mind back to Eden- with the implication that Samson was the seed of the woman, in type of Christ. "The woman" is a phrase nearly always associated in Scripture with the birth of someone who was to be a seed of the woman [\(1\)](#). "Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware", coming from the mouth of an Angel (13:13), surely confirms the Eden allusions.
- Both married Gentiles; both were betrayed for pieces of silver.
- The supreme strength and courage of Samson in fighting and killing the lion points forward to Christ's spiritual verve and fervour in destroying our adversary the devil, which is likened to a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8).
- 'Samson' means "the sun" - linking with the Lord's title as "the sun of righteousness" in Malachi 4.

- The incident in Gaza is evidently typical of the Lord's work. There was Samson, " the splendour of the son" , 'compassed in' by his enemies (as Christ on the cross, Ps. 118:5,10-12) in Gaza ('fortified stronghold', cp. death). Then he arose in the darkness, rendered powerless the gates of death and carried them up 30 miles to a high altitude (cp. Heaven), to Hebron, 'the city of fellowship', where the tomb of Abraham was (Gen. 23:19), and where Gentile giants had once lived (Num. 13:22), conquered by faithful Israelites. Joshua had taken Hebron (Josh. 10:36) but Israel had not followed up his victory, and the Philistines had returned; Caleb then took it (Josh. 15:13), but again, by Samson's time, the Philistines were back. And Samson, although a type of Christ, was intensely aware of all this failure (cp. how he chose Gaza and Timnath, areas with a similar history, for his other exploits). It would seem that Samson killed the men at the gates, the leaders of the city, and then took the gates with him (16:3 cp. 2). The Hebrew used for Samson 'taking away' the gates is that translated 'possess' in the Genesis promises. Thus he possessed the gates of his enemies and slew their figureheads, as the Lord did through the cross. Samson obviously saw some specific meaning in taking the gates to Hebron and the tomb of Abraham. He surely saw that he was prefiguring Messiah's work of taking the gate of his enemies, as promised to Abraham. Or perhaps he saw himself as 'in' the Messiah, and sharing in what He would do in the future. Archaeologists have found tablets that refer to the power of Baal to possess the gates of all who oppose him; and Samson evidently wanted to show the superiority of Yahweh over Baal. The fellowship ('Hebron') which was enabled by the Lord's victory should never be undone by us; He died that He might gather together in one all God's people, to reconcile us all in one body both to each other and to God. To break apart the body is therefore to deny the essential intention of the cross. There are other points of contact with the Lord's passion. The men of Gaza laid wait in the gates of the city; they were therefore the rulers? But they decided to only kill him in the morning. The rulers of the Jews decided likewise.

" Through death..."

Samson at his death was Samson at his finest; and this was true of the Lord. Thus Samson was a type of Christ. The way he was betrayed for silver by the one he trusted means is an obvious link with the Lord's experience. The way he died with such a deep, deep sense of betrayal must have found an echo with the Lord. We must have all asked: 'Why, oh why, did Samson go on trusting her, when it was so obvious she was going to betray him?'. It may have been because she was an Israelitess (even if a renegade). The way she says " The Philistines be upon thee!" (16:20) and the way the lords of the Philistines came up to her (16:5) may suggest this. Their offer of money to her was exactly after the pattern of the Jews' approach to Judas. The way " pieces of silver" feature in both records leads us to wonder whether the correspondence was so exact that she also betrayed the helpless Samson with a kiss, as Judas did. It is suggested in [Samson And Delilah](#) that her betrayal of Samson was done in the spirit of some kind of loving teasing. She started to afflict Samson, and had the better of him. She may well have betrayed him with a kiss as she called the Philistine warriors in. We can reason on, and consider how she like Judas would have avoided eye contact, how Samson would have looked at her with a pain and disbelief and disappointment that is beyond words, altogether ineffable... and how she as Judas must have lived a wretched life afterwards, until her (premature?) death. Prov. 6:26,27; 7:1 make clear allusion to Samson and Delilah, and they suggest that Delilah was a " whorish woman" . In this case, her motivation for betraying Samson was fundamentally financial, apart from other lesser factors which there probably were. The bribe she was offered has been estimated in modern terms as around \$500,000 (1997). And Judas likewise went to the chief priests and asked how much they would give him for betraying the Lord. Again, Samson was a type of Christ. This all

indicates the unbelievable materialism which is in our natures: to betray a good man, even the Son of God, ultimately for pieces of metal.

I think it wasn't only that love is blind. In all such deep relationships there is a sense that we may know full well the weakness of the one we love, and what they will do to us in the end; and yet our nature has a tendency to overlook this. This is true not only of male:female relationships. The problem we have in understanding Samson (if we do have a problem with it) occurs again, in exactly the same form, when we consider the Lord's relationship with Judas. He knew from the beginning who should betray him. He knew that the one with whom He shared especially sweet counsel would betray Him (Ps. 55:12-14). And surely the Lord Jesus had reflected on David's experience with Ahithophel. And yet He spoke of how the twelve (including Judas) would sit on twelve thrones, sharing his glory (Mt. 19:28). He loved Judas and treated him as a close friend, even though he knew that this very close friend would betray Him. There is, to my mind, no satisfactory explanation of this apart from to realize the utter humanity of the Lord; that just like Samson, He could sincerely love a man whom he knew would betray Him. This same Lord is the same today and forever. He isn't a hard man. He loves and actively fellowships *at the time* with those whom later He knows will betray Him, even now. He doesn't just not bother because He knows they will later turn nasty. Lord, we salute you for this, your utter grace.

Micah 7 is a prophecy shot through with Messianic allusion ⁽²⁾. Christ openly quoted Mic. 7:6 concerning himself and His men in Mt. 10:35,36. Mic. 7:1 is alluded to in Mt. 21:19; 7:4 in Mt. 7:16. There are many references to Christ's betrayal and arrest: " They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net" (7:2 = Jn. 8:59; 10:31,39; 11:8). " The prince (Herod) asketh (for a sign, Lk. 23:8), the judge (Pilate) asketh for a reward; and the great man (Caiaphas the High Priest) he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up" (7:3), i.e. hatch their plot together. Because of this, " the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh" (7:4 = Lk. 19:44). " Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide (reference to Judas- Ps. 55:13): keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom" . This begins a reference to Samson's experience with Delilah. " I will look unto the Lord (Samson first used the Yahweh Name when he cried in his final suffering)...my God will hear me (cp. " Hear me this once")...rejoice not against me, O mine enemy (the Philistines mocking Samson): when I fall, I shall arise (Heb. elsewhere used about the resurrection); when I sit in darkness (Samson sitting in blindness in the prison), the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him (Samson's thoughts, surely), until he plead my cause (" Remember me!")...he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy (Delilah, symbol of the Philistines to Samson) shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me (as Delilah did?), Where is Yahweh thy God? mine eyes shall behold her (is this Samson imagining the judgment, with restored eyesight?)" . If these connections are valid- and it is hard to deny this- then Samson died full of vision of the resurrection, judgment and the final manifestation of his forgiveness which he would then receive. Paul likewise has plenty of these references in his final writings in 2 Tim. 4. One question remains: why are there these Samson references in a prophecy of the Lord's betrayal? Surely Samson was a type of Christ. It could be that the Lord Jesus was being warned, prophetically, of how a particular woman could be his undoing, as she was Samson's. The way the Messianic Proverbs warn the Son of God against a particular woman lend weight to this. Or it could be that in the same way as Delilah betrayed Samson, so Judas was to betray Jesus, and He would go through the same gamut of emotions. This would be why this prophecy of His betrayal is described in terms of Delilah's betrayal of Samson.

You will recall the words of Heb. 2:14,15 about Jesus: " through death he (destroyed) him that had the power of death" . This is exactly the idea of Jud. 16:30: " Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" . Through his own death, Christ destroyed the power of sin, epitomized in the dead Philistines. Perhaps there is an allusion in Hebrews 2 to this passage. Heb. 2:15 goes on to say that Christ delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" . Now that's packed with allusions to the time of the judges- Israel in hard bondage to their Philistine masters, living in fear, until judges or 'deliverers' like Samson delivered them from their oppressors. The same great relief which Israel felt after Samson's deliverances of them, can be experienced by us spiritually. The sins, the doubts, the fears which we all have as we analyze our spiritual standing, should melt away when we recall the great deliverance which we have received. In practice, Samson must have become a larger than life figure. We get the impression that the Israelites had a problem relating to him due to his fantastic physical strength; his wives likewise must have felt distanced from him, knowing that he had a spiritual inner being which they had no access to. We too can feel distanced from Christ as we perceive more and more the supreme spiritual strength which he had. Yet in all his ways, Samson sought the glory of God, and means of overcoming Israel's Philistine enemies. Even his first marriage with a Philistine woman was " of the Lord, that he (Samson) sought an occasion against the Philistines" (14:4). Here we see his all consuming desire to actively seek conflict with the powers of sin which debilitated and crippled Israel. As we see the forces of sin so strong in our own lives, as well as in the new Israel generally, we too should have the zeal which he had in seeking an occasion against our own flesh. It is easy to think that we are just asked to passively resist temptation whenever it arises. But the example of Samson and the Lord Jesus was of active warfare against the flesh, going on to the offensive rather than being only on the defensive.

There are several other parallels with the Lord's death, following through Samson as a type of Christ:

- The Jews wanted the Lord's death because they saw Him as their destroyer (Jn. 11:50). And the Philistines likewise (16:24).
- The way they made sport of Samson (16:25) links with how the Lord was mocked, and was even the song of the drunkards (Ps. 69:12).
- The Lord's silence was due to His complete humiliation (Acts 8:32,33). That extreme humiliation can be entered into through a consideration of Samson's ineffable shame. He was given women's work in prison, grinding at the mill, in order to rub the point in (Ex. 11:5; Mt. 24:41). 'Grinding' was some kind of figure of speech for the sex act (s.w. Job 31:10). The " fetters of brass" with which he was bound would have recalled his games of bondage with Delilah, and the same word is translated " filthiness" in a sexual context (Ez. 16:36). The word used for 'prison' means literally 'house of binding'- n extension of Delilah's house, they would have joked. One can imagine how the story of how Delilah enticed him would have become the gossip of the nation.
- The utter exhaustion of Samson from their afflictions (prodding with sticks?) is revealed when he asks the lad " Suffer me..." (Heb. 'allow me to rest / take a break'). The Lord's physical exhaustion, driven to the limit of human endurance, must be imagined.

- The Philistines didn't kill Samson immediately; they wanted to prolong the agony of his death. It was evidently their intention to kill him. Perhaps it was their plan to torture him and then finally torture him to death at the feast to their god- cp. the Lord's planned death at Passover. The great sacrifice which they planned to offer (Heb. 'kill') was probably Samson (16:23).

- Samson dying between the two pillars is broadly similar, as a kind of silhouette, to the Lord's death between two other crosses. The way the lad (also a Hebrew? for they spoke the same language?) "held" Samson's hand is significant, for the same word is translated 'to strengthen / encourage'. Perhaps the lad strengthened Samson as the repentant thief did the Lord.

- The final effort of Samson, both to speak and to act, bowing himself (Heb. 'stretching himself out to his full extension') with all his spiritual and physical energy: this was the final effort of the Lord. Again, we see in both how we are lead to a final crescendo of spiritual effort at the end of probation, although this may be articulated in various forms.

- The way the body was taken up by brave Israelites after Samson's death recalls the action of Joseph and Nicodemus.

Samson's Awareness Of Christ

There is reason to think that to some degree, Samson would have appreciated all this- that he was a type of Christ. Samson may have recognized the strength of the future Saviour when he gave his riddle to the Philistines. He meditated upon that dead lion with the sweet honey in it, and formulated his comment: "What is sweeter than honey? What (or, Who?) is stronger than a lion (Heb. 'the strong one'- this is one of Samson's many word plays)?" . 'Who is stronger than the strong one?' was an idea picked up by the Lord Jesus in, I suggest, conscious allusion (Mt. 12:29); although it is masked in the English text. He was the strong one who was stronger than the strong man of sin. Through His victory, the roaring lion of the devil lays dead. And in his skull is sweet honey; did Samson see in this the same meaning as David did in Ps. 119:103? Did he so understand the nature and method of the Lord's work that he appreciated that the Lord's victory over all His people's enemies would be through the power of God's word, lying there in the place of the mind of the beast He overcame? Yet Samson killed the lion himself; surely he felt that to some degree *he* was the strong man who had overcome the beast, through his application to God's word. His frequent references and allusions to God's past revelation, both in his words and actions, would indicate that he was a man of the word. And yet despite this, he fell so miserably. Proverbs contains a number of Samson allusions (16:32; 25:28). But the most powerful are in 7:1,5,22,25-27, where the young Israelite is commended to God's word, because this will keep him from falling to the wiles of the Gentile woman, who throws down strong men into the way of miserable death. Solomon evidently writes with allusion to Samson; that here was the man who loved God's word, and yet went so astray with women. And tragically enough, Solomon himself did just the same! He realized and lamented the tragedy of Samson, as a lover of the word who fell for the Gentile woman; and then, with all his wisdom, he did the very same thing! Here, for all to see, is the crucial difference between knowledge and faith.

However, due to the weakness of the flesh, Samson was a man who never quite made it, spiritually. In his time of dying he must have had a strong desire for salvation in the future seed. The way he pleads with God to remember him for good at the end, as he bows himself

with all his physical and spiritual might, was picked up years later by the repentant thief. In a similar plight, he likewise pleaded, this time with the Lord Jesus, to be remembered for good, even though he was unworthy. And could it be that after the pattern of many others (e.g. Paul, Jacob) we all come, at the end of our mortality, to a peak of appreciation of the Lord Jesus, of our own sinfulness and His saving grace, and of our desperation for His salvation?

Notes

(1) See Andrew Perry, *The Doctrine Of Salvation* (Sunderland: Willow, 1993).

(2) For a fuller exposition, see H.A. Whittaker, *Bible Studies* pp. 94-99 (Cannock: Biblia, 1987).

Chapter 6: DAVID

6.1 David And Goliath

David must be one of the greatest types of Christ. At this time of the David and Goliath conflict he was a shepherd, despised by his brethren, trying to save Israel at a time of dire physical suffering and spiritual apostasy. These connections alone should make us scan this record for deeper Messianic allusions. The giant strongman falling to the earth because of a stone suggests Nebuchadnezzar's image of Dan.2, where the stone refers to Christ. Note how lion and bear (17:34 cp. Dan.7:4,5) and brass and iron (17:5-7 cp. Dan.2:32,33) are all mentioned in the record. Goliath's death by a fatal wound in the head (1 Sam.17:49) must look back to Gen.3:15, again connecting David and the stone with the seed of the woman (Christ) and equating Goliath with the seed of the serpent. This is confirmed by the repetitious description of Goliath in battle with David four times as covered in "brass" from head to foot (17:5,6); which is the same word translated "serpent" and is a symbol of sin. According to some etymologists, "Philistine" fundamentally means 'one who rolls in the dust', i.e. a serpent; and significantly, Goliath is several times described as "the Philistine". Six being the number of the flesh it is significant that his "height was six cubits and a span...his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels" (17:4,7). It is even possible that the "man of sin" of 2 Thess.2 refers back to Goliath as his prototype, in which case the image of Dan.2 and the man of sin are equated.

Goliath, representing the seed of the serpent, a personification of sin (i.e. the Biblical devil), needed a man to fight him (17:8,9). The men of Israel cowered in fear, wishing they could only have the strength and courage necessary, but looking one on another helplessly as the invincible giant made his boast. How to overcome him and the evil intent of this man against God's people was what the men's conversation revolved around: "Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up". They also discussed the glorious reward

being offered: " It shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel" - and throw in his daughter for good measure too (17:25). But " all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (17:24). This may well refer to those who thought about being Israel's " champion" in fighting Goliath, rather than speaking about the Israelite army as a whole. Now what more precise description could we wish for of our feelings in the struggle against sin? There seems a similarity here with men and Angels weeping because no man was found worthy to look upon or pen the book of life (Rev.5:3-5)- until our Lord prevailed on the cross. 'Golgotha' meaning 'The place of the skull' may well be the place near Jerusalem where David buried Goliath's skull (17:54), greatly strengthening this connection. Whilst speaking of words, " Ephes-Dammim" meaning 'border of blood' suggests 'Aceldama', the " field of blood" . Goliath coming out to make his challenges at morning and evening (1 Sam.17:16) coincided with the daily sacrifices which should have been offered at those times, with their reminder of sin and the need for dedication to God. The thoughtful Israelite must surely have seen in Goliath a personification of sin which the daily sacrifices could do nothing to overcome.

The ultimate wager

If David represents Jesus and Goliath represents sin personified, then his supporting Philistines must be the armies of our individual sins, depending for their strength and power on this principle of the devil (cp. Goliath). The Israelites were effectively the servants of the Philistines before this battle, although with a theoretical chance of freedom; and similarly with mankind before Christ's death. However, this relationship between Israel and the Philistines was now to be formalized and made permanent: " Choose you a man for you...if he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants" (17:8,9). This was exactly the contest between sin and our Lord; if He had failed in His mission, we would have permanently been in bondage to sin, as we were effectively even before the cross. Something of the same wager is implied in Gen. 3:5, another prophecy of the cross- either the man kills the snake by hitting it on the head, or the snake will bite the man's heel. He has to kill it outright, first time. Yet thanks to His victory we are now free from sin- and more than that, our sins (cp. the Philistines) should now be subservient to us; Rom.6:17,18 may even be referring back to this passage: " Ye were the servants of sin, but (by baptism into Christ's death)...being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" . This sheds more light on the immense pressure on our Lord, knowing that just one slip would result in the permanent servitude of man to the sin which he hated. No wonder he appeared a man of sorrows. With that weight on him was he ever jovial, light hearted, off hand? Surely the growing flippancy and laid back, humorous atmosphere in our meetings is alien to this spirit of Christ? " Wherefore...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run (not stroll) with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus; who for the joy that was set before him (not now!) endured the cross...consider him...lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood (in your) striving against sin" (Heb.12:1-4). There is no doubt that these verses teach that Christ's personal struggle against sin in Gethsemane, prefigured by the pressure on David as he ran towards Goliath, is meant to be imitated by us.

Despised and rejected

Plenty of other details now appear relevant to the Lord's crucifixion. Both his family and the men of Israel generally rejected David's claims to be able to save Israel (1 Sam.17:28-30). Eliab's "Why camest thou down hither?" matches Christ's brothers telling him "depart hence" (Jn.7:3). The crucifixion psalms emphasize how Jesus felt rejected by both Israel and His family as he fought his Goliath then (e.g. Ps.69:8). Arguing back from the experience of his Lord, it would seem that David was really hurt and cut by the discouragement he received. 'Eliab' meaning 'God of my father' invites comparison with the Jews who despised our Lord's claims at the time of his death. The alternative rendering 'God is my Father' would connect with Israel being God's son (Ex.4:22). It is twice stressed that David's brothers "followed Saul" (1 Sam.17:13,14); is it possible to argue back from this that Christ's brothers were strong Judaists? His family appear to have later disowned him during Saul's persecution (Ps. 31:11), fleeing from him, as the Lord's friends also did (Ps. 31:11 = Mt. 26:56). David's being sent by his father to see his brethren has echoes of Joseph's experience- which was also highly typical of the Lord Jesus. Joseph's problems with his brothers may well indicate a great barrier between Jesus and his natural brothers (who surely would have always resented the fact he was the firstborn in the eyes of their mother, whilst they were most likely convinced he was illegitimate).

David's other brothers also have names which have connections with an apostate Israel. Abinadab means "The Father is willing"; cp. "All day long have I stretched forth mine hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom.10:21). Shammah means 'desolation, astonishment, ruin'. God would "make thy land desolate (shammah)" (Jer.4:7), and Israel were to be an astonishment to the world after their rejection. Similarly, Saul too represented the Jewish system, as the one who appeared superficially to Israel to be the one who could overcome all enemies, i.e. sin in the parable (1 Sam.8:20). Doubtless one of the reasons they were attracted to Saul was because his large warrior physique made him seem a match for the giant Philistines in these man to man duels that often decided whole battles in those days. And the men of Israel should have learnt at the time of the crucifixion that the Law which appeared so powerful to save was unable to do so. By contrast we are specifically told that David was not of unduly great height (so 1 Sam.16:7 implies), but was chosen because of the spiritual state of his heart. We have seen how Goliath was a 'man of sin'; the New Testament concept of Satan can describe both the Jewish system and also sin, because "the strength of sin is the (Jewish) law" ⁽¹⁾. The great height of both Saul and Goliath would inevitably have been noticed; as if to imply that Saul (representing the Law) was as superficially powerful as Goliath was. There seems to be a verbal connection at least between the Jews' mocking question of Christ "Where is thy father?" (Jn.8:19) and Saul's "whose son is this youth" (17:55)- or was Saul's question also a subtle accusation of illegitimacy? Ps.106:13 also seems to describe Israel's rebellions in language relevant to Saul, as if he represented them: "They sang his praise (cp. Saul prophesying). They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel" - cp. Saul in 1 Sam.13:8. Note how Saul lost the animals (asses) he was given to look after; while David preserved his father's sheep, maybe looking forward to the Jewish system's inability to save its people compared to Christ's keeping of us.

Of sheep and shepherds

We can now attempt a more chronological analysis of the confrontation between David and Goliath: "And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and went, as Jesse commanded him" (17:20). There being no human reason for David to leave his

shepherding (17:28), there may be the implication that Jesse knew more about David's mission than appears on the surface. Thus David could say to Eliab concerning his coming to the battle " Is there not a cause" (17:29)- i.e. 'I'm not just here to bring provisions- but for something far more important'. It would be fitting if Jesse represented God, in which case the commandment to go and see the brethren would correspond to Joseph being told by Jacob (cp. God) to go and see his brethren (Gen.37:13) resulting in his figurative death and resurrection in the pit, and the Son being sent by the Father to inspect the Jewish vineyard, with the subsequent murder of him by the husbandmen (Lk.20:14). " As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise..." (Jn.14:31) in the context of Christ's going to fight sin on the cross connects very nicely with David receiving the father's command and arising to go.

David leaving the sheep and going to fight Goliath recalls the parable of Christ as the good shepherd leaving the flock and going to save the lost sheep (Lk.15:4-6). The shepherd goes alone at night up into the hills (cp. Isaac going to be sacrificed in the hills), and carries the lamb on his shoulder- as Christ carried the cross of our sins on his shoulder to redeem the lost sheep of mankind (Is.53:6). This lost sheep parable is also picked up in 1 Peter 2:25: " For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (i.e. Christ the shepherd). But this in turn is quoting Is.53:5,6: " All we like sheep have gone astray...but he was wounded (on the cross) for our transgressions" , which is thus the parallel to the saving of the lost sheep. This interpretation of the lost sheep parable- i.e. that the shepherd going to save the sheep represents Christ going to die on the cross- was first prompted by David leaving the sheep with the keeper to go and fight Goliath, representing Christ's saving us from sin on the cross. The leaving of the sheep with the keeper perhaps looks forward to Christ's entrusting the disciples to the Father's care in those agonizing days while death parted him from them, as David's encounter with Goliath did. David's subsequent leaving of them altogether to go and live in the King's court clearly looks forward to our Lord's ascension to Heaven after his victory over the real Goliath.

Note how in the fight with Goliath, David progressively shed all human distractions; he left the sheep with a keeper, then on arrival at the battlefield he " left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage" (17:22), and finally left Saul's armour behind, representing the Law as a means of overcoming sin. And there must also have been progressive stages in our Lord's coming towards that state of total faith necessary for his final victory. Notice too how David " ran into the army" after leaving behind " his carriage" , and also ran towards the Philistine. The eagerness of our Lord to fight sin, despite knowing the supreme difficulty and seriousness of failure, sets us a matchless example of the enthusiasm we should have in our striving against sin.

Revvng up the faith

" He came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle" (17:20). What a terrifying sight and sound that must have been; and similarly the strength of sin and man's inability to overcome must have struck fear into our Lord's heart as he came closer to the cross. David as a newcomer and onlooker would especially have noticed the obvious weakness of Israel. His seeing the weak knees of all the warriors of Israel must have made him feel like his Lord did on contemplating the fact that he personally would have to overcome sin: " He saw that there was no man, and wondered ⁽²⁾ that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation...for he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation...the garments of vengeance" (Is.59:16,17- cp. David's

shunning of such physical armour for its spiritual counterpart. Is there a conscious allusion to David and Goliath here?).

David asked about the promised reward for killing Goliath as if it was a genuine motivation for him to rev up his faith and go ahead. "The man who killeth him, the King will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel" (17:25). Our victorious Lord received these rewards in the form of the spiritual riches of greater understanding of the Father, being given us, God's spiritual daughter, in marriage, and us being made free from the legal requirements of the Law. This again suggests that Saul in his heavy duty taxation system represented the demands of the Mosaic law, from which the victory of the cross made us free. Amazingly, it was the beauty which our Lord saw in us which inspired him to take a deep breath of faith and step forward.

Angelic help

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (17:26). At least three times David stresses that he will overcome Goliath with the help of the Angelic armies: "This...Philistine shall be as (the lion and bear I killed with Angelic help), seeing he (also, like them) hath defied the armies of the living God ('God of the living ones'- i.e. the Angel cherubim, 17:36). Thus David says to Goliath "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts (invariably an Angelic title of God), the God of the (Angelic) armies of Israel" (17:45). The Messianic parable is so complete that this triple emphasis on David's Angelic help must have relevance to Christ's overcoming of sin on the cross. It seems highly likely that it is through the Angels that Christ and us in our crosses receive power to overcome sin (cp. Goliath), over and above any human strength which we can muster. One can therefore better understand the spiritual panic of our Lord when he felt this Angelic presence and help withdrawn on the cross: "My God (Angel), Why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Mt.27:46).

Total faith

"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (17:32). This must be another John 14 allusion- this time to "Let not your heart be troubled" (Jn.14:1), spoken by Jesus as he was about to go forth to the cross, as David was about to fight Goliath. His subsequent references to his earlier delivering of sheep out of the mouth of the lion and bear indicate that Israel were in the same situation as those lambs had been; again, as if the good shepherd David/ Jesus had left the sheep safely (17:20) and gone to save the lost- and almost killed- sheep of Israel, both natural and spiritual. And on another level our Lord's previous triumphs of faith, not least in the wilderness temptations, would have given him courage for the ultimate spiritual test of the cross.

Such was his totality of faith that David could calmly call out "I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee" (17:46). David's emphasis on cutting off Goliath's head (cp.v.54) and the stone hitting the forehead perhaps indicates that the significance of Christ's victory over the devil was that men now have the possibility of sharing his victory over the mind of the flesh, which is where the real David and Goliath battle is worked out so many times each day. David continued: "That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel", which seems to be referred to in Jn.14:31: "That the world may know" that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself through Christ's loving obedience to the Father (cp. Jn.17:23).

Brief battle

David crossed the brook and then cast the stone at Goliath (17:49). This connects with our Lord crossing the brook Kidron, and maybe echoes him being a stone's cast distant from the disciples (Lk.22:41). There is a continued emphasis on David's zeal to fight Goliath- as the Lord had to fight sin: " David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and" disarmed him (17:51). There is a possibility that this is consciously referred to in Col.2:15, where we read that Christ on the cross " disarmed (NIV) principalities and powers, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them" - as if Goliath represented the Law and the sin engendered by it which our Lord conquered on the cross.

Triumph over every sin

" And the men of Israel and Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines" (17:52). That shout of glee and triumph should be ours on considering Christ's victory- and because the devil has been destroyed by his death, we should enthusiastically pursue our sins right back to their source, confident we will have the victory- as the Philistines were chased back to their home towns, such as Sharaim, meaning 'two gates'- as if hinting at the promise that Abraham's seed, both Christ and us, would inherit the gate of our enemies. Note that the enemies that the seed of Abraham would conquer are our sins (Gen.22:18 cp. Lk.1:73-75; Acts 3:25-27; Mic.7:19). David seemed to have anticipated that his victory would be pressed home by the Israelites attacking the individual Philistines: " The Lord...will give you into our hands" (17:47). And no doubt our Lord hoped that he eventually would see that the travail of his soul had produced the same effect in us. The " reproach" was taken away from Israel by David's victory (1 Sam.17:26), as Christ carried away the reproach of our sins on the cross (Ps.69:9; Rom.15:3); therefore we can stand unreprouchable before God at judgment, with no sin at all against us- due to Christ's victory (Col.1:22).

As a final inspiration- David took five stones but used only one. Was he faithless and doubting that the first one would hit home? Do those five stones represent the five books of Moses which Ps.119 tells us was Christ's study all the day, it being through the word that Jesus overcame the mind of sin? Or did he aim to use the other four on Goliath's four giant sons (2 Sam. 21:16-22)? That shows supreme spiritual ambition. In reality those four were killed later by David's closest followers- and they must have their counterparts amongst us. So let us too arise, shout, and pursue those sins which appear so triumphant.

Additional homework for the enthusiast would be a study of Psalms 8 and 144, both of which appear to be about the David and Goliath struggle, and are therefore a description of our Lord's feelings after his resurrection. Ps.144:3 is amazing: " What is...the son of man (Jesus) that Thou takest account of him?" , showing our Lord's humility is such that even now He is amazed that God bothered to help him, so low is his estimation of the flesh he had.

Political aspects

The political aspects of this passage have not been considered; the following points are to stimulate thought along this equally fruitful line. The different metals which feature in the description of Goliath all find their place in the beasts of Daniel 7, which are destroyed by the coming of Christ. This implies that the nations of the world are confederate under one charismatic, seemingly invincible leader; the latter day Goliath. Hit by David's stone, Goliath keeled over " upon his face to the earth" (1 Sam.17:49), just as Dagon his god had done

earlier. Thus Goliath was treated like his gods, as the lives of people of this world *consist* in the idols of materialism they possess. Perhaps this "man of sin" will likewise be an Arab? We have mentioned the evident similarity between Daniel's image and the Goliath man of sin. The place of the conflict was a little South of Jerusalem, halfway between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean. This sounds suspiciously like the king of the north planting his tents (cp. the Philistine's) "between the seas (Dead and Mediterranean) in the glorious holy mountain" (Dan.11:45). The Philistines making their constant painful incursions into an apostate Israel may well have links with the P.L.O. activities today. Goliath was from Gath (1 Sam.17:4), meaning "winepress", with its Armageddon and judgement hints. Similarly the conflict lasted for 40 days (1 Sam.17:16)- another link with the coming Divine judgements. David's mocking "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" matches "Who art thou, O great mountain?" which was to be destroyed "not by might..but by My spirit" (Zech.4:6,7), as Goliath was killed by David without a sword in his hand, i.e. not by human might. Note that the Philistines were pitched on a mountain, comparing with the description of Babylon as "O great mountain". Thus the king of the North, the man of sin, Babylon, Daniel's image of the last days are all subtly alluded to, implying that Christ will destroy all of them during one conflict. It is worth questioning whether all these various systems in opposition to Christ will be separate at the time of His return; present developments suggest there may be one huge opposing system (the beast) which incorporates all these others. But now the possibilities are opened up to the reader to work through 1 Sam.17 again from this political/ latter day prophecy perspective.

Matchless Jonathan

It must be significant that straight after the fight between David and Goliath, representing Christ's conquest of sin on the cross, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul...then Jonathan and David made a covenant" (1 Sam.18:1,3). After the cross, a new covenant was made between Jesus and us, making Jonathan representative of us. The extraordinary bond between David and Jonathan then becomes a type of our relationship with Jesus after his victory on the cross. To confirm the covenant, "Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle", pointing forward to our total divesting of human strength and giving it to our Lord when we appreciate the greatness of his victory without those things (cp.1 Sam.17:39).

Jonathan lived in an environment which was bitterly opposed to David; yet he stuck up for him, at the risk of embarrassment and opposition, and certain damage to his own prospects (1 Sam.20:31); as we should in this wicked world. As Saul cast a javelin at David, so he did at Jonathan (1 Sam.20:33); as we should fellowship the sufferings of David's greater son. Saul's hate of David resulted in Jonathan being "grieved for David, because his father had done him shame" (1 Sam.20:34). Is this not our response to our world in its' ceaseless blasphemy of Christ?

Only occasionally could Jonathan and David meet, brief moments of intense fellowship away from the rest of the world, strengthening each other's hand in the Lord (1 Sam.23:16), re-confirming their covenant together (1 Sam.18:3; 20:8,16; 23:18). No wonder their goodbyes were so hard: "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (1 Sam.20:41). Not surprisingly, they looked forward to the promised day of David's Kingdom: "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee" (1 Sam.23:17). Our

communion meetings with the Lord during our wilderness journey must surely mirror those meetings.

The depth of the David/Jonathan relationship introduces to the pages of Scripture the idea of 'agape' love- a love higher than normal human experience. " The beauty of Israel is (singular- re.Jonathan,v.25) slain upon thy high places...I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam.1:19,26). Such love should typify our relationship with Jesus. But does it?

Our Inspiration

The David and Goliath conflict was not only inspirational to Jonathan, but to the men of Israel generally. It seems from 1 Chron. 11:13,14 that soon after the fight with Goliath, there was another skirmish with the Philistines at Pas-Dammim [RVmg. 'Ephes-Dammim' - the same place where David fought Goliath]. Again, the men of Israel fled, but those who held fast were given a "great deliverance" ["salvation", RVmg.], just as David is described as achieving. Those men who stayed and fought were doubtless inspired by David; just as we should be, time and again, by the matchless victory of our Lord on Golgotha.

Notes

(1) See 'In Search Of Satan'.

(2) Remember the Lord's great respect for John the Baptist.

6.2 David And Jonathan

6-2-1 David And Jonathan

It is evident from our previous study of 1 Sam.17 that we are intended to see David's victory over Goliath as deeply representative of Christ's conquest of sin on Golgotha. Immediately afterwards, we read (and the record stresses this repetitiously) that Jonathan's soul " was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul...then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he (Jonathan) loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam.18:1,3). A good example of how the souls of David and Jonathan were spiritually knit together is shown by the identical style of prayer they had (20:12 cp.23:10; the question arises: Who influenced who?). After Christ's victory on the cross, he entered into a covenant with us his church. The intricately related friendship between David and Jonathan thus becomes typical of that between the Lord Jesus and ourselves. The idea of souls being knit together occurs in Col.2:2,19, concerning how our hearts and souls are knit together with Christ. This alone encourages us to see Jonathan as typical of ourselves. The inspired Paul may also have had Jonathan in mind as typical of the church when he spoke of our eyes being enlightened (Eph.1:18), using the very words of 14:27 concerning Jonathan. Likewise Paul speaks of the church as workers together with God (2 Cor.6:1), probably alluding to Jonathan having " wrought with God" (14:45). The covenant between Jonathan and David was an eternal one (20:15; 23:17), and was reconfirmed during their brief meetings together, during which they earnestly looked ahead to the Kingdom (23:17). And as we are all too painfully aware, our friendship with the Lord Jesus reflects the frustration of the Jonathan / David relationship, the accumulated tension of being unable to express their spiritual communication with each other, the pain of physical distance, Jonathan not knowing David's geographical location, having to live up to appearances and expectations in the David-hating court of his bitter father, struggling for the courage to stand up for his best friend. The sheer human pain of it all is so thoroughly revealed to the sensitive reader of the records. There is a purpose in this: it is to take us further in appreciating the true nature of our relationship with Christ.

Response to the cross

From the moment David stood triumphant over the slain Goliath, there is the continued emphasis on Jonathan taking the initiative in his relationship with David. It was he who first entered the covenant, *his* soul was knit to David's, etc. This 'initiative' was in response to David's ultimate initiative in conquering Goliath. Likewise it is in the cross that we see the unsurpassed spiritual initiative of the love of Christ; and now we initiate the response (Rom.5:8). We love, because he first loved us (1 Jn.4:19).

Jonathan was doubtless teetering on the edge of whether to take up Goliath's challenge. As the King's senior son and the young, dynamic army general (13:2), surely he was the obvious Hebrew champion to match Goliath. And moreover, Jonathan had risen to a similar challenge in 1 Sam.14, when he and his armourbearer took on the might of the Philistine army singlehanded, in a supreme act of faith. The question arises: Why didn't Jonathan do the same again when faced with the Goliath crisis? Presumably his faith was capable of one-off flashes of brilliance in certain situations, but in cold blood, as an act of the will, Jonathan's faith just

didn't stay at the peak he achieved in 1 Sam.14. Truly and fully can we empathize with that man. His sense of failure in not rising up to Goliath's challenge made him appreciate David's victory much more deeply. Again, exact ditto for us in our response to the cross. As Jonathan wrought great salvation in Israel in 1 Sam.14:45, so did David (the same phrase occurs in 19:5). As Saul tried to kill an innocent Jonathan out of jealousy of his victory, so he did David- thus Jonathan shared the sufferings of David, as we do of Christ. Another example of this will be found in 20:33, where Saul tries to kill Jonathan with a javelin, as he did to David. Yet wonderfully, David seems to have counted Jonathan *as if* he actually had been the champion against Goliath; he describes him as " the mighty" (2 Sam.1:27), using the same Hebrew word translated " champion" in 17:51 concerning Goliath. Likewise Christ shares his victory with us to the extent that he counts us *as if* we were the victors on Calvary.

Further confirmation of Jonathan seeing David as his personal hero, succeeding where he failed, can be found in the following consideration. Jonathan seems to have seen Gideon as his hero ⁽¹⁾. Yet in 19:5 he says that " David put his life in his hand" , exactly as Gideon did (Jud.9:17). In other words, Jonathan saw David as the perfect fulfilment of all he spiritually wished to be, he felt that *David* lived up to the example of his hero Gideon, whereas he did not. Is this how dynamically and intensely we relate to our Lord Jesus? For this is what the David and Jonathan relationship points ahead to.

Jonathan stripped himself of his " robe...and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (18:4). The triple phrase " and / even to..." indicates the totality of this stripping. " Bow" and " sword" often occur together as almost an idiom for human strength (Gen.48:22; Josh.24:12; 2 Kings 6:22; 1 Chron.5:18; Hos.1:7) ⁽²⁾. Not only did he give David the weapons of his human strength (cp.13:22), but he appears to have stripped himself almost physically bare (cp. Mic.2:8).Stripping like this is almost always associated with shame. The same word occurs in relating how the Philistines stripped Jonathan of his clothes and weapons, as he lay slain on Gilboa (31:8,9). This all seems to suggest that Jonathan was saying to David: " I deserve to have been killed by Goliath (cp. the devil), so in a sense I will 'die' now by entering into a covenant with you, knitting my life / soul with yours. Rather than the Philistines (cp. our sins) killing, shaming and stripping me, I'll do it to myself'. Isn't this exactly our response to the cross in the ongoing 'baptism' we commit ourselves to? And of course we shouldn't miss the connection with Israel stripping themselves, deeply conscious of their sins, and then entering into covenant with God (Ex.33:6). Yet does the cross of Christ really fill us with that sense of shame, that desire to throw away all our human strength and knit our souls with that of Christ...?

Jonathan saw David as God manifest; thus " Jonathan said unto *David* , O Lord God of Israel..." (20:12). Our reflection on Christ's great victory should also makes us appreciate the more finely the degree to which " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" . Yet despite Jonathan's deep respect for David, evidently seeing David as his spiritual superior, David speaks of himself as being so *inferior* to Jonathan! Three times in two verses he calls himself " thy servant" (20:7,8). And David felt that he had " found grace" in Jonathan's eyes (20:3). What a relationship was this! David truly feeling Jonathan's servant, whilst Jonathan gasped at David's spiritual stature. And with what precision do we see the Spirit artlessly capturing our position before Christ, the " servant of all" the church. There was something incredibly mutual about their relationship; Jonathan was a real inspiration to David. He strengthened him, as the disciples did Christ. It is difficult to accurately appreciate the sense in which we have a mutuality of friendship with Christ; the sense in which we

actually give him something. Shortly before he went out to face the cross, Christ thanked the disciples for sticking with him in all his temptations (Lk.22:28). His words must have met with blank looks. In like manner it is hard for us, in this life at least, to enter into the idea of our giving some kind of help and encouragement, indeed *anything*, to our Lord. Yet at least we must accept, on a conceptual level anyway, that somehow, in some sense, we *do* give him something.

Jonathan in weakness

20:14,15,42 seem to hint at some kind of nervousness, even fear, in Jonathan, despite his closeness to David. He seems to have almost feared that David would take revenge punish him in some way, on account of his close relationship with his sinful father. It must have seemed impossible to Jonathan, living at a time of kinship-based revenge, to believe that ultimately David would not react strongly against Saul's hatred of him. And we too, ever conscious of our sinful nature, the problems of our natural ancestry, struggle to reassure ourselves of the love of Christ that passes knowledge, just as Jonathan must have looked deeper and deeper into the malice-less love of his friend David.

Notes

(1) There are clear connections between Jonathan and Gideon; compare 1 Sam.14:10-20 with Jud.7:3,10,11,14,22. Jonathan's son was called Merib-baal (1 Chron.9:40), meaning 'rebellion against Baal', an epithet for 'Gideon'.

(2) Jonathan and Saul's "bow...and sword" were used by them in the fateful battle on Gilboa (2 Sam.1:22). Does this mean that Jonathan was trusting in his human strength again? Psalm 44, which sounds very much like David's meditation on Israel's defeat on Gilboa, includes the comment: "I (David) will not trust in my *bow*, neither shall my *sword* save me" (Ps.44:6). Or does it mean that although Jonathan gave David / Jesus his human strength, David gave it back to him, for him to use on his own initiative?

6-2-2 David's Lament Over Jonathan

If we are to read Jonathan as typical of ourselves, we can expect to see a number of hints at his spiritual weak points. Already we have observed that he failed to maintain the spiritual peaks that he occasionally reached; and we have suggested that Jonathan's death on Gilboa may hint that he too shared the apostasy of Israel at that time. The Spirit's condemnation of Israel in Am.2:14,15 is loaded with allusions to the fate of Saul and Jonathan on Gilboa, as recorded in David's lament over Jonathan and Saul: "The flight (cp. Saul and sons fleeing before the Philistines) shall perish from the *swift* (= Saul and Jonathan "swifter than eagles"), and the *strong* shall not strengthen his force (= "stronger than lions"), neither shall the *mighty* ("How are the mighty fallen") deliver himself: neither shall he stand that handleth the *bow* (= "the bow of Jonathan...")." Another set of allusions to Saul and Jonathan's death occur in Micah 1 and 2, where again they are connected with spiritually collapsed Israel:

Micah 1 and 2

High places (1:3)

Saul and Jonathan

Slain at the site of *their* high places (2 Sam.1:19,25). These high places are consistently associated with idolatry and at best semi-spirituality.

" A wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls" (1:8) for apostate Israel	David's lament over Jonathan and Saul
" They covet fields, and take them away...they oppress a man" (2:2)	Saul was guilty of this.
" Lament with a lamentation of lamentations" for the pathos of it all (2:4 AVmg.)	David's lament over Jonathan and Saul
" Thy shame naked" (1:11)	Stripped naked by the Philistines, with Saul's body paraded naked on the wall of Bethshan.
" It is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem" (1:9)	The Philistines took the Israelite cities at this time (31:7), presumably including Jerusalem, which David had to recapture.
" Declare ye it not at Gath" (1:10) - regarding Israel's judgment for sin	This is a direct quote from 2 Sam.1:20.
"The glory of Israel hides in the cave of Adullam" (1:15 NEB)	Saul
" She is grievously sick of her wounds" (1:9 AVmg.)	How Saul and Jonathan died (31:1,2 AVmg.).

The point of all these allusions to David's lament over Jonathan and Saul is to show that at best Jonathan died the death of a sinner, as does the church whom he typified. Yet it is also possible that there is here the possible hint that Jonathan's personal spirituality was not what it might have been at this time. There is another reason for these allusions. The Spirit could have described the depth of David's grief using adjectives alone. But instead it chooses to also make the point by way of allusion. The grief of Micah for Israel was that of David for Jonathan: " I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls" (Mic.1:8). The extent of David's grief is another indication of his love for Jonathan; and this is a prophecy of Christ's love for us.

It is really stressed that Saul and Jonathan " fell" on Gilboa (31:1,8; 2 Sam.1:10,12,19,25,27), using a Hebrew word which is often used about spiritual falling. The fact that " the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons" (31:2) gives the impression of them fleeing from the Philistine soldiers. This sends the mind back to the Law's warning that an apostate Israel would flee before their enemies (Dt.28:25). It is possible to Biblically reconstruct the battle of Gilboa, and thus to enter into the pathos of the whole scene yet more fully. Saul and Jonathan did not retreat (2 Sam.1:22) when the rest of Israel did (31:1). Saul and his sons held their ground, slaying many Philistines. But then Jonathan was wounded by an arrow (the Hebrew word translated " slain" in 2 Sam.1:19,22,25 means to pierce to death; crucifixion language), as was Saul. Yet they kept on fighting, until they were surrounded on all sides; they died " in the *midst* of the battle" (2 Sam.1:25); they " perished" (2 Sam.1:27), a Hebrew word also translated 'to have no way to flee'. They tried to flee, eventually throwing down

their shields so that they could run faster (2 Sam.1:21). Eventually Jonathan and his brothers, the cream of Israel, lay slain on Gilboa, and Saul then fell on his sword.

David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is extremely positive, after the spirit of the way in which Christ looks upon his dead saints (cp. God's positive comments on many of the kings after their death). Yet we know that Saul's death was in recompense for his dire apostasy. In that punishment, David observed, he and Jonathan " were not divided" (2 Sam.1:23). This may suggest that in some sense Jonathan was too closely linked with his father, and was therefore implicated in his punishment. It can be shown that not all Saul's sons died on Gilboa; therefore there was special point to the fact that Jonathan died with his father in that way. David's command that there should be no dew or rain upon the mountains (2 Sam.1:21) was to be picked up years later by Elijah, when he made the same imprecation against an apostate Israel (1 Kings 17:1).

Earlier on, Jonathan certainly seems to have seen Saul in a somewhat too positive light. His statement that God would be with David as He had been with Saul in the past and was still with him (so the Hebrew seems to imply) surely bespeaks a lack of appreciation of the seriousness of Saul's apostasy (20:13). Despite Saul commanding Jonathan by clear pronouncement to kill David (19:1 Hebrew), Jonathan assures David that Saul is not really intending to kill him; the implication is that he felt David's fear of Saul was somewhat exaggerated (20:1,2). David gently pointed out, in the spirit of Christ, that Jonathan did not realize how deceptive Saul was (20:3). Saul gave the impression that he 'delighted' in David (18:22), using the very same word as in 19:2: " Jonathan...*delighted* much in David" . In other words, Saul and our surrounding world can appear to have the same attitude to David / Jesus as ourselves. Those who see the apostasy as good 'fellow-Christians' have fallen headlong into this trap. The massive difference between the world's attitude to Christ and our own should become more and more apparent to us, despite the external similarities between us and them. Jonathan's familiarity with his father led him to overlook the manic danger which he posed for David, although at other times Jonathan seems to have faced up to it squarely. Again, the similarities with ourselves should be clear; our familiarity with sin, our hereditary closeness to it, leads us to question the real danger it has for the Christ-man. Our sense of the seriousness of sin likewise tends to blow hot and cold.

6-2-3 Jonathan's Relationship With Saul

All of us in Christ experience a massive sense of paradox. We live and work in this world, doing the things of this world in our daily occupations, yet in the more important side of our lives we have this high spiritual relationship with the Lord Jesus and the Almighty Sovereign of this universe. This is - or ought to be- part of our hour by hour experience in this life. A little imagination of Jonathan's situation soon shows that our dilemma was exactly matched by his experience. He was the King's son, heavily taken up with the day to day running of the Kingdom, clearly tipped to succeed the King, and possibly take over as regent on Saul's retirement. Saul effectively says as much during his explosion at Jonathan for befriending David (20:30,31). . So there was Jonathan, going up the ladder towards Kingship, when he had no real interest in this, and when he had firmly decided that David would be king, not himself , when the Kingdom was established (23:17). There must be hundreds of Christians-cum-high flying executives worldwide who can identify completely with this scenario.

The bitterness underlying Saul's words in 20:30,31 indicates a certain element of love-hate in Jonathan's relationship with Saul. We can sense this in the record of 1 Sam.14, when

Jonathan overcame the Philistine garrison whilst his father cowered away in nervous faithlessness. How jealous Saul must have been! Jealousy was one of Saul's characteristics ⁽¹⁾, and it is subconsciously a major feature of the world's aggression towards us; for the world *is* passively aggressive (cp. Gen.3:15), if only we manifest Christ as we should. Saul almost seems to have contrived his command not to eat on pain of death in order to incriminate his son, whom he knew would not have heard his prohibition. The way in which he says that even if it were Jonathan who had eaten, then he must die (14:39), seems to suggest that Saul was actually looking for an excuse to kill Jonathan. This love-hate relationship between Jonathan and Saul is exactly typical of ours with the world and our own flesh.

There were times when Jonathan's relationship with Saul and the court became more strained than at others. Their all consuming desire was increasingly the destruction of David. Our surrounding world has a similar, obsessive, anti-Christ enthusiasm to which we are diametrically opposed. It would seem that Saul's whole family turned against David. A comparison of 1 Chron.10:6 and 1 Sam.31:6 shows a parallel between the house of Saul and his men; and it was the men of Saul who aided Saul in persecuting David (23:25,26). Further divergence between David and Saul's family is shown by the fact that Michal, Saul's daughter, either left David or was divorced by him (2 Sam.2:2 cp. 6:20). Yet despite this, Jonathan's intensity of relationship with David meant that he was not ashamed to speak up for him: " Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not *the king* sin against his servant...because his works have been to thee-ward very good: for he...slew the Philistine" (19:4,5). Note how he calls Saul " the King" , suggesting a certain detachment from him. The vision of David standing triumphant over Goliath still motivated Jonathan, to the extent that he could stand up in that hostile environment and testify to the love of David, the extent of his selfless victory, and the urgent need for this to be recognized by men. The spirit of our preaching only occasionally matches this example. No wonder the record stresses Jonathan as being typical of ourselves.

Despite this, the record reveals a certain closeness between Saul and Jonathan in Jonathan's relationship with Saul. David recognized this when he reflected that even in their death they were not divided (2 Sam.1:23). Perhaps this means that they died fighting next to each other. Consider the following:

- The description of Jonathan as the son of Saul occurs a massive 23 times; the connection between them is certainly highlighted.
- We have mentioned that Jonathan had Gideon as his personal hero. Yet there is ample evidence that Saul too saw Gideon in this light ⁽²⁾. Does this suggest that in his more spiritual days, Saul successfully imparted his spiritual enthusiasm for Gideon to his son in Sunday school lessons?
- Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam.9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house.
- Jonathan was commander of the army (13:2). When he gave " *the* robe that was upon him" to David (18:4), he was effectively making David the commander (cp. 2 Chron.18:9,29). Thus when " Saul set (David) over the men of war" (18:5), he was tacitly going along with Jonathan's wish, even though by this time he had already heard the women praising David

more than himself, and his bitter jealousy against David had already begun (18:6). This little point simply shows the external unity of action between Saul and Jonathan.

This closeness in Jonathan's relationship with Saul shows the emotional tangle which Jonathan was in on account of his relationship with David. If we truly love Christ, and if we are honest enough to come to terms with the pull of our own natures, we will be going through exactly the same. Our Lord seems to have seen in Jonathan a type of ourselves. In the context of warning us that loyalty to him would mean confessing him before men and conflict between fathers and sons, he encourages us that not a hair of our head will perish (Mt.10:30 cp. Lk.21:18). This is picking up the application of this phrase to Jonathan in 14:45.

Notes

(1) Saul's jealousy is most clearly shown by his resentment of how the women praised David more than himself. But consider too how Saul gave David his armour, as did Jonathan ("garments" in 18:4 is the same word as "armour" in 17:38). David accepted Jonathan's gift, but rejected Saul's.

(2) The following is the evidence that Saul saw Gideon as his spiritual hero: 1 Sam.11:11 = Jud.7:16; 13:5 = Jud.7:12; 13:6 = Gideon offering before fighting Midian; 14:5,20 = Jud.7:22; 14:24 = imitating Gideon and his men going without food; 14:28,31 = Jud.8:4,5; 11:7 = Gideon killing his father's oxen.

6-2-4 The Love Of David For Jonathan

The record powerfully presents the picture of David and Jonathan as two men living in totally different worlds, and yet being bound together, despite the tangles of their lives, by the hope of the Kingdom, and the pure intensity of their spiritual bond with each other in the Lord. The love of David for Jonathan is surpassing. The juxtaposition of their lifestyles is shown by passages like 23:18: "David abode in the *wood*, and Jonathan went to his *house*". Jonathan Saul's son (note the emphasis again!) arose, and went to David *into* the wood" (23:16). We are invited to imagine Jonathan walking into the wood, stumbling through it, until he found David, concealed in some deep thicket; and then, after brief but intense fellowship, stumbling back through the undergrowth, brushing himself down, and returning to his stately home. The same impression is given by 20:42: "We have sworn both of us...and David arose and departed (to his den): and Jonathan went into the city". There seems more than an echo here of Abraham and Lot parting company in Gen.13:8-12. How many of us, coming out of a memorial meeting and returning to the world, have gone through the same emotions. The clandestine nature of the David:Jonathan friendship is surely replicated between us and Christ. The love of David for Jonathan is Christ's love for us. Their souls were "knit", a Hebrew word also translated "conspire", hinting at the secretiveness (18:1). What company we are in! Yet as Jonathan became too involved in his surrounding world (so it seems), so we run a similar gauntlet. The question arises: Should Jonathan have run away from his situation, and gone to join David in the wilderness, like others did? Should we? To close down a career, move down the property ladder, change our eating, travelling, holiday habits.... or stay where we are in Saul's court, to some degree living out a lie, hoping Gilboa won't come for us?

The intensity of fellowship

By now we have presented enough evidence to show that we are intended to read Jonathan as typical of ourselves. Hidden away in the records, there is so much information concerning the human side of his relationship with David. So now we want to revel for a moment in piecing

it all together, to marvel at the *human pain* of it all, and to see in it both challenge and comfort; challenge in that we really should be experiencing something like this with Christ, and in those parts of life in which we do, to take comfort from the fact that other men have trodden this path before.

In all close friendships there are some aspects which just could not have been contrived by human arrangement, and which add to the closeness and sense of specialness which those relationships have. There were such aspects with David and Jonathan, intensifying the love of David for Jonathan. For example, it was a beautiful coincidence that they both happened to have a brother called Abinadab (16:8 cp. 1 Chron.8:33). The same spirit is shown in the incident where they agree that if Jonathan shoots arrows well beyond David, then David should flee. Obviously they did not intend to meet if this were the case; otherwise there would have been no point in the arrangement about the arrows. David did need to flee, so Jonathan shot the arrows beyond him. Yet somehow Jonathan and David took a chance and crept towards each other. David went towards Jonathan, somehow hoping that he would meet him. And Jonathan went to find David, hoping against hope that he *wouldn't* flee immediately, as they had arranged. This explains the intensity of their meeting together: "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded" (20:41). "Until David exceeded" defies complete translation and interpretation. It clearly does not mean that David cried until he stopped crying. David "exceeded" in that he went somewhere beyond; Strong defines the Hebrew word as meaning 'to be made larger in the mind'. In a sense David broke down emotionally, and yet on another level he went beyond, into a level of relationship which was beyond normal emotional experience. In like manner he commented that his love for Jonathan was beyond the love of women; the love of David for Jonathan pointed forward to that special emotional and spiritual bond in Christ which passes the human experience of love (Eph. 3:19).

It was doubtless overruled that they grew up only 10 miles away from each (Jonathan in Gibeah of Saul, David in Bethlehem). In the early Israel of those days, it is almost certain that they knew each other from their youth. It is possible to speculate that David was in fact "the young man that bare (Jonathan's) armour" in the heroic conquest of the Philistine garrison in 1 Sam.14. Note how Saul also calls him "young man" in 17:58. There was evidently an intense spiritual and physical rapport between Jonathan and his armour bearer which was similar to that described between Jonathan and David. "I am with thee according to thy heart" (14:7) has firm connection with David and Jonathan being described as having their souls knit together in 18:1. The record of David's battle with the Philistines in 2 Sam.5:17-24 has certain similarities with the exploits of 14:8-11; as if, years later, David replicated his early adventure of faith. David already had a reputation in Israel for being "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war...and the Lord is with him" (16:18), even before the Goliath incident. This would be understandable if he had gone with Jonathan in chapter 14. His becoming *Saul's* armourbearer (16:21) would then be seen as a logical promotion from being Jonathan's armourbearer.

The last mention of the David : Jonathan relationship is in 2 Sam.21:12-14, where we read that David personally ("he" cp. "they") took and carried the bones of Saul and Jonathan to their final resting place. The love of David for Jonathan is apparent. We are invited to imagine David carrying the bones of his best friend, perhaps just the ashes of them (31:12,13), cradling them (or the container) in his arms, weeping as he walked. How about this for pathos. What *is* man, that God is mindful of us? The words of David's lament in 2 Sam.1 would have surely come to his mind. It is almost certain that David memorized them,

seeing it was taught as a song of remembrance (2 Sam.1:18). There would have been the restimulation of so much. So that is how the Spirit concludes the story, David walking off into the sunset with the bones of Jonathan. It should be remembered that this occurred after David's disgrace with Bathsheba ⁽¹⁾. The thought must surely have gone through his mind: It's a good thing dear Jonathan isn't here to see it. The very name of the prophet Nathan, the expositor of David's sin, would have restimulated David. For 'Jonathan' means 'Yahweh-Nathan'. It is quite likely that in practice David would not have pronounced the 'Yah' prefix; he would have called Jonathan 'Nathan' (how many 'Jonathan's do you know whose name isn't abbreviated by their friends?). The reason why there is so much pathos in the story, so powerfully expressed, is to set us a standard of love and feeling towards Christ; for Jonathan represents us, and the love of David for him really is a reflection, even an *inadequate one* (selah) , of the love of Christ for us. Truly do we sing that " Thou art far above / dearest of human love" .

" The love of Christ, that passeth knowledge" (Eph.3:19) is clearly prefigured in David's feelings for Jonathan and the love of David for Jonathan. Despite many passionate relationships with women, experiencing the depth of human closeness more than many, David could sob: " Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam.1:26). The Hebrew for " wonderful" has a root meaning 'separate'. This love of Jonathan was separate from all other love David had known. In this we see perhaps the first Old Testament foretaste of *agape* love, love beyond the *phileo* and *eros* . Emotionally and spiritually, Jonathan and David went way ahead of their time. David speaks of Jonathan's love in terms of male:female love. He describes him as " the beauty of Israel" , " very pleasant hast thou been unto me" ; and grammatically, " thy love to me..." (2 Sam.1:26) implies that the lover was female. It is even possible to work this out from Strong's Lexicon. In ecclesial life, it has often been observed that there is a certain spiritual relationship between male and female in Christ which is somehow deeper than that between believers of the same sex. Yet these two brethren had a spiritual love for each other which totally transcended the gender division. They entered deeply into the spirit of Christ, where there is neither male nor female, but all are knit together in one. In like manner, our Lord said that male believers could be his sister and mother. We are dealing with high things here. Yet the heights of the David:Jonathan relationship are set down here to challenge us to at least try to touch the sky, however briefly. And when David later wrote of how good and "pleasant" it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133), he surely had the pleasantness of his relationship with Jonathan in mind, and wished it to be shared by all his brethren.

Notes

(1) It is quite likely that Ps.19:8,10 were written with Jonathan's experience of 1 Sam14 in mind: " The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes...sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" . Psalm 19 may well have been written in the Bathsheba period: " Cleanse (s.w. Ps.51:2) thou me from secret faults" . So the memory of Jonathan stayed with David all his life long.

6-2-5 David And Michal

As Jonathan's close friend, it was inevitable that David got to know his sister, Michal. David and Michal began their relationship on this basis. Jonathan's spiritual side would have had some reflection in his sister. For even Saul their father had a spiritual side, and it is fair to assume that Jonathan's mother was also a spiritual woman. It is easily overlooked that David later married Saul's wives (2 Sam.12:8)- including the mother of Jonathan and Michal. So

now we can reconstruct the complex spiritual and emotional situation. David without doubt experienced a state of 'in-loveness' with Jonathan. His lament of 2 Sam.1 is proof enough of this. The spirituality which was in Jonathan was also seen in Michal his sister. And David loved Saul, too. Again, his lament over him is proof of this- it shows that David's loving respect for him was not just the result of a steely act of the will, forcing himself to patiently respect Saul. There was something in him which he loved. And we can assume that David did not just marry women whom he didn't spiritually love. There was therefore something in Saul's wives which was spiritual. And the whole thing was not just one way. Jonathan loved David, " Michal, Saul's daughter loved David" (18:20), and Saul clearly had love-hate feelings for David; there was something about him which he deeply loved and respected. The intensity of his hatred of David must have been psychologically connected to a deep-seated love. " He loved him greatly" is the comment of 16:21. The seeds of the love between David and the house of Saul would have begun early on ⁽¹⁾. The reason *why* all this information is included is to provide comfort for us in the incredible emotional and spiritual complexities which we find ourselves in. In the flesh, David cannot have known which way to turn, mentally, spiritually, emotionally. Yet in the Spirit he could turn to his Heavenly Father, whose mind can totally fathom our pain, who can know in totality our every situation.

Notes

(1) The evidence presented here for David having close connection with the house of Saul from early on is not conclusive, but is surely worth pondering in the context of the David and Michal relationship. Against it could be advanced 17:58: " Saul said to (David, after killing Goliath), Whose son art thou?" . This cannot mean that Saul didn't know David, or who his father was; for in 16:19, before the Goliath incident, " Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son" to ease Saul's depressions. So the question of 17:58 perhaps implied something like: 'Whose son are you? Jesse's? No, from now on you're adopted into my family, you're *my* son now, after all, you've been like a brother to Jonathan all down the years'. The fact that David replied that he was *Jesse's* son may have been a polite refusal to accept this position. It may be that Saul had tried to adopt David earlier, when after David had been at the court for some time, Saul asked Jesse if David could " stand before me" (16:22). Another way of understanding Saul's apparent lack of knowledge of David, after having had much intimate association with him at the court in the past, is to conclude that Saul *pretended* not to know David. In chapter 16, David has left his shepherding and is at the court, as Saul's personal counsellor and armourbearer. In chapter 17, he is back keeping the sheep. It may be that he ran away from the court after Saul tried to adopt him. In other words, he found that despite the close spiritual relationship he enjoyed with the family, Saul was overpoweringly possessive, and he just had to leave. Accordingly, Saul disowned him, hence his very public appearance of ignorance concerning who David was (17:55,56). When David later " avoided out of (Saul's) presence" (18:11), this would not have been the first time he had gone through this. His desire and need to do this was made all the more complex by his falling in love with Saul's daughter, Michal (18:26,28). We can well imagine how we would have loved to be Jonathan's brother-in-law. David and Michal were a marriage made in Heaven- that went wrong.

6-2-6 Jonathan And Christ

This leads us to the conclusion that Jonathan showed David the love of Christ, making him representative of Christ. It is quite clear that Jonathan is framed by the records as a type of Christ; as is David. This is understandable, in that they were so closely knit together by the spirit of Christ. Likewise Christ loves us, and yet in a sense we are Christ, in that we are in him, sharing his titles and honours. We have seen that Jonathan saw David as God manifest. Yet David saw Jonathan likewise. The words which he speaks to him in 20:8 he later repeats to God (Ps.7:3,4). The following is proof enough that Jonathan is a type of Christ:

Jonathan

" Wrought this great salvation" (14:45)

Christ

These words are alluded to in Heb.2:3 concerning Christ (and possibly elsewhere)

" Jonathan said...Go in peace" (20:42)	Lk.7:50; 8:48
Stripped off his robes	Mt.27:28 cp. Gen.37:23
" Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee" (20:4)	This is the spirit of Christ's words to <i>us</i> (Jn.15:7).
" My father will do nothing, great or small, but that he will shew it me" (20:2)	Ditto (Jn.15:15)
Wounded by archers, although he still slew many with his bow (2 Sam.1:22)	The Messianic Gen.49:23,24 seems to also point forward to Jonathan's death: " The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him...but his bow abode in strength" .
The Hebrew word used to describe Jonathan's death in 2 Sam.1:19,22,25 means 'to slay by piercing to death'.	Cp. Christ's crucifixion.

6.3 David And Saul

6-3-1 David As A Type Of Christ

We have shown elsewhere that David was a clear type of the Lord Jesus ⁽¹⁾. This is what makes the book of Psalms so exciting; for no other Bible character do we have such an intimate expression of his innermost mind. And because David typified Christ, we have here an exquisite insight into the mind of Christ, into the *thought processes of the Son of God* . Now this alone should fill us with a sense of wonder. But this morning we want to consider specifically the relationship of David to Saul. It becomes apparent that in the typology, David and his men represent Christ and us, and Saul and his men represent the persecutors of the Lord Jesus in the first century. Consider the evidence for David as a type of Christ from this table:

Saul vs. David (1 Samuel)

Saul's jealousy was on account of David's victories, especially over Goliath, which represented Christ's conquest of sin ⁽²⁾ (18:7,8; 19:8,9), and his subsequent popularity with the people. Saul watched David's spirituality, observing the close fellowship David had with God (18:15,28)

The Jews / Judas vs. Christ

The Jews were jealous of the evident moral perfection of the Lord Jesus, and his popularity with the people which he seemed to effortlessly achieve. Joseph's brothers had a similar motivation to Saul. David as a type of Christ comes out clearly here.

Saul drove David away from his presence and that of Yahweh, to become a fugitive and vagabond; Saul would not accept any sacrifice from David (1 Sam. 26:19). This has so many connections with the driving out of Cain in Gen. 4:14. In other words, Saul was saying that David was not spiritually fit to be in the land and must therefore be destroyed.

19:20,21

The Jews maintained that Christ was a sinner and therefore merited their persecution.

Jn. 7:46

19:10

Christ slipping away from Jews bent on killing him, Jn. 8:59; 7:19

20:1

" Ye seek to kill me...which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Jn. 8:37,40,46)

" I have sinned" (19:5)

The very words of Judas (Mt.27:4). Again, we see clearly David as a type of Christ

19:5 Saul wanted to slay innocent blood

Mt.27:4

20:2

Jn.7:20

22:23

David's men = the uncertain disciples; Jn.14:1; 15:4, 20

David couldn't live in the Jerusalem area, near the temple, as he wished, because of the persecution (Ps. 84:3,10)

Christ didn't stay in Judea because the Jews sought to kill him (Jn.7:1)

God did not deliver David into Saul's hand (23:14)

Jn. 10:39

Saul: " Where is he?" at the feast (20:27)

Jn. 7:11

David cried out in appeal to Saul

Jn. 7:28

Saul's seeking to kill David ran into problems because of David's popularity with the people

Jn. 7:30,31; 10:39-41- David as a type of Christ

Saul also persecuted the people of Israel at the time, resulting in some of them going forth to be with David (22:2)

David's men represent the followers of the Lord Jesus (cp. Heb. 13:13). David's motley crew were bitter men, " them that are set on fire...whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp

sword" (Ps. 57:4). So rough were they that David says that having to live with them almost destroyed him spiritually (1 Sam. 26:19). This typology would explain why the body of Christ seems full of bitter men and women with hard words- who eventually will be the rulers in Messiah's Kingdom, after the pattern of David's men.

Saul's spies aimed to *deliver* David into Saul's hands (23:20) Lk. 20:20

It can be taken as read that Saul expected the Israelites to inform him of where David was; he was to be seen as public enemy no.1 Jn. 11:57

Saul had a network of spies watching David (18:20,24; 19:11,19; 23:7,13,25; 24:1; 27:4) Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20

Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8) The Jews sought to kill Christ (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8)

David bore a charmed life from Saul's persecution; humanly, he should surely have perished (23:26,27; 27:1) Jn. 7:30

To the Hebrew thinker, there is an unmistakable similarity between the Hebrew words Shaul and Sheol (grave); it is a matter of pointing. In the same way as Judas personified the Jewish system and the flesh behind it (hence they are both called the devil), Saul too personified what was evil; he was the great enemy, the satan, of David, as the Jews and the flesh were the great satan for Christ. In this we see David as a type of Christ.

David's bringing the ark to the place which he had prepared (1 Chron. 15:12) is the basis of the Lord's words in Jn. 14:1-3. Clearly the Lord saw David as Himself, and us as the ark. The 'bringing up' or 'lifting up' of the ark (1 Chron. 15:12,22 RVmg.) to a perpetual dwelling place has evident reference to the resurrection. And when the ark was finally brought or lifted up to Zion, David / Jesus dealt bread and wine to the people (1 Chron. 16:3). One practical encouragement from this typology is that the memorial feast is a celebration that in fact we, the ark, have in prospect already been brought or lifted up into the eternal place prepared for us in the Kingdom.

Notes

(1) The extent to which David was a type of Christ is shown in Ps. 89:20-27. This is concerning "David my servant", but evidently this passage describes the future glory of Messiah, David's son. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone" (Ps. 118:22) is clearly quoted in the New Testament with reference to Christ's exaltation. But in the context, these words are part of a personal prayer of praise from David for God's healing of him.

(2) See *David and Goliath*.

6-3-2 David And Saul

Saul loved David. David had spiritually helped him (16:23), and the very special relationship between the spiritual helper and the helped had fully developed. Yet in such cases it isn't uncommon for there to arise a bitterness between the convert and the converter; exactly as happened with David and Saul. In response to his victory over Goliath, "Jonathan loved him as his own soul. *And Saul* took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house" (18:1,2). This seems to show Saul's response to David as parallel with Jonathan's response. Saul's possessiveness towards David was surely an indication of how closely he felt towards him ⁽¹⁾. That he wouldn't allow him to return to his father's house suggests that Saul wanted to have David as his adopted son. His delight that David was in love with Michal was a strange mixture of motivations; genuine joy at having David as his son-in-law, and also glee that perhaps David would die whilst raising that strange dowry. David was "pleased" to be Saul's son in law, as Saul too was "pleased" at the prospect (18:20,26, the same Hebrew word is used); this indicates the complexity of the relationship.

David loved Saul, his daughters and his son Jonathan; and later David was to marry Saul's wives. These wives were given into David's bosom (2 Sam. 12:8); in other words, they were really close in their relationship; so close, 2 Sam. 12:8 implies, that David had no real emotional need to take Bathsheba. Even while Saul was alive there was probably some attraction chemistry going on between David and those women. This may well be reflected in Saul's fury with Jonathan: "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman...thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to...the confusion of thy mother's nakedness" (1 Sam.20:30). This hints at least two things: firstly, Saul had a bad relationship with his wife; and secondly, he suspected some kind of unfaithfulness in her, perhaps only on a mental level.

There can be few men who do not have at least some attraction to the father and family of their wife. David really loved Saul's daughter, indeed the prospect of marrying her may have been a large motivator behind his zeal in fighting Goliath and the Philistines (17:26,30; 18:26). Saul was not a totally unspiritual man; there are many hints that he had a spiritual side. It's rare indeed that a totally unspiritual person can love a highly spiritual person like David. And yet this fine relationship ended in an intense love-hate affair. So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

So, it's taken us a long time to establish two points, hopefully (now) without any doubt:

1. Saul's persecution of David is used by the New Testament as the antitype of Judas and the Jews persecuting Christ.

2. David and Saul had a highly complex relationship, pointing forward to the complexity of relationship between Christ and Israel. Consider the way that Jewry initially accepted John's

Gospel of Messiah, how soon after the resurrection thousands of the priests who had rejected Christ then accepted him, and how even a few hours before the crucifixion the people shouted out for Jesus of Nazareth to be their Messiah-king. These are some of many hints that there was a complex acceptance-rejection relationship between Israel and Christ. Saul and David likewise had a mutual love and respect for each other. After all Saul had done to David, David's grief at his death in 2 Sam. 1 is deep indeed. David taught all Israel to regularly sing that song of grief for Saul (2 Sam. 1:18), and his zeal to demonstrate his forgiveness to the house of Saul is outstanding. Saul's sons and family were also involved in the anti-David campaign.

The Spirit Of Christ

How to love the unlovely, to live without bitterness, to not be a psychological victim of our past experiences, is absolutely vital for the true child of God. In David and above all the Lord Jesus we see this achieved so supremely. He was at times bitter, as the imprecatory Psalms reveal, and as Hushai commented, David was a man "bitter of soul" (2 Sam. 17:8 RVmg.). Yet his gracious love for Saul was a stronger and the more dominant part of his character. Can we say that as a community, it seems we are in sore need of capturing this spirit, of knowing the mind of Christ in this. We seem far, far away from it, as individuals and ecclesias. We wallow in our pasts, the bitterness born of others' unkindness stalks the generations, somehow we fail to break out of it. The world around us are trapped, utterly trapped, by their backgrounds, by their experiences, they treat their children as they were treated by parents, by teachers, by a morally crooked society; and their children do the same. Many of us seem trapped in the same way. But we needn't be, there is a Gospel of freedom from all this, of a truly new creation.

So let's consider how David, and the Lord Jesus, achieved what they did. Firstly, let's get it clear that neither of them turned a blind eye to the hatred they were being shown, they didn't just pretend they hadn't seen. They faced up to the fullness of the hatred and betrayal they were experiencing, they analyzed the implications of it. We have shown in the table above that the record emphasizes how Saul *sought* to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved.

David responded to their seeking of him by seeking God more. He uses the language of the hunt and chase to describe how he was drawing closer to God: " My soul followeth hard after thee" (Ps. 63:8; Ps. 63 is a wilderness psalm, see title). " Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul...let all those that seek thee rejoice" (Ps. 40:14,16). In this sense, David felt he wasn't fleeing *from* his enemies as much as fleeing *to* God : " Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies (from whom he was running): I flee unto thee to hide me" (Ps. 143:9). This fleeing *to* God didn't mean that David and Jesus didn't respond or retaliate verbally; both of them, especially the Lord Jesus, did. They both pleaded their innocence, and accused their enemies of being unfair and hypocritical. Yet this must have been done from a genuine motive of love; as David loved Saul, as the thought of Saul's death must have torn at his heart, so the Lord Jesus loved Israel, weeping over Jerusalem, wishing to himself like a child for the impossible: that they would know him as their Saviour. Both David and Jesus had a real sense of direction, they could see that their mental, emotional and physical

sufferings were leading them towards an altogether higher relationship with the Father. They took those sufferings as an almost welcome push towards the Father. They had a sure sense of spiritual direction in all their afflictions; this accounts for the human loneliness which they both felt. David felt that no one else understood (Ps. 14:2, a wilderness psalm) or was really seeking towards God as he was doing (Ps. 27:4,8). The Hebrew for "understand" here is that translated "wise" concerning David in 1 Sam. 18.

True respect

David saw Saul for who he was, the anointed of God. Christ too taught *his* men to have respect for the Pharisees, who "sat in Moses seat", and therefore ought to be given reverence on that account (Mt. 23:2). David's extreme respect for Saul is shown in the fact that Yahweh had explicitly told him that he would deliver Saul into David's hand, and David was free to do as he wished to him; but because of his genuine respect for Saul, David didn't take the liberty of killing him; indeed, he even felt guilty at cutting off the blue ribband from Saul's coat (1 Sam. 24:4,5). Such was David's *respect* for Saul. It's shown again in the way that David fairly evidently wanted to fight against Saul with the men of Achish, evidently wanting to turn against them and fight for Saul- as they correctly guessed (1 Sam. 29:8). This would have been suicidal. For Saul wanted to kill him, and the Philistines also would have tried to kill David as a result of this. He would have had no place to run. But even to the point of political suicide and the serious risking of his own life, David so loved his enemy. This true love leads to and is related to true respect. This kind of respect is sadly lacking in our society, and has rubbed off upon our relationships within families and ecclesias. Often David calls Saul his master, describing himself as Saul's servant (1 Sam. 17:32,34,36; 20:8; 24:6; 26:16,19; 29:3,4; 30:15). This was no formal "Sincerely your brother and fellow-servant". This was a real conscious putting of himself down, as the Lord Jesus felt he was a worm rather than a man (Ps. 22:6). If only we would concentrate upon our own status and show some true respect for others on account of their being in the ecclesia, having even been anointed spiritually at their baptism (2 Cor. 1:21) as Saul was. We have shown how Paul deeply loved Corinth and respected them for their status as men and women in Christ ⁽²⁾, in receipt of the Father's love and grace. Therefore he like David could love his enemies within the ecclesia (Saul was in the ecclesia of Israel as much as David was).

David learnt the secret of seeing the positive in our weak brethren, and he didn't let all that was wrong with Saul interfere with this. He describes himself as responding to criticism like this: "I as a deaf man, heard not" (Ps. 38:13). Yet he was alluding to how Saul, when likewise criticized by "sons of belial", "was as though he had been deaf" to their words (1 Sam. 10:27 RVmg.). He saw the good in Saul, he remembered that one good example he showed- and it empowered him to follow it. This is all the more remarkable, in that it seems God would have given Saul into David's hand when "a deep sleep from the Lord" fell upon Saul at the very time David intended to kill him (1 Sam. 26:12). Saul himself realized that the Lord had delivered him into David's hand to kill him (1 Sam. 24:18). God thus confirmed David in his intentions- and yet at the last minute, it seems, David chose an even higher level; of love and deep respect for this spiritually sick man.

Devotion To The word

To achieve this state of mind must have required a lot of conscious thought and self-analysis by David. We get the sense that David pitted his wisdom against Saul's anger and bitter persecution; David's wisdom is mentioned in tandem with Saul's anger against him (1 Sam.

18:5,11,15,30). " David behaved himself wisely (AVmg "prospered") in all his ways; and the Lord was with him" runs like a refrain through 1 Sam. 18:5,14,15,30. These words are referring back to Dt. 29:9: " Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do" . David's charmed life and prospering despite all manner of plotting against him was due to his single-minded devotion to the Law; to those very chapters which tired Bible readers are wont to skip over as boring and not motivating. Yet David found something immensely inspiring and practical about the Law. The word made him wiser than his foes (Ps. 119:98).

The majestic Psalm 119 was almost certainly written while David was in the court of Saul and then on the run from him ⁽³⁾. David's love of the word then was just supreme, staying up all night straining his eyes into those scrolls, up at the crack of dawn to get back at it. We so glibly speak about devotion to the word, keeping up the readings, of course we must *devote* ourselves to the word, brethren. It becomes rather a cliché . Yeah OK we know, we know. But just look at David in that emotional and psychological mess he was in, the word just *swamped* his thinking, it dominated his consciousness.

" One that mourneth for his mother"

There is one verse which to me is a cameo of the extent of the victory which David won against the mind of the flesh, against our massive tendency to repay sin with sin, bitterness with bitterness, anger with anger. If we take nothing else away from this, please focus your mind on this, and keep the memory: In Ps. 35:14 David protests his love for the one who was persecuting him (v.1-4 etc.): " (When he was sick...I humbled my soul with fasting)...I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed myself heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother " . Perhaps David is reflecting here upon his attitude to Saul's death. " As one that mourneth for his mother " . Just think of it. " As one that mourneth for his mother " . This is surely one of the most powerful figures that could be employed. Picture a young man of say 24, in a dark blue suit, kneeling down at the graveside of his mother, surrounded by friends and relatives, bowing down heavily in his grief. Or picture a man of 34, 44, 54, hair greying and receding now, bowing himself down heavily. Or even 64, 74, alone in his grief, bowing down heavily to the green turf, muttering words about mum. Perhaps some of us haven't yet experienced this; many have. If you haven't, just imagine it. Surely it brings a lump to your throat. Now it was with this intensity of grief that David mourned the death or sickness of his persecutor. This is a wondrous reflection of his devotion, his true love, his triumph over bitterness and anger, over all the human actions that had been directed against him. The heavy bowing down of the Lord Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem, the city that hated and rejected him, whose leaders slew him, whose people screamed for his blood.

David wept for Saul as if he was his friend or brother. Who was David's friend and brother? Surely Jonathan his brother-in-law. But he wept for Saul, David says, as he wept for Jonathan. This is testified to historically by David's lament of 2 Sam. 1. And still David sought out the house of Saul, "that I may shew the kindness of God" unto them (2 Sam. 9:3). It was the experience of Divine kindness that motivated David. As he hoped for fellowship at the King's table in the future, so David delighted in inviting his former enemies to partake of his table, now *he* was king (2 Sam. 9:7,11,13). And if we hope to share the Lord's table in the Kingdom, we must share it with our weaker brethren now. You know I see in all this such a triumph for David, that a man should reflect the love of God to such an extent, to love in the face of such hatred, to not just love those who loved him. The deep sorrow of the Lord Jesus

for Judas and all those who turn away is surely typified here. Right at the bitter end, the Lord still referred to him as his friend (Mt. 26:50), even though a few hours before he had been speaking of how the faithful few were his friends, and how he would give his life for his friends (Jn. 15:13-15). Throughout his ministry, Christ had spoken of the faithful as his friends (Lk. 14:20; 11:8; 12:4). This was the spirit of the Lord Jesus in his time of dying, this is what enabled him to go through the mock trial, the intense degradation, the bitter pain of rejection, without bitterness and the sin of unholy anger. To be like David to Saul, like Paul to Corinth, like Christ to the Jews, like God to us, really is possible. If that's how we can live, we will truly be in the new life.

Providence

David's whole experience with Saul was of course led and arranged by a loving Father. The sensible thing would have been for David to get out of Saul's way and lay quiet- and this is what he tried to do, by going to Moab. But then God tells him to go back into Judah (1 Sam. 22:5). This was political suicide. It made no human sense to expose himself to Saul again. And then God tells David to go and fight with the Philistines in order to rescue the people of Keilah (1 Sam. 23:2). Yet the men of Keilah weren't allies worth having- even they were prepared to betray David to Saul, and by this action he made the Philistines hate him yet more, so refuge amongst them was no longer possible. Again and again, God led David into situations that were politically suicidal, that only made things worse for him... because He wanted David to trust in Him alone. And so it happens in our lives. Time and again.

Notes

(1) For more analysis of this complex relationship between David and the house of Saul, see *David and Jonathan*.

(2) See *Paul and Corinth*.

(3) That Ps.119 was written at this time is evident. It mentioned David as a young man devoting himself to the word rather than riches(v.72)- the riches which could have been his if he mentally surrendered to Saul, or if he killed Saul and took the kingdom. He often laments how he is in exile from Yahweh's word (v.43,46,54), which would have been on account of his being away from the sanctuary at Gibeah. He pleads the promise of the word that he would be preserved from Saul's persecution (v.41,58), and several times mentions Saul's attempts on his life (v.87,95,109,110). The following verses are evidently relevant to this period: 61,63,67,79,84 (=1 Sam. 27:1),95,98 (= 1 Sam. 18:14,15),110 (cp. the 'snaring' with Michal),119 (the emphasis is on 'You will destroy the wicked like Saul- one day),125 (David is often called Saul's servant),150,154 (= 1 Sam. 24:15),157,161,165,176. Therefore in the face of such hatred and pain, feeling he must be careful of every step he took, emotionally and physically, David could rejoice: " I will walk at liberty (AVmg. 'at large'): for I seek thy precepts" .

6.4 David And Bathsheba

6-4-1 David Our Example

The ample detail recorded concerning this incident shows that it must be God's will for us to reflect upon it in some detail. It is not a question of hanging out another man's dirty washing; there is good reason for thinking that we are intended to see in David's sin the epitome of all our failures (1). His repentance and subsequent closeness to God therefore exemplifies the intensity of repentance and knowledge of God's ways which we too can come to.

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (Ps. 119:176) was likely written by David with his mind on his follies relating to Bathsheba; and yet it is taken by the Lord and used as the basis for the parable of the lost sheep, whereby all who have sinned go through the David experience. David found his sins associated with Bathsheba " as an heavy burden...too heavy for me...I am (thereby) bowed down greatly" (Ps. 32:4,6). Surely our Lord was thinking back to David when he invited all of us: " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden (with sins), and I will give you rest...for my...burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30). Bathsheba was " very beautiful to *look upon*" (2 Sam. 11:2). And David did just that. Our Lord surely had his eye on that passage when he spoke about him that " *looketh on* a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already" (Mt. 5:28). But it is not just in that specific sin that we can share David's experience; James 1:14,15 speaks of the process of temptation and sin, in any matter, as looking lustfully upon a woman, with the inevitable result of actually committing the sin. In this he may be interpreting David's sin as an epitome of all failure. David is our example. Likewise the Lord's list of the 12 evil things that come out of the heart: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, evil thoughts...all seem to describe the completeness of David's sin with Bathsheba. As we will suggest later, it incorporated all these things, and was not just a one time, lustful failure of the moment.

David And Us

Truly David is our example. David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. "The God of my rock is *my* shield... he is a shield to *all* them that trust in him" (2 Sam. 22:3,31). "*I* am in a great strait; let *us* fall now into the hand of the Lord" (2 Sam. 24:14) reflects this. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). And many of these Psalms of praise seem to have their origin in his experience of forgiveness regarding Bathsheba. The Lord based His parables of the lost sheep and the man finding the treasure of the Gospel in a field on the statements of David (Ps. 119:162,176), as if He saw David as representative of all those who would truly come to Him. " Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1), David wrote, after experiencing God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba. But Paul sees this verse as David describing " the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6). Each of us are in need of a like justification; therefore we find ourselves in David's position. The Spirit changes Ps. 32:1 (" Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven") to " Blessed are *they* " (Rom. 4:7) to make the same point. "

Blessed is the man (e.g. David, or any sinner- David is our example) unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2) is alluded to in 2 Cor. 5:19: " God was in Christ...not imputing (the world's) trespasses unto them" . Through being justified, any repentant sinner will then have the characteristics of Christ, in God's sight. In Christ there was no guile (1 Pet. 2:22), as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2). " Blessed is the man...in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev.14:5: " In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" . The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance " before the throne of God" . Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect. David speaks of being bold in his prayer of praise for the promises made to him (2 Sam. 7:27 RVmg.). Yet Heb. 4:16 encourages *us* to be bold in prayer. He was our pattern in prayer. Another link between David and us is in Ps. 140:9,10, which speaks of burning coals falling on the head of David's enemies; yet those words are effectively quoted in Rom. 12:20 concerning all believers. David sets himself up in the Psalms as our pattern. He speaks of himself and then applies the point to all of his readers. In other words, we really are to see David as representative of ourselves; we need to change our minds and lives so this really is the case. Yet on a negative note, it is difficult to read Rom. 2:1 without seeing an allusion to David's condemnation of the man who killed his neighbour's only sheep: " Thou art inexcusable, O man, *whosoever thou art* that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself" . Surely Paul so saying that David's massive self-deception and hypocrisy over Bathsheba can all too easily be replicated in our experience.

" Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" is a soliloquy; but Paul says that David consciously spoke them with reference to all those who were to go through the experience of justification with God outside the system of legalistic righteousness. Because God granted *him* forgiveness, David had inspired confidence that " for this (forgiveness) shall every one that is Godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found" (Ps.32:6). Note how he describes those who would sin as grievously as he had done, as " Godly" , even in the moments *before* their prayer of repentance. In those moments of contrition immediately prior to uttering a prayer of penitence, we reach pinnacles of Godliness.

There is another connection with Romans in Ps. 51:4, where David recognizes " Against thee...have I sinned...that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" . He recognized that God works through our sinfulness- he is effectively saying 'I sinned so that You might be justified...'. These words are quoted in Rom. 3:4,5 in the context of Paul's exultation that " *our* unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God" - in just the same way as David's did! Because God displays His righteousness every time He justifies a repentant sinner, He is in a sense making Himself yet more righteous. We must see things from God's perspective, from the standpoint of giving glory to God's righteous attributes. If we do this, then we can see through the ugliness of sin, and come to terms with our transgressions the more effectively. And Paul quotes David's sin with Bathsheba as our supreme example in this. We along with all the righteous ought to "shout for joy" that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David's repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). Notice too how Ps. 51:1 "Have mercy on me, O God..." is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David's prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

In several of his Psalms, David shows an awareness that he represents all God's people, that David was our example. "The righteous cried, and the Lord heard", he could write, with easy reference to his crying to God when with Abimelech [see Psalm title]; but he goes straight on to say that God delivers *all* the righteous out of all their troubles (Ps. 34:4,6,17 RV).

Solomon inserts parts of his father's Bathsheba psalms in his prayers for how all Israel could be forgiven if they "confess thy name...when thou afflictest them...saying, We have sinned...forgive thy people...and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed" (1 Kings 8:35,47,50 = Ps. 32:5 etc.). On the basis of David's pattern, all God's people can find forgiveness, if they make a like confession. Indeed, this has long been recognized by Jewish commentators; and many of the Psalms understood by them as relevant to the Nazi holocaust are Bathsheba Psalms. "Out of the depths" they cried like David; and at the entrance to Bergen-Belsen it stands written: "My sorrow is continually before me" (Ps. 38:17), in recognition of having received punishment for sin [note how these kind of plaques contain no trace of hatred or calling for Divine retribution upon the persecutors] ⁽¹⁾.

It could be that David, realizing he was seen by God as a representative of his people [see *David And Jesus*], prayed for forgiveness in that he realized that he was thereby a pattern for all the wayward people of God. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Ps. 25:11) is an undoubted reference to Moses praying for Israel's forgiveness relating to the golden calf (Ex. 32:30,31). He saw himself as both Moses in prayer and also guilty Israel. He saw Bathsheba had been his golden calf idol, mixing as it had done sexual abandon with an appearance of Yahweh worship. There was nobody to pray for him apart from himself. He saw himself as all Israel, savable only by pure grace and the sincere prayer of a mediator- even if the mediator himself was guilty. It is noteworthy that Peter appeals to Israel to repent and be converted "that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)- quoting the words of Ps. 51:1, where the sin of David with Bathsheba is 'blotted out' after his repentance and conversion. Each sinner who repents and is baptized and leads the life of ongoing conversion is therefore living out the pattern of David's repentance.

There are an interesting set of allusions to David's sin with Bathsheba in Micah 7, almost leading us to wonder whether Micah too had a *femme fatale* in his life- whom he speaks of in Mic. 7:10 as "she that is mine enemy...shame shall cover her". He says that "I have sinned against the Lord" (Mic. 7:9), using the very same words as David does in 2 Sam. 12:13; and he marvels how God 'passes by' transgression (Mic. 7:18), using the very same Hebrew word as is found in 2 Sam. 12:13 to describe how God "put away" David's sin. And there are many references throughout Micah 7 to David's Psalms of penitence. Could it be that David's sin and repentance served as a personal inspiration to Micah, as well as being held up as the inspiration to all God's people to repent and experience the sure mercies which David did?

Ps. 38:1 is another Bathsheba Psalm: "Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me". But it is quoted in Heb. 12:5,6 about *all* of God's children, who have to go through David's basic experience in order to become the accepted sons of God. We *do* all have to be rebuked and chastened, even if like children, like David, we so fear it.

What David learnt from the Bathsheba failure is in essence what we all have to learn. Psalm 26 was surely written before he sinned with her. He speaks of how he had walked in integrity before God

“without wavering” (Ps. 26:1 RV), and how his foot did not slip (Ps. 26:12). What else does this evidently pre-Bathsheba Psalm indicate about David’s attitude, and what changed after Bathsheba? He speaks in Ps. 26:5 of how he refuses to sit at table with sinners. Yet the Lord rejoiced to do just this. He contrasts his righteousness with the sinfulness of the wicked (Ps. 26:10,11)- a far cry from Paul’s insistence in Romans that we have sinned just as much as the world has, in the sense that we desperately need salvation by grace. When David asks for forgiveness in Ps. 26:11 (“redeem me, and be merciful unto me”), he therefore was apparently asking for mercy in an almost technical way, perhaps seeing the only mercy he required as a resurrection from the dead. All these attitudes changed radically after his Bathsheba experience. He could look back and reflect how “As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved” (Ps. 30:6), perhaps looking back to Ps. 26:10, where he had felt confident his foot had never been moved. And he speaks of how he only stands strong because of God’s gracious favour (Ps. 30:7). God works through sin and failure- to bring us to know His grace. We follow the same learning curve as David, if we are truly God’s man or woman. The soliloquy of David is commented upon in Rom. 4:6: “David pronounceth blessing upon the man [i.e. any man, each of us] unto whom God reckoneth righteousness...” (RV). Rom. 4:9 RV likewise speaks of David in the soliloquy of Ps. 32 pronouncing blessing upon *us*.

Finding God

For every sinner, for whom David is our example, *now* is the time when God may be "found" in the sense of experiencing His forgiveness. God *is* love towards men, He *is* forgiveness. To experience this and respond back to it is therefore to find the knowledge of God. This "time when thou (i.e. God's forgiveness, which *is* God) mayest be found" which David speaks of is that of 2 Cor.6:2: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation". Paul was speaking of how all sinners, baptized or not, need to realize this; we are all in David's position. Some complain that they did not experience a very great upsurge in finding and knowing God at the point of baptism. This may be due to an insufficient emphasis on the need for repentance and appreciating the seriousness of sin before baptism. We must not think that we know God because we believe a Statement of Faith and have been baptized. "Now is the accepted time", Paul wrote to the baptized Corinthians, to truly take on board the marvel of God's forgiveness, to know it and respond to it for ourselves, and thereby to come to a dynamic, two-way relationship with God.

As David "found" God through experiencing His forgiveness, so can "every one that is Godly" today. It is quite possible that "seek and ye shall find" (Mt.7:7) was uttered by the Lord with his mind on Ps. 32:6 and David's experience. After all, we cannot expect this to be a blank cheque offer, that whatever we seek for we must receive. But if these words are an allusion to David's seeking and finding forgiveness in Ps. 32:6, then the promise is more realistic. If we seek for forgiveness and a living relationship with God, then we have this unconditional promise that we *will* find this. Yet in a sense, the time when we will ultimately find God will be at the judgment: we will "find mercy of the Lord in that day" (2 Tim. 1:18), so that "ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14). We will find God, as He will find us, in that great moment of consummation; "for then shall (we) know (God), even as also (we) are known" by Him (1 Cor. 13:12;). Then we will "be *found* in him...that I may (then) *know* him" (Phil. 3:9,10). Yet David says that after forgiveness, we can find and know God. It is as if whenever we sin, we in a sense face our judgment seat.

And the knowledge and 'finding' of God which we will then enjoy should be prefigured in our present experience of forgiveness. Should we not therefore pray for forgiveness with the intensity with which we would at the judgment, if we were then offered the chance to do so?

Sorrows Of Sin

Reflection on the record enables us to enter a little into the nature and tragedy of David's sorrow; remembering always that David is our example. His love for Abigail, with marriage to her so wondrously arranged, would have been cruelly mocked by his falling for Bathsheba. His abuse of Uriah's loyalty (when almost certainly Uriah knew exactly what David was playing at) would have created a sadness that can only be described as ineffable. David in his early years described himself as a "poor man", indicating his humility; yet the very same word is used by Nathan in the parable about Uriah, as if to bring home to David that he had slain a man who had the humble loyalty which he had had in those early, spiritually formative years (1 Sam.18:23 cp. 2 Sam.12:1,3,4).

Another New Testament allusion to David's penitence may be found in 2 Cor.7:7-11: "Ye were made sorry...ye sorrowed to repentance...ye were made sorry after a *Godly* manner (cp. "every one that is *Godly*..." , Ps.32:6)...for *Godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...ye sorrowed after a *Godly* sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation (cp. David's in 2 Sam.12:5)...what zeal...your mourning, your fervent mind". Allusion after allusion to David is being piled up here. The eight references to their "sorrow" in four verses is surely a signpost back to David's intense sorrow for his sin with Bathsheba: "My sin is ever before me (Ps.51:3)...my sorrow is continually before me...I will be sorry for my sin...many sorrows shall be to the wicked" who, unlike David, refused to repent (Ps.38:17,18; 32:10). This association between sin and sorrow is a common one (Job 9:28; 1 Tim.6:10; Ex.4:31; Is.35:10. The last two references show how Israel's sorrowing in Egypt was on account of their sinfulness). We must pause to ask whether our consciousness of sin leads us to a like sorrowing, whether our repentance features a similar depth of remorse.

It would appear that Paul is likening Corinth to David. They too were guilty of sexual "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness" (2 Cor.12:21). We have seen that in the same way as David's repentance was made in a "day of salvation", so in 2 Cor.6:2 Paul told Corinth that they were in a similar position to him; they too had the chance of repentance. Those who had heeded this call earlier had experienced the zeal and clear conscience which David did on his repentance (2 Cor.7:9-11). In this case, Paul would be likening himself to Nathan the prophet. This zeal which was seen in both David and Corinth is a sure sign of clear conscience and a joyful openness with God. Again, we ask how much of our zeal is motivated by this, or is it just a continuation of a level of service which we set ourselves in more spiritual days, which we now struggle to maintain for appearances sake?

Prodigal David

David was very conscious that his sin had been "in thy (God's) sight" (Ps.51:4). The psalms of repentance have several examples of him talking like this. It may be to this Davidic theme that the parable of the prodigal son (i.e. each of us) refers: "I have sinned...in thy sight" (Lk.15:18,21). It is significant that our Lord's supreme parable of repentance refers back to that of David. It has been observed that there are many connections between the Psalms related to the Bathsheba incident, and those which are especially prophetic of Christ's

crucifixion. David's intense suffering on account of sin was therefore prophetic of our Lord's mental and physical suffering for the same reason. It is because of this link that Christ is able to sympathize with the traumas of spiritual guilt which accompany our repentance. It is truly breathtaking to discern how God works through our sins, to the extent that through the struggle for repentance which they engender, they can associate us with the sufferings of His sinless Son.

David came to know the marvel of this. And David is our example. His response was to eagerly desire to spread the knowledge of God which he acquired through his experience of God's forgiveness. "I will instruct thee and teach thee" he exalts in Ps.32:8. He knew that as God " shalt *compass me* about with songs of deliverance" on forgiveness (Ps.32:7), so " he (anyone) that trusteth in the Lord (as David did), mercy shall *compass him* about" (Ps.32:10). " Then will I teach transgressors thy ways" (Ps.51:13) is another example. Likewise, Peter (Lk.5:8-10), Isaiah (Is.6:5-9) and Paul (Eph.3:8) all received preaching commissions straight after their experience of forgiveness. Our knowledge of God through receiving it should be a powerful stimulus to our personal witnessing. There is every reason why *some* of our witnessing should include personal testimony of what the Lord has done for us.

The more we look for it, the more we see other examples of where material relevant to David is applied directly to all believers in the New Testament, thus setting him up as our example and realistic pattern. Joab's comment about the way David loved his enemies (2 Sam. 19:6) was thus verbatim picked up by the Lord and set up as the example for each of us. And yet David only came to be so kind and forgiving because of his experience of God's forgiveness to him over the Bathsheba incident. Thus in the same way as God did not impute iniquity to David (Ps. 32:2), so David did not 'impute iniquity' to Shimei for cursing him, and did not carry out a rightful death sentence against that man (2 Sam. 19:19,21). Note how Shimei uses the very same wording which David used in *his* repentance: "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 19:20). It makes a good homework to now look through the New Testament, looking for David allusions.

Notes

(1) That David's sin is indeed an epitome of all our sins is proved by the way in which the record of it is framed in the language of the fall. The connections between the falls of Adam and David have been commented upon in Andrew Perry, *The Doctrine Of Salvation*, Vol.1 p.197. The following is a summary of the links:

Adam (Gen. 2 and 3)	David (2 Samuel)
2:8	12:5
2:17	12:5
2:17	12:9
6:2	12:9
3:17	12:10

3:7	12:11
3:8	12:12
3:8	11:24
3:21	12:13
3:17	16:11
3:19	16:13

It should also be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps.38:7=Is.1:6; Ps.51:7=Is.1:18; Ps.65:2=Is.40:15). David recognized this in Ps.51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam.12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

6-4-2 Bathsheba: Saint or Sinner?

Having established how precisely David's sin is the summation of our every transgression, it is worthwhile attempting to capture something of the background of the incident. The majority of our sins are the outcomes of complex webs of pressures and circumstances. So often there is an element of spiritual reasoning somewhere along the slide into sin; rarely do we instantly capitulate to a major temptation, even if it appears so outwardly. David's sin can appear to be one of momentary weakness. But closer examination reveals a number of points which indicate that it's motivation was far more complex than a temporary lapse into sensuality. Consider the following points:

- David was a spiritual man. Was he really likely to have fallen so deeply just at the sight of a beautiful woman? Remember that he had a number of attractive wives.
- The act of intercourse recorded seems to have occurred straight after Bathsheba ended menstruation. Whilst pregnancy was possible, it would have more likely been caused by other acts of intercourse before or after that recorded. It could be that the record we have gives as if it were a snapshot out of a photo album of their relationship, as if the thing that turned David on *that time* was the way she was washing herself so obedient to the Law which he loved and was his study all the day. But like the early church, in his zeal for the Father and for all his knowledge of the Law, he missed some essential points and principles [in their case, e.g., to accept the Gentiles].
- Bathsheba was a spiritual woman, married to a man of faith (Uriah). Solomon (the Lemuel of the book of Proverbs) was brought up by a very spiritual mother. The spiritual woman of Prov. 31 whom Solomon likens to his mother is a cameo of the sort of woman Bathsheba was. Note how Lemuel's mother (Bathsheba) warns her son not to give his strength to women, to those relationships which destroy kings. She surely said this with a sideways glance back at her own failures with David. So again- Bathsheba: saint or sinner?
- There is an undoubted link between sexuality and spirituality (witness the typical meaning of the Song of Solomon). The Hebrew text of Gen. 39:6,7 suggests that it was Joseph's spiritually attractive personality that mesmerized Potiphar's wife; and what good living, socially aloof Christian office worker has not experienced the attention this attracts from colleagues of the opposite sex?

- David and Uriah knew each other very well; they had spent David's long wilderness years together. All that time, Bathsheba had been brought up by Uriah (2 Sam.12:3). She was the daughter of Eliam, who had been another of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 11:3; 23:34). Presumably he had been killed and Uriah adopted her, bringing her up from babyhood, mothering her by feeding her from his bowl and letting her sleep in his bosom. This may imply that his own wife died early, and that he brought her and his own children up alone, and then married her when she was older. A very special spiritual and emotional bond must have been forged between those who stuck with David as a down and out, and who later on shared in the glory of his kingdom. That Uriah had such easy access to David would have been unthinkable for an ordinary soldier whom David hardly knew. Nathan criticizes David for having "no pity" on Uriah, implying that David well knew the relationship between Uriah and Bathsheba. Moreover, David would have been a larger than life figure for his followers, and Bathsheba would have grown up with this image of David as the saving hero.

- That David married Bathsheba, when the normal procedure would have been to quietly send her away as a kept woman, surely indicates a degree of genuine love for Bathsheba by David. If their sin was a one-off act between two virtual strangers, his marrying her would be hard to understand. Again- Bathsheba: saint or sinner?

- That David could see into the back yard of Bathsheba's house shows that they were almost next door neighbours in Jerusalem. Nathan's parable emphasized this: "There were two men (David and Nathan) in one city (Jerusalem)" (2 Sam. 12:1). That Uriah "went not down to his house" after meeting David in Jerusalem could imply that it was just at the end of David's back garden (2 Sam. 11:13 etc.).

- 1 Chron. 3:5 could imply that she had no other children before those she had by David. This means that she may have been barren until that point; her conception was certainly brought about by God. Was it that they would both have been aware of the unlikelihood of her bearing children, and therefore perhaps more inclined to take a chance?

- Bathsheba's washing of herself which exposed her nakedness would have been in obedience to the Law. David "lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness" (2 Sam.12:4) adds weight to this. However, the Law didn't actually state that the woman must wash herself after menstrual uncleanness; but the man who touched her must. So it could be that she had gone beyond the Law in washing herself; such was her spiritual perception, which was a factor in David's attraction to her.

- David confessed that he had sinned against God (Ps. 51:4), using the very language of faithful Joseph who refused ongoing temptation with these words (Gen. 39:9). Could this not imply that Bathsheba wife of Uriah was similar to Potiphar's wife?

Bathsheba: saint or sinner?

Putting all these things together, we emerge with the impression that David and Bathsheba knew each other well, and would have developed a close spiritual relationship. Having only known Uriah, both as a father and husband (12:3), Bathsheba would have been strongly attracted to David, yearning for a relationship with someone other than Uriah. David would have been an alternative father figure to her, and also the same age as her husband Uriah. He would have become her physical and spiritual hero. David must have allowed his feelings for her to grow, until the sight of her quiet obedience to the Law, artlessly exposing her beauty

against the setting sun, was just too much. With her husband far away, kidding himself there was a spiritual motive, David shrugged off the voice of conscience. What happened to David's family was related to David's sin. The obsessive love of Amnon for Tamar may have similarities with David's for Bathsheba (2 Sam.13:2).

It takes two, and Bathsheba's compliance seems to be recognized by David when he prays: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4). There is no hint in the psalms of David's regret for having sinned against an innocent Bathsheba. *Her* child had to die; the retribution did not just come upon David. The incident is referred to as "the matter of *Uriah*" (1 Kings 15:5); her name does not figure in those sinned against. "She came in unto him, and he lay with her" (2 Sam. 11:4) is an odd way of putting it; it reverses the usual Biblical reference to intercourse as a man coming in to the woman. The reason for this inversion seems to be to balance the blame. And there seems an evident similarity between the way the sin occurred within the city, and the way Dt. 22:24 says that in cases of adultery both parties were to be stoned if the sin occurred within a city and the woman didn't cry out. Bathsheba doesn't seem to have cried out- and so she bears equal blame, it would seem. This makes Bathsheba more of a sinner than a saint. This said, Nathan's parable describes David as killing the sweet lamb (Bathsheba); if she was partly guilty for the actual act, this may suggest a killing of her spirituality by David, at least temporarily. And so we are left with the question of interpretation- Bathsheba: saint or sinner?

6-4-3 David's Sin With Bathsheba

It has been rightly noted that David's remaining at Jerusalem "at the time when kings go forth to battle" (11:1) is the classic example of the devil finding work for idle hands. It was the set up for David's sin with Bathsheba. That he was lying down on his bed in the late afternoon rather than working would exemplify the same thing. He appears to recognize his attitude problem in Ps. 30:6: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be (spiritually) moved" . In the lead up to the sin, God had given him victory after victory- leading him to think that he must therefore be spiritually OK because of his many physical blessings (1 Chron. 18:6 RV). His conscience had been blunted. David may have cleverly alluded to this when he comments that the ark was abiding in a *tent*, and therefore he would not go down to his *house* (2 Sam. 11:11). The tension between a tent and a house is surely intended to take David back to his words in 2 Sam. 7:2, where he laments as unacceptable the fact that he lives in a *house* but the ark is in a *tent*. And David was 'tarrying', living in a settled way, in a house in Jerusalem now.

"David *tarrying* still at Jerusalem" uses a Hebrew word which does not mean to wait, but rather to permanently dwell. It is also translated 'to marry'. The next verse continues "And it came to pass..." , indicating that his permanent residence at Jerusalem was connected with his sin. Are we to infer that David remained at Jerusalem because of his relationship with Bathsheba? Even though they had probably got nowhere near consummating it, subconsciously this was behind David's motive in remaining. The word for "tarrying" being the same for 'marriage' could imply that David was still actively married to his other wives who were there in Jerusalem. In the parable, the rich man had his many flocks (i.e. David's wives) with him in the city, of Jerusalem. Walking upon the roof of his house connects with several passages which associate the roof top with a place of idolatry: 2 Kings 23:12; Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5. It may be that David regularly worshipped the idol of Bathsheba in his mind, upon the bed which he had on the house top. David's sin with Bathsheba is therefore not such a momentary slip. Significantly, it was in that very place where Absalom

later lay with his wives in retribution for what he had done (2 Sam. 16:22). >From this we could infer that David lay with Bathsheba in that same place on the roof top. This is significant insofar as it shows how exactly the thought leads to the action. David's thoughts in that spot were translated into that very action, in precisely the same physical location. The roof top is also the place of prayer, and in this we see the schizophrenic nature of David's spirituality; he went to pray, and then stood at the edge of the roof in order to view Bathsheba, with his hands on the railing around the roof which surely he would have erected, in obedience to the Law. And he realized that it was evening, and that in accordance with the Law a menstruating woman had to wash and be unclean until the evening. But now, he reasoned, she's clean, and I can sleep with her. He lay with her "for", just because, she was now purified. In this we see the mixing of flesh and spirit which is at the root of most of our failings.

We are familiar with our own sins being a result of a process of faulty reasoning. This often involves a limited amount of weak spiritual reasoning against doing the sin, which we progressively argue against, until our resistance level is so low that we commit something which normally would be unthinkable for us. The densely written record of David's sin with Bathsheba reveals such a scenario to us.

" David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba...the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (12:3). From the evidence presented earlier, there can be no doubt that David knew exactly who Bathsheba was. His enquiring after her may therefore have been to summon her to his private audience, with all that this implied in the context of a monarch. The exclamation of the messenger " Is not this Bathsheba...the wife of Uriah?" was therefore tantamount to saying 'Surely you aren't going to? She's the wife of your faithful friend Uriah' . When experiencing temptation, the flesh can become extraordinarily blind to reason. The next verse continues: " And David sent (other) messengers, and took her...and he lay with her; *for* she was purified from her uncleanness" . This may imply that David set up an irrelevant spiritual pre-condition for himself: 'If she's unclean, then I must take that as a sign, and not sleep with her, because that would be against the Law'. The Law often stipulated that having washed, the person would be " Unclean until even" . David had seen her washing " in an eveningtide" . By the time she came in to him, the sun would have set; she would have been fully purified from her uncleanness. It was *because* of this that David lay with her; he must have reasoned 'Now hat she's clean, even the Law says that I'm allowed to sleep with her! That's a sign from God'. As with us, his spiritual judgment did not completely depart in this crisis of temptation; but it became seriously warped to the point that it was no use. It is significant , in the light of this, that the statement that " David...*enquired* after the woman" uses a Hebrew word which is often used about enquiring of God; as if David asked God whether it was right to go ahead or not.

The fact that he is condemned for having " despised the commandment of the Lord" (12:9) in David's sin with Bathsheba indicates that He knew all along what God's will really was. The fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: " The soul that doeth ought presumptuously...because he hath despised the word of the Lord...that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David's emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion. In his prosperity he had said "I shall never be moved" and he was determined that he couldn't be (Ps. 30:6). Hearing those words from

Nathan must have struck real fear into David- he was being incriminated for the supreme sin of presumption, for which there was no provision of sacrifice or repentance. It is a mark of his faith and knowledge of God as the God of love, that He is willing to go on to confess his sin, in the hope of forgiveness. " Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16) was spoken by David more concerning this sin of presumption for which there was no sacrifice prescribed, rather than about the actual sin of adultery. However, we must not get the impression that David was a hard, callous man. Everything we know about him points to him be a big hearted, warm softie. David's sin with Bathsheba was in that sense out of character. Yet such is the stranglehold of sin that even he was forced to act with such uncharacteristic callousness and indifference to both God and man in order to try to cover his sin. The degree to which David acted in a coolly thought out way is brought out by a few hints in 2 Sam. 11:10-12. His comment to Uriah " Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house (and sleep with your wife?)" surely implied 'You've been away a long time- and you don't want to see your wife? Well, you must have been unfaithful then, like most of you soldier boys!'. Remember that this was David talking to a man who had risked his life for him during the wilderness years. How sin totally ruins loving fellowship! " Tarry here to day also, and tomorrow I will let thee *depart*" uses a word translated 'to put away' in Mal. 2:16. The implication was 'Tomorrow you can divorce her and there'll be no problem- and I bet you've been unfaithful yourself while away on duty!'. The man after God's own heart had truly fallen from Heaven to earth- knowing what he was doing.

It should be noted that the sin of adultery is not highlighted in Nathan's rebuke of David, but rather that David had " killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife" . This is twice emphasized in 12:9,10. This is not to say that the sin of weakness, of the moment, was irrelevant in God's sight. But the emphasis on how he had taken Bathsheba as his wife hints that this had been his long term intention, further suggesting that his sin with her was the end result of much prior meditation. This further illuminates the way in which David speaks of his sin with Bathsheba as if it comprised a whole multitude of other sins: " I acknowledged my sin (singular) unto thee...I said, I will confess my transgressions (plural)" (Ps. 32:5 cp. 38:3,4,18). Ps. 25:7 also occurs in a Bathsheba context: " Remember not the sins of my youth..." ; as if facing up to his sin with Bathsheba made David face up to sins of years ago, possibly also in a sexual context. Indeed, David went so far down this road of self-examination that the sin with Bathsheba made him realize that it was probably associated with many others which he did not even realize: " Who can understand his own errors? cleanse (s.w. Ps. 51:1,2 re. the Bathsheba affair) thou me from secret faults" (Ps. 19:12). If our own self-examination and repentance is after the pattern of David's, we will appreciate how that each of our sins is associated with so many others. We will be aware how that each spiritual event in our life makes us either weaker or stronger in facing the next one, how that each temptation is intertwined with others, so that in reality we do not commit (say) three or four sins per day. We are constantly failing and winning, and therefore we live in God's mercy; we do not just experience it for the few seconds in which we pray to Him for forgiveness to be granted. David's sin with Bathsheba is a process we each go through in one way or another.

6-4-4 David's Repentance

It is possible to infer that for all their spiritual closeness, David and Bathsheba experienced a falling out of love immediately after the incident- as with many cases of adultery and fornication. In contrast to their previous close contact, she had to *send* to tell him that she was

pregnant. In addition, before David's repentance he appears to have suffered with some kind of serious disease soon after it: " My loins are filled with a loathsome (venereal?) disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh" (Ps.38:7). It is even possible that David became impotent as a result of this; for we get the impression that from this point onwards he took no other wives, he had no more children, and even the fail safe cure for hypothermia didn't seem to mean much to David (1 Kings 1:1-4). Therefore " My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore" (Ps. 38:11) must refer to some kind of venereal disease. The Hebrew word translated " lovers" definitely refers to carnal love rather than that of friendship. It may be that an intensive plural is being used here- in which case it means 'my one great lover', i.e. Bathsheba. We have commented earlier how Amnon's obsessive love for Tamar was an echo of David's relationship with Bathsheba. There may be a parallel in the way in which afterwards, " Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he loved her" (2 Sam.13:15). All this would have been yet another aspect of the emotional trauma which David went through at this time; to fall out of love with the woman for which he had almost thrown away his eternal salvation. And in addition to this, all Israel would have got to know about what had happened- with a fair degree of exaggeration thrown in, we can be sure.

The record stresses how much David and Bathsheba relied on sending messages through the servants (2 Sam. 11: 3,4,5,6,19,23,27)- and remember that Bathsheba probably couldn't read, necessitating verbal communication. The palace servants would have gossiped and chatted about little else. When Uriah " slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord" after an evening with them in the bar, there can be no doubt that he came to know the score. He must have guessed the contents of the message which he took back to Joab; and when the command came for him to go on a suicide mission against Rabbah, he went in conscious loyalty to a master whose every intrigue he knew perfectly. This would explain why he refused to go and sleep with Bathsheba; he knew what David was up to. And David would have known that Uriah almost certainly knew what had happened. In view of this, " I go mourning all the day long" (Ps. 38:6) before David's repentance can be seen as the language of an agitated breakdown. It has also been observed that the Psalms contain several usages of language which is specifically related to leprosy. It could be that David was struck with some form of leprosy after the sin. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth: because thou didst it...when thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth" (Ps. 39:9,11) may all suggest David suffered some kind of stroke, leaving him dumb and without his legendary beauty. In all this he was brought to know the spirit of Christ crucified, in whom there was no beauty that he should be desired, and who was dumb as a lamb before her shearers. The links between the Bathsheba psalms about David's repentance and the crucifixion are copious. The Lord on the cross came to know the feelings of David after his sin, He felt a sinner although He never committed sin, so that even when we sin we are not in that sense separated from our Lord. He even then has a fellow feeling true with every failure.

Long Term Effects

The nervous effects on David may well have continued throughout the rest of his life. Despite exalting in the fact that he has now confessed his sin and been forgiven, David uttered Ps. 32:4: " Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me (in the days before repentance): my moisture *is* (present tense) turned into the drought of summer. Selah" . Is this not an eloquent picture of the David who was once so sure of himself, full of vitality, now shrivelled up, at least emotionally? " Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord,

mercy shall compass him about" (Ps.32:10) may also give insight here. It does not say 'Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but the repentant will have joy'. Instead, the contrast is made between sorrow and experiencing God's mercy; as if to imply 'The sorrows brought about by sin will go on and on in this life, but knowing you are surrounded by God's mercy more than compensates'. It takes little imagination to realize how that after his sin, David must have become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, tortured with deep and manic depressions. David's repentance comes as a relief to the reader.

The Answer Of A Bad Conscience

The harsh treatment of the Ammonites, torturing them under harrows, is indication enough of David's bad conscience before God being shown in his harsh treatment of others. Likewise Asa oppressed the people when he was guilty in his conscience (2 Chron. 16:10). And the wicked Kings of Israel usually died "without being desired" by their people, presumably because their broken relationship with God had led to a broken relationship between them and their brethren (e.g. 2 Chron. 21:20). The extent of David's fall at this time may be indicated by the way he crowns himself in 2 Sam. 12:30 with the "70 pound gold crown of the Ammonite state god Milcom" (1). Whilst retaining his allegiance to Yahweh, this personal association with a pagan god seems inappropriate.

Yet there is good reason to think that David did not spiritually crash completely, during the nine months in which he refused to fully acknowledge his sin. Although he no longer felt confident of having God's salvation, he still felt that God's Spirit/presence was with him. Hence he prayed in his confession: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me (i.e. he felt that he had these things even then). Restore unto me the joy of salvation...thy free spirit" (Ps.51:11,12). He was very conscious that God was so closely watching him: "Hide thy *face* from my sins...against thee (have I) done this evil in thy *sight*" (Ps.51:4,9). "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Ps.32:4), he later recognized as he reflected upon God's close scrutiny of his life during those unrepentant months.

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring" (Ps.32:3) must refer to David's roaring to God in prayer (Ps.22:1) before David's repentance, whilst keeping silent about his sin. In the same context he laments: "I have roared by reason of the disquietness (bad conscience) of my heart" (Ps.38:8). His very separation from God made him pray to God the more, pleading for some form of spiritual healing. But without realistic confession of sin, such prayer was shouting out words into the darkness. David found that attempting to have a relationship with God in such bad conscience only adds to the pain.

Further proof that David did not totally spiritually crash, is to be found in his very genuine, uncontrived sense of morality that led to his instant reaction to Nathan's parable (2 Sam. 12:5). That same parable described David's lust as a "traveller" which came to him, implying that this was not his usual frame of mind (and does the 'traveller' needing sustenance of Lk. 11:6 also refer to our sinful tendencies?). It should also be observed that Joab warned the messenger to quickly explain to David why the soldiers approached so near the wall of Rabbah, *because* he knew that David would *immediately* quote an example from the history of Israel, to prove that such an approach was unwise (2 Sam. 11:21). David's familiarity with the spiritual records of Israel's history was therefore well known, and it presumably did not depart from him during the nine months. Psalm 38 speaks of how the guilt of his sin weighed so heavily upon him (Ps. 38:4 NIV), whereas Ps. 32:5 describes how the guilt of sin has now been lifted from him- implying that he wrote Ps. 38 some time after the sin, but before

repenting properly. The point is, he didn't crash completely, he didn't turn away from God in totality- he was still writing Psalms at the time!

David's experience was so similar to ours. After sinning, we do not turn right away from God. Like him, we strive to continue walking with God. The trauma can only be resolved by a totality of confession of sin. " Let not this thing displease thee" were David's words to Joab (2 Sam. 11:25). But those very Hebrew words are used again in v.27: " But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" . It displeased God spiritually; and it is therefore reasonable to think that David was saying to Joab 'Now don't think that there's anything really spiritually wrong with what I've done'. Doubtless David tried even harder to persuade himself of this than he did Joab.

Soon after the sin, but before David's repentance, David went to join Joab in the battle for Rabbah- perhaps to give an impression of zeal to Bathsheba and the rest of his people. 'If brave Uriah died there, why, I'm not afraid to be with the boys on the front line either'. After the victory, David proudly placed the crown of Rabbah's king on his own head, pillaging the spoil of the city rather than burning it, and then cruelly tortured the Ammonites; " he (David personally) brought out the people...and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes" (2 Chron.20:2,3). How true it is that one sin leads to another. David's own bad conscience with God led him into this fit of bitterness, in which he so needlessly tortured people who at the most only warranted a quick death. One is left to imagine him making a great deal of how he was doing this in vengeance for the death of Uriah. Whenever we detect unreasonable behaviour, pride, materialism or bitterness within our own lives, we need to ask to what degree this is related to our own lack of good conscience with God.

More of the time in the daily round than we like to admit is spent in bad conscience with God. Psalm 38 gives further insight into David's tragic spiritual state. Psalm 38 appears to be David's lament of his bad conscience, some time before he makes his confession of Ps. 51. Psalm 38 shows that David certainly had some faith in God before his confession: " Forsake me not...make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation" (Ps. 38:22). Yet it is possible to intensely believe in the mercy of God, His ability to save, and yet not have the real faith- which is to believe that this mercy and salvation really can still apply to us personally. Thus he prays " Make me to hear joy and gladness" (Ps. 51:8). His introspective world of sin and self-hate found joy a paradigm impossible to relate to; as with mercy and salvation, he knew spiritual joy existed, but seemed unable to make this apply to him personally.

Other details in Psalm 38 fill out David's experience before David's repentance. " Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Ps. 38:4) was spoken before David's frank confession of Ps. 51. It therefore reveals how David felt swamped by his sense of sin; whilst recognizing it, he couldn't come to terms with explicitly confessing it. Every child of God must have come somewhere near to this feeling. The flesh can deceive us that just *recognizing* our sin somewhere in our consciousness is all that is needed. The lesson taught by David is that there is the need for frank and total confession; otherwise, the bad conscience will only deepen. " I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly" (Ps. 38:6) uses Hebrew which is elsewhere translated 'to commit iniquity', 'to be crooked'. This is David recognizing 'I *am* a sinner'- but still this did not help him. Specific, uninhibited confession was still not forthcoming. " My sorrow is continually before me. For I *will* declare mine iniquity; I *will* be sorry for my sin" (Ps. 38:17,18) may mean that David was so swamped by the trauma of the sin and the distancing from God which he was experiencing, that he could only vaguely resolve that some time in the future he would get down to a

serious prayer session, in which he would analyze and confess his sin. But instead he goes on desperately pleading " O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me..." . Our own sins so often gives us a nagging conscience; not because we are consciously trying to pretend that we never sinned, but because we will not make the effort to overcome the circumstances which stop us making the mental effort necessary to put ourselves straight with God.

However, David's genuine sorrow for his sin during this period is still a powerful exhortation to us, whose every sin must be repented of and forgiven after the pattern of David's repentance. The extent of his sorrow is heavily stressed: " My sorrow is continually before me...my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 38:17; 51:3). How much sorrow is there for our sins? Have the years mellowed our terror at sin? Things which once appalled us can so easily become sins of habit, the real sorrow we once experienced on committing them can be watered down to just a vague tickle of conscience. The significance of David's sin and repentance being held up as an example of our own should be a good antidote against such problems. The chilling thing is, despite all this awareness of his sin during the nine month period, when he was told the parable by Nathan- he just didn't see it. Every part of the story had such relevant application, but David was blinded to it. He knew he had sinned, but this was only on a surface level. "Thou art the man" was still news to him. We have commented that "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (Ps. 119:176) was likely written by David with his mind on his follies relating to Bathsheba. The point, is in the 'loat' state, he still remembered the commandments. He didn't turn his back on God; and neither do we, in our semi-spiritual unspirituality. We can likewise be blinded to true, personal understanding of God's message because of our refusal to *truly* repent. Corinth and the Hebrews could not understand the strong meet of the word because they were divided; their divisiveness hindered their understanding. Husbands and wives find their prayers hindered unless they are themselves united.

Repentance

It is amazing how sudden David's proper repentance seems to have come. There is no reason to be unduly afraid of a sudden, emotional confession of sin, prompted by a certain circumstance, as David's was by Nathan's parable. Psalm 51 may well have been prayed but moments after Nathan finished his parable. And Psalm 32, describing the joy of David's repentance, would have followed soon after. " Purge *me*...and I shall be clean...create in me a clean heart" (Ps.51:7,10) shows that David understood the 'me' which needed cleansing as being his own mind. This was clearly a result of the great level of self-examination which brought forth his real repentance. " Against thee, thee *only* have I sinned" (Ps.51:4) was a conclusion wrung out of so much reflection about what he had done; as is his recognition that his " sin" had involved many " transgressions" (Ps.51:3).

The Effect Of Forgiveness

One of the most repeated themes of the psalms of penitence is that of coming to know God as a result of experiencing His mercy, and recognizing how serious our sin is in His sight. " I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps.51:5) is a good example of how the experience of sin and real repentance makes us appreciate the essential badness of our own natures. It is through a failure to recognize this in practice (whilst doing so in theory) which so often leads us into temptation and eventual failure. Thus the doctrine that man's nature is sinful and mortal is essentially practical in its outworking. The more we recognize

it, the more sensitive we will be to temptation and failure, after the pattern of David's repentance. " In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Ps.51:6) David meditated, as he looked forward to his new life with God after receiving forgiveness. His very innermost being would then be able to learn more deeply of God's real wisdom. There is a connection between David knowing God in his " hidden part" , and Ps.32:7: " Thou art my hiding place" , or 'hidden part'. This shows that David felt that after his repentance, God Himself would live in David's 'hidden part', that part of his mind and thinking which no one else knows. Through knowing God, God would come and live in that part which truly knew God. The tabernacling of God in our 'hidden part' also requires us to come to know Him, as David did.

Being so certain of having received God's mercy, and therefore knowing the joy of living in good conscience with God, led David to preach to those around him. " Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps.51:13). Note too that Psalm 32 is a 'Maschil' psalm- 'for instruction'. If we have really experienced the mercy of God, we *will* preach to others from our personal experience. 'Preaching' will not be something which we will have to will ourselves to do, nor will it be just a compartment of our lives. Like David, our very existence, the very spirit of our lives, will be an open proclamation of what God's mercy has achieved in us.

Learning

Through David's repentance he obviously learnt from his sin, as we can from each of ours. Ps. 32:9 comments that men ought to learn from David's example, and not be as horses who must have their mouths kept in with a bridle. In Ps. 39:1 David reminisces how he had earlier said [before his sin with Bathsheba] that he would stop himself sinning by restraining himself with a bridle. He learnt that sheer will power is not enough; blind resolution to simply 'obey' will fail. Instead, it is a living relationship with the Father, a deep sense of His glory, that creates an environment of life where we just won't do what David did with Bathsheba. This was what he learnt, and this is what he was so eager to pass on to us in the post-Bathsheba Psalms of David's repentance.

David's experience of God's grace stayed with him when he faced up to the results of his errors in the future, too. From experience, he can ask to fall into the Lord's hand rather than man's, because "his *mercies are great*" (2 Sam. 24:14)- using the same two Hebrew words he had used when Nathan came to him in Ps. 52:1: "Have mercy upon me...according unto the *multitude* [Heb. 'greatness'] of thy *tender mercies*". And so the experience of God's gracious mercy over one sin fortifies us to believe in His grace when, sadly, we fall again; although, in passing, I think that in 2 Sam. 24, David himself didn't really do so much wrong. Yet he perceived himself to have sinned, so the point is still established.

Yet the Bathsheba Psalms, and those written after that time, clearly reflect how David had a sense of integrity before God. Ps. 41:4,12 is a good example: "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned...as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever". How could David, David the adulterer and the murderer, speak of his integrity...? Only, surely, because he truly believed in imputed righteousness. Forgiven sinners- and none of us are essentially any different to David- can have genuine integrity before God and men, because of this wonderful thing called imputed righteousness, justification by grace, call it by whatever theological term we like. But the bottom line in practice is that we can have genuine integrity before God and man. Yet, of course, men are no

so willing to accept this... those who break that 11th commandment 'Thou shalt not be caught!' are very often treated as if they can never have any integrity, and are for ever second class citizens in their community. But this isn't the way of those who seek to reflect God's way of dealing with sin. David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her... will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and *felt* this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to "every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. Another example is in Psalm 86, a Psalm where David constantly speaks of his need for God's forgiveness (Ps. 86:3,5,15,16). And yet David in the same Psalm can say: "Preserve my soul; for I am holy" (Ps. 86:2). He again has this sense of his own integrity, in the midst of realizing his need for God's grace and forgiveness. David's repentance is a pattern for ours, day by day.

David And Grace

In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Psalm 37 speaks of the wicked without any apparent interest in their conversion, but rather is there an emphasis upon their condemnation, even a gloating over it, and the [surely incorrect] fantasy that God laughs at the thought of how He will punish the wicked in future (Ps. 37:13). God takes *no* pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 18:32; 33:11). David's view of God's mercy was that it would be only according to, proportionate to, our hope in God (Ps. 33:22)- it was only through his Bathsheba experience that David came to know that grace is simply not proportionate to any human virtue. Psalms 24, 25 and 26 are full of David explaining that fellowship with God was dependent upon a man's "integrity", walking in truth, hating sinners, personal innocency, "uprightness", clean hands and ure heart. And throughout these Psalms, David holds up himself as the great example. Ps. 18:23-26 has David describing his own uprightness before God, and how God only shows His grace to the pure and upright. How little did he understand grace! Worse still, he several times bids God judge men according to their sins (Ps. 5:10). It is against this background that we must understand the significance of David's statements that after Bathsheba, after how God did *not* deal with him according to his sin, there were no rebukes of others now in his mouth. Realizing the extent of his personal sin and the depth of God's grace led David to not only be less reproachful of others; but also to be less hurt by their unkindness to him. And in these things we surely have a great lesson to ourselves.

Notes

(1) Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001) p. 37.

6.5 A Study Of The Character Of David

David is one of the major OT types of the Lord Jesus. The words of David in Ps. 16 are quoted in Acts 2:25,29 concerning Jesus: "I have set the Lord always before me...he is at my right hand...thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption". These are words describing David's feelings about his own death and resurrection; and yet so identified was he with the Messiah, that they are quoted as being directly true of Jesus. But Acts 2:29 also quotes these words with a slightly different spin- in that David saw the Lord *Jesus* always before him, and it was this sense that stabilized him. This could only have been true in that David understood all his feelings and present and future experiences [e.g. resurrection, not being suffered to corrupt eternally] as being typical of the Lord Jesus. He so understood himself as a type of the One to come that he saw this person as ever with him. This is the extent of the typology. 1 Chron. 17:17 in Young's Literal has David saying: "Thou hast seen me as a type of the man on high" [i.e. Messiah]. David describes himself at ease with clearly Messianic titles such as 'the Christ', 'the man raised on high', and then goes on to speak of the Messiah who *is to come* on the "morning without clouds", admitting that "verily *my* house is not so with God" (2 Sam. 23:1-5). This is only really understandable if we accept that David consciously saw himself as a type of the future Messiah.

The feelings and pulse of David are expressed at more length than those of any other Bible character; and therefore in these we are to see something of the Lord we follow. It is significant that David is seen as the representative of Israel, just as was and is the Lord- hence, e.g., the confusion between "the city of Judah" and "the city of David" (2 Kings 14:20 cp. 2 Chron. 25:28 AVmg.). Or consider how David parallels his own afflictions and need for forgiveness with Israel's need for redemption (Ps. 25:18,22); or how the saving strength of Yahweh's anointed (i.e. David) was to be Israel's saving strength likewise (Ps. 28:8,9). The evidently Messianic words of Ps. 8:4,5 "What is man...thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" are prefaced by the context of David thanking God for how he has been given victory over Goliath: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings [an intensive plural, referring to David himself?] hast thou ordained strength...that thou mightest still the enemy" [Goliath]. In this particularly we see David as a type of Jesus, not least in the way that he himself felt that he was manifesting God as He would be manifest through "the son of man" to come. The point is, David consciously felt he was typifying the Lord.

God encourages David to see himself as representative of Israel by saying that "I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies...and have made thee a great name" (2 Sam. 7:9), words replete with reference to Israel in the wilderness and their establishment in the land. As David so loved his people and was their representative, for all they did to him, so with the Lord Jesus and His people. When God asked David "choose thee one of" three possible judgments, each of them involved the whole nation- e.g. "Shall seven years of famine come unto *thee*" (singular). David was their representative even in their time of failure.

The Character Of David: The Broken Relationships Of David

I'm glad the word 'ineffable' is in the English language. Without it I don't know how we could express the ineffable, *ineffable* sadness of the relationships of David. He loved Jonathan with a love passing that of women, those two men came so close together in the bond of the Spirit; only for Jonathan to be slain in his prime by the uncircumcised. David loved Jonathan's sister

Michal, and she loved him; only for her to come to despise David's spirituality, and to be unfaithful to him (2 Sam.21:8 implies she had even more relationships than just with Paltiel). And Saul's sons, David's brothers-in-law, the brothers of his deep deep best friend, joined their father in persecuting him in the wilderness years (Ps.119:161). David so loved his son Absalom, his very *soul* was *consumed* for that strapping young man (2 Sam.13:39 AVmg.); but that son bitterly hated David, and coolly plotted to destroy him and his reputation. David loved Abigail and Ahinoam, but those fairy tale romances took a bitter blow when David fell for Bathsheba. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters (Ps.27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18). David loved Solomon and gave very special attention to teach him the real spirit of the Truth, taking time out from a hectic public life to do so; only for that beloved son to turn away in later life, to fast women, alcohol, materialism, and the perversions of idolatry.

But perhaps above all is the ineffable sadness of the relationship between David and Saul. Saul loved David. David loved Saul, his daughters and his son Jonathan; and later David was to marry Saul's wives. There can be few men who do not have at least some attraction to the father and family of their wife. Saul was not a totally unspiritual man; there are many hints that he had a spiritual side. It's rare indeed that a totally unspiritual person can love a highly spiritual person like David. And yet this fine relationship ended in an intense love-hate affair. So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps.27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam.26:19). This in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind.

The Character Of David: Broken Man

Despite his undoubted physique stamina, all these things contributed to David being a broken man, even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam.24:14 with 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps.75:10 and the whole of Ps.101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam.11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom. He had a heart cruelly torn so many ways. All these traits are amply reflected in the Psalms: Ps.6:7; 31:10; 42:3,6; 38:8; 55:4; 56:8; 69:3,29; 88:3,9; 94:19 (what introspection!); 102:4; 116:3; 143:4. An uninterrupted read through the Psalms makes this obvious. Please, try to read through the Psalms in one go some time, try to make the time in this crazy life to do it at least once. Let's be aware, as aware as we can, that this broken down mind of David was the prefigurement of our Lord's broken life. The brokenness of his heart is what we show when we break bread.

David: Broken Man

Ps.6:7; 31:10; 42:3,6; 38:8; 55:4; 56:8; 69:3,29; 88:3,9; 94:19 (what introspection!); 102:4;
116:3; 143:4

" Mine eye is consumed because of grief" (6:7)

" *My life* is spent with grief, and *my years* with sighing (not just the depression of a moment)...my strength faileth, my bones are consumed" (31:10)

" I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart...my heart panteth...the light of mine eyes is gone from me" (38:8-10)

" My tears have been my meat day and night...my soul is cast down within me" (42:3,6)

" I mourn in my complaint...my heart is sore pained within me" (55:2,4)

" Put thou my tears into thy bottle" (56:8)

" I am weary of my crying...mine eyes fail...I am poor and sorrowful" (69:3,29)

" My soul is full of troubles...mine eye mourneth" (88:3,9)

" In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" (94:19)

" My heart is smitten and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread" (102:4)

" I found trouble and sorrow" (116:3)

" My spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate" (143:4)

The Character Of David: Depression

There are a number of links between the Psalms and Job's speeches (run your eye down the marginal references). Depressed Job must have been very much at the back of David's mind. Like Job, David knew and respected God's promises, but at times such as that when he wrote Ps.89, it all seemed rather abstract, and in his depression he bitterly questioned God. In Ps.89, David repeats the promises made to him, but compares them with his present difficult situation: " Thou saidst...my covenant will I not break...but thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant" (Ps.89:19,34,39). He reflected how God had promised that " The enemy shall not exact upon him" , but now his enemies clearly had the upper hand (Ps.89:22 cp. " Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice" , v.42,50,51). Likewise " His throne (shall endure) as the sun" , but " thou hast profaned his crown (i.e. his throne) by casting it to the ground" (Ps.89:36,39). It is in the context of God promising David eternity that he questions: " *Shall* he (God) deliver his soul from the grave? What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?" (Ps.89:48). He goes so far as to feel that God's " former lovingkindnesses (a word often re. the promises), which thou swarest unto David in thy truth" had been at best suspended (Ps.89:49). Surely David is close to the edge here; there almost seems to be a sense of mocking in his comments on the promise that his throne would endure for ever as the sun: " His throne (shall endure) as the sun...but...Thou hast cast his throne down to the ground" , rather than it being like the sun (Ps.89:36,44). Yet truly in the spirit of Job, he was able to praise God in this very same context: " Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and amen" (Ps.89:52). Presumably this Psalm was written (or thought out) whilst fleeing from Absalom, or possibly during one of the later rebellions, when it seemed that all hope of holding on to the throne was lost. Here is David in depression, making hasty comments about the faithfulness of God, reacting to the position of the moment. This is surely an indication of his mental make up. One cannot be persuaded that the Lord Jesus did not experience the temptations which go along with this kind of personality. " My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt.27:46) and the following thoughts in Ps.22 seem to be Christ's equivalent of David's crisis in Ps.89.

The Character Of David: Humility

Further indication of David's low self-esteem (or humility), related as it was to his depressive tendencies, can be found throughout the Psalms. These must all point forward in some way to the make up of the man Christ Jesus. Consider David's graphic descriptions of himself, rooted in his fine appreciation of the natural creation, especially of bird life, which he seems to have carefully observed. In these allusions we see a true humility rather than a playing with words. This was how he really felt (see table). It was because David was truly humble that he could immediately respond in genuine humility to God's promises to him; whereas Solomon became proud because of them (1 Chron.17:16: " David *the king* came and *sat* before the Lord, and said, Who am I...?"). Despite the openness with God which we see in the Psalms, despite being able to break explicit commandments because he so finely appreciated the spirit behind them, despite being a man after God's own heart, even in his true spiritual maturity towards the end of his life, David " could not go before (the altar) to enquire of God; for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the Lord" (1 Chron.21:30). Now this seems an eloquent essay in the true spiritual humility of that man David [\(1\)](#).

David: How he saw himself

A dead dog (1 Sam.24:14 cp. 2 Sam.9:8; 16:9)

A dead man, a corpse (Ps.31:12)

A deaf and dumb man (Ps.38:13)

A poor beggar man (Ps.40:17 and often)

A young orphan (said as an older man; Ps.27:10)

A locust (Ps.109:23)

A flea (1 Sam.24:14; 26:20)

A moth (Ps.39:11)

A partridge of the mountains (1 Sam.24:14)

A lonely sparrow (Ps.84:3; 102:7)

A turtledove, the poor man's offering (Ps.74:19)

A pelican and desert owl (Ps.102:6)

A snared bird (Ps.124:7)

Often David likens his enemies' plans to catch him as snares, gins, pits etc. (eg Ps.140:5)- all the language of hunting animals and birds.

Compare this with the parables of the Lord Jesus. There too one sees the words of a man whose mind was actively observing the natural creation, exhorting himself every hour from

what he saw there. The broken state of David's mind looked ahead to the broken mind of our Lord. We can perhaps more easily appreciate how and why David's mind was broken. But with the Lord Jesus, it is more difficult to enter into how and why his soul was so broken. His soul was broken *so that* we might be saved; David's soul was broken as a result of his own mistakes and his general experience of life. David's depression resulted in him manifesting all the classic characteristics of the highly strung person. His great sensitivity and almost telepathic ability to enter into other's problems was legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which endeared him to his people (1 Sam.22:22; 2 Sam.14:17,20; 18:13)- and there is a powerful, powerful similarity here with our relationship with Christ.

The Character Of David: Suicidal?

David may even have extended to suicidal tendencies. His servants, who knew him well, feared he would take his own life if Bathsheba's baby died: " How will he then do hurt to himself...?" (2 Sam.12:18; the same word is used in Num.20:15 concerning Egypt's 'hurting' of Israel). One gets a sense that David had another such fit of self-hate in his reaction to the news that many in Israel would have to die because of his numbering of the people (even though their punishment was just, seeing they had refused to pay the census money required by the Law). It is quite possible that Christ knew these tendencies well; was he not tempted to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple, to take the Kingdom immediately, in other words to short cut through this life? Indeed, any man driven to the mental lengths of David and Jesus has known these feelings. The Lord Jesus broke his soul in striving against sin; this is what brought about in him that similar mental state to David.

Christ so struggled against sin, he so groaned beneath the mental weight of our sins, that it was *as if* he had been through everything David went through emotionally and spiritually. The main reason why there is so much deep personal detail about David is because we are intended to come to know him as a person, to enter into his mind- so that we can have a clearer picture of the mind and personality of the Lord Jesus. This is why the thoughts of David, eg in Ps.16:8-11, are quoted as being the very thoughts of Christ (Acts 2:27). So Christ-centred was David's mind that he " foresaw (not " saw" - disproof of the pre-existence) the Lord (Jesus) always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved" (Acts 2:25). David was obsessed, mentally dominated, by his imagination of Christ, so much so that his imagination of his future descendant gave him practical strength in the trials of daily life. Small wonder we are bidden know and enter into David's mind. Likewise the book of Genesis covers about 2000 years of history, but almost a quarter of the narrative concerns Joseph; surely because we are intended to enter into Joseph, and thereby into the mind of Christ.

The Character Of David: Loneliness Of Roads Less Travelled

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps.43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam.6:13-20; and 2 Sam.19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had

lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter, he airily waived the Mosaic law concerning bloodguiltiness (consider the implications of 2 Sam.14:4-11), and the need to stone rapists (2 Sam.13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam.13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron.26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to have agreed. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led him to commit the sin of presumption in his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

David: Spiritual Loneliness

(Ps.12:1; 14:1; 88:18; 102:7)

" The godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (12:1)

" There is none that doeth good" (14:1)

" Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness" (88:18)

" I am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (102:7)

For this reason, the Psalms often speak of David's spiritual loneliness (Ps.12:1; 14:1; 88:18; 102:7). The Lord Jesus likewise must have had this sense, he clung on to those twelve men whom God gave him as companions, knowing that they appreciated so little, taking comfort from them as a single mother does from a conversation with her four year old son. This sense of spiritual loneliness will afflict every true servant of Yahweh. Elijah, Moses, Adam, Hezekiah, Job, Jeremiah and all the prophets, Paul... each of them felt so alone. We too surely feel that we are walking along a virgin path, pioneering a new road, but one that will only be travelled by us. All the talk about fellowship and support from our families, our community, can only go so far. And in our hearts, we know this. It's at times like this, as we come to know the mind of David, that we have both temptation and fantastic opportunity: temptation to feel that even the Father and Son cannot enter into our experience; and yet also the marvellous opportunity to touch the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, *the Son of God* , on a personal level; to *know* him, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and thereby to have the certainty of sharing his resurrection.

The Character Of David: Self knowledge

Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals another characteristic of David: frequent and intense self-examination, especially while on the run from Saul (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

David: self-examination and self-knowledge

" The answer of a good conscience"

(Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

" Commune with your own heart upon your bed" (4:4)

" If I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil...let the enemy persecute my soul" (7:3-5)

" Thou hast visited me in the night: thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing" (17:3)

" I have kept the ways of the Lord...*for* all his judgments were before me...I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity" (18:21-24; after Bathsheba)

" Who can understand his own errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" (19:12)

" Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity" (26:1)

" I said, I will take heed to my ways" (39:1)

" They lie in wait for my soul...not for my transgression" (59:3)

" If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (66:18)

" In the night I commune with mine own heart" (77:6)

" Preserve my soul: for I am holy" (86:2)

" I will walk within my house with a perfect heart" (101:2)

" They fought against me without a cause" (109:3)

" O God...know my heart: try me...and see if there be any wicked way in me" (139:23,24)

David's characteristic of self-examination cannot be unrelated to the fact that while on the run from Saul, he keenly meditated on the word of God (largely in the Law); Ps.119 has many connections between his love of the word and the outlaw experiences. Perhaps David thought so much of the Law that he came close to Moses in spirit; " those that seek after my soul...shall go into the lower parts of the earth" (Ps.63:9) is clearly alluding to the fate of Moses' enemies, Korah *et al* . Amid daily pursuit from his enemies, David reflected that " In God will I praise his word" (Ps.56:10 and context). In the same period, David eagerly looks forward to the judgment seat (Ps.62:9 RV, 12) *as a source of comfort in his present distress* . Real self-examination, real love of the word, will have the same effect.

The Character Of David: Awareness Of Sin

Yet another theme is the frequent allusion David makes to the promises, both to Abraham and himself; often he speaks of those promises as "mercy" and / or "truth". He saw the promises as fundamentally concerning forgiveness of sin ("Mercy"), which is how Peter interprets them in Acts 3:25,26; it is fundamentally through this that we can receive the eternal inheritance. David describes the promises as "blessing" (2 Sam.7:28,29), a word normally used in the context of forgiveness. So David was aware of the grossness of sin, of the need for self-examination, to ensure that his technical breaches of the Law of Moses were truly a reflection of his friendship with God rather than an indication of spiritual weakness.

And now consider the Son of God, Christ our Lord, tempted in every point like as we are. He knew his sinlessness, indeed he must have been constantly aware of it. Just one sin would have marred that fine, heavenly relationship with the Father which he so rejoiced in. How he would have examined himself! How he would have searched his motives, perhaps even examining the tone of his voice, his body language, his way of using Scripture, his use of humour (for he did use it).... The high level of self-knowledge which David achieved must have been reflected in his Lord. Christ's sense of purpose must have exuded from his very being. He knew where he was from and where he was going to, there was a precision and certainty behind all his words: "I *am* the bread...I *am* the *true* vine....the good shepherd..." . And yet all this was thought, believed and said by a man whose very soul was broken, whose whole life was a carrying of a cross, and who (therefore, from that analogy) found it so desperately hard to carry on.

The Character Of David: Desire To Praise And Preach

David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam.27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps.4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

David: Zeal to preach to the world

(Ps.4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 71:18; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12)

"I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen" (18:49)

" My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation...they shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this" (22:25,31)

" I will praise thee among much people" (35:18)

" I have preached...in the great congregation...I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart: I Have declared thy faithfulness" (40:9,10)

" I will sing unto thee among the nations" (57:9)

" Trust in him...ye people" (62:8)

" Come and see the works of God...I will declare what he hath done for my soul" (66:5,16)

" When I am old...forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation" (71:18)

" Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, glory...come into his courts...say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth" (96:7,8,10)

" Make a joyful noise...all ye lands...come before his presence...know ye that Yahweh is God" (100:1-4)

" Make known his deeds among the people...talk ye of all his works" (105:1,2)

" Make me to understand thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works" (119:27)

" I will speak of thy majesty...I will declare thy greatness...to make known to the sons of men...the glorious majesty of his Kingdom" (145:5,6,12)

The Son of God understood " what was in man" even more finely than David. The Lord Jesus likewise looked out of himself, out of the warfare that plagued his inner mind, to the need of preaching the Gospel to the brokenhearted. If we had been in the shoes of the Lord Jesus, we would doubtless have stayed tucked away in anonymous Nazareth, keeping away from temptation, struggling to hold on to our perfection of character, and avoiding the sort of spiritual stress created by days of active preaching, constantly being pestered by irritating, self-centred questioners. But not so the Lord Jesus. In a sense he exposed himself to this type of temptation through his devotion to preaching the Gospel, he looked out of himself to others, his deep knowledge of the love of God, his fine appreciation of the Father's character, simply *impelled* him to share it. Yet because of this appreciation, the Lord Jesus was forthright in his condemnation of those who did not believe or want to understand the truth of the Father. This was prefigured by the way in which David had a marked hatred of sin, and often stated his desire to purge Israel of sinners, and his refusal to fellowship with evil (Ps. 94:20; 97:10; 101:3-8; 119:63,78,79; 139:19). So often David makes reference to his enemies within Israel, and the judgments to come upon the wicked (Ps.1:1; 4:3; 5:5; 15:4; 26:4,5; 35:3-8; 45:7; 52:6; 58:6; 104:35; 109:5-20; 137:8,9; 139:21). Again, this is quite some emphasis.

David: reference to judgment for sin

(Ps.1:1; 4:3; 5:5; 15:4; 26:4,5; 35:3-8; 45:7; 52:6; 58:6; 104:35; 109:5-20; 137:8,9; 139:21).

" The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (5:5)

" Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion...let them be as chaff...let the Angel of the Lord persecute them...let the net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall" (35:4-8)

" God shall destroy thee for ever...The righteous also shall laugh at him" (52:5,6)

" Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth" (58:6)

" Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth" (104:35)

" Let Satan stand at his right hand...when he shall be judged, let him be condemned...let his children be fatherless...continually vagabonds, and beg" (109:4-20)

" Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" (137:9)

" I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee...I hate them with perfect hatred" (139:21,22)

David's refusal to fellowship with evil

(Ps. 94:20; 97:10; 101:3-8; 119:63,78,79; 139:19).

" Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (1:1)

" Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? He...in whose eyes a vile person is contemned" (15:1,4)

" I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked" (26:4,5)

" Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee?" (94:20)

" Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (97:10)

" I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the works of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave unto me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off...him will I not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me...he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house...I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord" (101:3-8)

" I am a companion of all them that fear thee...let those that fear thee turn unto me" (119:63,79)

" Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men" (139:19)

The Character Of David: " Full of grace and truth"

Yet think of the attitude of mind with which David wrote and prayed those words; scarcely with any hard self-righteousness after Bathsheba, and we have seen that David suffered acutely from depression and lack of self-esteem. He surely would have said and thought all those words from a motive of truly loving God's righteousness, and wishing to vindicate Yahweh's perfect character. His awareness of his own weakness is summarized in Ps.139:21-23: " I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee...I hate them with perfect hatred...search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" . We lack the zeal to stand up for God's truth, both in the world and in the ecclesia, because we sense that we are such desperate sinners. David had that strength even more so, and yet it was his true appreciation of God's grace which led him to so eagerly resist anything which was against this or in any way compromised it. Indeed, the seriousness of sin and the need to separate from it was one of David's favourite preaching topics.

There can be no misunderstanding of David as some softie who let anything go. Of course he was a sensitive man, with a soft heart. The way others' words so hurt him is evidence enough of this (Ps. 57:4). Yet this was marvellously blended with his clear recognition of evil and firmly expressed desire not to mix with it. Much self-examination and realization of his own failures didn't make David turn a blind eye. Many of David's references to his enemies and the wicked whom he hated are in fact to Saul and Absalom. And yet we know that he deeply loved both these men. The Lord Jesus had this same wondrous mixture of " grace and truth" which has so eluded Christianity. His hating sin more than any other man was one reason for the height of his exaltation above all others by the Father (Ps.45:7).

The Character Of David: Love For Israel

Another way in which Christ looked out of himself was by recognizing that he was representative of so many others, that he was so connected with us. This was seen in David's experience too, and again the Psalms explain just how: Many times David reveals that he saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). David's awareness of this must have led to a very special relationship between him and Israel. He was " the light of Israel" even after his disgrace with Bathsheba, the light which his people would fain see quenched (1 Chron.11:1). He treated all Israel as his brothers, as Christ treats his Kingdom (1Chron.28:2). The fact that he was living out the collective experiences of God's people must have been a strength to David, a real encouragement to endure. And in the case of the Lord Jesus, it is possible to speculate that if he were *only* concerned with achieving his personal salvation, he may not have had the motivation to hang on which he had. How true are the words of Bro. Roberts, that Christ did it all for himself, " that it might be for us" . And for many a latter day saint, the extra motivation for hanging on, for struggling to do those readings, to say those prayers from a true heart, has often come from realizing one's connection with the rest of the body, realizing the need to spiritually help a partner, children, ones' converts of earlier days, ones' long loved ecclesia... There's nothing wrong in our sense of spiritual responsibility to others giving that vital fillip to our spiritual enthusiasm. The effect of our weakness upon the Lord Jesus, like the clinging need of a weak minded husband or child, was the same!

David's joy was Zion's joy

(Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2).

" Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Ps.51:8)- in the context of Bathsheba

" I am poor and sorrowful...the Lord heareth the poor...praise Him...for God will save Zion, and will build the (poor) cities of Judah" (Ps.69:29-35)

" Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps.87:2)

" Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people...that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance" (Ps.106:4,5)

" He that keepeth *thee* will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is *thy* keeper: the Lord is *thy* shade" as He was to Israel in the wilderness (Ps.121:3-5 cp.105:39)

" That thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life" (Ps.128:4,5)

" Sing unto the Lord...let the children of Zion be joyful in their king" (Ps.149:2)

And so as we take the emblems, we express again our willingness to at least make the effort to shoulder the cross, to go on. But as we said, the man carrying his cross is the picture of a man who finds it hard to go on. Many men, like the Lord Jesus, just couldn't make it to the place of crucifixion. The man carrying the cross was the picture of a man who finds it hard to go on. We stress it because if we are truly carrying the cross, and thereby have hope of sharing his resurrection, then we will be finding it hard to go on. As that perfect day draws near, the day of the Lord Jesus, of our meeting with him, it will be harder and harder to go on. Life seems to get spiritually harder as the years go by. But yet we never will be tried beyond what we can take. I find those words just so encouraging. There *will* be a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. So yes, we will find it hard to go on, we will know that spiritual loneliness of David / Jesus. Yet we will also *know* the love of Christ, love which passes our human knowledge, we will *know* him, know his sufferings, know his mind, the mind of the *Son of God* . And then, surely, we will be united with him in his glory. Now we symbolize our connection with him, and yet also with each other. As David felt part of Israel as he suffered, and as the Lord felt so close to us in his agonies, so we are bound together too as the body of Christ, pushing separate paths up different sides of the mountain, perhaps, but somehow, in an inexplicable way, bound together in the unity of the Spirit.

David's Final Maturity

2 Sam. 23:1-5 gives quite some insight into the nature of David's spiritual maturity at the end. He comes over as:

Sure of his salvation

Aware of his own failures and frailty, acknowledging that his family 'was not so with God'

Deeply aware of God's grace

Having a clear vision of Jesus the future Messiah, even foreseeing how He would be pierced with a weapon and slain by wicked men- in order to attain our salvation

Aware that his own rulership was pathetically inferior to that of the Lord Jesus

Appreciative that all these wonderful things are rooted in the covenant made to himself, which was all his salvation and desire.

These very same themes we find recurring in the lives of many other servants of God.

6-5-2

David And The Value Of Human Life

Many have struggled to reconcile the statement that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) with the fact that his life contains many examples not only of failure, but of anger and a devaluing of human life. He was barred from building the temple because of the amount of blood he had shed (1 Chron. 22:8). The figure of 'shedding blood' takes us back to the incident with Nabal, where David three times is mentioned as intending to "shed blood" (1 Sam. 25:26-33), only to be turned away from his sinful course by the wisdom, spirituality and charm of Abigail. David started out as the spiritually minded, humble shepherd, full of faith and zeal for his God. Hence Jehoshaphat is commended for walking "in the *first* ways of his father David" (2 Chron. 17:3). It seems to me that the comment that David was "a man after God's own heart" refers to how he initially was, at the time God chose him and rejected Saul. But the trauma of his life, the betrayals, jealousies and hatred of others, led him to the kind of bitterness which so often surfaces in the Psalms and is reflected in several historical incidents where he lacks the value of others' lives which we would otherwise expect from a man who walked so close with his God. Consider some of those incidents:

- When told to slay 100 Philistines, he slays 200 for good measure (1 Sam. 18:25,27)
- His wife Michal had a pagan image at home (1 Sam. 19:13)- rather odd for a man who appears so committed to Yahweh
- When David demands to eat the shewbread (1 Sam. 21:6) we sense a rather different David from the one who extolled the scrupulous keeping of the letter of God's law in Ps. 119, a Psalm apparently written in his early days whilst at the court of Saul
- David's eager taking of the sword of Goliath (1 Sam. 21:9- "There is none like that; give it me") contrasts sadly with his earlier rejection of such weapons in order to slay Goliath. And David later reflects how he knew that his faithless taking of that sword and the shewbread would lead to the death of Abiathar's family ((1 Sam. 22:22). But still he did it.
- Going down South to Achish of Gath and playing the mad man (1 Sam. 21:13,15) has further sad connections with the patriarchs going down to Egypt in times of weak faith

- His anger with Nabal and desire to slay all “that piss against the wall” who lived with “this fellow” ((1 Sam. 25:21,22) is expressed in crude terms; and he later thanks Abigail for persuading him not to “shed blood” and “avenging myself with mine own hand” ((1 Sam. 25:33)- the very things he elsewhere condemns in his Psalms (e.g. Ps. 44:3). Time and again in the Psalms, David uses that Hebrew word translated “avenging myself” about how God and not man will revenge / save him against his enemies, for God saves / avenges the humble in spirit not by their strength and troops but by His. But in the anger of hot blood, David let go of all those fine ideas. He had some sort of an anger problem.

- David says that the servants of Saul are “worthy to die” because they fell asleep as a result of “a deep sleep from the Lord” which fell on them, and therefore didn’t protect Saul (1 Sam. 26:12,16). Were they *really* that guilty of death for this? There doesn’t appear to be any Biblical command David was quoting.

- “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” is surely a collapse of faith (1 Sam. 27:1). And it led to the way in which David deceived Achish by pretending he was attacking Jewish towns, when in fact he was going out and attacking the Amalekite settlements, killing all men, women and children in them so that nobody was left alive to tell that it was David who had attacked them (1 Sam. 27:8-10). Innocent people were slain by David’s sword for the ‘political’ reason that he had to keep Achish ‘in the dark’ about what he was really up to. And so in case a 5 year old say something incriminating later, David simply killed the little boy. Indeed, when Achish later says that David would be best not to go with him to fight Saul, David hypocritically says: “But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant so long as I have been with you unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies [i.e. Saul] of my lord the king?” (1 Sam. 29:8). This was hardly an example of the “integrity” and “uprightness” which David glorifies in his Psalms, and which he insisted he was full of (Ps. 25:21). Indeed he claims that his integrity is the basis of his acceptance by God (Ps. 26:1).

- It’s recorded that in this ethnic cleansing which David performed, he took the spoil of those settlements for himself (1 Sam. 27:9). Indeed when he destroyed Ziklag, he took away their herds “and said, This is David’s spoil” (1 Sam. 30:20).

- When Saul is killed, a young Amalekite hopeful comes to David with the story that he had killed Saul, trying to curry favour with David and secure his own release as a prisoner of war. David executed him (2 Sam. 1:15). It seems to me that this was an over the top reaction, and yet again betrays a lack of value and meaning attached to the human person. There was no attempt to convert the frightened young man to grace, to the God of Israel. The summary slaying of Rechab and Baanah has some similarities (2 Sam. 4:12).

- Once King, David decides to get back his ex-wife Michal, who was by now married to Phaltiel, who evidently loved her. Yet David takes her from Phaltiel, and we have the tragic image of the loving husband walking behind her weeping as she is led away from him (2 Sam. 3:15,16). This was not only a breach of Mosaic law, but displayed a sad elevation of politics above others’ relationships and marriages. It may be significant that her renewed marriage with David wasn’t blessed with any children (2 Sam. 6:23).

- The incident with Uzzah touching the ark led to David being “displeased” with God because He had slain a man who was trying to assist David’s project of bringing the ark to

Zion (2 Sam. 6:8,9). Do we not again see the anger and irrational emotion of David flaring up?

- I've commented elsewhere about God's response to David's desire to build God a house. God said 'No' - because He chose to live in the hearts of men rather than physical buildings. But still David obsessively pushed ahead with his dream. Likewise his whole attitude to Solomon appears to have been obsessive and involved a 'reading out' of the conditional nature of God's promises regarding Solomon.

- When David defeated Moab, he made the captives lay down in three lines. He arbitrarily chose one line to keep alive, and killed the other two lines (2 Sam. 8:2). This can't be justified as some careful obedience to some Mosaic law. It reads like something out of the Holocaust, an arbitrary slaying of some in order to exercise the whim of one's own power. No wonder David was barred from building the temple because of his attitude to bloodshed. Likewise when Rabbah is captured, David proudly puts the crown of the king on his head, grabs their spoil for himself, "and he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon" (2 Sam. 12:31). Now all that is torture. It's one thing to obey Divine commands about slaying enemies; it's another to wilfully torture them, Auschwitz-style. These incidents reveal David at his worst. And again- did he really have to ensure that every male in Edom was murdered (1 Kings 11:15,16)- was that really necessary? What about the mums, wives, sisters left weeping, and the fatherless daughters, left to grow up in the dysfunction of a leaderless Middle Eastern home? Those men were all somebody's sons, brothers, fathers, grandfathers. Was David really obeying some Divine command here, or was this the dictate of his own anger and dysfunctional bloodlust?

- David's murder of Uriah and his sin with Bathsheba again reflects this same lack of value of the human person, even of his faithful friends.

- When David is asked to give seven men of the family of Saul as a blood sacrifice to appease the rain god who was not sending rain, David agrees. He doesn't make the Biblical argument that rain being withheld indicates the need for repentance before Yahweh, and that sacrificing humans is wrong and won't change anything in this context. He gives in to the false understanding of the Gibeonites, breaking his undertakings to Saul and Jonathan by doing so, and selects seven men to be slain and hung up. We read of the mother of two of them, Rizpah, lovingly watching over the bodies of her sons day and night, with all the distraction of true love (2 Sam. 21:10). David didn't have to do this. But he did. He doesn't seem to have cared for the mother's feelings, nor for the lives of her sons. And note that David makes up the total of seven men by having the five foster sons of his own estranged wife Michal slain. Was this not David somehow hitting back at Michal, who had mocked him for his style of worship in 2 Sam. 6? And how did Adriel, the father of those five sons, feel? He wasn't of the house of Saul, but because of David's desire to placate someone else, he lost all his sons, just because his wife had died and Saul's daughter had raised them. And yet this same David is recorded as saying soon afterwards: "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his ordinances were before me; And as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also perfect toward him; And I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in his eyesight" (2 Sam. 22:22-25).

- David seems to glory in how he destroyed his enemies- “I might destroy them that hate me... then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the more of the street, and did spread them [i.e. their body parts] abroad” (2 Sam. 22:41-43). Can this really be justified as obedience to Divine commands? Is this not the expression of blood lust and anger? And isn’t it therefore self-righteous to style himself “the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1)? Was he really “sweet”?
- The numbering of Israel was another weak moment for David (note 2 Sam. 24:3,4,10), leading to suffering for others. Yet this same David had written that “there is no king saved by the multitude of an host” (Ps. 33:16).
- When David became old and impotent (AV “gat no heat”, 1 Kings 1:1), it was still felt important for him to be producing children, and so the sex goddess Abishag was found for him. Where exactly is the morality in that...?
- David earlier forgave Shimei for cursing him. But he tells Solomon to bring down that old man’s white hairs to the grave with blood on them- again, a crude image for the murder of an old man. And he uses the same awful turn of phrase to ask Solomon to do this also to his lifelong friend Joab (1 Kings 2:6,9). Surely grace would’ve found another way?

The Weakness Of David In The Psalms

In addition to all this, we find the Psalms so often expressing David’s intense anger- even to the extent of contradicting his other more gracious statements about people, and also being at variance with his own beggings for mercy and grace at the time of his sin with Bathsheba. Consider “Hold them guilty, O God; Let them fall by their own counsels; Thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions; For they have rebelled against thee” (Ps. 5:10). Yet David has to use these very words about himself in Ps. 51:1 when he pleads with God to be merciful to *him*. David’s ‘imprecatory Psalms’, in which he asks for bloodcurdling judgments upon his enemies, are hard to justify in the light of Christ’s teachings. They appear to be a continuation of the moments of bitterness, anger and brutality which we saw in the above mentioned historical examples (1).

Throughout David’s Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be “contemned” in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be “hated” and sinners should not be fellowshiped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God’s uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God’s judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as “the violent man”- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn’t indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There’s no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that’s why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days.

Spiritual Schizophrenia

It would be true to say that the Bathsheba experience changed David's attitude. His mouth had been full of reproofs of the wicked, but through his desperation then he became a man "in whose mouth are [now] no reproofs" (Ps. 38:14). But I think it's too simplistic to suggest that David simply changed post the sin with Bathsheba. For the list of anger incidents etc. given above include many from *after* that time. My suggestion is that David was in essence the man of love, grace and forgiveness which we see so often- his grace to Saul and the house of Saul, his love for his children, his marvel at the natural creation, his humility, his praise of God, his walking with God, his constant contact with the Father, his Psalms of love and spiritual insight, to the point that he beheld the future Messiah "always before my face" (Acts 2:25). And there's that wonderful account of "the last words of David", where he recognizes that he had failed, that his house was "not so with God", and yet through the future Messiah, "the light of the morning", who would be pierced by a spear, the promises to him regarding his eternal future would indeed be fulfilled (2 Sam. 23:4,5,7). This 'other side' of David we've not touched upon in this present study, but any Bible student knows it so well. But- and it's a big 'but'- this loving, wonderful person had an anger problem, a temper that could lead to murder of innocent people (e.g. the Nabal incident), a bitterness with his enemies whom in his better moments he loved and prayed over with a grace rarely reached amongst men. In short, he displayed the spiritual schizophrenia which plagues us all, and even on his deathbed it didn't leave him [witness his vicious commands for the death of Shimei and Joab]. And yet in the final analysis, God loved David, setting him up as the spiritual benchmark for the judgment of Israel's future kings.

The Bigger Picture

How does this affect us? It's all surely encouragement for those who despair of their weaker side, who feel this may lead to their condemnation, who despair at how one moment they can be loving, gracious and spiritual, and the next- caught up in the unspirituality which warrants condemnation. God sees to the end of a man's history, to the end of human history, He weighs men, and weighs them up in grace. Further, we all likely struggle with the unspirituality of others against us. We ponder how brother X or sister Y can really be a Christian, can have any real relationship with God, because of how we see them act. This struggle over these kinds of issues is, in my experience, the number one reason why people leave Christian communities. The raw anger, hatred and viciousness they see in others disillusion them, and they walk. The pull of materialism, of false doctrine etc, are actually not significant reasons in the majority of cases I know of where a believer has quit the community of believers. It's nearly always personal disillusion with the evil side of their brethren. All I can say is, Consider David's poorer side. Think of men like Adriel and Phaltiel, women like Rizpah, the mothers of Moab and Edom, who all likely considered David a sadistic maniac- given their experience of him. And, of course, Uriah, who surely knew all along what was going on. They saw the weaker side of David. Thanks to the extent of Biblical revelation about David, we see a wider picture. And even if that wider picture remains invisible to us concerning brother A and sister B, try to imagine that they have a prayer life, read Scripture, are loved by God, and probably in some ways and to some extent do respond to that love... and leave the final analysis of human character to the God who judges, weighs and knows far deeper, more graciously, more hopefully, than we ever can in this life.

God accepted David and thought so positively of him by grace. And our own covenant relationship with God is a result of receiving the "sure mercies" [Heb. *hesed*, covenant grace] given to David (Is. 55:3). As God perceived David so positively, by grace, so He will us; and

we likewise must extend that same perspective to our brethren who are in that same covenant of grace.

Notes

(1) There are other explanations for these imprecatory Psalms. One that appeals to me is that throughout them, David is alluding to the Abrahamic covenant that God will curse those who curse His people and bless those who bless them. Another window of understanding is provided by analyzing them from a psychological viewpoint. Dorothee Soelle speaks of how “the movement from helplessness to power is through public expressions of lament, complaint and protest” (*Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) p. 73). By expressing our hurt and feelings in words, even if they come out terribly, we are (psychologically at least) on the way to some kind of healing or liberation. This is demonstrated at length throughout Arthur Janos, *The Primal Scream* (New York: Putnam, 1970)

Notes

(1) Or is this an indication that in later life, David's spirituality declined? We have shown in *Solomon and the temple* that David became totally carried away with the idea of Solomon being the Messiah, even though this was not what God had promise. Jehoshaphat is commended for walking "in the first ways of his father David" (2 Chron.17:3, although see AVmg. and other versions). When David became king, he forgave his enemies, whereas he advises Solomon to murder his enemies when *he* becomes king. Does this indicate that he didn't sustain the spirit of grace to the end?

Chapter 7: SOLOMON

7.1 Solomon As A Type Of Christ

David's prayers that Solomon would be the Messiah were heard in that without doubt Solomon was a superb type of Christ. The promises to David clearly had a primary fulfilment in Solomon; there are too many similarities between those promises and the life of Solomon to sensibly deny this. Particularly is his Kingdom typical of that of Christ, and through this fact we can gain stimulating insight into the nature of the Millennium. Nearly all the information we have about the Millennium is taught to us through type- especially once it is realized that the majority of Isaiah's well known 'Kingdom' passages are alluding back to Solomon's reign (notably Is. 60:1-8), and had their initial fulfilment in Hezekiah's Kingdom, which was also typical of Christ's. It is clear that the hope of the Kingdom is intended to be the motivating force behind our lives. We cannot believe in or be motivated by something which we know little about; knowledge must be related to faith and inspiration to act. Knowledge of Christ and his Kingdom is taught largely by types because it is through types that we can relate to him as a person, and to his coming Kingdom as a physical reality. Just consider the following, put them all together and you have a convincing and intricate picture of the Kingdom of Christ, through considering Solomon as a type of Christ.

Solomon as a type of Christ

Solomon

After dedicating the temple, it was filled with the cloud of glory so that the priests could not stand to minister (2 Chron. 5:13,14)

" There was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not" (2 Chron. 9:2). In this we see clearly Solomon as a type of Christ.

Solomon was fully representative of Israel (1 Kings 11:1,5-7 cp. 33; 8:52; and note the ye...thee confusion of 9:4-7); his prayer was their prayer (2 Chron. 6:21);his worship was theirs (2 Chron. 1:3,5)

Israel's blessing was dependent on Solomon's obedience (1 Kings 6:12,13) ; their joy was because of the honour God had given Solomon (2 Chron. 7:10)

God's love for Israel was shown through giving them Solomon as king (2 Chron. 9:8)

" I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in" , i.e. to rule God's Kingdom

(1 Kings 3:7-9)

The supreme intellectuality of Solomon (1 Kings 3:12; 4:30-33) which led him to be deeply

Christ

Because of His death, the temple was filled with glory and the Mosaic priesthood ended (Rev. 15:8 cp. 2 Cor. 3:10)

As Christ told us all he knew (Jn. 17:8); consider the implications of this . If the Lord told us *all* that He knew from the Father, His words deserve a more sustained study and reflection than any of us have given them.

As Christ and us

As ours. The blessing of others can be dependent upon a third party (e.g. Mk. 2:5) Cp. our response to Christ's

victory and exaltation

Cp. our appreciation of Christ's Kingship?

Alluded to in Mt. 18:3,4; become a child so you can rule the Kingdom; Christ was the greatest child as he will be the greatest ruler. This sets Solomon up as our example in this aspect. Notice how Sarah's unspiritual comments "cast out the bondwoman..." and "my Lord being old..."are interpreted positively in the NT

In the type, Christ the most intellectual of all men- with the associated sadness and problems.

depressed in Ecclesiastes

He could have analyzed the surface tension on a glass of water if He wished. His knowledge of others thoughts was perhaps not due to a bolt of Holy Spirit revelation, but due to His great sensitivity that was related to His intelligence.

He asked for wisdom so that he could guide Israel (1 Kings 3: 8-11)

Is. 11:1,2

" The wisdom of God was in the midst of him" (1 Kings 3:28mg)

Col. 2:3- clearly seeing Solomon as a type of Christ

Solomon had God's wisdom and used it to judge Israel; therefore they feared him (1 Kings 3:28)

As Christ (Jn. 5:22)

Sorely tested by materialism, women and pride

Ditto for Christ; he wanted to take the Kingdom for himself, to have worldly power and glory; and if " my son" in Proverbs is Jesus, he too was tempted by women.

Solomon built the temple of stone already prepared (1 Kings 6:7)

Christ is the builder of the spiritual temple, in which the stones should fit together without strife (Eph. 2:21 alludes to 1 Kings 6:7)

The purpose of the temple was to let all the world know about the God of Israel (1 Kings 8:59,60)

We are the spiritual temple; the literal temple of the future (Ps. 68:29) will do the same. The stones are shaped so that they might fit together; could it be so that those we now are being fitted in with are those we will work with eternally in an especially close relationship?

The Kingdom Of Solomon As A Type of Christ's Kingdom

Solomon's Kingdom

Solomon sat on God's throne as King over His Kingdom (2 Chron. 9:8), in Jerusalem

A temple built by Gentiles (2 Chron. 2:17,18)

Christ's Kingdom

Ditto for Christ when the Kingdom is re-established. (Jer. 3:17)

Ez.40-48; Zech.6:13

Is.60:10

Israel was at its largest extent in Solomon's Kingdom; lost land was restored, and the borders re-established (2 Chron. 9:26; 8:4 cp. Josh. 16:3,5); it was also at its political strongest; nations submitted to Solomon (1 Kings 4:20); Israel was the chief of the nations (1 Kings 4:21)

Mic. 4:7

Mic. 4:8

" King over a people like the dust of the earth" (2 Chron.1:9 = Gen. 13:16). Promises to Abraham initially fulfilled (1 Kings 4:20)

Christ the true King of the Kingdom when the promises to Abraham are fulfilled.

" Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and...fig" (1 Kings 4:25); great fertility (1 Kings 4:22-28)

Mic. 4:4; Ez. 34:28 (security and peace)

Is. 35:1,2

The happiness of Solomon's servants as they sat down to food and wine is stressed; they listened to Solomon's wisdom as they ate; this was the basis of

This is alluded to in Lk.22:30; Lk.14:15 speaks of us as happy servants.

their happiness. They ate in the presence of observing Gentiles (2 Chron.9:4,7)

Rev.19:17 "Come and gather yourselves to the supper of the great God"

After Solomon's ascension, there was judgment and reward; in the form of being able to eat at his table (1 Kings 2:7 cp. 2 Sam.9: 7,10; 19:28)

Cp. After Christ's return; the reward is to break bread with him (Lk.14:15; 22:30). Breaking bread with Him now is a sign of joyful fellowship with Him; it shouldn't be a scary, worrying experience.

The priests were dressed in white linen, praising God with one sound (2 Chron.5:11,12)

Rev.19:8 . This is possible even now in ecclesial life (Rom.15:6). In this sense we "have eternal life" in that we begin living the type of life we will eternally live right now.

Kingdom ruled by king-priests (1 Kings 4:2) with 12 deputy rulers (1 Kings 4:7)

Rev.5:10

Mt.19:28

who provided food each month (1 Kings 4:27)

Consider Is.66:23; Ez.47:12;

Rev.22:2

The nations bring " presents" (s.w. sacrifices) to him (1 Kings 4:21)

The Law re-established in the Millennium ? Ps.68:29; 76:11; 72:8,10.

The Queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon manifested in the joy of his servants

Our response to Christ's wisdom will make the world believe. She represents us: "One

(2 Chron.9:3,4,6) and therefore she believed.

Jerusalem was the centre of wisdom and worship for the region (1 Kings 4:34; 2 Chron.9:23)

Solomon stressed in Proverbs that wisdom brings joy (3:13; 8:34), even in this life.

Solomon's wisdom concerned " the name of the Lord" (1 Kings 10:1)

His wisdom was to guide Israel, but it concerned the natural creation; as if his expositions concerning this were teaching spiritual lessons (1 Kings 4: 29,32,33)- as the Lord's parables.

The Queen of Sheba poured out her soul to Solomon- although she was a high flying career woman (2 Chron. 9:1,4)

The queen of Sheba was an ambassador, one of many (2 Chron. 9:1,23)

" Solomon reigned over all the kings" (2 Chron. 9:26)

The nations traded their material wealth for spiritual instruction, coming annually to Jerusalem for instruction (2 Chron. 9:23,24)

Solomon judged the poor, ordinary people (e.g. the two poor prostitutes living in one house). He didn't burn them, as the Law demanded, but judged with grace.

" The king made (mg. gave) silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones" (2 Chron. 1:15)

" The Queen of Sheba...came to prove

thing have I desired...that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...to inquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). Example leads to conversion not just a bald statement of doctrine.

Is.2:2,3; Zech. 14:16

So our joy now should be the joy we will have in the Kingdom

Christ's purpose both now and in the Kingdom is to declare God's name (Jn. 17:26)

Will this be how we teach the nations in the Millennium?

Ditto for the leaders of this world?
Conversion results from relationships, and the person trusting is and opening up to us.

The nations will send representatives to Christ to learn wisdom. The value of spiritual wisdom will then be appreciated. There will still be an element of mortal rulership, with ours superimposed over it.

Ditto in the Kingdom? Knowledge of the Kingdom leads to quitting materialism for "the pearl of great price"

Zech. 14:16

Ps.72:4,12-14

No materialism in the Kingdom because such abundance. Spiritual riches (redemption) given at Jerusalem at the judgment. There will be a different set of values then, as there was due to the fact meaningless in Solomon's Kingdom.

The cynics converted to believers

Solomon with hard questions (s.w. riddles- i.e. trick questions)...I believed not... until I came" (2 Chron. 9:1,6) . By seeing the theory turned into practice, the word made flesh, she was converted.

For all these similarities, however, it is possible to see Solomon as an anti-Christ, as well as Solomon as a type of Christ; like Saul, he was both a type of Christ, and also the very opposite of the true Christ. This point is really brought out in Is. 53:11, where the true Messiah is described as being "satisfied" with the travail or labour of his soul, and will thereby bring forth many children. The Hebrew words used occur in close proximity in several passages in Ecclesiastes, where Solomon speaks of how all his "travail" or "labour" has not "satisfied" him, and that it is all the more vain because his children may well not appreciate his labour and will likely squander it (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:3). Likewise the 'Babylon' system of Revelation, replete with its feature of 666, is described in terms which unmistakably apply to Solomon's Kingdom. This feature of Solomon- being both a type of Christ and yet also the very opposite of the true Christ- reflects the tragic duality which we will observe at such length in our later studies.

7.2 Solomon And The Temple

David desired to build God a physical house. 2 Sam.7:7-11 records God's response in clear enough language: God did not want a physical house because

1. It was not really possible for man to build God a house (" Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" is surely rhetorical)
2. God had never asked Israel to build Him such a house before; indeed, it had been His expressed will that He should dwell among Israel in the temporary form of the tabernacle. God wanted a temporary abode to point forward to the fact that the reality was in Christ; thus the Law of Moses had features built into it which were intrinsically temporal, to point men forward to the stability and finality of Messiah. By building a permanent temple, Solomon reflects his lack of focus on the Messiah to come.
3. He would only have a permanent physical house when His people were permanently settled, never to be moved again (2 Sam.7:10), i.e. in the Kingdom. Yet Solomon perceived that his kingdom was in fact the final Kingdom of God. David made this mistake, in assuming in Ps. 72 that Solomon's Kingdom would undoubtedly be the Messianic one...and Solomon repeated the error, yet to a more tragic extent.
4. God plays on the confusion between 'house' in the sense of household, and 'house' in the sense of a physical building. He says: '*You* want to build *me* a physical house. But *I* am going to build *you* a *household* which will be my Kingdom'. The implication is that David's desire for a physical house was altogether too human, and that there is an opposition between what man thinks he can physically do for God, and the fact that God wishes to do things for men. Yet Solomon went ahead with his works rather than grappling with the reality of sheer grace. He so wanted to *do* something. He betrays this when he writes in Ecc. 9:7: "God now accepteth thy works". The Hebrew translated "accepteth" means literally to satisfy a debt, and is elsewhere translated 'to reconcile self'. He saw works as reconciling man's debt to

God, rather than perceiving that grace is paramount. He keeps on about David his father; and yet there was a crucial difference. David perceived the need for grace as the basis of man's reconciliation with God; whereas Solomon thought it was works. David wrote that God wants a broken heart and not thousands of sacrifices; yet Solomon offered the thousands of sacrifices, but didn't have the contrite heart of his father.

5. To desire a physical house for God is to overlook the promised Messiah- that was surely the implication of the promise of the Lord Jesus following right on from the statement that a physical house was not required. Is. 57:15 and 66:2 explain why this is- because God does not live in what man builds, but will fully dwell in one man to whom He will look, one who would have a humble spirit towards Him. And this man was of course the Lord Jesus. Solomon's obsession with the temple therefore reflected his deeper problem- of not being focused upon the Christ to come.

Further, David's plan to build a great house was met with the word of the Lord coming unto him "the same night" (2 Sam. 7:4), telling him not to do this. There seems to be some allusion to this by the Lord Jesus when He spoke of the rich fool who wanted to build a greater barn being told the Lord's word "that same night". It could be that the Lord Jesus saw something material and very human in David's desire to build a house for the Lord.

So it ought to be clear from all this that God's response to the request to build a temple was negative; He did not want a physical temple. None of the four reasons for this listed above were just temporary considerations; they were reasons which were valid for all time. There can be no doubt that God's response here is at the basis of Is.66:1,2: " The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" . God is saying that it simply isn't possible to build Him a house; instead, He seeks to dwell in the hearts of men. Yet Solomon wasn't interested in the personal spiritual mindedness which enables this to happen. This is the same spirit as God's response to David: 'You can't build me a physical house, I will build my own household of believers'.

These words of Is.66 are twice quoted in the New Testament. " God that made the world and all things therein, *seeing that* he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands...as though he needed any thing" (Acts 17:24,25). The reason for God not dwelling in temples is that He is Lord of heaven and earth. This reason does not change with time; He was Lord of heaven and earth at David's time just as much as He is now.

Stephen was accused by the Jews of blaspheming the temple. In reply, he gives a potted history of Israel, emphasizing how the faithful were constantly on the move rather than being settled in one physical place. He was subtly digging at the Jewish insistence that the temple was where God lived. In this context, he refers to Solomon's building of the temple in a negative light. He says that David tried to find a *tabernacle* for God, " *But* Solomon built him an *house* . *Howbeit* the most High dwelleth *not* in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne...what house will ye build me?" (Acts 7:46-49). This cannot mean 'God no longer dwells in the temple as He used to before Christ's death', because the reason given is that the prophet Isaiah says that God cannot live in houses. This reason was true in Isaiah's time, before the time of Christ. It would seem that Stephen is politely saying: 'Solomon made this mistake of thinking that God can be limited to a physical building. You're making just the same mistake'. And he goes on to make a comment which could well

allude to this: " Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers (including Solomon) did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Further evidence that Stephen saw Solomon's building of the temple in a negative light is provided by the link between Acts 7:41 and 48: " They made a calf...and rejoiced in *the works of their own hands* ...howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples *made with hands* ". The word " made" is stressed in the record of Solomon's building the temple (2 Chron. 3:8,10,14-16; 4:1,2,6-9,14,18,19,21). The work of the temple was very much produced by men's *hands* (2 Chron. 2:7,8). Things made with hands refers to idols in several Old Testament passages (e.g. Is. 2:8; 17:8; 31:7). Significantly, Solomon's temple is described as being made with hands in 1 Chron. 29:5. And it may be significant that the words of Is. 66:1,2 concerning God not living in temples are quoted by Paul with reference to pagan temples in Acts 17:24, and concerning the temple in Jerusalem by Stephen. The building of the temple became an idol to Solomon. Human motives get terribly mixed. One is reminded of William Golding's novel, *The Spire*, in which a bishop becomes obsessed with building a huge spire on his church- subliminally finding in it a phallic symbol. The temple project became an obsession with Solomon; after his death, his people complained at the "grievous servitude" which Solomon had subjected them to (2 Chron. 10:4). But the Hebrew word "servitude" is that repeatedly used to describe the "service" of the temple by the people (1 Chron. 25:6; 26:8,30; 27:26; 28:13-15,20,21; 29:7; 2 Chron. 8:14). Solomon became obsessed with making others 'serve God' when it was effectively serving him; he came to be abusive to God's people, when the initial idea of the temple was that it was to be built in order to help God's people serve Him. And such obsession, turning well motivated projects into means of personal ego tripping, with all the resultant abuse, has sadly not been unknown amongst us.

So what, then, was God referring to when He told David that David's son would build him a house? Firstly, we must bear in mind that in hundreds of places, the Hebrew word for " house" means 'household'. The eternal house promised to David is paralleled with the Kingdom; and a Kingdom is comprised of people. The Kingdom is the house of Jacob (Lk. 1:33). That the house of David is the Kingdom is evident from 2 Sam. 7:13,16; 1 Chron.17:14 (cp. Lk.11:17). The Kingdom was taken from the house of Saul and given to the house of David (2 Sam.3:10), but later the Kingdom was taken from the house of David because of Solomon's apostasy (1 Kings 14:8). This is proof enough that at best the promises to David had only a tiny fulfilment in Solomon's Kingdom.

The New Testament is very insistent that the true temple of God is the body of Christian believers (1 Cor. 9:13; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 3:12; 11:1,2; 1 Tim.3:15). This string of passages is quite some emphasis. Yet Christ was the temple; he spoke of the temple of his body (Jn. 2:19-21; Rev. 21:22). For this reason, the Gospels seem to stress the connection between Christ and the temple (Mk.11:11,15,16,27; 12:35; 13:1,3; 14:49; Lk. 2:46; 21:38). Christ's body was the temple of God. By being in Christ, we too are the temple (1 Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21), *our* body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19). Yet Solomon was not Christ centred; he didn't want to see this connection. And we too can have an over-physical view of the Kingdom, centred around a literal temple in Jerusalem etc., rather than perceiving that the Kingdom / reign of God is, in its essence, over the hearts of men and women like us. The future political Kingdom will be the concrete articulation of the essence of the Kingdom principles which are now being lived out in the hearts of the people who are under the Lord's present kingship. In the person of Jesus, the essence of the Kingdom came nigh to men (Mt. 10:7; 11:4; 12:28)- and this was why one of His titles is "the Kingdom". The Kingdom of God is about joy, peace and righteousness more than the physicalities of eating and drinking. In this sense the Kingdom was "among" first century Israel. The

Kingdom of God is not merely a carrot held out to us for good behaviour. It is a reality right now, in so far as God truly becomes our king. Even in the Old Testament, the word "temple" does not normally refer to the physical temple outside the records of Solomon's building of the temple. It is often stated that the house David's seed was to build would be for the Name of Yahweh. His Name refers to His mental attributes. A physical house is inappropriate to express these. If the house refers to a household of righteous believers, all becomes plain. This explains why 2 Sam. 7:13,26 parallels God's eternal name with the eternal house and Kingdom which was promised to David. Building a house was a common Hebrew idiom for developing a household (Ruth 4:11; Dt. 25:9). God's promise to David about building him an eternal household was anticipated in His words to Eli: "I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind (i.e. David, 1 Sam. 13:14): and I will build him a *sure house* ", in contrast to God's destruction of Eli's household (1 Sam. 2:35). 1 Kings 11:38 clinches the idea that this refers to David: "I will be with thee, and build thee a *sure house* as I built for David". In passing, note that these words to Solomon remind him that God will build *him* a house, in opposition to the way in which Solomon so frequently speaks about building God a house.

Once we understand that the house God would build for David refers to the household of believers, it becomes evident that the builder of that household must be God, through the Lord Jesus, the great son of David. We are built up a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5), by God the builder of all (Heb. 3:4; 11:10). Psalm 127 is prefaced with the information that it is a Psalm for Solomon- perhaps given by some nameless prophet (Gad? Nathan?) to warn him of where he was going. Verse 1 reminds him that God must be the builder of any house, or else the builders labour in vain. There is good reason to think that Solomon utterly failed to appreciate this. The records stress time and again that *Solomon* built the temple (1 Kings 6:2,14; 9:10,25; 10:4; 1 Chron.6:10,32; 2 Chron. 8:1,12; 9:3; Acts 7:47); yet the house referred to in the Davidic promises was to be built by God, through David's Messianic Son, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah prophesied at the time of the rebuilding of the physical temple. It is significant, in this context, that Zech. 6:12 reminds Israel that the true temple of God will be built by the Branch, the Lord Jesus.

By now, a number of questions will be arising in the minds of the Bible student:

1. But surely God *did* dwell in the temple?
2. David said that God had told him that he couldn't build the temple because he had shed so much blood, but Solomon was to build it.
3. In many verses in the Psalms, David expresses his understanding that God's temple is in Heaven (e.g. Ps. 11:4); both David and Solomon recognized that God cannot be confined to a physical house, seeing that even the heavens cannot contain Him (2 Chron.6:18).

The answer to these questions provides valuable insight into God's way of working with men, and also into the minds of David and Solomon. If God *did* want a physical temple and if He did willingly dwell in it, then so many of the above verses and arguments cannot be made sense of. If God wanted the physical temple, then the reasons He gave David for not building it are logically contradictory, as is the reasoning of Paul and Stephen in the New Testament [\(1\)](#).

So now we will consider the questions posed above.

1. The fact is that God *did* dwell, temporarily, in Solomon's temple. His glory entered it, and later left it in Ezekiel's time. This is the classic example of the way in which God will go along with men in their mistaken enthusiasm, working with them, even though this is contrary to His preferred way of doing things. A similar example is found in the way God forbade Israel to have a human king, because to do so would be a denial of His superiority and of their covenant relationship with Him. And yet Israel had a king. God did not turn a blind eye to this. Instead He worked through this system of human kingship. Or take marriage out of the faith. This is clearly contrary to God's ideal wishes. And yet in some cases He is prepared to work through this, in order to being about His purpose. There is even the possible suggestion in Acts 15:10 that God was 'tempted' to re-estate the law of Moses, or parts of it, in the first century, seeing that this was what so many of the early Christians desired to keep. That God is so eager to work with us should in itself be a great encouragement. Yet we must not come to presume upon God's patience, assuming that He will go along with us.

In any case, 2 Chron. 7:12 says that God accepted the temple only as a place of sacrifice, i.e. a glorified altar (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17,18). And yet- God didn't really want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5). " Now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever" (2 Chron.7:16) is a conditional promise, followed by five verses of conditions concerning Solomon's spirituality which he overlooked. Like Solomon, we too can fix upon promises without considering their conditionality. There is good reason to think that communally and individually we are increasingly shutting our eyes to the possibility of our spiritual failure and disaster. God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9). Note, too, that Solomon had the idea that if sinful Israel prayed towards the temple, they would somehow be forgiven because of this. God's response was that if they sought *Him* wherever they were and repented, then He would hear them- the temple was not to be seen as the instrument or mediatrix of forgiveness which Solomon envisaged. Likewise, Solomon's implication that prayer offered in the temple would be especially acceptable was not upheld by God's reply to him about this (2 Chron. 6:24-26 cp. God's response in 2 Chron. 7:12,13).

2. It is nowhere recorded that God actually said that David could not build the temple because he had shed so much blood. Why should it be morally objectionable for David to build the temple because he was a man of war? Yahweh is a man of war, yet He was to build David's house. We only learn about God's objection to David building the temple from the passages where David reports what God apparently told him, and from Solomon repeating this. If God did actually say this, then there is a logical contradiction between this and His statements about not wanting a house at all. If He was saying 'I want a physical house, but not built by David', then this appears irreconcilable with the reasons He is actually recorded as giving David for not wanting a house (see the four points we began with). Either God wanted a house or He didn't. We are told in Is.66:1 that it is not possible to build God a house; and we have seen above that the house God wants is a household of believers, built by Himself through Christ. So we have to conclude that David was deeply puzzled as to why he couldn't build God a house, and he concluded that it must be because he had shed so much blood; and therefore he eventually came to the conclusion that God had actually said this to him. It is quite likely that David was paranoid about being guilty of the blood of Saul's house (2 Sam. 3:28,29; 4:11,12; 1:16 cp. 16:8); see how aware of this he felt in 1 Sam. 22:22; 24:5; 26:9. This would not be the first time Yahweh's servants have done this kind of thing- speculating upon what they wish God had said, until they come to the conclusion that this is actually what He wants. Nathan initially told David to build the temple, sure that this was what God would

say- but not so. The sad thing is that Solomon took this as Scripture. David's immediate response to the promises to him says nothing about Solomon building the temple; rather does David praise God for His plan of salvation in Christ. One wonders how accurate was David's account of the promises in 1 Chron. 22:9: " A son shall be born to thee...I will give him rest from all his enemies [without mentioning any conditions]...his name shall be Solomon" . Due to his apostasy, Solomon did *not* have rest from his enemies (1 Kings 5:4). Note that the fact the record is undoubtedly inspired does not mean that all inspired words are factually accurate- the speeches of Job's friends are recorded under inspiration, as are the claims of Sennacherib, but what they say is criticized within Scripture as being inaccurate.

There can be no doubt that David was proud about his sons; his sappy obsession with Absalom indicates that he cast both spirituality and rationality to the winds when it came to them. The words of 1 Chron.28:5,6 indicate this: " Of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house *and my courts* : for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father" . We have to ask: Is this what God actually said? The records of the promises to David in 2 Sam.7 and 1 Chron. 17 contain no specific reference to Solomon, nor do they speak of him building physical courts for God. We have shown that the Davidic promise is fundamentally concerning David's greater household, rather than a physical house. So it seems that David became obsessed with the idea of Solomon being the Messiah, building a physical house for God, and being king over the eternal Messianic Kingdom. The words of Ps. 110:1 are applied by the NT to Jesus, but there is no reason to think that they were not primarily spoke by David with his eye on Solomon, whom he addresses as his Lord, such was his obsession: "The Lord saith unto my Lord..." (RV), and the rest of the Psalm goes on in the language of Ps. 72 to describe David's hopes for Solomon's Kingdom. 'Solomon' was actually called 'Jedidiah' by God through Nathan (2 Sam. 12:25). The 'beloved of God' was surely prophetic of God's beloved Son. When God said "This is my beloved Son", He was surely saying 'Now THIS is the Jedidiah, whom I wanted Solomon to typify'. But David calls him Solomon, the man who would bring peace. I suggest that David was so eager to see in Solomon the actual Messiah, that he chose not to use the name which God wanted- which made Solomon a type of a future Son of God / Messiah. And this led to Solomon himself being obsessed with being a Messiah figure and losing sight of the future Messiah.

The point has been made elsewhere that David seems to have become obsessed with preparing for the physical building of the temple in his old age. He truly commented: " The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Ps. 69:9). The RV margin of 1 Chron. 28:12 makes us wonder whether the dimensions of the temple were in fact made up within David's own mind: "David gave to Solomon his son the pattern...the pattern that he had in his spirit [AV "by the spirit"] for the...house of the Lord".

There are several other examples of David wildly over-interpreting. 2 Chron. 3:1 implies David assumed that the spot where the Angel appeared to him in 2 Sam. 24:17,18 was where he should build the temple. And David's prophecy about his son in Ps.72:12 was not fulfilled in Solomon as he confidently expected; Solomon whipped the people rather than delivering the needy who cried for help. And his throne hardly endured as long as the sun. Further, David *assumes* that "the Lord hath said unto [Shimei], Curse David" (2 Sam. 16:10); but later he orders Solomon to punish Shimei for doing this. So it seems that David had a way of assuming God had spoken when it was more his own assumption. Solomon likewise came to assume things about God in order to justify his passion for building a temple. He claims that

God “said that He would dwell in the thick darkness” (1 Kings 8:12), but actually there’s no record God ever said that. What He said was that He would dwell in the hearts of men and not in a house.

There are some hints in 1 Chron. 29 that the plans which David had for the temple were not necessarily from God but from his own desires, which he assumed were confirmed by God. We read of “the pattern of all that [David] had by the spirit” (1 Chron. 29:12)- but there is no definition of *whose* spirit. One would expect to read that he received the pattern of the temple by the Spirit of God, but the wording is perhaps purposefully vague- as if to suggest it may have come from his own spirit. 1 Chron. 29:19 seems to emphasize that it was only David's opinion that his plans were confirmed by God: “All this *said David*, the Lord made me understand...”.

Solomon came to overlook the conditionality of the promises because his father had done the same. David on his deathbed speaks of how “God hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it” (1 Kings 1:48). He forgot how those promises more essentially spoke of his house “for a great while to come”, and how only after “thou shalt sleep with thy fathers” would David see “thine house and thy kingdom established for ever *before thee*” (2 Sam. 7:12,16), thus implying David’s resurrection. He lost this focus in his enthusiasm for Solomon, and it seems that Solomon followed suite. There is an intended ambiguity in the Hebrew text of 2 Sam. 23:5. The AV has: “Although my house be not so with God...this is all my salvation”; whilst the NIV and other translations suggest the opposite: that because his house *was* in order, therefore this was all his salvation and desire fulfilled. Solomon and David were sure that the house of David was “with God”, and yet from God’s perspective they weren’t, and the fulfilment of the promises would have to be in the future Messiah.

3. David seems to have recognized that the building of the temple was conditional on Solomon's spirituality, but he overlooked this in his enthusiasm for Solomon to be the Messiah. He tells Solomon to show himself a man (1 Kings 2:2), and goes on in v. 4 to speak of how “a man” would eternally reign on his Messianic throne. He was encouraging Solomon to be and act like Messiah. Ps. 127 is “For Solomon” (v.2 “beloved” = Heb. Jedidah), and warns him that his labour for the temple will be in vain unless *God* builds it. The Psalm basically says that God will build Solomon a house in the sense of a family centred in the beloved seed who would die [“sleep”] to enable it; and therefore Solomon should not be so sweating himself day and night to build God a house / temple. This is the very message which God had given David earlier. David and Solomon evidently shelved their knowledge of the fact that Heaven is God's dwelling place. It would seem that Solomon particularly was guilty of a false humility; there is a gross contradiction within his words of 2 Chron. 6:2,18: “I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling *for ever*...But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?” . This is one of several hints that Solomon felt that the full fulfilment of the Davidic promises was to be found in him (cp. 2 Chron. 6:10). He failed to look forward to the spirit of Christ, instead becoming obsessed with the achievement of his own works. He was largely encouraged in this by David, who seems to have felt that Solomon was the Messiah figure the promises spoke about. Thus Ps.72 is dedicated to Solomon, and yet it speaks clearly of the messianic Kingdom. In the same way as David came to misquote and misapply the promises God made to him, Solomon did likewise. God told David that He did not want a physical house, because He had never commanded this to be done at any time in the past. Solomon misquotes this in 2 Chron. 6:5,6

to mean that God had never asked for a physical house in the past, but now he had asked David's son to build such a house in Jerusalem.

Another example of Solomon misquoting God is in 2 Chron. 6:6. Solomon claims that God said: "I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there". God had chosen no resting place, although it would have been politically convenient for Solomon if the city of Jerusalem as a city was where God had chosen to dwell. And so he kept thinking that way until he persuaded himself that in fact this was what God had said. David had charged Solomon with the words which God had spoken to him about Solomon: "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul" (1 Kings 2:4). But Solomon subtly changes this when he reminds God of how He had supposedly told David: "There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne of Israel; so that they children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me" (1 Kings 8:25). Two things become apparent here:

- The conditionality of the promise to David about Solomon is totally overlooked. "*If* thy children..." becomes "so that...", with the implication that David would always have descendants on the throne who would walk obediently before God. The possibility of personal failure had been removed by Solomon from his own perception of God.

- God's desire that Solomon should "walk before me in truth" was changed to "walk before me as thou [David] hast walked before me". This defined walking before God personally as having the relationship with God which your father had. And so often we have made the same mistake. The call to personally follow the Lord has become displaced by a following Him through others.

Notice how Solomon says these words to God Himself. Solomon had persuaded himself that this truly was what God had asked of David and himself, and so he comes out with these words to God.

Solomon's words to Hiram in 2 Chron. 2:3-6 also seem to smack of a false humility. He pompously informs Hiram of the magnificence of his project, lost in the manic obsession of the powerful architect, and then concludes: "Who am I then, that I should build (God) an house?" . Confirmation of this is provided by the way in which Jer. 22:13-17 describes Jehoiakim's proud building of his own cedar house in the language of Solomon's building of the temple.

From all this we can see in Solomon a believer gone wrong. He did not completely cast off his faith in God and His word. Instead his service to God became a case of living out parental expectation, he lost sight of the future Kingdom and the greatness of Christ; typology meant little to him. He had the Kingdom in this life, and saw his service to God as an expression of his own works, receiving his own gratification and self-fulfilment in his works for God. David had actually prepared everything for the temple, and yet still Solomon prepared even more works; clearly he was obsessed with his own self-expression and fulfilment, and used service to God as a means of expressing this. He came to read God's word just as he wished to see it, all he saw in it was justification for his own actions; he failed to realize the constant emphasis there upon the conditionality of the promises to David. God reminded him at least twice that the promises would only be fulfilled if he kept God's words (1 Kings 6:12; 2 Chron.7:16-19). Solomon was keen on the promises, but he failed to really think what they required of him. In some ways Solomon became over familiar with God, he minimalized God

so that He could live in a house built by man. His prayer of 2 Chron.6:33 speaks as if the heavens where God lived were actually the temple; he bid men pray towards the temple where God lived, rather than to God in Heaven. Yet theoretically he recognized the magnitude of God (2 Chron.6:18); yet the vastness of God, both in power and Spirituality, meant little to him; it failed to humble him as it should have done. It is a feature of human nature to be able to perceive truth and yet act the very opposite. His enthusiasm for his own works lead him to lose a true relationship with God. The idea of salvation by grace became lost on him, loving response to God's forgiveness was not on his agenda, true humility was unnecessary for him, given his certainty that he was King as God intended. He reasoned that God would hear his prayers because they were uttered in the temple of his own hands, rather than because of any personal faith (1 Kings 8:52). Indeed, Solomon legalistically demands that God maintain [as in a court of law] the legal cause or "right" of His people if they pray towards the temple (1 Kings 8:45,49). Legalism and faith are opposed to each other, and Solomon's usage and conception of the temple was legalistic rather than faith based. When dedicating the temple, Solomon asks God to incline the hearts of Israel to be obedient to His commandments (1 Kings 8:57); and whilst God can and does do this, Solomon's implication seems to be that any disobedience would therefore effectively be God's fault for not making His people obedient. He failed to see the need for personal election to obey God's ways.

Fundamentally, Solomon lacked faith in Christ and the Kingdom, and thereby he lacked the humility and other spiritual attributes which spring from this. Because of this, Solomon lost his faith in the idea of the resurrection (Ecclesiastes is proof of this) ⁽²⁾; he felt that the Messianic Kingdom was here and now. Because Solomon lacked a future hope, his life eventually became a meaningless round of existence, no matter how stimulating it may have appeared to be. L.G. Sargent observed: "The man to whom life is a meaningless round has no inward repose but an inward weariness, and without a centre his life may become disorganized; he may break down, morally, mentally, emotionally..." (*Ecclesiastes And Other Studies*, Birmingham: CMPA, 1965 p. 14). This is exactly what happened to Solomon- this is the life he observed in Ecclesiastes. And even our Christian life can slip into this "meaningless round" unless God's wisdom is a gripping vitality in our deeply internal experience.

Solomon was so confident in the fact that David was his father and that he was the Messiah, that the need to strive for personal spirituality and be aware of his possibility of failure were irrelevant to him ⁽³⁾. And we too can lack a sense of the future we might miss. Remember that 1 in 3 of those baptized leave, and many more admit to spiritually falling asleep. Solomon had God's wisdom throughout his apostasy (Ecc. 2:9), as the Truth ever remains with us. God put that wisdom in his heart in order for him to help others, both in Israel and in the world (2 Chron. 9:23); yet Solomon failed to realize that he needed to apply it to himself. He speaks about him being King in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:1,12; Prov. 1:1) as if this was the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Consider the implications of 2 Chron. 1:9: " O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth...give me now wisdom, that I may go out and come in before (i.e. lead) this people" . Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the Kingdom).

“The people sacrificed in high places, *because* there was no house built” (1 Kings 3:2) surely reflects Solomon’s perspective- for God Himself didn’t need a built house in which sacrifice could be offered. The temple became such an obsession with Solomon that he came to think that no really acceptable worship could occur outside of the idea which he had so developed in his own mind. It’s rather like thinking that one *must* have a physical church building in which to be an ecclesia of the living God- who doesn’t dwell in buildings made with hands. Remember that Solomon *loved* building (Ecc. 2:4-6)- he built cities and buildings because it was “the desire of Solomon which he desired” (1 Kings 9:19 AVmg.), i.e. one of his dominant desires. So when we read that it was the desire of Solomon to build the temple (1 Kings 9:1,11), he was merely serving God in a way that naturally appealed to him anyway. And when he had finished that desire when the temple was completed (9:1), he was in the same position as when in Ecclesiastes he describes how he indulged every desire up to the very end, and then was left with the emptiness of vanity. The spirit of walking out against the wind of our desires in order to serve God simply wasn’t with him. “I gat me men singers and women singers...musical instruments, and that of all sorts” (Ecc. 2:8) were things he did when he tried to find the meaning of life outside personal faith in God. “I gat *me*”, he said- he organized the temple worship, the courses of singers etc., because he liked music and orchestra- not from true service to God. Many like the Queen of Sheba rewarded him for his wisdom with presents- and “I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces” who visited him (Ecc. 2:8). He retained wisdom theoretically, but he allowed the human benefits of ‘having the truth’ to swamp him. And so we must beware, lest, e.g., the happy social environment which knowing the Truth has generated for some comes to dominate our lives *of itself*; we may ‘retain wisdom’ as Solomon did, but the fire of real spirituality can drop out of our lives so easily.

Solomon didn't like the idea of God doing something for him (i.e. building the house); in his own mind, he swamped this concept with his obsession for achieving his own works. The fact that God needs and requires nothing failed to register with him; the fact that salvation is by pure grace meant nothing to him. After Solomon finished the temple, he started work on his own house; Ecc. 2:4 relates how he built houses and all kinds of gardens, travelling down every road of human experience. The implication of this is that once the temple was finished, he felt that the Kingdom had come, and that he must create it himself. He taught Israel that if they sinned even in captivity, then all they had to do was pray towards the temple and they would be forgiven. He saw in that building some kind of atonement for sins. He lost sight of the importance of the blood that made atonement; he replaced the blood of Christ with a work of his own hands. Indeed, it would seem that God’s response to the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 9:7 corrects what Solomon has said, in that He says that if Israel sin then He will cast the temple too out of His sight; which is rather different to how Solomon instructed the people to gain forgiveness for the sake of the temple if they were in dispersion ⁽⁴⁾. He saw the temple as a talisman- the need for real, meaningful change and repentance and spiritual mindedness to enable the dwelling of God went unperceived. The constant moral and physical experimentation led Solomon to the deep cynicism of Ecclesiastes: 'If this is the Kingdom, the ultimate experience, then I don't think much of it'. Ecclesiastes emphasizes that Solomon experienced more glory and wisdom than any other who had been in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9); this suggests that he felt he had reached the ultimate experience of the Kingdom, and yet he was not impressed by it. He lacked the faith and humility to look ahead to the future Kingdom, and to realize thereby that all the achievements of this life are as nothing.

In the same way as in Proverbs, Solomon made his commands equal to those of God, so he came to see his throne as the throne of God. He made 12 lions to stand on either side of his throne (2 Chron. 9:19), perhaps in imitation of how the Angels were perceived to be on either side of God's throne (1 Kings 22). Of course, he was sitting on the throne of the Lord as king over Israel. But he seems to have taken this to the extreme of thinking that he himself was some kind of God over Israel. And the lesson for us is to perceive ourselves as God's servants and representatives, but not to take this to the extent that we think that all of our actions are thereby justified as somehow Divinely sanctioned. The end result was that Solomon lost sight of the future Kingdom- and we too will likewise lose our way if we *de facto* consider our little kingdoms to effectively be God's Kingdom.

God takes no pleasure in huge numbers of animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:6). The way that Solomon offered so many animals at the temple's dedication that the altar [built by God's specifications] was too small for them rather indicates how out of synch Solomon was with Divine thinking.

Notes

(1) The somewhat unusual idea that Solomon's building of the temple was not actually what God wanted is confirmed by the fact that Jer. 22:13-17 denounces Shallum in the language of Solomon: Building a cedar house, not following the righteous ways of his father, oppressing people needlessly, making a house with large chambers and windows, not paying the wages of those who helped build the house.

(2) Paul quotes Solomon's words in Ecc. 2:24 as the words of those who have no faith that there will be a resurrection (1 Cor. 15:32). The rich fool likewise disbelieved the resurrection, and his words also allude to those of Solomon (Lk. 12:19 = Ecc. 2:24; 11:9).

(3) This lack of self examination and confidence that he could not spiritually fail is reflected in 1 Kings 11:2,3, where we are reminded that God had said that foreign wives would "surely...turn away your heart after their gods". How "surely" this would happen was not believed by Solomon. "He had seven hundred wives...and his wives turned away his heart". He started marrying these foreign wives when he was young; presumably he reasoned that they could never turn away *his* heart because he was the Son of David, the Messianic King. In Prov. 6:27 he soberly warns against the strange (i.e. Gentile) woman, observing that a man cannot take this kind of fire into his bosom and not be burned by it. Yet this is exactly what he was doing at the time he wrote that. His public removal of his Egyptian wife from the house of David "because the places are holy" (2 Chron. 8:11) is therefore to be seen as spiritual pride, appearing to do the right thing, when his heart was far from it.

(4) And note, too, how God said that He accepted the temple not so much as a place to dwell in (as Solomon assumed it was) but as a place facilitating sacrifice, prayer etc., for the glorification of His Name through these things; He emphasised that He dwelt amongst *His people* (1 Kings 6:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16). There are several other places where God's response to Solomon's words seems to be corrective rather than affirmatory. Thus Solomon says that God will hear the prayers of His people because *the temple* is called by God's Name; but God's response is that "my people, which are called by my name" would pray to Him themselves and be heard, quite apart from the temple (2 Chron. 6:33 cp. 7:14). He sees them as bearing His Name rather than the temple building, as Solomon perceived it. God goes on to parallel the temple and His people in 2 Chron. 7:21,22, saying that if He punishes the temple He will punish the people. Solomon seems to have thought that the temple would still stand favourably in God's eyes even if the people were punished. The record records that the temple was "perfected" whereas Solomon's heart wasn't perfect [s.w.] (1 Kings 11:4 cp. 2 Chron. 8:16).

7.3 Solomon's Wives

7-3-1 Solomon's Wives

There can be no doubt that many of Yahweh's servants have suffered from an undoubted weakness for women. Despite the clear one man: one woman standard of Eden, the heroes of faith like Moses, Abraham and Jacob all had more than one wife- and, the records hint, suffered because of it. Samson, Judah, Simeon, David and others spring to mind as men who got into hot water because of their unbridled passions. Many a Christian life has

founded on the same rocks. Solomon is the supreme example. Solomon's wives were his undoing.

His tragic loss of faith is analyzed by the Spirit in 1 Kings 11, and the blame is firmly laid on his attitude to women: " King Solomon loved many strange women, besides the daughter of Pharaoh...of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them...for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love...and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:1-4). There is double emphasis here upon the fact that Solomon's wives did turn away his heart, as if to prove the truth of God's prophecy that alien marriage would *surely* turn away a man's heart from Yahweh. Solomon knew and loved the Law, he must have written out his own copy of it as commanded, and his gift of wisdom would surely have opened his understanding to the many passages which warned of relationships with the Gentile world. Yet Solomon went ahead and married a total of 1000 Gentile wives. Surely he must have reasoned that he could spiritually handle it, they would not surely turn away his heart, he was strong, he could handle it. And how often have the children of God gone running down exactly this road; in attitudes to careers, relationships of all kinds, until over the years true spirituality is whittled away; and nothing, nothing is left.

Solomon failed to mix his wisdom with a true humility and an awareness of his own proneness to failure. The teaching of the word remained only within his brain cells.

The words of 1 Kings 11:1-4 have some interesting implications when analyzed. Even before he built the pagan temples for his wives, his marriages to them are described as " evil in the sight of the Lord" (11:6). Those words are a hard contrast to the minimalizing of marriage out of the Faith which now afflicts the body of Christ. Solomon's marriages are often explained away as political manoeuvrings. But the record says that Solomon " clave unto these in love" , surely alluding to God's definition of marriage as a leaving father and mother and cleaving to a wife. Solomon really loved those women; they weren't just political strings to his bow. They would not have turned away his *heart* if they were only political relationships. 1000 seems a rather exorbitant number of political alliances to have in any case. And Ecc. 2:8 RV says that Solomon sought "the delights of the sons of men, concubines of all sorts". He took sex to its maximum extent- he had every possible type of woman in his harem. Every hair colour, size, type. "Whatsoever mine eyes desired [this is language elsewhere used about sexual desire] I kept not from them" (Ecc. 2:10). And yet still, he never found one... counting one by one, as he put it. If ever there is a warning against immorality, it is here. The more relationships one has- and our world glorifies this- the less ultimate satisfaction there can be. God's way has to be best.

A Little Of Both - ?

The criticism of Solomon for marrying these women also applies to his first marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh; *besides* marrying her, he married the others too, and the criticisms which follow are spoken in the context of both these actions. Yet Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter in his early days, before he asked for wisdom. This is another indication that Solomon did not start off well and then go wrong; right from the beginning he had this incredible dualism in his spirituality. The Talmud (*Shabbath F, 56,2*) records that "When Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh she brought to him 1000 kinds of musical instruments, and taught him the chants to the various idols". Even when Solomon was young,

he evidently loved wine (Song 1:2,4)- which was later to be something he (temporarily) abandoned himself to. He had a child by an Ammonite girl one year before he became king (1 Kings 14:21)- so his relationships with foreign women cannot be put down to mere political alliances. If the Song of Solomon is about her rather than the Egyptian woman he married, one can only say that one early error, unrepented of, paved the way for his later disasters with foreign women. The Song suggests that he met the foreigner he married whilst walking alone in the countryside- which again proves it was a love relationship rather than a political alliance. The record later describes his building of store cities in the very language used of Pharaoh's using Hebrew labour to build treasure cities (2 Chron. 8:4 cp. Ex. 1:11 Heb.). The influence of his father-in-law was deep, and lasted a long time. Yet in the early days the record describes him as a man who "loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father" (1 Kings 3:3); and the record of his request for wisdom enables us to almost sense the Divine exaltation of spirit with Solomon because he so loved wisdom. The influence of Egypt upon Solomon is reflected by the way in which he is described as making the people serve him with "hard bondage" (2 Chron. 10:4; 1 Kings 12:4). This is the very Hebrew phrase used to describe what the Egyptians did to Israel (Ex. 1:14; 6:9; Dt. 26:6). Solomon put his people under a yoke (2 Chron. 10:4), just as Egypt did to them (Lev. 26:13). And so we see the progression. Solomon loved an Egyptian woman, came to serve her gods, traded with Egypt... and the attitude of Egypt to God's people became Solomon's attitude to them. There is something unique about God's people; and yet the closer we come to the world, the more we come to see our own community, God's special family, just as this world sees us. The world's attitude to us can so easily become our attitude to our brethren- no longer seeing them as the specially chosen little children of God, sensitive to them as our very own brothers and sisters.

Solomon's early mistake of thinking that he could indulge the 'little of both' syndrome brought his destruction. We all have an element of the 'little of both' syndrome, loving the spiritual life and the things of Israel, but laughing off our human side as something we can handle. The study of Solomon's attitude to women is therefore a classic insight into spiritual psychology. The general characteristics of Solomon have far too many uncomfortable similarities with our own lives. We all have the little of both syndrome, the nonchalant attitude that we can handle a bit of infringement of the letter of the law, that God understands, that our spiritual side justifies our unspiritual side. But this led one of the finest believers of all time to crash spiritually, to leave behind one of the most ineffable spiritual tragedies that could be imagined.

7-3-2 The Song Of Solomon

The Song Of Solomon: Psychology Of Marriage Out Of The Faith

The Song of Solomon is the record of Solomon's romance with Pharaoh's daughter. Of course, this was an explicit breach of the crystal clear commandment not to marry women from Egypt. He should have admired neither the horses nor the women of Egypt (Song of Solomon 1:9); yet he begins his Song with an unashamed breach of the command not to desire either of these things. The unashamedness of Solomon coupled with his spirituality indicates that at this time he was genuinely convinced that what he was doing was deeply spiritual; when in fact it was completely carnal. He totally ignored his own advice about choosing a spiritual woman as a wife. The girl he loved liked wine- unusual, perhaps, in that culture; she loves him because of his ointment, and he loves her because of her jewellery (Song of Solomon 1:2,3,10; 4:4). He says that deep kissing with her gives the same after

effect as drinking enough wine that you talk in your sleep afterwards (Song of Solomon 7:9). It's all very human and carnal.

There is a sharp contrast throughout the Song between Solomon's girlfriend and the "daughters of Jerusalem". She begins as a humble girl who recognizes her inferiority to these Israelite girls; she comments upon the way her skin is darker than theirs (Song 1:5,6), but she asks Solomon to overlook this. She deeply wished that Solomon was her brother, i.e. an Egyptian, because in that case their relationship could be much more open, they would not be despised because of their love, and Solomon could come and live in her mother's house back in Egypt (Song of Solomon 8:1,2). Clearly she was attracted to Solomon rather than to the God of Israel. In 8:2,3 she seems to be saying 'I'll have sex with you, as you offered in 7:12, *if you agree to be an Egyptian*' (and 4:16; 5:1,4-6 could imply they *did* have intercourse). But throughout the Song, Solomon describes her in Jewish terms, he likens her to many well-known places in Israel: the Heshbon fishpools, the tower of Lebanon etc., seeing the way her hair draped over her breasts as reminiscent of how Mount Gilead looked (Song of Solomon 4:1,4). He wanted to see her as an Israelite girl, and so that was how she appeared to him. She even starts to use similar language in praise of him (Song of Solomon 1:14). Solomon takes her on a tour of Israel (Song of Solomon 4:8), enthusing about the sights, speaking of them as the things of "*our land*" (Song of Solomon 2:10-13). He wanted her to be an Israelite, and he spoke to her as if she was, assuming that he could psychologically and spiritually dominate her so that he could have a little of both- his own carnal fulfilment coupled with spiritual satisfaction. How many times has this been worked out in the experience of a spiritual brother enthusing about the beauty of the Truth and spiritual Israel to an Egyptian girl, who only superficially shares his enthusiasm, longing in her heart to have him with her in Egypt.

Solomon saw her as a "paradise", a garden with rivers and exotic fruits, surrounded by a wall- exactly the language of Eden. And she was a fount of "living waters" (Song 4:12,13,15 RVmg.), the language of Messiah. He saw her as the Kingdom / Eden personified. And yet her response to being described in this way is almost inappropriate- for she invites him to come and eat the fruit of the garden (4:16), exactly after the pattern of Eve destroying Adam. Yet Solomon didn't want to see this connection; she was the Kingdom to him, just as so many have felt that having their new partner means that *nothing*, not even the Kingdom, is meaningful any more.

Solomon comforted her with the thought that he saw her as far more attractive than the daughters of Jerusalem, the Jewish girls whom he should have been marrying: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (Song of Solomon 2:2). Thorns are invariably connected with spiritual weakness and rejection; it was as if Solomon was saying that he found the daughter of Pharaoh spiritually more attractive than the Jewish girls. This is the basis for the sarcastic comments and tensions between Solomon's girl and the daughters of Jerusalem. And she went along with how he wanted to see her: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (Song of Solomon 2:1); even though her heart was far away in Egypt, she described herself in Jewish terms because that was how he saw her; he calls her his "sister" (Song of Solomon 4:9), as if she was actually Jewish- whereas she wanted him to be her Egyptian "brother". The relationship was doomed from the start. She walked the streets of Jerusalem whilst he was confined in the palace (Song of Solomon 3:2). Her mother moved to Jerusalem from Egypt, but it wasn't possible for Solomon and her to easily be together in that house (Song of Solomon 3:4; 8:2). When Solomon describes her painted lips as being like a thread of scarlet (Song of Solomon 4:3), he uses two Hebrew

words which only occur together in Josh. 2:18, describing how the Gentile harlot Rahab hung the scarlet thread outside her home in order to bring about the salvation of her mother and her family. Solomon wanted to justify his Egyptian girlfriend by comparing her to Gentile Rahab. And such sophistry goes on at the beginning of every relationship that leads to a marriage out of the Faith.

She sarcastically comments to the Jerusalem girls: “Go forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold king Solomon”, and goes on to mock the crown his mother Bathsheba had made for him, wishing instead that he would be under the influence of *her* mother (Song of Solomon 3:11,4). Her sarcasm turns to angry defence at times, e.g. when she warns the Jerusalem girls not to stir up “my love” (Song of Solomon 2:7)- i.e. ‘Hands off my Solomon!’. In turn, they ask her where Solomon has “turned aside” so that they can come and seek him with her (Song of Solomon 6:1), using a word elsewhere associated with ‘turning aside’ in apostasy to other gods. They in their turn sarcastically comment to her: “Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women...that we may seek him with thee?” (Song of Solomon 6:1), quoting Solomon’s terms of endearment back to her.

Solomon boasts that he has many Jewish queens and concubines, but there is only one woman, the Egyptian, that he truly loves (Song of Solomon 6:8,9); he even calls her his “sister”, associating himself thereby with Egypt. Perhaps this tension between the two groups- the Jerusalem women and the Egyptian girl and her family- is behind the enigmatic reference to “the company of two armies” or “the dance of the two camps” (Song of Solomon 6:13). Solomon went on to say that the bed he had prepared for the daughters of Jerusalem he was now giving to his Egyptian bride. The bed is described in the language of the tabernacle; made of wood, but covered with gold and surrounded by silver pillars, with a mercy seat of purple (Song of Solomon 3:9,10 Heb.). He persuaded himself that his marriage to this woman was some kind of expression of spirituality. The bed was made from cedar brought from Lebanon- and yet the same wood was used for the temple (Song of Solomon 3:9). Such was his dualism. The Song is shot through with allusion to the Law and tabernacle rituals; he speaks of making her borders on her clothes (Song of Solomon 1:11), probably alluding to the borders of blue to be worn by the faithful Israelite. Solomon wanted her to be a spiritual woman, and he was going to make her one; many a preacher, teacher, husband, wife, father, mother, child, boyfriend has had to learn the impossibility of this. He wanted to see her as a spiritual woman, and eventually he became persuaded that she was just this. It seems likely that Solomon wrote down his inspired Proverbs (a result of the wisdom God gave him) and the Song about the same time. In Proverbs he uses the figure of a well of living water to describe spiritual words and thinking (Prov.10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22). Yet this is the very figure which he uses concerning his worldly bride (Song of Solomon 4:15). This typifies the massive imputation of righteousness which the Lord Jesus grants to us, his worldly Gentile bride.

There are a number of connections between the behaviour of Solomon and his girlfriend in the Song and Solomon's own warnings against Gentile marriage in Proverbs.

Song of Solomon

"I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had

Proverbs

"She caught him...come not nigh the door of her house...her house...the chambers of

brought him into my mother's house..into her death" (7:13,27; 5:8) chamber" (3:4)

Yet Solomon was aware, at least theoretically, of the foolish path he was going down. God had inspired him with the wisdom of Prov. 2:16,17, which warned that wisdom would save a man from the Gentile woman who made a covenant with the God of Israel in her youth (in order to marry an Israelite, by implication), but soon forgot it. This was exactly, exactly the case of Solomon; yet he just couldn't see the personal relevance of his own wisdom to himself. Solomon could write of the folly of the ruler who oppressed the poor (Prov. 22:16)- and yet do just that very thing. The Proverbs so frequently refer to the dangers of the house of the Gentile woman; yet the Song shows the Egyptian girl dearly wishing that Solomon would come with her into her house. And Solomon, just like the foolish young man he wrote about, went right ahead down the road to spiritual disaster he so often warned others about. He warns the young man of the dangers of the Egyptian woman who perfumes her bed with myrrh (Prov. 7:16,17)- and then falls for just such a woman (Ps. 45:8). This woman he warns of appears to want to serve Yahweh, and presents herself in the very language of the tabernacle (Prov. 7:14,16,17). And yet Solomon goes and falls for just such a woman. One can only conclude that the more true spiritual knowledge we have, the more prone we are to do the very opposite. Such is our nature.

Solomon's assumption that he was Messiah, the promised seed of David, presumably led him to assume that he was likewise the promised seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. No less than four times he calls his Egyptian girlfriend "my sister, my spouse" (Song 4:9,10,12; 5:1). This repeated emphasis seems to me to be an allusion to the way in which the patriarchs called their wives their sisters (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11). And yet clearly enough, these incidents were lapses of faith for which they were rebuked. Yet Solomon didn't want to see it like that; they did it, therefore he could. David his father had horses and many wives; therefore he could. His sense of morality, of right and wrong, was controlled by the precedents set by his worthy ancestors. And so often we see this in supposedly Christian lives- the weak elements of our fathers we tend to feel are perfectly acceptable for us too. We do just what Paul says we should not do- we compare ourselves amongst and against ourselves, rather than against the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 10:12).

Parts of the Song are very sexually explicit once the fairly obvious allusions are figured out. He's describing the vaginal lips of his girlfriend, his intended spouse (Song 4:1,3,8 etc.); and he has seen "behind your veil", the symbol of her virginity (Song 4:1 RV). And yet he glorifies all this in his song. Quite clearly, Solomon was guilty of fornication with the one whom he wished to marry, although the ending of the Song seems to imply the relationship somehow broke up. And this was all right at the beginning of his reign. He seems to have assumed that if *he* thought his behaviour was OK, then it was. It's rather like how he declared the middle court to be "holy" and a kind of extended altar (2 Chron. 7:7)- he doesn't ask God if God would sanctify it, he just decides what is holy and what isn't- Solomon played God, and it led him into sin and loss of faith in God.

The Song Of Solomon: No Eternal Romance

The key to understanding the Song is to appreciate that we have here a set of dialogues- Solomon to his Egyptian girlfriend, the Egyptian girl to him, words of the daughters of Jerusalem to the girl and the girl to them. Breaking up the text into these sections isn't easy,

as sometimes the break can occur within a verse. The best attempt I'm aware of is in the Net Bible.

The Song begins by the daughters of Jerusalem and the Egyptian girl being in some kind of competition for Solomon; they both state their desire for him, and both of them compare his love to wine (1:2, 4). Note how the Song doesn't begin as a romance is supposed to- with the first meeting, love at first sight scene. As early as 1:2 she comments that "your lovemaking is more delightful than wine". This is all a subversion of the whole genre of romance. So the Song begins with the relationship already advanced, and with intense rivalry between the girl and the "daughters of Jerusalem". The Egyptian justifies her darker complexion to the Jerusalem girls, and praises her own beauty: "I am black but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem" (1:5). There's evident aggression from her to them: "Don't stare at me because I am dark!" (1:6). Her despidal of the Jerusalem girls is perhaps reflected in 1:6,7, where she asks Solomon: "Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat? Tell me lest I wander around beside the flocks of your companions!". His "companions" presumably were the daughters of Jerusalem, and she didn't want to be anywhere near them. She likewise yells at them not to sexually stimulate her lover, Solomon (2:7). And I take "My beloved is *mine*" (2:16) to be the same catty kind of defensiveness. The girl is jealous of how the daughters of Jerusalem admire Solomon, not least because of his fame in Israelite circles: "thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee" (1:3); "How rightly the young women adore you!" (1:4). "Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned? Tell us, that we may seek him with you" (6:1) appears none less than sarcasm from the daughters.

So often there's the sense of urgency and haste- perhaps rooted in the girl's fear of competition from the daughters of Jerusalem: "Draw me after you; let us hurry! May the king bring me into his bedroom chambers!" (1:4). This would also explain the quite unabashed sexual seduction practiced by the girl- she begs Solomon to take her to his bedroom right here at the start of the Song (1:4), and later says things like "May my beloved come into his garden and eat its delightful fruit!" (4:16). This is all inappropriate for a romance, and in ancient Israel such forwardness would have been greatly frowned upon. In Proverbs, Solomon often warns against falling for the forwardness of the Gentile immoral woman; and yet he falls for it himself.

Solomon clearly was aware of the tension between the Egyptian girl whom he loved, and the daughters of Jerusalem- from whom he should've been choosing a wife. The girl says she is merely a common "meadow flower from Sharon", but Solomon responds that in his eyes, "like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens" (2:1,2). He likens the Jerusalem girls to thorns- he was besotted with this Gentile. Ironically enough, Num. 33:55 had warned that the Gentiles within the land promised to Abraham would be "thorns" to Israel if they married them. And yet Solomon sees the Israelite women as "thorns" and the Gentile as a lily amongst them... . He likewise compares her to them in 6:8,9: "There may be sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and young women without number. But she is unique...". But despite this, the girl seems to always fear Solomon's attraction to the Jerusalem girls. She challenges him: "Why do you gaze upon the Perfect One [as Solomon called her] like the dance of the Mahanaim?" (6:13), the dance of the two camps / lines. She suspects there may be two camps in Solomon's mind.

It was because of the impossible tension between the Egyptian girl and the Jerusalem maidens that there's the constant theme of needing to hold meetings in secrecy, often in the

countryside or mountains around Jerusalem ("in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the mountain crags, let me see your face", 2:14), and to "go away" in order to be together- e.g. 2:13 "come away my darling; my beautiful one, come away with me!". They appear to have slept together in the open air, beneath the trees: "The lush foliage is our canopied bed; the cedars are the beams of our bedroom chamber; the pines are the rafters of our bedroom" (1:16,17). The same impression of outdoors secret romance is to be found in 7:11 "Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside; let us spend the night in the villages". 2:17 and 4:6 suggest they spent a night together in the hills, and then before dawn Solomon got back to Jerusalem. 5:2 has Solomon coming to her room secretly at night, wet with the night dew. Chapter 3 appears to tell of a dream she has, a nightmare actually, of how Solomon failed to turn up at a night time rendezvous in Jerusalem, and she distraught and desperate wanders around the city, is picked up by the night watchmen, but finally finds Solomon and drags him back to her mother's house [in Egypt]. I find the passage very powerful- it's so imaginable as a nightmare which a girl in her situation would have. Her deepest desire was to get Solomon back to Egypt, into her family... and thus she dreamt of it. And likewise her subconscious awareness of the tension between her and the people of Jerusalem comes out too; yet again she charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon. Straight after this is the passage which speaks about Solomon's wedding (3:6-11), with the daughters of Zion looking on as Solomon rides in from the desert and goes through the wedding day procedures (3:11), and they do no more than decorate the interior of his wedding chariot (3:10). I take this to be part of her night time dream which began in 3:1. The daughters of Jerusalem mock her for it at the very end: "Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her beloved?" (8:5). We expect a romantic song to end with the wedding; but it doesn't. It ends with the couple parting; and this dream wedding is no more than the Egyptian girl fantasizing. The fact the wedding 'scene' or dream comes in the middle of the song rather than at the end is again a subversion of the whole genre of romance. The climax is in the wrong place. And this just indicates how unfulfilling are relationships which flout Divine principles.

Because of all this, there is a sense of on-off relationship throughout the Song. One moment she is sick of love (2:5), the next she claims Solomon had caressed her head with one hand and fingered her with the other (2:6). The very explicit language of 2:6 sits strangely if the Song is intended to be some wonderful romance building up to the climax of marriage. Another example is in 5:8, where after Solomon gives up on visiting the girl one night, she angrily tells the daughters of Jerusalem that as far as she's concerned, they can tell Solomon that she [too?] is sick of love. But when they sarcastically call her "O most beautiful of women" and enquire what she exactly loves about Solomon (5:9). she comes out with a great speech of praise for him (5:10-16). The seeking and not finding him of chapter 5 all suggests he had temporarily rejected her, after she had been lazy to open the door to him (Song of Solomon 3:2; 5:6- these passages are the basis of NT teaching about Christ's rejection of his unworthy bride. See [Judgment To Come](#) and 'Loving His Appearing' in [Beyond Bible Basics](#)).

The girl wants to see in Solomon one as dark and Egyptian-looking as herself. Having said that she is "dark" in complexion (1:4,6), she later comments in 5:11 that to her, Solomon is also "dark" [s.w.]. She says 5:11 to the daughters of Jerusalem, as if in defence of her relationship with Solomon, and his choosing her rather than them. In the same way as he tried to see in her an Israelite woman, "O daughter of my princely people" (when she was the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh, 6:12 cp. 7:1), comparing her body parts to various geographical places in Israel (e.g. goats on Gilead, 4:1; the tower of David, 4:4; "as beautiful as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem" 6:4), so she tried to see him as an Egyptian. They were

trying to see each other as who they were not... and so the relationship was doomed to failure. Right from the start, the girl feels that Solomon isn't giving her the complete passion of his love: "Oh, how I wish you would kiss me passionately! For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine" (1:2).

The Song ends without the famous final scene which we expect in a romance. The expectation of a wedding and walking off into the sunset is subverted by the concluding songs. The girl laments how she can't kiss Solomon publically or be with him without being despised; and longs to be able to take him back to her mother in Egypt (8:1,2). She utters the final warning to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon, and then breaks down with the lament that jealousy is cruel as death (8:6) and unrequited love is impossible; Solomon's true love cannot be bought by her. The daughters of Jerusalem then speak of how they have a younger sister whose breasts aren't yet developed, but they will care for her until she is ready for Solomon (8:8,9). The Egyptian girl then reminisces in the past tense: "I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers. Then I found favor in his eyes" (8:10). Solomon throughout the Songs has commented positively upon her breasts; and now she is left to lament that that is all just how it was, it's all over now. She then makes the enigmatic comment about how Solomon has a vineyard which he leases out, and yet she is a vineyard which belongs to her alone: "My vineyard, which belongs to me, is at my disposal alone". The Songs have likened her to a vineyard (Song 2:13,15), and her romantic meetings with Solomon appear to have sometimes been in a vineyard. Solomon spoke of her breasts as grapes (7:7). But Solomon's vineyard, she says, was associated with Baal-Hamon- Lord / husband of a multitude. She finally realized that he was a womanizer, who would go on to have over 1000 women in his life... Lord [or husband] of a multitude. Perhaps his 1000 wives and concubines lay behind her reference to the 1000 shekels that Solomon can have for his vineyard (8:12). But now she was splitting up with him, her vineyard was hers alone, her grapes were now solely at her disposal and were not his any more. The final couplet of the Song is one of bitter sarcasm, typical of the worst order of romantic breakup. Solomon says that his "companions"- the daughters of Jerusalem whom she had so hated- are listening carefully to her, as he is. And she responds by telling him to run away, whilst still calling him her "beloved"- for although jealousy is cruel as the grave, her love for him was unquenchable by many waters. So the Song ends with Solomon in rather a bad light- off to his next women, whilst the Egyptian girl walks off the scene bitterly protesting her love for him and how she's a victim of circumstance and jealousy. Yet Solomon, presumably, authored the Song. I read it therefore in the same way as I do Ecclesiastes- his jaded statement of how life has been for him, how he sought fulfilment of his human lusts but it never worked out, leaving him with a tragic sense of unfulfilment because he had not gone God's way.

APPENDIX: Song Of Solomon [NET Bible translation]

1:1 Solomon's Most Excellent Love Song.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[1:2](#) Oh, how I wish you would kiss me passionately! For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine. [1:3](#) The fragrance of your colognes is delightful; your name is like the finest perfume. No wonder the young women adore you! [1:4](#) Draw me after you; let us hurry! May the king bring me into his bedroom chambers!

The Maidens to the Lover:

We will rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

How rightly the young women adore you!

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[1:5](#) I am dark but lovely, O maidens of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Qedar, lovely like the tent curtains of Salmah. [1:6](#) Do not stare at me because I am dark, for the sun has burned my skin. My brothers were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards. Alas, my own vineyard I could not keep!

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[1:7](#) Tell me, O you whom my heart loves, where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat? Tell me lest I wander around beside the flocks of your companions!

The Lover to His Beloved:

[1:8](#) If you do not know, O most beautiful of women, simply follow the tracks of my flock, and pasture your little lambs beside the tents of the shepherds.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[1:9](#) O my beloved, you are like a mare among Pharaoh's stallions. [1:10](#) Your cheeks are beautiful with ornaments; your neck is lovely with strings of jewels. [1:11](#) We will make for you gold ornaments studded with silver.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[1:12](#) While the king was at his banqueting table, my nard gave forth its fragrance. [1:13](#) My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh spending the night between my breasts. [1:14](#) My beloved is like a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-Gedi.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[1:15](#) Oh, how beautiful you are, my beloved! Oh, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves!

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[1:16](#) Oh, how handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how delightful you are! The lush foliage is our canopied bed; [1:17](#) the cedars are the beams of our bedroom chamber; the pines are the rafters of our bedroom.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[2:1](#) I am a meadow flower from Sharon, a lily from the valleys.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[2:2](#) Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[2:3](#) Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. The Banquet Hall for the Love-Sick

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[2:4](#) He brought me into the banquet hall, and he looked at me lovingly. [2:5](#) Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, with love. [2:6](#) His left hand caresses my head, and his right hand stimulates me.

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[2:7](#) I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the young does of the open fields: Do not awaken or arouse love until it pleases!

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[2:8](#) Listen! My lover is approaching! Look! Here he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills! [2:9](#) My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the window, peering through the lattice.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[2:10](#) My lover spoke to me, saying: "Arise, my darling; My beautiful one, come away with me! [2:11](#) Look! The winter has passed, the winter rains are over and gone. [2:12](#) The pomegranates have appeared in the land, the time for pruning and singing has come; the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. [2:13](#) The fig tree has budded, the vines have blossomed and give off their fragrance. Arise, come away my darling; my beautiful one, come away with me!"

The Lover to His Beloved:

[2:14](#) O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the mountain crags, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[2:15](#) Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards – for our vineyard is in bloom.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[2:16](#) My lover is mine and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[2:17](#) Until the dawn arrives and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved – be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountain gorges.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[3:1](#) All night long on my bed I longed for my lover. I longed for him but he never appeared.

[3:2](#) “I will arise and look all around throughout the town, and throughout the streets and squares; I will search for my beloved.” I searched for him but I did not find him. [3:3](#) The night watchmen found me – the ones who guard the city walls. “Have you seen my beloved?”. [3:4](#) Scarcely had I passed them by when I found my beloved! I held onto him tightly and would not let him go until I brought him to my mother’s house, to the bedroom chamber of the one who conceived me.

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[3:5](#) I admonish you, O maidens of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the young does of the open fields: “Do not awake or arouse love until it pleases!”

The Speaker:

[3:6](#) Who is this coming up from the desert like a column of smoke, like a fragrant billow of myrrh and frankincense, every kind of fragrant powder of the traveling merchants? [3:7](#) Look! It is Solomon’s portable couch! It is surrounded by sixty warriors, some of Israel’s mightiest warriors. [3:8](#) All of them are skilled with a sword, well-trained in the art of warfare. Each has his sword at his side, to guard against the terrors of the night. [3:9](#) King Solomon made a sedan chair for himself of wood imported from Lebanon. [3:10](#) Its posts were made of silver; its back was made of gold. Its seat was upholstered with purple wool; its interior was inlaid with leather by the maidens of Jerusalem. [3:11](#) Come out, O maidens of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon! He is wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, on the most joyous day of his life.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[4:1](#) Oh, you are beautiful, my darling! Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are like doves. Your hair is like a flock of female goats descending from Mount Gilead. [4:2](#) Your teeth are like a flock of newly-shorn sheep coming up from the washing place; each of them has a twin, and not one of them is missing. [4:3](#) Your lips are like a scarlet thread; your mouth is lovely. Your forehead behind your veil is like a slice of pomegranate. [4:4](#) Your neck is like the tower of David built with courses of stones; one thousand shields are hung on it – all shields of valiant warriors. [4:5](#) Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of the gazelle grazing among the lilies. [4:6](#) Until the dawn arrives and the shadows flee, I will go up to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. [4:7](#) You are altogether beautiful, my darling! There is no blemish in you!

[4:8](#) Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon. Descend from the crest of Amanah, from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon, from the lions’ dens and the mountain haunts of the leopards. [4:9](#) You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride! You have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. [4:10](#) How

delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!How much better is your love than wine;the fragrance of your perfume is better than any spice![4:11](#) Your lips drip sweetness like the honeycomb, my bride,honey and milk are under your tongue.The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[4:12](#) You are a locked garden, my sister, my bride;you are an enclosed spring, a sealed-up fountain.[4:13](#) Your shoots are a royal garden full of pomegranates with choice fruits:henna with nard,[4:14](#) nard and saffron;calamus and cinnamon with every kind of spice,myrrh and aloes with all the finest spices. [4:15](#) You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water flowing down from Lebanon.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[4:16](#) Awake, O north wind; come, O south wind!Blow on my garden so that its fragrant spices may send out their sweet smell. May my beloved come into his garden and eat its delightful fruit!

The Lover to His Beloved:

[5:1](#) I have entered my garden, O my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my balsam spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk!

The Poet to the Couple:

Eat, friends, and drink! Drink freely, O lovers!

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[5:2](#) I was asleep, but my mind was dreaming. Listen! My lover is knocking at the door!

The Lover to His Beloved:

“Open for me, my sister, my darling,my dove, my flawless one!My head is drenched with dew,my hair with the dampness of the night.”

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[5:3](#) “I have already taken off my robe – must I put it on again?I have already washed my feet – must I soil them again?”

[5:4](#) My lover thrust his hand through the hole, [5:5](#) I arose to open for my beloved;my hands dripped with myrrh –my fingers flowed with myrrh on the handles of the lock.[5:6](#) I opened for my beloved,but my lover had already turned and gone away. I fell into despair when he departed. I looked for him but did not find him;I called him but he did not answer me.[5:7](#) The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city.They beat me, they bruised me;they took away my cloak, those watchmen on the walls!

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[5:8](#) O maidens of Jerusalem, I command you –If you find my beloved, what will you tell him?Tell him that I am lovesick!

The Maidens to The Beloved:

[5:9](#) Why is your beloved better than others, O most beautiful of women?Why is your beloved better than others,that you would command us in this manner?

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[5:10](#) My beloved is dazzling and ruddy; he stands out in comparison to all other men. [5:11](#) His head is like the most pure gold. His hair is curly – black like a raven.[5:12](#) His eyes are like doves by streams of water,washed in milk, mounted like jewels.[5:13](#) His cheeks are like garden beds full of balsam trees yielding perfume.His lips are like lilies dripping with drops of myrrh.[5:14](#) His arms are like rods of gold set with chrysolite.His abdomen is like polished ivory inlaid with sapphires.[5:15](#) His legs are like pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.[5:16](#) His mouth is very sweet; he is totally desirable. This is my beloved!This is my companion, O maidens of Jerusalem!

The Maidens to the Beloved:

[6:1](#) Where has your beloved gone,O most beautiful among women?Where has your beloved turned?Tell us, that we may seek him with you.

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[6:2](#) My beloved has gone down to his garden,to the flowerbeds of balsam spices, to graze in the gardens,and to gather lilies.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[6:3](#) I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[6:4](#) My darling, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem, as awe-inspiring as bannered armies![6:5](#) Turn your eyes away from me –they overwhelm me!Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead.[6:6](#) Your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing; each has its twin; not one of them is missing.[6:7](#) Like a slice of pomegranate is your forehead behind your veil.[6:8](#) There may be sixty queens,and eighty concubines,and young women without number.[6:9](#) But she is unique! My dove, my perfect one!She is the special daughter of her mother,she is the favorite of the one who bore her.The maidens saw her and complimented her; the queens and concubines praised her: [6:10](#) “Who is this who appears like the dawn? Beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,awe-inspiring as the stars in procession?”

The Lover to His Beloved:

[6:11](#) I went down to the orchard of walnut trees, to look for the blossoms of the valley, to see if the vines had budded or if the pomegranates were in bloom. [6:12](#) I was beside myself with joy! There please give me your myrrh, O daughter of my princely people.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[6:13](#) (7:1) Turn, turn, O Perfect One! Turn, turn, that I may stare at you!

The Beloved to Her Lover:

Why do you gaze upon the Perfect One like the dance of the Mahanaim?

The Lover to His Beloved:

[7:1](#) (7:2) How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O nobleman's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a master craftsman. [7:2](#) Your navel is a round mixing bowl - may it never lack mixed wine! Your belly is a mound of wheat, encircled by lilies. [7:3](#) Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. [7:4](#) Your neck is like a tower made of ivory. Your eyes are the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon overlooking Damascus. [7:5](#) Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. The locks of your hair are like royal tapestries - the king is held captive in its tresses! [7:6](#) How beautiful you are! How lovely, O love, with your delights!

The Lover to His Beloved:

[7:7](#) Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like clusters of grapes. [7:8](#) I want to climb the palm tree, and take hold of its fruit stalks. May your breasts be like the clusters of grapes, and may the fragrance of your breath be like apricots! [7:9](#) May your mouth be like the best wine, flowing smoothly for my beloved, gliding gently over our lips as we sleep together.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[7:10](#) I am my beloved's, and he desires me!

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[7:11](#) Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside; let us spend the night in the villages. [7:12](#) Let us rise early to go to the vineyards, to see if the vines have budded, to see if their blossoms have opened, if the pomegranates are in bloom - there I will give you my love. [7:13](#) The mandrakes send out their fragrance; over our door is every delicacy, both new and old, which I have stored up for you, my lover.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[8:1](#) Oh, how I wish you were my little brother, nursing at my mother's breasts; if I saw you outside, I could kiss you - surely no one would despise me! [8:2](#) I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house, the one who taught me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates.

The Beloved about Her Lover:

[8:3](#) His left hand caresses my head, and his right hand stimulates me.

The Beloved to the Maidens:

[8:4](#) I admonish you, O maidens of Jerusalem: "Do not arouse or awaken love until it pleases!"

The Maidens about His Beloved:

[8:5](#) Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her beloved?

The Beloved to Her Lover:

Under the apple tree I aroused you; there your mother conceived you, there she who bore you was in labor of childbirth.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[8:6](#) Set me like a cylinder seal over your heart, like a signet on your arm. For love is as strong as death, passion is as unrelenting as Sheol. Its flames burst forth, it is a blazing flame. [8:7](#) Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters cannot overflow it. If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love, the offer would be utterly despised.

The Beloved's Brothers:

[8:8](#) We have a little sister, and as yet she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? [8:9](#) If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver; but if she is a door, we will barricade her with boards of cedar.

The Beloved:

[8:10](#) I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers. Then I found favor in his eyes.

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[8:11](#) Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon; he leased out the vineyard to those who maintained it. Each was to bring a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit. [8:12](#) My vineyard, which belongs to me, is at my disposal alone. The thousand shekels belong to you, O Solomon, and two hundred shekels belong to those who maintain it for its fruit.

The Lover to His Beloved:

[8:13](#) O you who stay in the gardens, my companions are listening attentively for your voice; let me be the one to hear it!

The Beloved to Her Lover:

[8:14](#) Make haste, my beloved! Be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spice

7-3-3 Psalm 45

Despite all the self-deception and the fact that Solomon was caused to lose his faith by this girl, the whole relationship is typical of that between Christ and the church. Psalm 45 is quoted in the New Testament concerning the marriage of Christ and the church, and yet this has at least some reference to that of Solomon and Miss Egypt (as well as to Hezekiah and Hephzibah). Psalm 45 is subtitled "A song of loves", using the Hebrew word 'Jedidah', the name of Solomon (2 Sam. 12:25). There are many links between Psalm 45 and the Song of Solomon. The wedding appeared highly spiritual, it seemed as if Solomon would reign for ever (Psalm 45 v.6), and his wife undertook to forsake Egypt and her father's home (Psalm 45 v.10).

The Psalm has many allusions to Joseph, who also married an Egyptian wife (see the links in Psalm 45 v.2,4,5,7,10,14 NIV, 16). So we can see the way Solomon's half-spiritual mind was working: Joseph, peerless servant of Yahweh that he was, married an Egyptian girl, and their children were given the great blessing of being counted as tribes of Israel; so what on earth was wrong with marrying an Egyptian? However, there is another way of looking at Psalm 45. It was evidently written by someone for Solomon; the writer commands the wife to forget her father's house. There is good reason to think that Psalm 45 was written by Solomon's mother Bathsheba and recited at his engagement party, when she crowned him again (Song 3:11).

Prov. 31 was also written by Bathsheba as advice to her son Lemuel (Solomon). In it she seems to be rebuking Solomon for his ways: "What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to them that destroy kings (i.e. women and adultery; surely this was said with a sideways glance at her own relationship with David)" (Prov. 31:3 RVmg). While Solomon was still quite young, i.e. within the lifetime of Bathsheba, she rebuked him for his wayward tendencies. Prov. 31 goes on to describe the ideal wife for Solomon; exactly the opposite of the women Solomon married. We are left to imagine Bathsheba's grief of mind, especially recalling her husband's special pride in Solomon. This was not just a case of protective mother checking out Solomon's girlfriends in a disapproving manner. She knew, through the inspiration of the Spirit as well as her own personal experience, the seriousness of messing with women. And she could see her ever so spiritual son going wrong in this. Her warnings in the same chapter against alcohol were likewise totally disregarded by Solomon in his later search for fulfilment in the flesh (Ecc. 2:3). His alcoholism likewise contradicted his own earlier condemnations of drink as being for the unwise (e.g. Prov. 20:1). Thus by turning to drink he was throwing off his former wisdom, even though his access to it remained with him (Ecc. 2:9; cp. 'But I still believe the Truth, you know'). She pleads with him not to drink lest he "pervert the judgment of any that is afflicted" (:5). And yet on his death, the complaints about his hard oppression of the people indicate that he did just this (due to his taking to drink, according to Prov. 31?). And yet Prov. 31 has Solomon praising his mother for her wisdom; he was proud of his mum, and yet he so miserably disobeyed her. He seems to have a mindset in which he felt it was impossible for him to be disobedient. The all important thing for him was who his parents and pedigree were.

So here was Solomon, brought up in the Truth by parents as devoted to God as could be, yet (one can guess) both outgoing, balanced and with a good sense of fun in family life. Here was Solomon, loving the Truth, deeply appreciating the ways of God, and yet throwing it all away by just not facing up to his own weakness, not seeing the urgency of his position, the seriousness of sin. Here was Solomon, dead keen on preaching to others, on inspiring Israel to be spiritual, discouraging the youngsters from messing with

the girls from the surrounding nations, fulfilling as few others had done God's intention that Israel be a missionary nation, spreading His principles far and wide.

But he failed, utterly failed, to even begin to apply all these things to his own heart. There are copious connections between Solomon's writings: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song; and also between them and the historical record of his life. These serve to demonstrate how he clearly contradicted the principles of the Gospel which he taught both to Israel and the world. One of the clearest examples of this is in Prov. 7:16,17, which describes the bed of the strange (i.e. Gentile) woman with which she allures the simple young Israelite: "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon". Yet these are the very descriptions of the bed Solomon shared with Miss Egypt (Song 3:6-10). The young man's heart was made to go astray because of her (Prov. 7:25), and her house led him to death (Prov. 7:27). Miss Egypt caused Solomon's heart to go astray (1 Kings 11:1-4), he built her a house, and her house became an idol temple which destroyed Solomon's faith. Yet Solomon warned the young men of Israel all about this in Prov. 7; and he even pointed out that such a woman would have all the outward trappings of Yahweh worship; she would claim an enthusiasm for keeping peace offerings and vows (Prov.7:14). Solomon was the young man whose picture he was painting. In Ecc. 9:12 he says that he suffered the fate of all men in that soon he would die, he would suddenly be caught like a bird in a snare, although he knew not his time. These are the very ideas of Prov. 7:23 concerning the snaring of the simple young man by the Gentile woman: "As a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life".

7-3-4 Sin Never Satisfies

Solomon wrote Prov. 7 shortly after his marriage; how ever could he do it? Clearly he was spiritually blind to a fundamental part of his life, but the fact he was blind never seems to have occurred to him. How *can* we think that we are not blind? Remember how the disciples were blind to the most obvious teaching of the Lord Jesus: that he would die and rise again. Israel likewise were blind to the prophecies of a suffering Messiah; the early Jewish Christians were blind to the mass of Old and New Testament evidence that circumcision, Sabbath keeping etc. were irrelevant to salvation. In retrospect it all looks so obvious. There may very well be aspects of our lives which are fundamentally astray, which could even lead to our condemnation. "Search us, O God, and know each heart".

The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. He warned the typical young man about being captivated by the eyelids of the Gentile woman (Prov. 6:25); yet it was the eyes of Miss Egypt that he openly admitted stole his heart (Song 4:9; 6:5). The strange woman has words like a honeycomb (Prov. 5:3); and yet this is exactly how Solomon found his woman's words (Song 4:11). The wicked Gentile woman is associated with a large house in a high place, in the temple area (e.g. Prov. 9:14). But this is exactly where Solomon built his Egyptian wife a house! The Proverbs which lament the rich man who has bitterness in his family life no doubt came true of Solomon in later life (e.g. 15:17). A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" woman (2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish") is used in Neh. 13 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of

this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon. Thus Solomon exhorted others to keep the law of their mother (Prov. 6:21), so that it would keep them from the attractive Gentile girl. And don't think, he went on, that in this context you can take fire into your hands and not be burnt. You can't play around with your own sexuality without it having a permanent spiritual effect upon you (6:27). But dear Bathsheba's words to Solomon warning against the Gentile woman were completely forgotten by him.

Truth flowed through his mouth with ease, but took no lodgement at all in his heart. Truth, absolute and pure, flows through our hands in such volume. Bible study after Bible study, chapter after chapter... But does it mean anything at all to us? Prov. 6:26 warns the young man that the Gentile woman will take his money and leave him destitute at the end. These words seem to be alluded to by Solomon years later in Ecc. 6:2, where he laments that despite his wealth and success, a Gentile would have it all after his death. He saw in later life that his warnings to the young men of Israel had been in the form of painting a picture of a typical young man who epitomized youthful folly; but now he saw that he had been making a detailed prophecy of himself. Likewise in Ecc. 2:18,19 he laments that his labours will achieve nothing; doubtless alluding back to his words in Prov. 5:10, where he says that the Gentile wife will make the young Israelite's labours meaningless. Sin never satisfies. "Hell and destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20 RV), Solomon wrote in his youth; and then in old age, he came to basically the same conclusion, having spent his life working back to the truth that he had been taught in his youth (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8). And there are many men and women who have done the same. We all tend to be empirical learners; and yet this is the great power of God's word, that through it we need not have to learn everything through our failures; but we can receive His Truth, trust it, and simply live by it. Otherwise we shall be like Solomon...

It is the tragedy of sin that it never really satisfies:

"Hell and destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20 RV)

"A proud man...enlargeth his desire as hell, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied" (Hab. 2:5). To live the life of endless self-gratification is to be dead whilst we live.

"The eye is not satisfied with seeing, not the ear filled with hearing [therefore] all things are full of weariness / labour" (Ecc. 1:8)

"There is no end of all his labour [for] neither are his eyes satisfied with riches...this also is vanity, yea, it is a sore travail" (Ecc. 4:8). The Millionaire always wants another million...

"All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite [Heb. 'soul'] is not filled" (Ecc. 6:7). These verses explain the sense of weariness and vanity which there is in our world.

Those who lusted for meat were given it; yet "they were not estranged from their lust" (Ps. 78:30). Sin never satisfies.

Despite his ravishment with Pharaoh's daughter as outlined in the Song, she never fulfilled him; indeed, none of his women did. In the Song he speaks of how he was ravished with this Egyptian girl, especially with her breasts (Song 2:7; 3:5; 4:9; 8:14). Alluding to this he could confidently exhort in Prov. 5:18-20: "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe (Song of Solomon language); let her breasts satisfy thee...be thou ravished always with her love...And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange (i.e. Gentile) woman?" . How, indeed? But 999 women later, it was a different story for Solomon. Solomon writes in Prov. 5:18-20 as if it is of course unthinkable that he should have been ravished by a Gentile woman; but he had been. He spoke to others with absolutely no thought as to whether his words had an application to himself. Effectively he was kidding himself, on a deeply internal level, that he hadn't married out of the faith. The obviousness of all this is in order to drum the warning home to us. How tragic that Solomon should go on to comment that such a person would die for want of instruction (Prov. 5:23). Solomon had all the instruction he could wish for; but he didn't allow it to really sink home one little bit. He hit out on the search for an ultimately satisfying woman, but out of the 1000 he had he never found one (Ecc. 7:28), even when he sat down and analyzed each of them. And even politically, his marriages with all those Gentile women didn't seem to achieve him the support he desired from their home countries; Egypt gave refuge to Jeroboam, Solomon's main rival (1 Kings 11:40), even though he always acquiesced to his wives and even in his very old age he still didn't destroy the idol temples he built for them (2 Kings 23:13).

The Song of Solomon itself subtly hints at the problems which existed between Solomon and his girl- for sin never satisfies. The daughters of Jerusalem and the watchmen (i.e. the prophets? Gad, Nathan? Whoever wrote Ps. 127 as a warning to Solomon?) were constantly watching them and being critical of her (Song of Solomon 5:7,16; 8:1), they despised her. There was a jealousy as cruel as the grave between the Jewish girls and Solomon's Egyptian lover (Song of Solomon 8:6). The courtship was held in lonely, secluded places, with the fear of being seen and mocked (Song of Solomon 5:6; 8:1,14; 7:11,12). And the Song ends on a most unhappy note; the two separate, rather than there being the consummation we might expect ⁽¹⁾. The problem of conscience was probably always there; and her secret yearning for the Egypt life doubtless only increased with the years.

In this aspect lies such a deeply powerful exhortation. There's pain either way in our life, whether we chose the path of obedience or self-gratification. We are not pleasing ourselves if we chose the latter; but a cruel master, namely the (Biblical) devil. Sin cannot satisfy, Scripture is almost screaming at us to learn this lesson. Above all do we see the lesson taught in the cross, we see there sin condemned, in the resurrection of Christ we see the joy and power and ultimate reality that service to sin cannot attain. The logic of a life of obedience is screaming, yes screaming at us. Can't we see it?

Notes

(1) The Song of Solomon really isn't the idyllic lovesong some have made it out to be. Constantly there is fear and contradiction within it; the unsatisfactory ending is but a continuation of a theme of uncertainty and difficulty in the relationship. Throughout the song there are constant interjections of doubt and misunderstanding, and anticlimaxes between the height of love's expression and the depths of doubt. We expect the Song to feature a romance

that blossoms into marriage and the consummation; but all we have is a constant struggle in the relationship, and it all ends in a quite unsatisfactory and unfulfilled way. The sense of lovesickness reflects the unsatisfying nature of it all (Song 2:5, 15,16). She asks him to turn and go away, and then seeks him desperately (Song of Solomon 2:17; 3:1)- having earlier rejoiced at the news of his coming (2:8). There is also the tension with the daughters of Jerusalem, who can be understood as Solomon's Jewish wives, or those who were his Jewish harem. She wants to bring him into her mother's bedroom in Egypt, but this is contrasted in the next Song with Solomon's bed in Jerusalem, prepared for the "daughters of Jerusalem" (3:4,10) whom he should have married. Then, with this bed in the background, he tells her how he especially loves *her* (4:1). She seems to boast of Solomon's love to his "daughters of Jerusalem", the Jewish women in his harem (5:16). The seeking and not finding him all suggests he had temporarily rejected her, after she had been lazy to open the door to him (Song of Solomon 3:2; 5:6- these passages are the basis of NT teaching about Christ's rejection of his unworthy bride. See *Judgment To Come* and 'Loving His Appearing' *in Beyond Bible Basics*). The unsatisfactory ending of the Song is reflected in the jilted lover desperately seeking Solomon again. She reflects how "I was a wall [with turrets]", and her breasts which she speaks of were "in his eyes as one that found favour" (Song 8:10). I take Song 8:1-8 to be her fantasy, her desperate dream, for Solomon's return. She dreams of asking him to commit to her ("set me as a seal upon your heart", Song 8:6), but concludes by telling him to flee far away from her, although she still calls him "my beloved" (Song 8:14). It's a tragic, unfulfilled ending.

7.4 Solomon And David

7-4-1 Parental Expectation

One of the reasons for Solomon's strange mixture of spirituality and carnality, not to mention his supreme spiritual self-assurance, was the fact that Solomon's faith was almost completely on account of his living out parental expectation. Those fundamental problems of Solomon are at the root of much of our difficulty in living dynamic spiritual life today: we have the 'little of both' syndrome, and are far too spiritually self-assured. The real possibility of failure and rejection seems lost on many of us. For many in the Christian heartlands of the UK, North America and Australia, the reason may be exactly the same as for Solomon: our spirituality is the result of living out parental and community expectation, rather than a result of being motivated by the fact that Christ loved us, and gave his life for us so that we might be a people zealous of good works. There can be no doubt that upbringing has a crucial impact upon who we later become. If we seek to truly be new creations, to find a genuine independent identity, to have the Name written which can only be given to us, then we need to be able to decode our Christian backgrounds, taking from them that vital and saving truth which they gave us, and yet not being who and where we are simply by reason of living out parental expectation.

David's hopes and expectations for Solomon are expressed in Psalm 72, "A Psalm for Solomon". The Hebrew title can equally mean "A Psalm *of* Solomon". David was so certain that his expectations would be fulfilled. David's prediction that Solomon would wisely judge his people (Ps. 72:2) was perhaps why Solomon asked God to give him wisdom to judge God's people. His wise judgment of the prostitutes, and his willingness to consider such

cases, was surely a living out of David's expectation that he would deliver the poor, needy and those with no helper (Ps. 72:12). The prediction that Solomon would be given of the gold of Sheba (Ps. 72:15) was fulfilled by Solomon's willful trading with Sheba to get gold from there, and one wonders whether he in fact invited the Queen of Sheba to visit him in order to fulfil the prediction that the rulers of Sheba would come to him with gifts (Ps. 72:10).

Some of you might have heard of a book by Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled*. Despite the drawbacks common to all self-help psychology, there's a lot in it for Christians. He speaks a lot about living out parental expectation. He gives examples of people who've lived for many years as successful businessmen, and then in middle age lose their parents; then they flip their lid, perhaps becoming farmers on some remote island, searching for who they really are. We are all only human beings. Inevitably our lives are a living out of parental and community expectation- to some extent. Those of us with generations 'in Christ' behind us, brought up in a closely knit Christian community, wary of everything and anything outside the community, really need to wake up to the possibility that a large percentage of our spiritual life is only living out expectation. This really is a worrying thought. As the last days wear on, and even in the mission fields the second generation of converts appears, this will be an increasing problem. Even if we have broken free from parental and community ties in order to be baptized, there still remains the possibility that we have become so involved in our community that we too are only living out the expectations of our brethren and sisters. The Gospel is a call to be a new creation, to truly break free of all the strings of our background, and stand alone before God and in this world, having left father and mother to be married to Christ, and bring forth spiritual fruit to his glory and our own salvation. David almost willed Solomon to make God's promises come true. He told Solomon that God had promised that Solomon would be the Messianic King, if he was strong [AV "constant"] to do God's commandments. And so, David urges Solomon to be "strong" [s.w.] (1 Chron. 28:7, 10,20) to as it were make God's promises come true. On one level, David was being a good spiritual parent to his son. Yet one suspects that David was so filled with pride that *his* son could be Messiah that he was urging Solomon almost for his [David's] sake to be obedient... And this can be seen happening in the psychology of the best Christian families. Parental expectation is lived out initially in spiritual matters, but the heart of the son or daughter can still be unconverted.

In so many ways Solomon is a believer gone wrong. We have shown in our study of Solomon and the temple that David firmly expected Solomon to be the eternal Messianic King; he wildly over-interpreted God's promises in such a way as to imply that Solomon would build a literal temple and have the full Messianic Kingdom. Not surprisingly, Solomon unquestioningly accepted his father's perspective; and we have seen that this was his undoing. He "prosperously effected" the work of the temple in fulfilment of his father's hope and expectation that he would "prosper" (s.w.) in this work (1 Chron. 22:11; 29:23; 2 Chron. 7:11). He reigned in the place of his father and "prospered"- just as David had expected of him (1 Chron. 29:23). So very very often does Solomon speak of "David my father", and that God had made him king "instead of David my father" (eg 1 Kings 3:7). Thus he asks Hiram to deal with him just as he had done with David his father (1 Kings 5:2-7; and cp. 1 Kings 5:1 with 2 Sam. 5:11). The number of times these phrases occur in the records is so large that we simply have to recognize that God is pointing something out to us about the relationship between Solomon and David (1 Kings 2:24,26,32,44; 3:6,7,14; 5:3,5; 6:12; 8:15,17,18,20,24,25,26; 9:4; 11:33; 2 Chron. 1:8,9; 2:3,7,14; 6:4,7,8,10,15,16; 7:17). So often in his prayers to God does Solomon make reference to David; for example: "Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy,

according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit upon his throne" (1 Kings 3:6).

These words are doubtless an allusion to the mercy God showed David in his relationship with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. But Solomon makes no mention of David's great faith in God's grace, and his subsequent appreciation that animal sacrifices were meaningless. These were David's real strong points, but Solomon is obsessed with David's public life of obedience ("according as he *walked*"). He evidently saw his father as the epitome of spiritual good, faultless in God's sight. "Mercy" and "truth" both occur in 1 Kings 3:6, and they often refer to the promises. Solomon seems to have seen the promises to David as a reward for David's good life, rather than an expression of God's unwarranted grace. David's reaction was "Who am I...?" to receive such an honour. Solomon's feeling was that David deserved them because of his righteousness. So here is a feature of many parent:child relationships in the Lord. The children love and respect their parents spiritually, but often for the wrong reasons; they actually misunderstand their forefathers' spirituality. This is why their understanding of parental and community expectation is often wrong in the first place.

7-4-2 Solomon And David

Solomon wished to imitate his father David in every sense; his own real personality only really came out in the Ecclesiastes years, when he took to drink, materialism, women and idolatry. It took the influence of his parents many years to wear off. David had weaknesses for horses (2 Sam. 8:4) and many wives; and Solomon followed in these steps too. Note that David had six sons in seven years by six different women, including Gentiles (1 Chron. 3:3). And in addition to these, David had children by "the concubines" (1 Chron. 3:9). Doubtless Solomon reasoned, albeit deep within his psyche, that such behaviour was legitimate because David his father had done it. We have seen that David seems to have over interpreted Scripture and assumed that his interpretation was certainly correct. And Solomon did exactly the same. The weaknesses of the parents all too easily are repeated by the children to an even greater extent.

David had taught his children with the words: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 34:11- did David say this to his children every evening?). And Solomon uses just the same words, even whilst disobeying God's law at the same time in his own life: "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father...I give you good doctrine...for I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live" (Prov. 4:1-4). And so Solomon taught *his* kids with the same outward form of words, although the personal reality of wisdom was lost on him. He repeats these very words of David when teaching his own son: "My son, keep [retain] my words...keep my commandments and live" (Prov. 7:1,2). The idea of keeping commandments in order to live is a reference back to the many Deuteronomy passages where Moses pleads with Israel to keep *God's* commands and live. But Solomon came to perceive his father David's commands as those of God, and in his generation he watered this down in his own mind until he assumed that *his* commands to his children were to be treated by them as the law of God- no matter how far he had strayed himself from God's law. It's a gripping, frightening psychology. "O my son, receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many" (Prov. 4:10) is alluding to the promise of long life for the obedient to *God's* laws; but never does Solomon make the admission that his

laws are only a repetition of God's laws. He was playing God by implying that *his* words carried the weight of *God's* words. He taught his son obedience to him as a father, but not to God Himself. He tells them: "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths" (Prov. 4:11), repeating the words of David in Ps. 32:8: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye". But those words in their context were wrung from a David desperately grateful for God's forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba. Solomon hadn't gone through this contrition- he was a self-justified womanizer, and yet he used the same outward form of words as his father. Solomon assumes he is going in the right way when he says: "I have led thee in right paths" (Prov. 4:11), in subtle contrast to the way David repeatedly asks to be led in the right way by God Almighty (Ps. 23:3; 25:4,5). Solomon's obsession with large numbers of horses and chariots (2 Chron. 1:14) was a marked contrast to the words of one of David's songs which Solomon must have often hummed to himself: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 20:7). He knew this, but the knowledge resided in just one part of his brain- in reality, he went ahead and did the very opposite. It's rather like he uses phrases out of his dad's lament over Jonathan ("dew...pleasant...like a roe on high places...love...shield") and applies them to his Gentile girlfriend in *his* song- the Song of Solomon...

One cannot help notice the great stress placed by Solomon on *teaching* his children, as David had *taught* him. It could be that there was too much emphasis on theory, thinking that by merely teaching the Law, the children would turn out OK. But Dt. 6:1-7 taught that Israel must "*do*" the commandments of the Lord "so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes... these words... you shall teach them diligently to your sons". It was by the parents both doing and teaching the Law that their children would "*do*" it too. Behaviour patterns are learnt by observation and experience of parents, not by mere theoretical inculcation. So could it not be that there is a lesson here for us- that the diligent teaching of the Law, as David did to Solomon and as Solomon so proudly did to his children, actually has no lasting effect unless that Law is lived out in a daily life. It seems to me that the Western Christian attitude and program for child-rearing is based very much on the assumption that both parents are believers, marry in their 20s, mother raises the kids and father brings in the money, with the result that the children will in due time also be baptized and repeat the cycle. This is all well and good. But the reality is that less than 7% of America's population fits the traditional nuclear family profile. "Today's family can be a single parent with one or more children, a two-career couple with no children, a female breadwinner with child and househusband, or a blended family that consists of a previously married couple and a combination of children from those two previous marriages" (John Naisbitt, *Megatrends*, NY: Warner Books, 1984 p. 261). Our style of Sunday School material and teaching needs to be appropriate to this reality, if we seek to win this world for Christ rather than just reproduce within the existing Western community. The brethren and sisters of our community and ecclesias must be the *de facto* spiritual parents of many of our children. Mere doctrinal teaching *alone* is not enough- it must be seen regularly and meaningfully and relevantly to be lived out in transformed lives. Solomon's Proverbs, although inspired by God, have so many similarities with the Psalms of his father David. It seems to me that although he was of course inspired in writing Proverbs, he chose to articulate the wisdom given him in terms which his father had used in his songs, prayers and Psalms. Thus when Solomon teaches that God must be allowed to establish or direct our way (Prov. 4:26; 16:29), he is using the same Hebrew words as in Ps. 37:23 and Ps. 119:5, when David says the same. It's as if he was given God's truth and yet he never quite made it his very own- he still articulated it in terms of the faith of his fathers. And thus he lost it in the end.

It seems to me that David didn't challenge Solomon, nor did he teach him the spirit of cross-carrying service. His big desire was that Solomon would build a temple. But Solomon loved building. Solomon built "for his pleasure", for *his* will, whereas the Kingdom of God is about doing the will / pleasure of God (2 Chron. 8:6 RV). Solomon was being taught by David to serve God in a way which only reinforced his own personality type and in ways which were already what he naturally wanted to do. It would be rather like a father teaching his young son that you serve God by playing with your train set, and nothing else is needed. Or when the son gets older, that all you have to do to serve God is to go to social events and hang out with your Christian friends. This is all too easy. The service of God *is* joyful, and yes it can be 'fun', but the essence of sinful man serving his God is struggle against his own humanity. Could it be that we in the West have often spoon fed their kids on a diet of 'safe' service. But if they are challenged to step out and put themselves on the line a bit more, particularly in the area of local witnessing, would not the harvest be a bit different? Brethren and sisters with initiative, with commitment, with the spirit of self-sacrifice rather than young adults who think that our faith is about ice cream and pizza and endless fun and games, with a bit of Bible reading thrown in? As my manner is, I am caricaturing. I know so, so many fine and committed young brethren and sisters. But perhaps there are fractions of truth and relevance in the caricature. For in the end, Christianity is not in books, church halls or Sunday School classes, but in the real world, where it is practiced and demonstrated. It is a reaching out from ourselves and our comfort zones to do something transformingly significant in the lives of those around us.

It is significant that Solomon's spiritual life has more appearance of spirituality the closer we get back to David's death. David had asked for wisdom (Ps. 119:34), and even Solomon's request for wisdom can be seen as rooted in a desire to live out parental expectation more than purely from his own volition. For David had told him: "Thou art a wise man" (1 Kings 2:9), and Solomon wanted to live up to that expectation. In other words, David's influence was extremely strong, but it decreased over the years. Yet even at the end, Solomon's wisdom stayed with him in that some aspects of his upbringing stayed with him—he could never escape from it. When he says that he has never found a truly wise woman, but he did know one wise man (Ecc. 7:28) he may well have had David in mind. Solomon keeps saying that his zealous work for the temple was the result of God's promise to David having fulfillment in him (1 Kings 8:24-26), and to some extent this was true. David earnestly prayed for Solomon to be the Messianic King (e.g Ps. 72), and therefore David asked for Solomon to be given a truly wise heart (1 Chron. 29:19). These prayers were answered in a very limited sense— in that Solomon was given great wisdom, and his Kingdom was one of the greatest types of Christ's future Kingdom. We have shown [elsewhere](#) (*Christians Unlimited in A World Waiting To Be Won*) that our prayers for others really can have an effect upon them, otherwise there would be no point in the concept of praying for others. But of course each individual has an element of spiritual freewill; we can't force others to be spiritual by our prayers; yet on the other hand, our prayers can influence their spirituality. David's prayers for Solomon is the classic example of this. Those prayers were heard most definitely, in that God helped Solomon marvellously, giving him every opportunity to develop a superb spirituality; but he failed to have the genuine personal desire to be like this in his heart, in his heart he was back in Egypt, and therefore ultimately David's desire for Solomon to be the wondrous Messianic King of his dreams had to go unfulfilled.

1 Kings 11:4,6 clearly states God's opinion that Solomon was not like David: "his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father...(he) went not fully

after the Lord, as did David his father". This double stress, bearing in mind inspiration's economic use of words, is really making a point. Yet the records of Solomon seem to be framed to show that externally, Solomon was indeed following David. 2 Chron. 8 is a passage which especially makes this point, in that it describes the actions of Solomon in the very language which is used earlier about David:

Solomon (2 Chron.)	David
8:3 "Solomon went to Hamath Zobah"	2 Sam.8:3 "David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob king of Zobah"
8:3 " and prevailed"	Same word 1 Sam.17:30
8:8 Those "whom the children of Israel consumed not, did Solomon make to pay tribute"	2 Sam.8:6 "David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts"
8:14 "He appointed according to the ordinance of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges...for so had David commanded"	1 Chron. 24:1
9:15,16	2 Sam.8:7 "David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem"

Yet notice too how in this connection how both David and Solomon dealt with the matter of chariots and horses. Solomon's weakness for horses was perhaps traceable to David's. Solomon unashamedly amassed horses and chariots, in direct disobedience to Divine command (Dt. 17:16). When David his father had captured 1000 chariots and horses, he hamstrung 900 of them and retained 100 of them (2 Sam. 8:4). He had a conscience about the matter, but thought that 90% obedience wasn't bad. And the hamstrung horses were likely used for agricultural work and especially for breeding- breeding yet more chariot horses. David's 90% obedience lead to his son's 100% disobedience in this matter of chariot horses.

Solomon prayed to God in the terms and language of his father (2 Chron. 6:41,42 cp. Ps. 132:1,8,9). He was familiar with his father's Psalms- after all, all Israel sung them. It must have been like being the son of a world-famous singer. The words were even in Solomon's subconscious it seems, for when he tells his son "Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids" (Prov. 6:4) he is alluding unconsciously, it seems (in that it is out of context) to David's promise not to give sleep to his eyes until he had found a resting place for the ark (Ps. 132:4). Solomon's zealous organization of the temple worship was an exact fulfillment of the order laid down by his father David (1 Kings 7:51; 2 Chron. 7:6; 8:14). Solomon wanted God to bless the temple as a sign of His pleasure with David his father

(e.g. 2 Chron. 6:42). Solomon's personal enthusiasm for service to God became subsumed by the huge psychological spiritual dominance of his parents. His zeal for the temple was almost purely a result of living out his father's expectation; he almost admits as much in 1 Kings 8:20: "I am risen up in the room of David my father...and have (therefore, in the context) built an house for the name of the Lord". He offered huge numbers of sacrifices when the ark was brought into the temple (1 Kings 8:63), just as David had sacrificed as the ark was brought to Zion (2 Sam. 6:13 = 1 Kings 8:5). Yet he failed to feel and know the truth of David's conclusion that God doesn't essentially want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6). David had been forced to learn that lesson through the shame of his sin with Bathsheba- Solomon was so sure of his own righteousness that he never was driven to see the inadequacy of animal sacrifice in itself, and the need in the end for the direct receipt of God's grace. It is possible that he asked for wisdom only because his father David had taught him to ask for it, just as he taught his children (Prov. 4:5-7). And even in the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, written in Solomon's later life, he still uses words and phrases which have their root in his father David- e.g. his description of women as snares in Ecc. 7:26 goes back to how his father dealt with women who were a snare (1 Sam. 18:21). And the whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai (2 Sam. 19:35). The lack of true zeal within our community, after several generations 'in the Truth', may be related to all this too. We each need to seriously examine ourselves in this connection, and know the meaning of personal conversion.

So what, then, can we learn from the attitude of Solomon's parents to him? In his early years, Solomon commented unashamedly: "I was my father's son (stating the obvious, unless Solomon was proud of the fact), tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother (Bathsheba had other children apart from Solomon, so he is exaggerating here). He taught me also (as well as Bathsheba- something remarkable for those times), and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words...neither decline from the words of my mouth...hear, O my son, and receive my sayings" (Prov. 4:3,4,10). David took time out from his busy schedule to spend time instructing his special, beloved son. And David wasn't just playing Scrabble with Solomon in the evenings; he was really drumming into that lad vital spiritual values. Solomon really respected David and loved his mother; he was without doubt the blue eyed boy to her, and he reacted accordingly. We have seen how in Prov. 31 she lays the law down with him about his girlfriends, about not marrying Gentiles, and about not drinking, yet in Song 3:11 we see Bathsheba with all her motherly pride crowning Solomon on the day of engagement to that Egyptian girl who was to be his downfall. Like David, Bathsheba taught Solomon the principles with great enthusiasm, but she allowed parental pride to make her dismiss the possibility that her son was seriously going astray. David had been described as the chiefest among ten thousand (2 Sam. 18:3), and yet this is how Solomon's illegal girlfriend describes him (Song 5:10). He had clearly told her all about his father David- and she evidently pleased Solomon by describing him as being like his father, even though she probably had never known David. He sought a wife who would be a surrogate parent rather than a help-meet. Like Bathsheba, David was a great example of obeying the Law's injunction to speak of the word to one's children at all times, but he got to the point where he was so convinced Solomon would please God and be the Messiah that he forgot all about the conditionality of the promises.

But Solomon repeatedly refers to this instruction as the words and commands of David his father; his early obedience to God's words and principles was because he wanted to follow his father, not because of any genuine response to the grace of God. He had an evident pride in the high standing with God which David his father enjoyed (2 Chron. 6:5,6,10),

which led him to automatically respect and accept David's spiritual teaching rather than figuring things out for himself. It is quite right that we should have a true spiritual respect for our elders (cp. Heb. 13:7); yet this must be balanced against developing our own faith, our own understanding of God, without being spiritually dominated by them.

Jotham is another example of this kind of thing. "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah had done" (2 Chron. 27:2). His perception of God was defined in terms of his father. Freud in his book *The Future Of An Illusion* was somehow right when he said that many people project the image of their father onto God; they see Him as defined in terms of the experience they had of their father. This is how spirituality comes to be transferred rather than developed after the direct image of God.

The Divine assessment of Solomon's spirituality makes no reference to his obedience to God's commands; rather "Solomon loved the Lord (in that he) walked in the statutes of David his father" (1 Kings 3:3)- rather than God's statutes. This perfectly explains why Solomon blandly disobeyed God's word in the very ways his father David did. Again, there are unpleasant similarities with our own position. Weaknesses which our forefathers and community have accepted without comment for generations are tolerated without a quibble; there are other issues, equally contrary to Divine principles, over which we create great complaint- simply because this is what parentally and communally we have been taught to react against. Yet the Gospel should be making us a new creation, standing independently of tradition and background conditioning. Knowing others who are doing the same should be the basis of our fellowship, rather than just belonging to the same community with the same background. It seems that Solomon didn't really reflect on who his father really was. He had an ideal image of him, choosing to overlook his failures with women. David committed the sin of presumption with Bathsheba, and yet Solomon judges Joab for committing presumptuous sin without mercy (1 Kings 2:29 cp. Ex.21:14).

The words of Prov. 4 show that Solomon's motivation for teaching God's ways to his son (Rehoboam) was because this is how his father had taught him. "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids", he exhorts his son (Prov. 6:4), in the very language used to describe his father's zeal for the building of the temple (Ps. 132:4). When he warns his son not to go in to his neighbour's wife (Prov. 6:29), this was inevitably looking back to his parents' failure. He told his son, and presumably all his sons, to keep their father's commandment and not forsake the teaching of their mother (Prov. 6:20). In this he was just blindly repeating his own experience of youth, and yet the way he repeated it was irrelevant seeing that his wives were largely Gentiles. To tell them to follow the laws of their mothers was hardly good advice. But he said it because it seemed the right thing, it was what he had been told as a child. David was motivated by a desire to fulfil the Law's command that the word should be enthusiastically taught by parents to their children. Externally, Solomon likewise obeyed the command. But he did so as a result of living out parental expectation; he did what his parents had done to him. Yet Rehoboam didn't really take Divine principles very seriously in his later life, although there is reason to think that he did so originally. And so he too lived out the spiritual experience of his father Solomon; the rot of only external spirituality snaked through those generations, until the real spirit of the Truth was lost, and only an external shell remained. There is ample evidence that this is exactly the situation in many areas today.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon comes to conclude that although he had heaped up riches, his life was vanity- indeed, all is vanity, because one doesn't know how wise will be the person to

whom one leaves their life achievements. And yet one of David's songs which Solomon must have sung went like this: "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Ps. 39:6). Solomon didn't think about the words of his dad's hymns. It took him a lifetime to learn the truth of them for himself, and by then it was too late (so it seems to me). So with us, to learn and heed wisdom rather than have to learn it all again by experience- this is one of the hardest things for us, especially if our background was in a home of truth and wisdom. David seemed to have feared that this might just be the case when he pleads with Solomon: "Solomon my son, *know thou* (i.e. experientially, personally) the God of thy father" (1 Chron. 29:8). It could also be that Psalm 127 is his Psalm for Solomon written at the very end of his life; he tells Solomon that unless God builds this house / temple, it will all be "in vain" and Solomon will but eat the bread of sorrows, labouring hard all his days for nothing. And this is very much the picture of Solomon in Ecclesiastes. David said that such labour in vain was made unnecessary by the fact that "So he giveth his beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2). 'David' means 'beloved', and it could be that David was gently trying to focus Solomon's attention on the future David who would be made to sleep / due by the Father, in order to build the real house.

David's life was full of grief, anguish and joy (2 Sam. 1:19-27; 3:33,34; 12:15-23; 18:33; 19:4; 23:13-17); whereas Solomon's life lacked any pathos, and he concludes that "what has been done is what will be done" (Ecc. 1:9). Because he sought to only follow his father, he never experienced his very own and personal experiences and growth; he did what he perceived was right not because it was what *he* wanted, but because it looked smart, and appeared in line with his father. For those raised Christian, these issues are live and difficult. On a psychological level, it appears that those without personal experience, i.e. experience which is uniquely their own, fall into destructive behaviour- and Solomon would fit that pattern. R.D. Laing comments: "If our experience is destroyed, our behaviour will be destructive" (1). And it's been observed that increasingly, modern society is creating behaviours rather than experiences (2). Typical 21st century man or woman has the Solomon syndrome- focused upon others as their heroes, endless learning from others rather than through empirical, personal experience; adopting the conclusions of others without having personally worked them through; indulging in virtual experience [especially, these days, online] rather than actual experience. Both psychology and the Biblical example of Solomon teach that all this tends to self-destructive behaviour in the end.

Solomon And The Promises To David

Solomon didn't go "fully" after Yahweh (1 Kings 11:6)- and yet this same Hebrew word is often on his lips in describing how God has "fulfilled" His promises to David through Solomon. Thus he saw the promises of God as some kind of unconditional offer of blessing- rather than grasping that their fulfilments to us actually demand a 'fulfillment' from us. So for all Solomon's references to the promises to David, he didn't see that they required something from him. And we can be so very similar, knowing God's promises and rejoicing in their fulfillment, without perceiving that this of itself requires response from us.

(1) R.D. Laing, *The Politics Of Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1967) p. 12.

(2) Martin Marty, *A Nation Of Behavers* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1976) discusses at length the relation between experience and behaviour.

David, Solomon And The Dynasty Syndrome

Of course, David was just a human being, as was Solomon. There would have inevitably been the 'dynasty' or the third and fourth generation syndrome. The father, in this case David, is raised in privation of some kind in his family of origin. Determined to give his own family more than what he had he works hard, day and night, sacrifices much, mostly his own family to build an 'empire'. But is it for them? Is he not driven as much by his own fear as his passion? Not able to trust others whom he often feels are plotting his downfall, he surrounds himself with family, cousins etc. He leaves his 'empire' to his progeny, who, having grown up in comparative luxury are not as 'driven'. "Born with a silver spoon in their mouths" they accept what they have as their right, it is their right to rule the family business etc. Because they were raised in an environment that deferred to them as heirs they are often arrogant, lacking the drive and acumen of their father, they are often self-centred dilettantes but they still have enough of their father in them to add to his fortune by merger and acquisition. By the third and fourth generation, well the dynasty is generally in decline the passion and drive having been lost almost completely. An oversimplification and generalisation I know but basically this is the framework of how the 'sins' of the fathers are passed on from one generation to the next. Then there is the passing on of dysfunction and functionality as well, through the genetic predisposition and family environment interface. The choice of partner for instance is determined by the family dynamic and the fact that they reflect what we know and love of our parents etc.

For Absalom the dynamic was different to that of Solomon, for him his father's love was his weakness which he hated due mostly to David's lack of action over the rape of Tamar. He exploited this weakness egged on no doubt by his maternal grandfather more to make his father do something to curb his own excesses and prove he loved him by giving him boundaries etc. This brings up David's family system which was highly dysfunctional, this dysfunction was passed on to the rest including Solomon's half brothers and sisters. Father's and mothers often live the lives they would of liked to have through their kids, fulfilling their fantasies. Then there's the internalisation of the parent and their family rule system, it goes on and on.

John Stibbs

7.5 Solomon: What Went Wrong?

7-5-1 Solomon's Apostacy

Throughout the record in Kings, there are copious hints that right from his early years all Solomon's spirituality was shot through with an incredible duality; his motives were partly spiritual, partly carnal - without him being the slightest bit aware of this. The degree of self-deception in that man is hard to plumb, yet he was a fervent believer in the God of Israel, zealous to lay his life down in service before Him. Solomon's lack of self-knowledge really should be a glaring warning to each of us.

Duality

Let's wade through all the evidence so as to appreciate how the very soul of Solomon was characterized by this partial spirituality, which appeared (to him and to Israel) as such wonderful commitment to the Lord.

- " *Only*" the people sacrificed in high places...and Solomon loved the Lord...*only* he sacrificed...in high places" (1 Kings 3:2,3), highlights the contradiction between Solomon's love for God and his willingness to sacrifice in the " high places" which God detested - for the Law clearly spelt out that sacrifice could only be offered in the tabernacle, at the place where Yahweh's Name was placed (Dt. 12:5-8; 14:23-25).
- Solomon later turned to alcohol for a while (Ecc. 1)- yet his girlfriend says that Solomon took her to house of wine (Song 2:4 RVmg.) whilst still young. The seeds of failure were there early on- he preached against wine in Proverbs, and yet still drunk himself.
- " Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry" (1 Kings 4:20). This combines allusions to two different passages. Clearly there is reference to the fact that the Abrahamic promises had a primary fulfillment at this time. But the final phrase refers back to Israel's idolatry with the golden calf. It is as if the dualism within Solomon at this time - in being the primary fulfillment of the seed, and yet also being apostate - was fulfilled in Israel. We see elsewhere several indications that Solomon and Israel were closely connected (cp. Christ and the church).
- Solomon's enthusiasm for Egyptian horses is clearly chronicled (1 Kings 4:26-28), although this was studied disobedience to Dt. 17:16.
- His marriage out of the faith right at the start of his reign is commented upon elsewhere. This was the beginning of Solomon's apostacy.
- The hollowness of Solomon's early worship is made all too apparent by 2 Chron. 1:3-6; he worshipped in a tabernacle without the ark (i.e. the presence of God). The children of the Arab tribes "that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute" (1 Kings 9:21) suggests that Solomon made the same mistake as Israel in earlier days- he was a satisficer, he himself married into those tribes, and he wasn't obedient to the clear covenant of the land which was binding upon him.

The apostate religious system called " Babylon" in Revelation is evidently presented in the language of Solomon - at the time his kingdom was apparently flourishing, due to his righteousness:

1 Kings	Revelation
10:14	13:17,18
10:23	18:11,12,15
11:1,2	17:1,2
10:22	18:17,19
10:23	18:3,17

10:21,22	18:12
10:11	18:12
10:22	18:12
10:10,25	18:13
10:23	18:3,9
10:28	18:12
9:22	18:13
11:1,5 (Solomon influenced by Zidonian idolatry)	2:20 cp. 1 Kings 16:31
2 Chron. 9:15 (666)	13:18

The description of Solomon's trading with Egypt is described with an unusual phrase- he brought forth chariots and horses out of Egypt by his hand (1 Kings 10:29). But the Hebrew phrase 'to bring forth by the hand' is used so very often to describe how God's mighty hand brought forth His people from Egypt- destroying the horses and chariots of Egypt in the process (Ex. 7:4,5; 13:3,14,16; 14:8; 32:11 and so often). This is such a major theme in Biblical history that the inspired choice of words is surely intentional and allusive in 1 Kings 10:29- for Solomon did the very opposite to what God did for His people. Solomon's hand brought forth and glorified the chariots and horses of Egypt, bringing them all the way from Egypt to Canaan. Solomon is thus being subtly set up as an anti-God figure- although apparently, all was well, the promises of blessing were being fulfilled etc.

God's House Versus Solomon's House

The record of Solomon's building of his own house is clearly framed to reveal the sad fact that his zeal for God's house was only an outcome of his own natural zeal and hard work; but that tremendous energy was given far more scope in achieving his own ends. So often apparently active brethren are only so because the Truth is only compounding their own naturally active characters. For example, those who naturally like travelling can seem zealous Gospel preachers. The style of the record makes this clear of Solomon:

" So was he seven years in building (God's house)...

but Solomon was building his own house thirteen years" (1 Kings 6:38; 7:1).

His own house (cp. our family and mortgage) assumed almost double the importance of God's house. In this we see Solomon's apostasy. The architectural detail given concerning Solomon's house and " the house of the forest of Lebanon" seems to be given in such a format as to compare with that concerning God's house.

The porch of Solomon's house matches that of the temple (Ez. 8:7,16), which in Ezekiel's time was a place of apostasy. Solomon's own house was undeniably larger than God's, although built with the same layout (e.g. 1 Kings 6:2 cp. 7:2; 6:36 cp. 7:12; 5:1-5 cp. 7:13). The "another court within the porch" in his house seems to have been a replica of the Most Holy within God's house (1 Kings 7:8), yet it was here that Solomon's wives worshipped their idols. Likewise the record of the foundation stones (7:10) is similar to that of the temple foundations. The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18). Worst of all, Solomon's throne seems to have been built with allusion to Yahweh's enthronement upon the praises of Israel in the Most Holy. The temple steps are mentioned in the context of the steps to Solomon's throne (2 Chron. 9:4,18).

The Temple

Solomon's House

Length: 60 cubits, breadth 20, height 30 (1 Kings 6:2)

Length: 100 cubits, breadth 50, height 30 (1 Kings 7:2)

Used cedar pillars and beams (1 Kings 6:9,10)

1 Kings 7:2

Inner court built with three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams (1 Kings 6:36 RV)

“The great court round about had three rows of hewn stones, and a row of cedar beams, like as the inner court of the house of the Lord” (1 Kings 7:12)

Hiram called in to build it (1 Kings 5:1-5)

1 Kings 7:13

The Most Holy within God's house (1 Kings 7:8)

The "another court within the porch" in his house seems to have been a replica of the Most Holy within God's house. Here Solomon's wives worshipped their idols.

Built on large foundation stones

The record of the foundation stones (7:10) is similar to that of the temple foundations.

The temple had a “porch” (Ez. 8:7,16)

The porch of Solomon's house matches that of the temple (Ez. 8:7,16), which in Ezekiel's time was a place of apostasy.

Open flowers design of the temple

The two pillars with their pomegranates and lily-work seem to have matched the open flowers of the temple, and they have ominous connections with Absalom's pillar of self-glorification (2 Sam. 18:18).

The way the record of Solomon's house follows straight on from that of God's house (1 Kings 6,7) seems to highlight the similarity between them. The house of Yahweh and Solomon's house are often spoke of together (e.g. 2 Chron. 7:11; 8:1; 9:11) to make us reflect on this. Indeed, the record of Solomon's house in 1 Kings 7:1-12 is a parenthesis out of historical

sequence; 5:2-6:38 and 7:13-9:9 are about the temple; 7:1-12 is a clear parenthesis to demonstrate Solomon's weakness.

Solomon was an enthusiast, a hard worker. Throughout Old and New Testaments (not to mention the Christian experience) works and apostasy are associated. Yet enthusiastic response to the love of God must be inevitable in the life of the true believer. In this lies the challenge of balance and correct motivation; to respond with emotion and warmth to the Gospel, yet without doing so only in ways which compound our own personality in ways which allow us to express our own personality and ambition to our own self-glorification. Our response must be to pick up the cross, to serve as we would not, to capture the spirit of service which is in Christ.

7-5-2 Solomon's Attitude To The Kingdom

It would seem from Ecclesiastes that Solomon lost any personal hope even of resurrection, and because of this he wonders why he ever initially had asked for wisdom: "I myself perceived that one event [death] happeneth to them all. Then said I in mine heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise?" (Ecc. 2:14,15 RV). "God giveth to the man that is good in his sight wisdom...this also is vanity" (Ecc. 2:26). This is a definite reference back to himself, who was given wisdom. But he now saw it as vanity, seeing there was no personal future hope. What this teaches us is that unless we personally believe we will be in the Kingdom, then all our wisdom is of no value to us personally...and in the end, we will like Solomon live a life that reflects this.

Solomon speaks in Ecclesiastes 6 of the tragedy of possessing all things but being unable to enjoy them, because fulfilling one's own natural desires one after another really isn't much of a life. And thus he came to despise the concept of eternal life: " Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good" (Ecc. 6:6). " A thousand years" was likely a figure for eternity. He conceived of eternal life as being life as we now know it; and he didn't really want to live for ever as he'd fulfilled every natural desire. There's a real warning for us here. If we see the eternity of the Kingdom as a big carrot for us, it may not actually be that motivating for us in the long run of spiritual life. It is the quality and nature of that life which is surely important to us, and not the mere infinity of it. Indeed, eternal life as we now know it would be a curse rather than a blessing.

We have shown elsewhere that Solomon saw himself as the Messianic Son of David, therefore he felt his kingdom was the Messianic Kingdom. He felt that God "hath made me an house, as he promised" to David (1 Kings 2:24). He felt that he was the fulfillment of the promises, and therefore the Kingdom had come; he failed to be awed by the greatness of the Christ to come, and abstracted and reduced His coming Kingdom into an effective nothingness. By doing so, he totally overlooked the highly conditional nature of the promises, and forgot his own proneness to failure, and the weakness of his nature. He failed to meditate upon the promises beyond what they seemed to offer him in the here and now; and the result was that he felt they were *totally* fulfilled in him: "[God had] kept with thy servant David that thou promisedst him... as it is this day... I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built an house for the name of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:20,24). He dogmatically declared to Shimei: "And King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever" (1 Kings 2:45). The way Solomon built a huge physical throne, defended by impressive lions of his own creation (1 Kings 10:19,20), rather indicates how he missed the entire point- of ruling on

God's throne, over a dynasty or 'throne' which God would perpetuate by grace; rather than establishing or creating the throne himself.

And in all this, of course, we see our warning. This may explain why he built his own house as a replica of God's house - he felt that in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant his house was God's house. Solomon's attitude to the Kingdom was that it was all here and now, and it was not so much the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of Solomon. In this Solomon may seem far removed from our experience. But with eyes half closed, discerning only the general outline, Solomon is surely in a mind-set analogous to many of us. Solomon was so sure that because of his father's righteousness, therefore God would establish him. "Mercy and truth preserve the king, and he upholdeth his throne by mercy" (Prov. 20:28 RVmg.) says as much- the promises ("mercy and truth" usually refer to God's promises) had been given to David and just because of that, Solomon was sure that *his* throne and kingdom would thereby be upheld. He forgot the crucial need for personal, obedient relationship with God. And he overlooked all the hard work that his father had done in preparing for the temple to be built- in that he claimed all glory for himself: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established" (Prov. 24:3) he said- perfectly true, but with the self-justifying twist behind the words in his case, that he had built the temple thanks to his own wisdom. Wisdom is given, he said, to the man who is pleasing to God (Ecc. 2:26)- again referring to himself. One even wonders whether he justified his many wives by reasoning that "Whoso findeth a wife [any time!] findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Prov. 18:22).

Solomon's use of his wealth to create a garden with special rivers and fruit trees was surely an attempt to reproduce Eden on earth (Ecc. 2:5,6 RV). He thought that he could buy the Kingdom, create the Kingdom paradise on earth, have it now... and so very many have fallen into the same delusion.

7-5-3 Solomon's Self-Justification

Solomon was so confident that he was or would be the Messiah that he seems to have felt that he was beyond the possibility of sinning; real self-examination and the sense of the possibility of failure just didn't exist for him. He says that the land of Israel is "blessed" because her king is the son of a noble, and she will be cursed if her ruler is a servant (Ecc. 10:16,17 RVmg.). Solomon proudly presented himself as the son of King David- and he makes a clear swipe at Jeroboam, the pretender to the throne who was a servant (1 Kings 11:26). By reasoning like this, Solomon sets himself in direct opposition to the spirit of Jesus, who declared that the servant is to be the King of all. Thus Solomon's self-justification, his self-defensiveness, his lack of focus on the future Messiah, led him to miss totally the spirit of Christ. And further, it made him into some kind of anti-Christ. The record in 1 Kings 11:31-40 brings this out clearly- God assures Solomon that he and his line will reign on the throne for ever *if* he is obedient. But he then straight away seeks to kill Jeroboam who was pretending to the throne- because he didn't pay attention to the import of God's conditional promise to him. And we too can so focus on present realities that we forget the sure promise of the Kingdom, and think that the conditional hope which we too have can only be ensured by our own politics, rather than faith and obedience.

Solomon offered sacrifices "that could not be told nor numbered for multitude" (1 Kings 8:5). This is evidently to be connected with the language of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed of Israel. It could be that Solomon thought that his generosity in

giving of his wealth was what had brought about the fulfilment of these promises- he almost forced God to fulfil them, at least in his own mind, by his generosity.

We know that the Proverbs are inspired by God, but all the same it is possible there to see Solomon's essential self-justification coming through- for so much of what he says and writes he surely thought of with reference to himself. His proverbs were in a sense his preaching and teaching to others- and yet as we can do so easily, he mixed this preaching with self-justification, a desire to prove himself to be right in the eyes of others. Many of us spent far too much of our preaching energy with this subconscious agenda.

- When he writes things like “the thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness” (Prov. 21:5), he must inevitably be connecting his own fantastic wealth / blessing with his hard work. He was justifying himself by works rather than by faith; he assumed his righteousness and acceptance with God rather than struggling through the work of faith. Yet he could say “Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom” (Prov. 23:5). He had all the right theory. Solomon was an active, industrious person by nature; and whilst all his many proverbs criticizing the lazy and glorifying the diligent are true as they stand, is there not in all this some element of self-justification, interpreting his own natural personality type as inherently righteous?
- “Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness” (Prov. 25:5) was justifying the way he killed Shimei at the establishment of his kingdom.
- “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice” (Prov. 29:2) surely refers to the way the people rejoiced at Solomon's ascension to power (2 Chron. 9:7).
- When Solomon, as the current King, wrote that "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the watercourses: He turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1), it's possible to understand this as a claim that whatever he thought in his heart was in fact from God. He played God, having convinced himself that he was somehow automatically thinking on God's behalf. This is one of the dangers of mishandling the Divine truth and wisdom which is granted us to possess. Solomon goes on to comment that "every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts" (Prov. 21:2). Is he perhaps drawing a contrast between the infallibility of the King's thought, compared to the deceit of the human heart in the population? Thus Solomon came to see himself as somehow more than human. Likewise his comment that "the wrath of a king is as angels of death" (Prov. 16:14). As God sends out angels of death, as on Passover night, it's a reflection of His decision as King in the court of Heaven. But Solomon decided that his court was as God's court, and therefore his thoughts, emotions and decisions would therefore be somehow Divinely fulfilled, with Angels sent out to fulfil them. He took 'God manifestation' to such a degree that he denied his own humanity, and this destroyed his own person. We see it happening all around us- church pastors, visual artists who think somehow God is speaking through them to the point they see themselves as "Gods in their own right" [as Dali and Picasso have been described as seeing themselves], Kings and political leaders and corporate directors and office managers and working class husbands and obsessive, domineering single mums... who all somehow come to see themselves as little gods with a 'Divine right' to infallible decision making for others.
- “The righteous considereth the cause of the poor” (Prov. 29:7) sounds like a reference to the way Solomon judged the two prostitutes.

Playing God

2 Sam. 7:14 had warned the son of David that if he sinned, he would be punished "with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men". I take this as meaning that he would be punished like ordinary men are punished- and the implication could be that Solomon would have a tendency to think that he was more than human, somehow above the possibility of failing and being punished as an ordinary man, because he might think that he was somehow 'God', or at least, that what happens to all humanity would somehow not happen to him. This tendency to assume that we are somehow different to the rest of humanity, that we can sin in a certain way but they can't, that somehow for us it will all be OK... is as alive in us as it was in Solomon.

When Solomon laments that a sinful land has many rulers, but stability comes from a wise ruler (Prov. 28:2), he is stating an inspired truth; but it is inevitable that he framed it in such terms as justified his own dictatorial rule, as if his wisdom justified him in crushing any opposition leaders. It was really Solomon's self-justification. Solomon taught that the heart of kings is unsearchable, i.e., it cannot be examined (Prov. 25:3 Heb.), being as far above the earth as heaven is. This sums up the concerns I've been expressing. Solomon thought that his possession of theoretical wisdom placed him in a God-like position above his people, and therefore they dare not even begin to question him or examine him; and none should therefore dare to 'put himself forth' in the King's presence (Prov. 25:6). Truly, "knowledge puffs up". And our very possession of 'the truth' of Christ and the word of God carries with it the same potential temptations, leading us to consider the world so far beneath us, that we can do what we wish with no accountability to anyone. And so brethren with amazing Biblical knowledge end up in court for paedophilia, etc etc.

Likewise Prov. 29:14: "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever". Solomon is clearly referring to the promises to David, which he assumed were about him. He thought that because he had judged the poor harlots wisely, therefore he would be the promised Messiah. And this was just what David his father had hoped and expected of him. David had even asked Solomon to "do wisely" i.e. to show wisdom, in order that the promises to him about Messiah would be fulfilled (1 Kings 2:3 RVmg.). So *this* was surely one of Solomon's motives in giving them justice and being 'wise'; he sought to live out his father's expectations and to fulfil the requirements of the Messiah figure. Solomon uses language elsewhere used about Messiah's final judgment when he says that "A wise king winnoweth the wicked, and bringeth the threshing wheel over them" (Prov. 20:26 RV). He felt that his judgment must be that of God, therefore he had to be right, because he 'had wisdom', he 'had the truth'; he assumed that because he was the king, therefore his heart would inevitably be guided by the Lord (Prov. 21:1). Prov. 20:28 also speak as if Solomon was somehow automatically the king promised to David: "Mercy and truth [a phrase elsewhere used about the promises] preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy". And again, Prov. 16:12: "The throne is established by righteousness". This cannot be without reference to the fact that Solomon's throne was "established"- and he assumed it was thanks to his righteousness, and his father's good standing with God. *Faith* and an acceptance of God's grace in doing this just didn't come into it. His father's high parental expectation of him led him to self-assurance, arrogance, an assumption he was right and could never be wrong. And one sees this in many a Christian family. This self-assurance of Solomon's was refelected in how *he* brought up his children. He spoke of *his* law as giving life and blessing, appropriating the very terms of Deuteronomy about the blessings of obedience to *God's* law. Wisdom said: "Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me: for blessed are they that keep my ways" (Prov. 8:32 RV). Yet these are the very words Solomon uses when talking to his kids: "Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me" (Prov. 5:7; 7:24).

Conclusion? Solomon sees the woman “Wisdom” as a personification of himself. It was really Solomon's self-justification. *He personally* was wisdom, so he thought. This is how self-exalted his possession of true wisdom made him. And of course, his kids *didn't* listen to wisdom's way. In passing, I have noted that those raised ‘in the truth’ often find it very hard to take criticism in later life. They find tolerance of others’ views hard; they perceive themselves to be right to an intolerant extent. Is this not a little bit of the Solomon syndrome?

Solomon writes inspired truth in Proverbs of course, but it is inevitable that much of what he writes about the need to respect the man who has wisdom, and his superiority over all others, was written with an eye to his own self-justification. He even writes as if the king must be accepted as automatically infallible: “A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; his mouth transgresseth not in judgment...the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul” (Prov. 16:10; 20:2). It was really Solomon's self-justification.

Often Solomon's Proverbs bring out the tension between wealth and wisdom, and the need to chose wisdom (Prov. 8:11; 16:16). But whilst he was inspired to write this, and true as it all was, it is inevitable that Solomon said all this with his mind on the way that he had rejected wealth for wisdom when asked by God for his wish. He thought that his right choice in early life [cp. Christian baptism] justified him in later loving wealth rather than wisdom. He taught that wisdom filled the treasuries of the wise (Prov. 8:21 RV)- just as his treasuries were filled with wealth. He says that a wise son makes a glad father(Prov. 10:1), so intent was he on living out his father's expectations even after David's death. Because of this he teaches that the King must always be right and be respected, whatever happens (Prov. 16:10-15). He saw himself as the Messianic King and therefore infallible. He again and again failed to realize the conditionality of all God has promised. His own words were so true of him: “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing [quoted in Rev. 3:17 about the rejected]: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth” (Prov. 13:7). This last phrase is quoted about the Lord Jesus, who made Himself poor on the cross. And yet Solomon, who made himself rich, is the very anti-Christ.

Thanks to his spiritual wisdom and works, his success in this life, the concept of a future kingdom meant nothing to him. He didn't need it; he had what he wanted spiritually and materially. The RV says that Ps. 72 is a Psalm *of* Solomon- in which case we have him asking God to give him the throne, in return for which he would establish the Messianic Kingdom. His judging of the poor harlots would therefore have been in conscious fulfilment of the predictions he himself had made as to what his Messianic Kingdom would be like- as a time when the poor would be judged by him (Ps. 72:4,13). He came to articulate God's Kingdom in terms of how he wanted *his* Kingdom to be. It could be truly said that there is an urgent need for us to be convicted - deeply convicted - of our desperate need for the person of Jesus, His second coming and Messianic Kingdom. Solomon was so obsessed with himself, so inward-looking, so sure of his spiritual pedigree, so sure of the intellectual correctness of his spiritual knowledge that his *need* for salvation didn't enter his heart. Because he never publicly sinned (unlike David) he lacked the awareness of his own sinfulness which would have helped him realize he was only a primary fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Lack of awareness of our own sinfulness is connected with a lack of true enthusiasm for the Messianic Kingdom. Because he thought the kingdom was with him, Solomon evidently failed to discern the chronic need of his own nature, both physically and morally.

Many passages in Solomon's writings seem to indirectly and subtly justify himself. They may be perfectly true, reflecting the wisdom of God, and yet he was using his knowledge of God's Truth to justify himself as being right- instead of being humbled by wisdom and the true knowledge of God. Consider: "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge" (Ecc. 2:26). He didn't want to understand that God's offer to him as a young man, and his grant to him of wisdom, was by pure grace. Solomon suggests that his mere possession of truth made him a "good" man. He said that a King "who maketh himself servant to the cultivated field" brings profit to the land (Ecc. 5:9 RVmg.)- as if he was justifying his zealous commitment to agriculture and considering the people of God to be so blessed by his presence amongst them. The mere possession of wisdom, of intellectual truth, can so easily lead us to this kind of empty self-congratulation. It was really Solomon's self-justification.

Facing up to the problem of our own nature is one sure way to revive our longing for the Kingdom. All around us this world is offering us a pseudo-kingdom, the kingdom of Satan, of anti-Christ (Isa. 36:16 cp. Mic. 4:1,2). To maintain a true enthusiasm for the Kingdom is one of the greatest and most fundamental art forms of the spiritual life. Just reflecting on the physicalities - or the likely physicalities - of the brief Millennium will not be enough to keep the flame burning down the years. There *must* be a real appreciation of our desperate moral and physical need for it, on a deeply individual level. Solomon's Kingdom was in fact only a fake replica of the true Kingdom of God. Thus the record stresses that he built cities "with walls, gates and bars" (2 Chron. 8:5)- the very *opposite* of how things would be in God's Kingdom. The whole of his kingdom was built on the backs of slave labour- firstly, of the Gentiles in the land (2 Chron. 8:8 RV), and then later of God's own people. The Gentiles should either have been put to death, or welcomed into the brotherhood of Israel- but to put them to slave labour was only repeating a classic mistake and sin of his forefathers (Josh. 16:10 RV). There was something written about all his achievements from the very beginning. Yet it was all shrouded behind a sanctimonious observance of God's law, offering offerings strictly "as the duty of every day required" (2 Chron. 8:13 RV), practicing guilt by association in insisting that his Gentile wife "shall not dwell in the house of David...because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come" (2 Chron. 8:11). All this practicing of both contamination and holiness by contact all merely veiled Solomon's inner bankruptcy. And it is not so difficult to see the very same problems and symptoms playing out amongst God's children in these latter days.

Solomon's lack of zeal for the kingdom becomes increasingly apparent the more we analyse his writings and history. "Let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude" (2 Chron. 1:9 = Gen. 13:16) sounds as if Solomon thought he was the ultimate ("established") fulfilment of the promises to both David and Abraham. David's belief that Ps. 72 applied totally to Solomon would have encouraged him in this. Solomon felt that the fact that he was the great Son of David and had had the promises made to him justified all his actions: "As the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David...and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death" (1 Kings 2:24).

Note how Solomon later prayed God *would* establish him as the prophesied Son of David (2 Chron. 1:9); but in his heart he had already decided that this was true anyway. Once again we see a false spiritual humility. Solomon's building of exotic gardens with "all kind of fruit" (Ecc. 2:5) sounds as if he was attempting to reconstruct Eden; he was so carried away with expressing his own abilities that he effectively created his own kingdom in this life. It seems Solomon's crazy programme of building and moral experimentation (outlined in Ecc.

2) began after he had finished building the temple. He seems to have got cynical and depressed after that; he had his kingdom in this life; he looked back and compared himself with others (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9), and thereby he became proud. He could see that materially and spiritually (in terms of knowledge) he had far, far outstripped all God's previous servants. It was this comparison with others (there is triple emphasis on it) which well indicates his pride.

The Death Of Conscience

Even when married to Gentile women, Solomon could charge his son to "observe my ways. For... a strange [Gentile] woman is a narrow pit" (Prov. 23:26,27). The fact he himself had fallen into the pit of marriage to unbelievers just didn't seem to occur to him; he was sure that he was in fact an upright example. This passage reflects more than many the extent to which Solomon's conscience was so deeply damaged. For he wasn't saying 'Do as I say but not as I do'. He was beyond that- doing the very wrong that he warned others not to do, and confidently presenting himself to them as a good example. It's interesting how often in Proverbs that Solomon warns about only eating a limited amount of the honey you may find (e.g. Prov. 25:16). Yet Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 show how Solomon found honey as it were, he had the opportunity to do and experience what he wanted- and he ate so much he became spiritually sick.

7-5-4 Solomon's Attitude To Being King

The promises to David involved the establishment of Solomon's throne. But God had declared clearly enough that this depended upon Solomon's personal spirituality. But he wilfully failed to see this, deciding that: "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness" (Prov. 25:5). He externalized righteousness, believing in a form of guilt-by-association, which the righteous would avoid. He redefined righteousness not as anything personal, but a separation from sinners. And there is no lack of evidence that our community has in places and at times fallen into some similar form of legalism. Solomon is described as having placed a "heavy yoke" upon God's people (2 Chron. 10:4). The Lord alluded to this when He said that *He* places a light yoke upon men, in contrast to the heavy yoke of the Pharisees. The Lord clearly read Solomon as a legalist. And also as someone who, although a type of Him, was also an anti-Christ in his legalism and harshness.

Solomon was so sure that he was acceptable with God by reason of being David's son, that he ended up playing God. He did this by assuming that *his* feelings were actually those of God. When he says, with reference to himself, that "the wrath of a king is as messengers [angels] of death" (Prov. 16:14), he meant that his feelings of anger would, he thought, be implemented by the Angels. He assumed, with reference to himself, that "a divine sentence is in the lips of the King" (Prov. 16:10). He was infallible, because of who he was, because he 'knew the truth', and had been raised in it, and was 'to the manner born'. So he thought. And thus he ended up appropriating to himself language relevant to God alone: "In the light of the King's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain" (Prov. 16:15).

Solomon evidently considered that the promise to "establish [his] throne" was more conditional upon him ridding himself of association with sinners than personal righteousness: "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness" (Prov. 25:5). His concept of righteousness was not God's. He forgot all about

personal holiness, and instead focused upon not being guilty by association with sinners. And he thought this would justify him as righteous. The same error has been made so many times since. For how often has it happened that brethren who have had the most to say about separation from "the wicked" reveal personal lives which are anything but righteous. Solomon's attitude to being king was similar.

7-5-5 Solomon And Pride

It must be more than ironic that it was Solomon who wrote that before a fall there is pride (Prov. 16:18). Clearly Solomon never considered he could fall, so he never considered the possibility that he was proud. The words of Dt. 17:16-20 are evidently a prophecy of Solomon. He did multiply silver, gold, horses and wives; his heart *was* turned away (Dt. 17:16,17= 2 Chron. 9:20). Yet this passage says that if he studied the Law all his life, this would *not* happen, and also his heart would not be "lifted up above his brethren" (v. 20). Solomon's whipping of the people and sense of spiritual and material superiority (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9) shows how his heart *was* lifted up. Yet Solomon knew the Law, despite his explicit disobedience to the commands concerning wives, horses etc. But his knowledge of the word didn't bring forth the true humility which it was intended to.

This, surely, is what we need exhortation about: the need to achieve a true humility in this evil, arrogant world. Solomon *assumed* he wasn't proud; he assumed the word was having its intended effect upon him. Such spiritual assumption is a major temptation for every child of God. The fact that Solomon's pride is only inferred is a reflection of the fact that his pride was not publicly apparent, either to himself or to Israel; we learn of it indirectly through Dt. 17:16-20.

A similar indirect allusion to it is found in Isa. 2:6-13, a passage which condemns Israel for their pride whilst making many allusions to Solomon: "Full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures...full of horses...chariots...idols...the work of their own hands...the cedars of Lebanon" (i.e. Solomon's armoury of 1 Kings 7:2,3; 10:17).

We have shown elsewhere that much of Solomon's apparent humility concerning God's inability to live in the temple he had built was actually in contradiction of the fact that Solomon believed that God would fully dwell in it. Consider just one example of this contradiction: "I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever...but will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven...cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" (2 Chron. 6:2,18). Solomon knew the theory of humility - he wrote much about it in Proverbs. But Solomon and pride go together. From the Law he knew the theory of God's greatness and man's inability to please Him by works. He knew it so well that he probably half meant it when he said it. But he only half meant it at best. The real possibility that he might be proud, that he might not appreciate the true greatness, the moral splendour of Yahweh, was just not present in him.

Another example of indirect reference to Solomon's pride is found in the way the record points a similarity between Paul and Solomon. Each was given wisdom, and each was given a Satan to humble them because of the way wisdom bloats a man's ego. The fact that we have 'the truth' in basic doctrinal terms - plus a fair bit of other Divine wisdom - really will tempt us to be proud. This is the sort of thing we individually and collectively need to exhort ourselves strongly about. Like us, Solomon knew theoretically the paramount danger of pride; he lists it as the most fundamental of the seven things God hates (Prov. 6:17 cp.

16:5,18). Indeed, Solomon correctly implies in Prov. 28:25 that pride is an outcome of lack of faith, and this was exactly true in Solomon's case. His lack of faith in the future kingdom led him to be proud.

Again, the Lord Jesus likewise hinted indirectly at Solomon's pride when he said that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one wild flower, symbolic of how God would clothe, with imputed righteousness, even the weakest believer (Matt. 6:29,30).

This reference to Solomon in Matt. 6:29 is only one of several hints that our Lord read Solomon in a negative light. He goes on to warn against excessive attention to food, drink and clothes (Matt. 6:31) - all things which the court of Solomon revelled in to a quite extraordinary extent. "Take therefore no (anxious) thought for the morrow...sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34) sounds like a rebuke of the way Solomon did just this in Ecclesiastes, as he intellectually battled with the sadness of knowing that all his achievements would mean nothing in the future. "But", says Jesus, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33) - clearly a reference to Solomon seeking Divine wisdom and subsequently being blessed; surely the Lord is telling us to follow Solomon's example in this, but to avoid his pride and materialism. Solomon didn't seek the future Kingdom but his own. The Lord taught that we should love our enemies, and not fall into the trap of only loving those who love us (Mt. 5:44-46). He seems to be alluding here to Solomon's claim that wisdom says: "I love them that love me" (Prov. 8:17). Maybe I'm wrong, and the Lord didn't have His mind there on that passage; but in the context of Him re-interpreting and re-presenting Solomon to us, it seems likely that He was consciously showing that God's grace is in fact the very opposite of what Solomon thought. God loves His enemies, and doesn't only love those who love Him; and this is to be our credo likewise.

The record of how Solomon spoke of his building of the temple can now be seen as blatant pride in his external appearance of spirituality; without the foregoing analysis of the *hints* of Solomon's pride, this wouldn't necessarily be a correct conclusion to reach; but with all these inspired links, surely we can read the following as pure pride: "Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven (hardly praying in his closet! Was Christ alluding to Solomon in Mt. 6:6?)...the house that I have built for thy name" (1 Kings 8:22,44). Solomon's frequent emphasis on the fact that *he* built the house makes a telling connection with the principle that God does not live in houses *built* by men (Acts 17:24?) Solomon's public declaration concerning his zealous intention to build the temple (1 Kings 5:5 AV mg.) was surely unbecoming for a truly humble man. The way the Queen of Sheba was given a guided tour of Solomon's wealth makes ominous connection with Hezekiah's proud parading of his blessings to the Babylonian ambassadors.

7-5-6 Solomon's Materialism And Self-fulfilment

Solomon's obsession with building the temple and his own houses shows a massive attraction towards material things. Ecc.2 chronicles how he crazily tried to accumulate every branch of material possession. Solomon figuratively chastised the people with whips in the form of the excessive tax he raised in order to build store cities (1 Kings 9:15,19), in which to store all his accumulation. Surely this is behind the Lord's parable of the rich fool, devoid of wisdom in practice, who built ever bigger barns because of his lack of understanding about the future Kingdom. The Hebrew for "store cities" (2 Chron.8:6) is also translated "to heap up",

strengthening the connection with the rich fool (Lk.12:15-28). That parable stresses the self-centredness of the fool- just circle all the occurrences of the word " I" . A similar over-use of personal pronouns in Ecc.2:4-8 makes the same point. Ecc.2:26 records how Solomon reflected that the sinner " heaped up" treasures- using the same word as for his " *store* cities" . He saw his error, but wasn't bothered to do anything about it.

Of course, Solomon no doubt created some kind of spiritual justification for his materialism and self-fulfilment. He would have seen it as God's blessing of him with the Messianic Kingdom. This emphasis on material things led Solomon to fail to see the concept of Christ as the future Saviour, and the way in which the things of this life should be seen as pointing forward to the reality of Christ and his Kingdom. Solomon's mass personal sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep was not only a public flaunting of his supposed spirituality. It was also indirectly alluded to by the Spirit in Heb. 10:6, where God says that He has no pleasure in such mass sacrifices. Instead God desires true spirituality and an appreciation that these sacrifices pointed forward to the blood of Christ. Likewise our materialism and self-fulfilment takes our concentration away from the reality and power of Christ's sacrifice. Solomon was self-centred rather than Christ centred, his obsession with his own works led him to ignore his desperate need for the blood of the one true sacrifice. And ditto for many of us. How up to date is the warning of Solomon!

Solomon had what we might call obsessive tendencies. We know that he became addicted to finding pleasure in women, and Ecc.2 shows him racing down the road of obsession with architecture, alcohol, food, gold etc. The historical narratives so often mention his gold and silver (eg 2 Chron. 9:13,14,15,16,17,18,20,21,24,27). This repetition reflects Solomon's obsession. The same fact explains the record's repetition of Solomon's enthusiasm for horses (1 Kings 10:26,29; 4:26,28; 9:19,22; 10:25,28; 2 Chron.1:14,16,17; 8:6,9; 9:24,25,28). Yet amassing of gold, silver and horses was explicitly forbidden for the King of Israel (Dt.17:17). There is a powerful point to be made here: we can deceive ourselves that God is blessing us, when actually we are breaching explicit commands. Would Solomon had understood the concept of self-examination.

Most people spend their lives pushing down one or two avenues of self-fulfilment- to own a large home, a nice car (cp. horses and chariots), to achieve some level of sexual and domestic fulfilment, financial power etc. Solomon fantastically succeeded in all these avenues- and came to realize that still he was unfulfilled. He became a workaholic, rejoicing in his own labour- but that too, as many a middle aged man can testify, brought nothing (Ecc. 2:10). If only we can perceive it, Solomon provides a fantastic challenge. If we believe the Biblical record of Solomon, none of these avenues will hold much attraction for us any more. But our community- the young especially- throw the majority of their energy into one or two of these avenues. Just a handful who learn the lesson of Solomon could turn the world upside down for Christ- especially given the financial and linguistic possibilities of our age. Yet in all such aspirations to burning zeal and achievement (would we had more of it!), the other lessons of Solomon must be learnt. His building of the temple was " all *Solomon's* desire which he was pleased to do" (1 Kings 9:1). There is a semantic connection between the Hebrew words for " desire" and " pleased" - the point of which is to emphasize that Solomon's work for God was only an expression of his own zest for self-fulfilment; he served the Truth in ways which only confirmed his own natural inclinations. Appreciating the spirit and blood of Christ, his own weakness, the grace of God, and the subsequent desire to live a life of self sacrifice, of carrying a cross in ways we wouldn't naturally chose- this was all foreign to Solomon. And is it so foreign to us? Solomon's materialism and self-fulfilment are sure warnings to our age.

7-5-7 Solomon And Wisdom

Solomon's Attitude To True Wisdom

Proverbs has so very many examples of Solomon teaching the very wisdom which he himself so categorically refused to obey, not least in the area of the "strange [Gentile] woman".

Solomon married "strange women" i.e. Gentiles (1 Kings 11:1) and was led astray by them. Yet at the very time he was marrying them, he wrote in his wisdom that the words of wisdom would preserve / keep / defend a Jewish man from being damaged by them (Prov. 2:16; 6:24; 7:5). The connection would seem to suggest that Solomon reasoned that because he had wisdom, because he had 'the truth', he could therefore enjoy these "strange women" without them corrupting *his* heart; because *he* had wisdom. Thus he thought that mere possession of Divine truth was some kind of insurance policy against moral sin being counted to him. And so many have gone down this road; so many who knew more true theology than many have at the same time made an awful mess of their personal lives, just as Solomon did. This is why the higher one goes in the echelons of Christian organizations, the greater the learning and knowledge a person has, the more powerful is the tendency towards gross hypocrisy in moral terms. The point is, of course, that all the knowledge of God which we quite rightly seek after must be *personally applied*. The very possession of it and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it. He foretold that the people would sigh when a wicked man ruled them (Prov. 29:2 RV)- and they did "sigh" because of the heavy burdens he placed upon them (1 Kings 12:4). He imposed the "yoke" of tribute upon the people (2 Chron. 10:4), whereas he himself had warned that a king that imposes tribute on his people "overthrows" a country (Prov. 29:4 RV mg.). He saw it all as true- and yet it was far from him personally.

Solomon forgot that his wisdom was a gift from God; he speaks in Ecc. 1:16 of how "I have gotten me great wisdom" (RV). His possession of truth led him to the assumption that this was a reward for his own diligence; whereas it was a gift by grace. Yet he himself knew that the wisdom given *by God* brings joy, whereas human wisdom leads to the grief and depression which afflicted Solomon (Ecc. 1:18 cp. 2:26). Solomon 'had the truth', he knew so deeply the true principles of Yahweh worship. But like us, he scarcely considered the enormity of the gap between the theory he knew and the practice of it in his own heart and living. We too have a tendency to build up masses of Biblical and spiritual knowledge, and to let the mere acquisition of it stop us from practicing it. He flouted the explicit commandments not to get horses from Egypt, not to marry Gentile women, and not to multiply silver and gold (Dt. 17:17,18 cp. 1 Kings 10:21-29). At the end of his days, he recognized that although he had loved the theory of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted his soul: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me" (Ecc. 7:23). His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom. In Prov. 19:12 he speaks as if his own wisdom was like the dew coming down- as if he felt that the mere possession of wisdom made him the Messiah figure which his father had so hoped for him to be in Ps. 72:6). And he says as much in Prov. 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom [exactly what Solomon was commended for doing] rejoiceth his father". He saw his wisdom and knowledge as some sort of a reward in themselves: "the prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:18). This is of course true in a sense, as all the Proverbs are. But Solomon surely had the idea that he, who was so renowned for his knowledge, was somehow thereby rewarded by having it. This assumption by Solomon was likely behind each of the

many references he makes to the value of wisdom and the blessedness of the man who has it. It is rather like feeling that 'we have the truth' because somehow our correct understanding of doctrines is a reward for our righteousness, and mere possession of doctrinal truth means that we are acceptable to God.

The description of the " largeness" of heart in 1 Kings 4:29 uses the same word used about the largeness of the land of Israel in Ex. 3:8; Neh. 9:35; his wisdom was " as the sand that is on the sea shore" (1 Kings 4:29) as Israel were described in Gen. 22:17. Even in his spiritual collapse at the time of Ecclesiastes, Solomon still taught Israel true wisdom, and organized his wisdom into more accessible books (Ecc. 12:9-12), giving himself the title "koheleth" ('the preacher'). And yet he himself tried alcohol, wealth, women, indeed every addiction, in order to "see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven" (Ecc. 2:3). And yet he knew from childhood the conclusion of the matter-man's duty is to fear God and be obedient (Ecc. 12:13). He who had been given wisdom started out in a search for it... showing clearly enough that what he knew was so much theory, but never touched his own heart. Solomon taught wisdom to the youngsters, but he gave himself over to search for some kind of vague philosophical truth outside of God.

Having admitted his wisdom was " far from me" personally, Solomon then recognized that he was a mixture of wise saint in theory, and utter sinner in practice: " God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge and joy (as he did to Solomon, Song 3:11)...but to the sinner he giveth travail (as Solomon complained he had in Ecclesiastes, 1:13; 2:23; 3:10; 4:4), to gather and to heap up (the same word is used re. Solomon's " store cities") " (Ecc. 2:26). Yet Solomon wasn't bothered to do anything about his chronic 'little of both' syndrome- a temptation many of us must know keenly. He knew that he had been given Divine wisdom, but the wonder of it meant little to him; he became so accustomed to using it for the benefit of others and sharing it with them that it became meaningless for him personally. The way this wisdom was "far from me" is truly tragic to behold in Solomon. He had spoken by that wisdom in Proverbs of bringing up a child in the way he should go; whereas by the time of Ecc. 2:19 and his experience with his own children, he comments about his heir: "Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?". He simply didn't see the relevance of his wisdom to his own personal family life. Yet he proudly insisted: "Who is as the wise man?", as if the possession of theoretical truth and wisdom was the ultimate possession; and he then goes on to say that this made him beyond criticism (Ecc. 8:2-4). This surely *must* be a danger for any community or individual who considers they have "the truth" and who considers the possession of it to be of the utmost importance.

" What hath the wise more than the fool?" (Ecc. 6:8) shows how effectively he despised his wisdom; he lost sight of the Kingdom which it led to ultimately, and the God manifestation which it could enable in this life. He had written in his Proverbs that the ruler who lacks wisdom will oppress his people (28:16); and although his wisdom remained with him right to the end, in terms of knowledge (Ecc. 2:9; 12:10), yet at the end end of his reign Solomon was the ruler who did oppress his people. And he had gone on in Prov. 28:16 to warn against covetousness in a ruler, even though he went ahead with practicing every conceivable form of it in Ecc. 2. "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh" (Ecc. 11:10) Solomon taught- and yet Solomon in Ecclesiastes is the very picture of such a person. Like the lung cancer specialist who smokes, the experienced pilot who takes off with frozen wings and then crashes, so Solomon's very wisdom somehow disinclined him to living it out in practice. This is the perversity of our nature- the higher we may rise, the deeper we

are inclined to fall. Further than all this, Solomon even seems to have come close to despising the wisdom he had been given. He refers to himself when he writes at the end of his life of the man whose labour is in wisdom [cp. his labouring to write out so many Proverbs], and yet it is all pointless in that he will leave it all to a fool after him- he had already seen the unspirituality of his children (Ecc. 2:21). This thinking reflects a perception that his wisdom was totally irrelevant to himself- he wrote it all down for others, but not for himself. Right at the end of Ecclesiastes he chuffles that he still preaches his wisdom to the youth, although he himself has the attitude that it is all meaningless. This is one explanation of the paradox within Ecclesiastes- the teaching of Divine truth, whilst lamenting the pointlessness of it.

The blasphemy of those statements in Ecclesiastes that wisdom is meaningless is hard to plumb. Deep within his heart, Solomon's attitude was that "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me (the man made wise by God); and why was I then more wise?" (Ecc.2:15). Ecc.7:16 is in similar vein: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise" - even though wisdom and righteousness are what God desires from us above all! This despising of wisdom and the truly spiritually ambitious life was due to Solomon's lack of faith in a resurrection; he had his kingdom in this life, and he failed to see the blinding necessity of a resurrection, judgment and change of nature. In the end, Solomon felt that for himself, it was as well to be righteous as to be wicked, for in death there was no further difference (Ecc. 9:2,5,9). He knows judgment will come (Ecc. 11:9), at least for the young people, but he reasons as if it won't- at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (Ecc. 2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. But in 7:12 he says that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But then again in 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, it's benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. I don't see these different perspectives as being the difference between life in the world and life in the spiritual realm. They are all spoken *with conviction* by Solomon, which, to my mind, ruins the idea that he himself believed the Truth but was simply outlining what life is like without God. He advocates both ways. My resolution of this is that he knew and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice. His final recommendation in Ecc. 12 is for young people to go the way of wisdom, as this is their duty. He had evidently minimized the coming of judgment, as his obsession with himself being the Messiah had lead him to minimize the reality of the coming of Christ. How deeply do we struggle with our own humanity, and deeply long for the second coming? Has our materialism made the Hope of the Kingdom mean practically nothing? Solomon's complaint at the pointlessness of wisdom in Ecc. 2:15-20 is liberally sprinkled with personal pronouns; his self-centredness was part of his materialism and lack of faith in the Kingdom. And for us too, familiarity with the glorious principles of Divine Truth with which we have been entrusted can lead us to the blasphemy of saying, in effect, that those principles are unimportant; they come to mean little to us personally, and thereby we effectively deny their value and worth.

Because of all this, despite having such knowledge and wisdom with which to rule Israel (for this was the primary purpose of the gift of wisdom to him), Solomon oppressed his people. With evident reference to himself, he commented: "Because the king's word hath power, who may say unto him, What doest thou?" (Ecc. 8:4 RV). It is only God who cannot be questioned in this way. But Solomon felt that because he possessed God's wisdom, he could therefore act as God: "I counsel thee, Keep the King's command, and that in regard of the

oath of God" (Ecc. 8:2) could suggest that he thought that his commandments were in fact God's. So the possession of Truth, which we too have, can lead to an incredible arrogance, a lack of openness to others' comments upon us, and a certainty that *we* are right in all that we do and are beyond criticism. The hardness of a man is changed by true wisdom (Ecc. 8:1 RV), but knowing this, Solomon became hard hearted. He had the wisdom- but as he said, it was far from him personally.

Solomon made the classic mistake of assuming that his will and word were effectively equivalent to the word of God. In Prov. 6:21 he speaks of the need to bind the law about your heart and neck; but in Song 8:6 he asks his Gentile lover to "set ME as a seal upon thine heart" and arm. And often in Proverbs he uses the language of the blessings for keeping God's law and turns them into the blessings for keeping *his* law; e.g. "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart" (Prov. 7:1,2). And we all do the same in essence, whenever we assume that our consciences are effectively the will of God; when we 'play God' by allowing our words and will to count as if they are *His* word. Even early on, Solomon had a way of spinning things, even God's word, in his own selfish way. David had insisted that God had told him that he couldn't build the temple because he had shed so much blood in war (1 Chron. 22:8). But Solomon just slightly spins this when he asks Hiram to come and help him build the temple, because, he says, his father David hadn't had the time to get around to the job because of being busy fighting wars (1 Kings 5:3). He says nothing about David shedding blood; the moral aspect of it all is nicely ignored by Solomon.

Theory And Practice

Dt. 17:17-20 is a warning to the King of Israel not to multiply horses and wives, lest his heart be turned away. It's a conscious prediction of Solomon's apostasy. But one result of such behaviour would be that the King's heart would be "lifted up" above his brethren (Dt. 17:20)- and this is exactly what happened to Solomon. He came to see himself as somehow above the rest of humanity, to the extent that he was convinced that he was acceptable to God, and that he could abuse his brethren because...he had wisdom. Significantly, Solomon uses the same Hebrew word translated "lifted up" in Dt. 17:20 in Prov. 4:8, when he speaks of how the possession of wisdom will "exalt" or lift up a person. He came to think that his mere possession of true wisdom gave him a superiority over others, and thus he was lifted up above his brethren. There are major warnings here for us, who for generations have possessed more Bible truth than any other church on earth. It *has*, sadly, led to a lifting up of many of our hearts above our fellow man and even our fellow brethren... Yet this doesn't take away from the wonderful truth of it all.

For Solomon, his "wisdom" was merely knowledge. The promises to David, the hope of the Kingdom, had no personal bite for him. He muses that "there is a time" for everything (Ecc. 3:1-7), as if his nihilism led him conclude that all behaviour is somehow predestined, all is cyclical, nothing is ultimately new, and even God is caught up in this- for "God seeks again that which He has driven away" (Ecc. 3:15). As water goes around the water cycle (Ecc. 1:7), so everything repeats, things just happen to us (Ecc. 3:1-8), there will be no resurrection, no coming back (Ecc. 3:22 RV); and there is therefore no real point in endeavour (Ecc. 3:9). This attitude reveals a pathetic failure to let the knowledge of God dynamically impact daily life; there's no appreciation of the Spirit, of God's radical life co-joining with human life, of

His mind meeting that of man. Leaving knowledge as mere theory, as so much Bible study can too easily remain, is a dangerous thing. And Solomon is the parade example of it.

Solomon's Attitude To The Bible

Solomon's lack of sensitivity to God's word led him to be tragically insensitive to people; in short, he showed no love. The way Solomon raised a "levy" or tribute from Israel, whereby the men of Israel had to serve him one month out of three and 'bear burdens', with 3,300 taskmasters over them (1 Kings 5:13-15), who 'bore rule' over (Heb. 'trampled down') the people (1 Kings 5:16)... is all reminiscent of Samuel's warning about the kind of King which Israel would have. And the language also recalls their bondage in Egypt; note that the levy was also in order to build treasure cities for Solomon, just as Pharaoh did (1 Kings 9:19). The Hebrew word for "levy" in 1 Kings 5:13 strictly means 'a burden causing to faint', and is rendered "taskmaster" in the record of Israel's suffering in Egypt (Ex. 1:11). One even wonders if Solomon's father-in-law- who also happened to be a Pharaoh of Egypt- influenced him (consciously or unconsciously) to act like the Exodus Pharaoh.

This levy was evidently one of the reasons which led the next generation to complain that Solomon had chastised the people with whips (1 Kings 12:11; the happiness of the people which the Queen of Sheba observed in 1 Kings 10:8 was therefore just an impression Solomon arranged for her to receive). Yet "this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised: in order to build the house of the Lord, and his own house..." (1 Kings 9:15). Solomon justified his zest for power and control by saying it was in order to do the Lord's work, to build His house... and yet had he listened to God's word more carefully, he would have realized that the true house of Yahweh was in fact people... yet Solomon abused people in order to build a visible house for God. And so very often religious people have gone down the same path- devaluing the meaning and value of persons, because they want to be seen as achieving something visible for God, no matter how many people they abuse on the way. The ends simply don't justify the means; Solomon told himself that they did, and he ended up as bad as Saul and Pharaoh, who are alluded to in the records of his levy of slaves from Israel. And yet the 1 Kings record gives the impression of all happily working together to create a great temple for God. When we probe deeper, we find this was far from the case. The huge amount of labour required- 80,000 men hewing stone alone (1 Kings 5:15)- was nothing more than Solomon acting like Pharaoh, using taskmasters to trample down / rule over the people to achieve his quotas and enable his building fantasies to become reality. The Hebrew word translated "bear rule over" (Heb. 'to trample down') in 1 Kings 5:16 is that which we find in the Law's prohibition of this in Lev. 25:46: "But over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule over one another with rigour". Solomon knew the Law, and he rambles on in Proverbs about the need to read, love and obey that law. And yet he thought that he could give that one a miss, 'because I am doing God's work and building His house'. And how many a believer has ended up missing the entire point of God's law, the very essence of Christianity, because of their obsession with serving God in a form which is effectively merely serving themselves, excusing their fantasies in the name of doing God service. It's the *process* of Solomon's apostacy which is so instructive; for he justified himself by saying that he was doing God's work. He didn't simply quit on God.

David had prophesied that his great son would "have dominion from sea to sea" (Ps. 72:8). 'Have dominion' is again the Hebrew word translated 'rule over' in 1 Kings 5:15. David's vision of his Messianic son having a world-wide Kingdom, in which all people blessed him for his grace and beneficence, was abused by Solomon into justifying 'having dominion' over

people as his personal slaves; and they certainly didn't bless him for it but rather complained (1 Kings 12:11). It's as if Solomon grabbed the word 'rule over / have dominion', wrenched it out of context, and used it to justify his actions, giving a quasi-Biblical justification to his pure selfishness. This is where knowledge of God's word can be a dangerous thing; leading people into a stronger self-justification than they would otherwise have had if they were guided by self-recognized greed alone. And so in this context we read that whilst Solomon was madly building the temple, "the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I establish my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father" (1 Kings 6:11,12). There appears no particular need for the phrase "Concerning this house which thou art in building" - it appears somewhat redundant, until we realize that God is saying 'OK I see you are building this house, thinking you are so obedient to my word; well, get on and keep my word in reality, and *then* the promises to David will apply to you'. Activity supposedly in God's service can lead us to think that of course we are being obedient to His word... when the very obsession of the activity may be blinding us to the fact that we aren't at all. There's no record that Solomon responded positively to God's warning words- 1 Kings 6:14 states that "So Solomon built the house, and finished it". We are expecting to hear Solomon respond to God- but instead, he gets on with building again.

There was no sense in Solomon that he might have the possibility of failure, of rejection by God. The promises to David were conditional- David pointed this out to Solomon in 1 Kings 2: 4: "*If thy children take heed to their way...*". But Solomon misquotes this in 1 Kings 8:25: "Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; *so that* thy children take heed to their way to walk before me as thou hast walked before me". Some translations offer paraphrases of the difficult "so that" phrase. But there's no getting around it. Solomon is saying 'Give me what you promised me, without conditions, so that I will fulfil those conditions... it's not possible for anyone to fulfil those conditions unless you first give them what you conditionally promised'. The logic is all upside down, and is very demanding upon God, implying that any failure to "take heed to the way" would be because God hadn't given what He promised. It's a telling insight into Solomon's mind. It was all about him, rather than all about God and glorifying Him.

Note that all this happened at the very start of Solomon's reign; it seems to me that he was always on the wrong track, rather than as it were 'going wrong' later on.

7-5-8 The Mind Of Solomon

Solomon's concentration on that which is external, material and public led him to de-emphasize the importance of personal spiritual mindedness. Deep in his soul he became hard, his conscience died. Even early on, Solomon seems to have assumed that his deep internal motivation was always correct. He thought that he could handle anything spiritually, even if it involved what he came to justify as 'technical' infringements of commandments. We have shown how his marriage to an Egyptian girl early in his life was justified by him as an spiritual act - when actually it was just the opposite.

Solomon's lack of deep spiritual mindedness is shown by the way in which he skirted round commandments in order to still have his own human enjoyment. Thus he had horses brought for him out of Egypt rather than going there himself and thereby disobeying

Dt.17:16,17; he started off as a middleman in the horse trade, buying horses from Egypt and selling them to the Hittite and Syrian kings (2 Chron. 1:16,17; 1 Kings 10:25,29); but he was playing with fire, and he soon came to flout the spirit of the command not to buy horses from Egypt. It's rather like the brother who works in a video store starting to watch the blue movies which he handles daily. Solomon would have justified it initially by saying that the horses were not for himself; just as we saw he justified his Egyptian wife by the thought that Joseph also married an Egyptian girl. His lack of conscience and desire for an outward appearance of righteousness concerning her is shown in 2 Chron.8:11: "Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house he had built for her: for he said (not thought; i.e. he publicly declared), My wife shall not dwell in the house of David...because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come. Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the Lord on the altar...which he had built before the porch", for all to see. This is typical of his concern with an outward righteousness in the eyes of Israel; he made out that he was deeply aware of his wife's Egyptian origin and the separation between her and the God of Israel; but in his heart, she made him come with her to Egypt, and turn away from Israel's God. Ecclesiastes contains many allusions to Solomon's personal state; parts of it are definitely autobiographical. Yet in those passages, he seems to express no personal regret or desire for repentance. Instead he is quite content to just lament his own sad spiritual collapse, and rest content behind the excuse that nothing really matters. Consider, for example, his reference to the tragedy of the man whose wisdom fails him, and that of the wise man whose "little folly" ruins his reputation (Ecc.10:1,3). To describe his apostasy as only a "little folly" indicates the death of Solomon's conscience, and his fantastic ability to minimize his own errors.

In tandem with this lack of conscience and real spiritual mindedness was an incredible hardness in Solomon. His wisdom initially made him soft and sympathetic, able to empathize with the mind of others (e.g the mother of the baby); and even before his endowment with the gift of wisdom he had the humility to recognize that he was but a little child (1 Kings 3:7). But as his apostasy developed, he came to whip his people (1 Kings 12:14), treating them as he thought fools should be treated (Prov.26:3)- suggesting that he came to see himself as the only wise man, the only one truly in touch with reality, and therefore despising everyone else. 1 Kings 5:13-16 reveals that Solomon had 153,000 full time and 90,000 part time male servants. Israel's complaint that Solomon had whipped them implies that he treated them like slaves, with himself as the slave-driver. 600,000 adults came out of Egypt (Ex.12:37), and assuming the population only rose slightly over the next 550 years, we have the picture of an Israel where almost half the males (i.e. probably the majority of the working population) were pressganged into slavery to a despotic King Solomon.

Solomon's Heart

Solomon often emphasized the importance of keeping ones' heart (Prov. 2:10-16; 3:5,6; 4:23-5:5; 6:23-26); he had foreseen that the essential sin of God's people was "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:46), and he imagined how for this sin God's people would later pray towards the temple. And yet his wives turned away *his* heart, for all this awareness that the heart must be kept. It was as if the more he knew the truth of something, the more he wanted to do the very opposite. And this is exactly true of our natures. This is why lung cancer specialists smoke, it's why we ourselves can discern the same perversity in our lives. Perhaps with Solomon he reasoned that in *his* case, foreign wives wouldn't turn away *his* heart. Just as our flesh thinks 'Yes, but it can't happen to *me*'. Perhaps too he reasoned that if the temple

somehow could bring forgiveness for the plague of the heart, his heart was uncorruptible because of the temple.

Solomon's heart was "turned away", or 'influenced' by his wives towards idols (1 Kings 11:3). Yet Solomon uses this very idea of the heart being turned or influenced in Prov. 2:2; 22:17 about the need to turn our hearts towards God's word. He taught, but did the very opposite. And perhaps Prov. 21:1 explains why he did this- he says there that Yahweh turns the heart of the King wherever He wishes- and so perhaps he thought that control of our thinking and inclinations is unnecessary, because somehow God will do it for us. And there's a lesson there for us, who may assume at times that God will somehow control our hearts for us, rather than our making a conscious effort towards mind control.

Solomon went off to other gods because his heart was not at peace [Heb.- not at *shalom*] with the one true God- so says 1 Kings 11:4,5. We see here the upward spiral of spirituality- knowing we are forgiven, being comfortable and at peace with God, means we will not go after the idols of this world. For there is an endless searching for peace in the human heart. If we don't accept the forgiveness and peace that can come from God alone, we will seek peace in false ways. And that's just what Solomon did- for all his wisdom, he didn't personally know peace with God. Head knowledge doesn't give peace- for that is experiential.

Solomon's Self-Knowledge

Ecclesiastes is in many ways Solomon's self-examination; and it was accurate. He indicates that the temple had actually made him stumble, and that his numerous sacrifices had been the sacrifices of a fool, rather than the wise man he had appeared to be (Ecc.5:1); and surely he was casting a sideways glance at himself when he spoke of the wise child (cp. Solomon initially, 1 Kings 3:7) being greater than the old and foolish king who would no longer be admonished (Ecc.4:13; even though Solomon had advisers, 1 Kings 12:6). Yet he chose to do absolutely nothing about this; once again, his accurate spiritual knowledge had no real practical influence upon him. "Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish" (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them. He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that "I returned and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun [by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way ⁽¹⁾]; but they had no comforter" (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed. He even seems to say that there is nothing to be surprised at in the poor being oppressed, because the whole hierarchy of officialdom above them do the same (Ecc. 5:2). He saw his sin as inevitable, as part of his participation in humanity- he didn't own up to his own desperate need for grace. Yet he also knew that "man lords it over man [cp. Solomon's oppression of the people] to his own hurt" (Ecc. 8:9 RSV).

"Even the wild land when cultivated has a king" (Ecc. 5:9, Lukyn Williams' translation) seems to be justifying the bringing of newly cultivated land under Solomon's immediate taxation; Solomon is merely describing a state of misrule by him without drawing any conclusions (so L.G. Sargent concludes, Ecclesiastes p. 49). And yet we each have the potential for this schizophrenia within us; we are, as Paul so strikingly describes, two different people within us, fighting for mastery of the soul (Rom. 7). He wrote in

Ecclesiastes⁴ of catastrophe overtaking the obstinate old king who will learn nothing. Revolution sweeps him away and brings to the throne a young claimant who has been kept in prison (cp. Rehoboam in Egypt). In spite of his rank the new monarch has grown up in relative poverty; and in the end, “all the living”, the people of the land, at first serve with the first king but later forget him. This was Solomon’s fear, his fantasy... so piercingly accurate in his self-understanding. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver” (Ecc.5:10) is yet another piece of self-realisation which doesn’t seem to have resulted in motivating Solomon to grab hold on his inner being and shake himself. This is supremely shown by Ecc.7:26, where Solomon as an old man says that the man who pleases God will free himself from the snare of women, but the sinner will be taken captive by her; yet as an old man, Solomon's heart was turned away by his wives (1 Kings 11:4-7). He saw himself as the sinner, rather than the man who was personally trying to please God. The way he built idol temples for those women on mock temple mounts near Jerusalem was surely a studied statement that he saw himself as a hopeless apostate (2 Kings 23:13). Like the alcoholic or drug abuser, Solomon could analyze his problem so so accurately- and yet do nothing about it. This is the utter tragedy of all spiritual failure.

Ecclesiastes is so packed with contradictions. Solomon knew and perceived God’s truth, and yet felt it meant nothing to him personally. Thus he teaches truth in Ecclesiastes, but intersperses it with his own personal depression and sense that none of it really has any meaning for him personally. The themes of labour, vanity, sleep and children which are found in Ecclesiastes all occur in Psalm 127, a Psalm of or for Solomon- where the message is clearly given that unless the Lord builds the temple, all this labour is in vain. And yet knowing this Solomon *did* labour for it so hard, and then came to the conclusion that it was indeed in vain. If only he had believed the words he earlier composed and sung in Ps. 127, he needn’t have had to come to that sad conclusion. He exhorted to live joyfully with “the wife” (singular) of youth (Ecc. 9:9), knowing full well that he in his old age was a polygamist whose many wives had led him astray. He seems to have contented himself with establishing himself as “the preacher” and his final appeal in Ecc. 12 is to youth- like so many, his view was that it was not for him personally, but the youngsters would benefit more from it. There are several passages in Ecclesiastes where Solomon is evidently half glancing at himself. He sees the error of his ways, as Achan could coolly recount his sin, but to personally do something about it is far, far from him:

- “He that loveth silver (as Solomon did, Ecc. 2:8; 1 Kings 10:21-29) shall not be satisfied with silver (as he wasn’t- see Ecc. 2); nor he that loveth abundance (s.w. used about the abundance of Solomon’s wives, 2 Chron. 11:23) with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them (cp. the large numbers at his table, 1 Kings 4:27)” (Ecc. 5:10,11). The Hebrew word translated “not be satisfied” occurs around 25 times in the Proverbs, with Solomon warning of how the way of the flesh couldn’t satisfy. Solomon said all this with an eye on himself. He preached it to others, he felt deeply the truth of it, but he saw no personal way out of it. All he had was the accurate knowledge of his situation, but no real motivation to change- like the alcoholic or drug abuser who knows every aspect of the harm of his habit.

- Solomon knew and warned that a little folly can destroy the man who is in reputation for wisdom and honour (Ecc. 10:1). Solomon had “honour” [s.w.] to an unprecedented extent (1 Kings 3:13). But in the same book he admits that he, the man famed world-wide for wisdom, gave himself to folly (Ecc. 2:3). He knew so well the error and folly of his ways, but he could only preach the lesson but not heed it. He “saw that wisdom exceedeth folly” (2:13)- but so what...

- “Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished” (4:13) is exactly Solomon at the time of Ecclesiastes.

- He knew that a little folly outweighs all the wisdom a man may have (Ecc. 10:1), and yet he gave himself to folly, whilst holding on to wisdom (1:17). A true fool is one whose wisdom fails him in practice (“when he walketh by the way”, 10:3); and especially is this acute when this “error...proceedeth from the ruler” (10:5). It’s all about Solomon himself.

- Eccl. 12:1 asks the young to turn to God as in old age one has no pleasure in life and, by implication, no possibility of remembering their creator. This, presumably, was how Solomon felt about himself. And there are many elderly people who will reject the preaching of the Gospel with this kind of comment. The description of old age in Ecc. 12 seems to be alluding to how Solomon initially had a large and thriving household, with him enjoying the pleasures of women and singing maidens (“the daughters of music”), but now he realizes he doesn’t have the faculties to enjoy it any more- all has gone quiet in the once bustling palace.

- He speaks of how laughter, mirth and songs are not the pursuit of the wise- and yet these are the very things he gave himself to, whilst at the same time possessing theoretical wisdom (Ecc. 7:3-5).

- He laments how when wealth is increased, “they are increased that eat them” (Ecc. 5:11)- and yet he prided himself on how many people sat at his table eating his food, how many courtiers he had...

- “And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets, *and* her hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her” (Ecc. 7:26) is a clear reference back to Solomon’s own entanglement. In his younger days, he had found “the hair of thine head like the purple of a king [i.e. he imagined her to be suited to him, the King of Israel, when she wasn’t]; the king is held captive in the tresses thereof” (Song 7:5 RV).

- He praises his mother for teaching him not to give his strength, “nor to them [women] who destroy kings” (Prov. 31:3 RVmg.), and yet he must surely have perceived that this was just what he had done.

- Eccl. 4:8 “There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. " For whom am I toiling," he asked, " and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless-- a miserable business!” (NIV) may also be looking to Solomon, in the existential loneliness of the man who had done it all, who effectively had neither son nor brother in that his son turned away from the faith.

Yet Solomon was so sure of his own rightness that he just couldn't conceive that in reality he might sin or break the principles he preached. He warns his son to "observe my ways. For... a gentile woman is a narrow pit" (Prov. 23:26,27). He held himself up in this matter as an example to his son even at the very time when he had married Gentile women! He describes in Ecclesiastes how he indulged every possible desire, and took each of his lusts to its ultimate term. Yet he warned his son to only eat honey in moderation, i.e. don't gorge your natural desires (Prov. 25:16). This sense of the impossibility of spiritual failure is stamped all over Solomon; and it has been the downfall of so many others too.

More than anything, Solomon was incurably selfish. Having spent his life writing and teaching wisdom, he makes one of his autobiographical comments: “There is a man whose labour is in wisdom...yet to man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil” (Ecc. 2:21). Solomon saw “wisdom” as something he had worked for [forgetting it was God’s gracious gift to him], and he treated it as a material possession. Because he saw that he couldn’t take it with him, he felt therefore it was useless- he didn’t, it seems, want to leave it to his son because he felt it was only for him. This was the spirit of the man who buried his talent of Divine Truth in the ground and thought that would be enough- he wouldn’t risk it with others or share it with them. And so Solomon ended up hating all his labour for wisdom (Ecc. 2:18, 21) because at the end of his life that mere knowledge and teaching of it to others hadn’t transformed or immortalized his personal life. The rejected at the day of judgment may well, tragically, feel the same. But *now* is the time to personally apply God’s Truth to ourselves, to be *humbled* by the very possession of it. The Queen of Sheba remarked how happy were Solomon’s servants, because of the application of his wisdom to them (1 Kings 10:8,9). And yet by the end of his reign, Solomon was as it were whipping his servants. He himself possessed wisdom, he taught it in the cold theory of Ecclesiastes, but there was no longer the essential concern for people which that wisdom required in its practical outworking. The wisdom was intended for the guidance and leadership of Israel into the Kingdom life- the wisdom given was “even as the sand that is on the sea shore” (1 Kings 4:29), i.e. for the people of Abraham’s seed. Likewise all true wisdom is to be *used*- not to be kept and repeated in passionless theory as we have in Ecclesiastes.

In the same way as Solomon criticized flirting with Gentile girls but then went and did this himself, so he said many other things in his wisdom which actually condemned himself. Thus “the prince that lacketh understanding is also a great oppressor” (Prov. 28:16). Yet Solomon did oppress the people- despite possessing wisdom. He insists that throughout his life, his wisdom had remained with him (Ecc. 2:9 RVmg.). So what does this indicate? Surely that the wisdom which he had did not affect his life practically, and thus it was as if he lacked wisdom completely. Mere possession of truth leads to great temptations- for like Solomon, we can reason that this alone justifies us in any behaviour. And again, consider Prov. 29:4 RVmg: “The king by judgment establisheth the land [another self-conscious justification of himself in his early reign]: but he that imposeth tribute overthroweth it”. And this was exactly what Solomon did, in imposing unbearable tribute upon his people. He so clearly sees what is wrong- and then goes and does it. This is one of the features of our nature. It’s why lung cancer specialists smoke cigarettes- and we all have this same tendency. The more we know what is wrong, the more we are inclined to do it.

SOLOMON: THEORY V. PRACTICE

Theory

The whole of Proverbs

Don't abuse alcohol

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is

Practice

Ecclesiastes

Ecc. 2:3- he gave himself to wine to see if there was any wisdom revealed under the influence of alcohol. If he had believed

red...when it goeth down smoothly” (Prov. 23:31 RV)

God’s word and been satisfied with it, this experiment would have been unnecessary.

“...the roof of thy mouth like the best wine, that goeth down smoothly for my beloved” (Song 7:9 RV)- how did Solomon know unless even at a relatively young age, he knew about the sensation of wine from personal experience?

Don't love " pleasure" (Prov. 21:17)

S.w. " mirth" Ecc. 2:1,2;8:15. Solomon had to re-learn this for himself rather than accept direct Divine teaching about it .

Prov. 14:13 even in mirth there is sorrow

He recognized that fools love mirth (7:4) but still he wanted it. He rejected this wisdom and only came to agree with it through doing just what Prov.14:13 condemns (Ecc. 2:2). Another example of this is in Prov. 5:4; 22:14 cp. Ecc. 7:26.

Prov. 23:3 don't desire huge meals

1 Kings 4:22,23

Prov. 23:4 Don't labour to be rich

Ecc.2:8,11

Prov. 23:22 listen to your parents , especially your mother when she is old

He disregarded Bathsheba's warning not to drink and marry Gentiles - he did just this when she was old

“Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of mirth is heaviness” (Prov. 14:13 RV)

But in Ecclesiastes, Solomon gave his heart to mirth, to see if there was wisdom to be found through this. He ended up re-learning the truth that he had earlier presented as prepositional truth.

Prov. 3:13-16 wisdom is better than gold and silver etc (cp 16:16; 20:15)

1 Kings 10:21-29

Prov. 15:22 take advice from others

Ecc. 4:13 wouldn't be admonished

Prov. 5:10 beware in case your hard work goes to a Gentile and their houses

Ecc. 2:18,19- this happened to Solomon through his Gentile marriages

Prov. 5:17-19 don't be ravished with the breasts of a Gentile and don't have many wives; be content with your first wife

But Solomon was (Song 4:9; 7:3), and he had many wives

Prov. 4:23 Keep thy heart

His wives turned away his heart (1 Kings 11:4)

Prov. 5:8 don't go near the house of the

Solomon had Gentile wives and built them

Gentile woman

Prov. 6:7 the self-motivated example of the ant should inspire our service- they need no “guide, overseer or ruler”

Prov. 13:15 “Good understanding giveth favour”; and often in Proverbs, Solomon teaches that material blessings come as a result of using wisdom.

Prov. 7:23 the Gentile woman is a snare leading to death

Prov. 19:10 “Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes”

houses (1 Kings 11:7,8)

But these are the very words used about Solomon’s elaborate hierarchy of foremen and slave drivers whom he used to ‘get the job done’ in his kingdom.

Ecc. 9:11 shows his rejection of Prov. 13:15: “The race is not to the swift...neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all”. He concluded life was just a random sequence of events.

Ecc. 9:12 shows Solomon claiming that death is a snare brought about by time and chance; he minimized the sin of marriage out of the faith

Ecc. 10:7 indicates Solomon didn't think Prov. 19:10 was true in practice: “I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth”. He thought that in reality, servants do rule over princes.

Nothing Unfulfilled

Solomon’s proverbs about not eating too much honey (Prov. 25:16) clearly mean that we shouldn’t over indulge legitimate human pleasures. But his approach in Ecclesiastes was the studied opposite of this. He openly says that he indulged himself in every human pleasure to the extreme, until it meant nothing. And yet he had warned against doing this very thing. Having stated that he sees no particular advantage of Divine wisdom, Solomon goes on to allude to his own wandering of desire (Ecc. 6:9); he had been given all a man could wish, his desire knew no bounds, and yet it wandered. This is yet another powerful challenge from Solomon; his every desire was satisfied, but still he felt that his desires were unfulfilled (Ecc. 1:8; 6:7). So much of our mental and physical energy goes into gratification of desire, even though it is heavily camouflaged beneath social respectability and achieving the norms of our community. Yet if we believe the lesson of Solomon, the only man who actually had every desire gratified, then we will shun all this- and fix our hope and every striving on Christ and his Kingdom alone.

Notes

(1) Ben Brinkerhoff makes the following analysis of Solomon’s clever, oppressive taxation system:

Solomon had begun a program of threatening traditional tribal organization, and of taxing the north for Judah's benefit. The program was known as Solomon's districting system.

Israel EXCLUSIVE OF JUDAH was divided into twelve administrative districts

1. Mount Ephraim
2. Makaz
3. Arubboth
4. Naphath-dor
5. Taanach and Megiddo
6. Ramoth-gilead
7. Mahanaim
8. Naphtali
9. Asher and Zebulun
10. Issachar
11. Benjamin
12. The land of Gad (1 Kings 4: 7-19)

Each district had to provide food for the court for one month out of year and was headed by a local governor. Solomon distributed his districts geographically to make each independent agriculturally and economically from those surrounding it.

These districts in many ways cut into the traditional tribal territorial allotments. Section 2 contains a combination of Danite and Ephraimite claims. 3 and 11 share parts of Manasseh and Ephraim. These allotments would destroy notions of tribal solidarity and expansionist dreams. Only the tribes of Benjamin, Issachar, and Naphtali were left intact.

This situation was made worse when it is considered who the local governors were and from where they had their origins.

District 9, Baana ben Hushai: He was almost certainly the son David's advisor Hushai (2 Sam. 15:32-37)

District 8, Ahimaaz: He married one of Solomon's daughters (1 Kings 4:15) and maybe connected with the priest Zadok, mentioned in connection with the Absalom revolt (2 Sam. 15:36)

District 5, Baaba ben Ahilud: Perhaps the brother of David and Solomon's court reporter, Jehoshaphat ben Ahilud (1 Kings 4:3).

District 7, Abinadab ben Iddo: He is likely to have been the son of Iddo ben Zechariah, who ruled Gileadite Manasseh during David's term (1 Chron. 27:21) Presumably the son of a prince would have been brought up with the king's son in Jerusalem

District 4, Ben Abinadab: He may not have been related to Abinadab in whose house the ark was deposited before its transfer to David. But at any rate he was married to one of Solomon's daughters (1 Kings 4:11)

In the remaining cases there is probably little evidence to pass judgement. But all the district governors would have been subject to the royal court.

Solomon got much benefit from this system, which makes sense, it's his system. For one, the agents did not hail from the tribes they were ruling and had no tribal sympathy which might put them at odds to the throne when sacrificing local needs for Solomon's national policy. They, instead of tribal agents, would also be the ones to collect tax money from trade routes like the Kings highway going through sections 2 and 3. They would also have control over military conscription which was vital in establishing the power of a king to rule and establish a dynasty. Solomon in this system attempts to take away power from tribal leaders and give it to his own governors which would be under his control. This would allow him to centralize authority in a country with a tradition of tribal authority and lack of centralization.

At Solomon's death the north was not willing to support what they must have seen as bondage to a king who cared not for their interests, but only his own and those of his tribe.

Chapter 8: The Character Of Jeroboam

It's easy to read the record of a man like Jeroboam and have a few superficial thoughts, and then pass on. But God's spirit is calling to us through *all* His words, like *all* the manna had to be used and eaten. And we know that the manna symbolized God's word. The spirit of Christ is God's spirit; they are one Spirit, therefore the writings of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament must in some way reflect the spirit of Christ, things to do with him and his character. Therefore Peter could say that the spirit of Christ was in all the prophets, all those who spoke forth the word of God by inspiration. Christ showed the disciples how *all* the Scriptures spoke of him- including the historical books. So I want us to make a special effort today to glean the spirit of Christ from the Old Testament. We keep reading, like a refrain, that Jeroboam the son of Nebat " made Israel to sin" . So somehow God is directing our attention towards him.

Type of Christ?

I want to show that in a distorted way, Jeroboam was almost a type of Christ. I'd suggest that many wicked Old Testament characters *could* have been types of Christ if they had lived righteously, and the record indirectly indicates this. Look back at 1 Kings 12:2,3. Here we've got the record of how Jeroboam fled to Egypt because of the persecution of Solomon. When Solomon died, " they sent and called him" , v.3. This of course rings bells with Jesus going to Egypt and coming back after Herod's death. Jeroboam came back on the third day (v.12) and offered freedom from bondage to Israel, as did Christ on his resurrection. In 1 Kings 13:10 we read of the prophet who came to prophesy about Jeroboam; we are told that he didn't return the way he came, but went back another way. That's an echo of the wise men, they came to see Jesus, and returned another way.

So through these hints that Jeroboam could have been a type of Christ, the record seems to imply that Jeroboam had a spiritual side to him. Very few people are totally reprobate; we all have a spiritual capacity in us which we partially exercise. This is why apostasy is a mixture of truth and error, both doctrinally and practically; the spiritual side, the truth, is realized, but only partially, and men fail to realize that this is going on, choosing to believe instead that they are totally spiritual. In 1 Kings 13:6 Jeroboam says : " Entreat now the face of Yahweh" and pray that God would heal him. This indicates the presence of some basic spirituality within him. In 1 Kings 11:35 God tells Jeroboam that He would take the ten tribes from the house of David, and give them to Jeroboam. This is exactly the language of God speaking about righteous David, who was given the Kingdom which God took away from Saul. So initially, Jeroboam had some of David's characteristics; it seems rather strange for God to take away the ten tribes from one sinner and give them to another sinner. At that time, Jeroboam's potential spirituality was reasonably to the fore. If Jeroboam had continued in God's ways, God would have established Jeroboam as king over His Kingdom (1 Kings 11:38). So Jeroboam was being given a chance to make the right choices. He had the potential to do so. This echoes God saying to Moses 'I will make of you a great nation' because of the apostasy of others. Thus Jeroboam is faintly connected with Moses. In 1 Kings 13:33 we read that Jeroboam "returned not from his evil way" again; the implication is that Jeroboam was the kind of person who had bouts of repentance and true spiritual humility. In 1 Kings 14:13 we are told that in Jeroboam's son "there was found some good thing" in him toward God. If Jeroboam's son was righteous, it is likely that Jeroboam and / or his wife had a spiritual side to them. But they didn't live up to their potential. Now we examine ourselves this morning.

We do clearly have a spiritual side to us . The question is whether we are living up to our potential.

Mixed up man

Israel were often told to bring their sacrifices to where God's Name was placed, Jerusalem. But of course Jeroboam didn't want people going up to Judah, in case they defected. So he reasoned that making the sacrifice was the important thing, where and how it was done didn't matter. So for political reasons, he broke away from the temple of God, and set up his own system of worship. Now there is a lesson here for us. In these troubled ecclesial times it isn't for us to break away from the temple, God's house, which is the ecclesia. 1 Kings 12:28 records how Jeroboam made calves of gold, and proclaimed: "These be thy gods, O Israel" . It's been suggested that these calves were false cherubim. There is certainly a connection between the calf and the cherubim. In Ez. 1:10 we read that the living creatures had " the face of an ox on the left side" . In Ez. 10:14 we learn that this face was that of a cherub. Jeroboam placed the calves at each end of the land of Israel, as if it was the ark (the ark had the cherubim at each end of it). By doing so, Jeroboam excluded Jerusalem, the temple, from God's presence. He excluded others from the presence of God. The calves were therefore a mixture of true religious symbolism with gross apostasy. In Hosea 8:2,3 we read a prophecy against Jeroboam: "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good...of their silver and their gold have they made them idols...thy calf, O Samaria hath cast thee off...(it) shall be broken in pieces" , as they were later by Josiah. So Israel thought that they knew God at this time, they felt in fellowship with Him, when actually the anger of God was deeply against them. Jeroboam was the one on whom the sin of Israel's later idolatry is blamed. But Jeroboam is not called an idolater. He no doubt had an element of good spiritual motivation in him. 2 Kings 3:2,3 implies that Jeroboam did not actually worship Baal. Jehoram put away the image of Baal, but he cleaved to the sins of Jeroboam. The implication is that Jeroboam was not a Baal worshipper, which is what the majority of the wicked kings were guilty of.

Jeroboam was full of works, of activity in fighting the Lord's battles. He was active in the Truth, as we would say. In 1 Kings 12:32 we read of Jeroboam ordaining a feast " *Like* unto the feast which was in Judah" . He ordained a new feast on the 15th day of the 8th month, no doubt copying the feast of tabernacles, on the 15th of the 7th month. So Jeroboam lacked an attention to detail, despite an appearance of spirituality. 1 Chron. 5:17 says that in Jeroboam's reign, the genealogies we read in the early chapters of Chronicles were written. So in some ways, he gave great attention to detail- when it suited him. He went up to the altar, making himself the priest. It seems that he was copying David and Solomon, who did just this. But he lacked their motivation and spirituality. Another example of his mixture of truth and error is shown by the way he built an altar at *Bethel* . Now this had many religious associations; Jacob offered there, Samuel held regular gatherings there; and as with trying to be like David and Solomon, it seems that Jeroboam went in for even more self-conscious spiritual exhibitionism and seeking to publicly associate himself with righteous men.

Aaron: Convenient hero

So Jeroboam is portrayed as a man who worshipped God in his own way; he had all the trappings of the truth of God, but he failed to grasp the spirit of real, meaningful spirituality. The character of Jeroboam was therefore dualistic in the extreme. What a mixture this man was! When he made the calves, he quotes the words of Aaron about the golden calf: " These

be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up from the land of Egypt" . And then Jeroboam made an altar in front of the calf, which is exactly what Aaron did! Jeroboam knew his Old Testament history in some detail. Jeroboam allowed the ordinary people to be priests; in Ex. 32 we learn that the ordinary people offered the sacrifices to the golden calf, not the priests. Again, it seems that Jeroboam was trying to consciously mimic the golden calf apostasy. It is no accident that Josiah stamped his calves to powder, just as Moses did to the golden calf. Now *why* did Jeroboam so consciously lead Israel into the same apostasy which brought them as it were within a hairs breadth of national rejection in Ex. 32? Jeroboam wasn't ignorant. Perhaps he had gone down a path of contorted exposition which made out that Israel didn't really sin by worshipping the calf. Or perhaps he got so carried away with the idea that he was like Aaron, the priest, that he thought (like some modern Rabbis) that Aaron couldn't have done anything wrong, and therefore he consciously copied Aaron, as he did David, Solomon, Jacob and Samuel. Again, we see Jeroboam having a familiarity with Scripture, but not pausing to really meditate upon his actions or upon the real spirit of the word. We see him failing to analyze why Aaron acted as he did, failing to see that Aaron acted politically, failing to deeply analyze his own motives. The character of Jeroboam shines through here. Jeroboam named his sons Abijah [Abihu] and Nadab- the very names of Aaron's sons. It seems Jeroboam tried to model himself upon Aaron, and justify the building of the calves by interpreting what Aaron did as a positive, righteous thing (as some Jewish expositors do today). He politely overlooked the fact that Aaron was condemned for making the calf, and that Nadab and Abihu were slain for unacceptable worship (Lev. 10:1,2). We too can justify outright wrong behaviour in the name of superficial allusion to Scripture, wilfully failing to see the similarities between our actions and those of men who were condemned for doing in essence the things which we seek to justify.

Jeroboam was a believer, he wasn't a man of the world. He had his eyes open. He was an enthusiast in doing God's work, and working for the good of His people Israel in strengthening their cities, fighting their enemies etc.. He had some faith, for example that God would heal him. He knew the real date of the feast of tabernacles; he knew his Bible, he had an enthusiasm for studying the genealogies and some aspects of the Mosaic Law. He seems to have taught the truth to his son. He understood a little about the symbology of the ark and the cherubim. But he shut his eyes to the real spirit of God's word. Now we can't say we have no similarity with that man. 2 Kings 10:31 sums up his real failures. Jehu " took no heed to walk in the law with all his heart, for (because)" he followed the sins of Jeroboam. So this was his specific sin; not walking in God's law *with all his heart* . It is stressed in the records that he was " the son of Nebat" . 'Nebat' means 'one who pays careful attention'; as if to emphasize that Jeroboam was not that person; he was the son of that person. Israel , Malachi says, were " partial" in God's law. Are we partial? Are we just focusing on those parts of spiritual life which we don't find difficult? Are we avoiding the real pain of spiritual growth? Natural Israel's sin was that they were half-hearted in their response to God. Israel in the wilderness were rejected, we are told, because they did not *wholly* follow Yahweh, as Caleb did. Spiritual Israel face just the same temptations as natural Israel. Christ criticized Laodicea for being lukewarm, for being partial in their response to his love. As we look towards the cross, to the Son of God kneeling in Gethsemane, we see a totality of commitment. It shines through the records, if we meditate upon them. It is *vitaly important that* we grasp at least the spirit of this totality of service. The character of Jeroboam reveals how he failed in this.

Total commitment

In the Lord Jesus, we see the totality of commitment to true spirituality. He was the complete whole burnt offering, he fulfilled the idea of whole and total commitment of which the sacrifices spoke. Here and now, as we sit and stand here, I want us to settle in our minds at least one thing: that we are called to completely imitate his spirit, we are called to this total commitment. O.K., we know that we will not achieve it. But that mustn't militate against our accepting it as our ultimate aim. We must lift our sights higher. The fact we won't achieve it shouldn't make us turn away from this. It is only twentieth century psychology which has led us to think that we can't conceive of what we can't possibly achieve. We can, we *must* conceive of the fact that we are called to total commitment. For our eternal future, the bulk of our eternal destiny, 99.99% of our existence, will be spent living on a level of total commitment to God's ways. Picture the Son of God, shifting his weight from his hands to his feet, then back to his hands, mouth open, throat dry, sweat on his deeply lined forehead. There we have a picture which we shouldn't turn away from. Israel as it were hid their faces from the sight of his face. We mustn't. He could've taken the easy way out, he could have given up the idea, the concept of total commitment, he could have had those 12 legions of Angels. The spirit of Christ as he hung there can pass through us just as quickly as the memorial bread and wine passes through our metabolism. This is why we must continually fill ourselves up with it, not just by keeping on breaking bread, but by *keeping on* in our meditation upon the Lord in his sufferings, not being afraid to ace up to ourselves, the likely failures we are making, the frailty of our spirituality, as candles in the wind; ever looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. And if we *keep on* in our meditation upon him, the triumphant spirit of his resurrection will be ours, he will lead us in an eternal march of triumph against sin and partiality, into the fullness, the *spiritual fullness*, of God's nature.

Chapter 8-2 Hezekiah: Faith And Weakness

Hezekiah and faith go together. "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel: so that after him there was none like him among all the kings" (2 Kings 18:5). There was no king like him for his faith / trust [note a similar rubric used about Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25, in relation to Josiah's obedience to the Law]. Josiah was the most obedient king; Hezekiah was the most faith-ful. But 2 Kings 18:6 goes on to say that this faith was "for" or because Hezekiah was obedient to God's commandments. Here we see the upward spiral in the spiritual life, and how each aspect of spirituality reinforces others. His obedience reinforced his faith; indeed the entire Law of Moses wasn't designed as a hopeless obstacle course, it was "holy, just and good" and was intended to lead people to *faith*, especially in the Messiah to come. 2 Kings 18:14 "I have sinned" suggests Hezekiah took false guilt; lack of faith in God often is related to false guilt. Faith in God's opinion and perspective on us saves us from such false guilt. Even worse, Hezekiah treated Sennacherib as God, addressing him with the language of confession and repentance which should be directed only to God. By doing so, he believed in Sennacherib as God. And whenever we let people give us false guilt, we are effectively believing in them as God rather than in the one true God. Hezekiah then stripped the temple of its gold, representing faith, and gave it to the Assyrians. It was a sad blip on the screen in Hezekiah's life of faith. The way he has to deal with the prophet Isaiah through messengers soon afterwards may suggest an estrangement between Hezekiah and Isaiah- exactly because of this.

After this lapse of faith in paying off Sennacherib, it became harder for Hezekiah to show faith again. Now it was going to be really hard to rebel against him and refuse the payments. I

take the comment in 2 Kings 18:7 that Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria and refused to serve / worship him as part of a summary of what Hezekiah did in his life. He refused any longer to serve Sennacherib as God, but decided to serve Yahweh alone. This rebellion against Sennacherib is singled out as the most noteworthy thing he did. He had submitted to Assyria, paid what they asked, made an agreement with them. And then he broke it, and so the Assyrians sent their army against Hezekiah. If this isn't the correct reconstruction, then we have the scenario of Hezekiah sending money to Assyria as they requested, but then them coming and invading anyway. In every other case of gold being given to buy off Israel's enemies, it seems the bargain was stuck to, at least in the short term.

So Hezekiah paid all the wealth of Judah to Assyria and entered an agreement with them. And it seems he impoverished Judah yet more by then making some arrangement with Egypt to throw off the Assyrian domination (2 Kings 18:21,24). Hezekiah really did mess up. But then he breaks the agreement with Assyria, inevitably provoking an Assyrian invasion of his now impoverished country. He must've been almost alone in this. Because doing this made no human sense; his cabinet and people would've surely been against it. Following our conscience often puts us in situations like this.

But Hezekiah was determined to live by faith. It would seem from Rabshakeh's words to the people of Jerusalem that Hezekiah had begun a 'Trust in God!' campaign: "Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD by saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria'... do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, 'The LORD will deliver us'" (2 Kings 18:30,32). "The Lord will deliver us" therefore appears to have been a catchcry of Hezekiah to all the people. Jerusalem was surrounded by her strong enemies, whom Hezekiah had sorely provoked by faithlessly siding with Egypt against them and then in faith towards God breaking off his agreement with the Assyrians. So now Hezekiah was driven to throw himself upon God for a miracle. His utter confidence is recognized by God, when He speaks of how the faithful remnant in Jerusalem- the "virgin daughter of Zion"- had despised Assyria, laughed her to scorn, and wagged her head at Assyria (2 Kings 19:21). That would've required an extraordinary level of faith to do that. Hezekiah wasn't just hoping for the best, using prayer as a last resort, a kind of back up insurance policy after doing all he could. This was the prayer and faith of utter confidence, believing that things that are not are in fact, and being so sure they will come about that this faith actually affects our feelings. Hezekiah felt confident, superior to the Assyrians, all the feelings that come from knowing that one is in a far stronger position. This is a challenge in our self-assessment. To what extent does our confidence in faith affect our emotions and feelings?

It seems that when Hezekiah said "The Lord will surely deliver us", he said it with such confidence that the people were inclined to share his faith. Several times, Rabshakeh picks up this word "deliver" and mocks that no other nation had been 'delivered' from Assyria, so why should Judah be. It seems Hezekiah took this catchword from Isaiah's earlier prophecy of Is. 31:5, where he had stated that "Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and *deliver* it". Hezekiah had heard those words of the Lord; and he believed them, even when they appeared to have no human chance of fulfilment. We too need to cling on to just one verse of Scripture and believe it. Of course we try to excuse our lack of faith by spiritualizing it away, wondering whether it can really apply to me, here, today. Hezekiah must've gone through the same. But it seems he ceased upon that one verse... and clung to it. This is where our faith in the Bible as God's word isn't merely a painless academic assent to a proposition. To believe God's word is true demands an awful lot from us.

Rabshakeh confirmed the threatened destruction of Jerusalem with a letter. Hezekiah took this “before the Lord”. His first response was not to turn to Egypt; he’d learnt the wrongness of that. He went to the house of the Lord. Whilst we are always in God’s presence, there is surely a sense in which coming into His presence through prayer is drawing yet closer to Him. And so it was with the special presence of YHWH in the temple at that time. Hezekiah was aware that YHWH ‘dwells between the cherubim’ (2 Kings 19:15). Presumably standing before the ark, Hezekiah “spread out” the letter (2 Kings 19:14). The Hebrew word translated ‘spread out’ is the same as that usually used about how the wings of the cherubim were ‘spread out’ over the ark (Ex. 25:20; 37:9). It’s also the word used in Solomon’s prophecy of how repentant people would spread out their hands in the temple at the time of the punishment for their sins, and receive forgiveness and help: “Whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands in this house, then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive” (2 Chron. 6:29,30). And Hezekiah would also have been only too aware of Isaiah’s judgment against Judah of a few years earlier: “When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen” (Is. 1:15). But Hezekiah summoned his faith in God’s forgiveness, and spread out his hands as he spread out the letter. He showed his deep repentance, and his faith in forgiveness to such an extent that he was bold enough to ask God for deliverance. Faith in forgiveness of our sins is perhaps one of the hardest things to believe in- strangely enough, seeing that God delights in forgiveness.

So Hezekiah ‘spread out’ the letter before the Lord. Perhaps he even placed it upon the top of the ark, beneath the spread out wings of the cherubim, upon the blood-sprinkled mercy seat or atonement cover, symbolizing the future work of the Lord Jesus. He brought the situation before the presence of God. He asks God to open His eyes and see (2 Kings 19:16). I take this as a tacit recognition from Hezekiah that God had turned away His eyes from Judah and Hezekiah personally because of their sin. But Hezekiah believed in the promises of forgiveness, and asks God to therefore respond to the awful situation they were in.

He believed that the cherubim-Angels would take note of that letter. And it’s significant that God’s response was to send an Angel to destroy the Assyrians. It may help us to focus our faith in prayers by being aware of the way that God responds to prayer through sending out Angels. He is enthroned, as Hezekiah put it, upon the cherubim. Another stimulus to faith is to reflect how God is creator of Heaven and earth (2 Kings 19:15). Believing that the cosmos was created and didn’t evolve from nothing isn’t a painless academic decision which we take somewhere within our brain cells. To believe God is the creator means that we believe that nothing in the life of this planet or our own lives is therefore too hard for Him to do.

Hezekiah’s faith was also strengthened by having the right motives: “Save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone” (2 Kings 19:19). This is alluded to by the Lord in His prayer just before His death: “That the world may know” (Jn. 17:23). Hezekiah’s prayer for the Assyrian destruction was in fact so that the Gentile nations around Judah would come to know Yahweh, to accept Him. What finer motivation! This was no selfish shriek for help.

It’s surely significant that Hezekiah is stated to be Judah’s most faith-ful King, and yet he had a major lack of faith when he cut off the gold of the temple and gave it to the Assyrians; and

he asks God to give him a sign that the promised healing was really going to happen. Indeed the whole nature of the dialogue seems to indicate a man of somewhat faltering faith, needing every encouragement:

“Then Isaiah told the king's attendants to put on his boil a paste made of figs, and he would get well. King Hezekiah asked, "What is the sign to prove that the LORD will heal me and that three days later I will be able to go to the Temple?" Isaiah replied, "The LORD will give you a sign to prove that he will keep his promise. Now, would you prefer to have the shadow on the stairway go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?" Hezekiah answered, "It's easy to have the shadow go forward ten steps! Have it go back ten steps." (2 Kings 20:7-10). Firstly, Hezekiah asks for a sign “to prove” that God’s predicted cure of him was going to happen. And when given the option of the shadow of the sun jumping forward by ten degrees, he almost mocks that as too ‘easy’. Yet this is the man with the accolade that no King believed in God like he did. Perhaps he reached his heights of faith through having these low moments. ‘Putting God to the test’ as it seems Hezekiah did is seen in Scripture as not fully believing in Him (Num. 14:20-24; Dt. 6:16; Is. 7:12; Lk. 11:33-36). Maybe God left Hezekiah to test him in the matter of the ambassadors from Babylon as a kind of response- ‘You put me to the test, I’ll put you to the test’ (2 Chron. 32:31). Let’s remember that in Bible characters like Hezekiah, we are reading only a few cameos of their lives. Most of his life history, his inner thoughts, are unknown to us. But God’s summary statement was that he was the most believing King of Judah. So when we read cameos from his life that reflect a weakened faith, we surely have little option but to conclude that somehow in the Divine economy, low points of faith lead a person to higher and stronger ones. And we can all take a lot of comfort from that conclusion as we survey our own lives.