

Samuel – A Character Study

A – Developing the Foundation – 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2 Samuel 2:1-10

1. Consider the following and discuss how each would have been a factor in developing the foundation of Samuel's character:

a. Elkanah and Hannah's character in general. R1882A:1; R3114:1; R5615:3

R1882A:1 - IT HAS been truly said that the education of a child should begin a hundred years before it is born. Wholesome parental influences are potent agencies in the formation of character. Samuel was the son of godly parents, a child desired and requested of the Lord, the request being accompanied with a solemn covenant that, should it be granted, he should from earliest infancy be dedicated to the Lord. Thus he came into the world richly endowed with an inheritance which only godly parents can bestow,--with a mind tending toward God and righteousness.

R3114:1 - SAMUEL, the prophet, is one of the grand, strong characters of Old Testament times. The story of his early devotion to the Lord and his obedience and perseverance in well doing, constitutes a grand lesson, not only for young Christians, but also for those more advanced in years, including parents. As the story of Ruth gives us glimpses of a time of life of the Israelites such as is generally obscured by the records of wars and troubles, so also does the story of Samuel. He was of the tribe of Levi already consecrated to the Lord, and accepted. An insight into the deep piety of his parents is given in the first chapter of the Book. A child born under such circumstances of prayer and devotion to the Lord, could not, under natural laws, fail to be noble minded and religiously inclined. Would that we could impress this thought upon all Christians who become parents--that their children should be devoted to the Lord from the moment of conception! and daily prayer and effort should be made that the pre-natal influences might all conduce to the highest mental, moral and physical welfare of the offspring. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" asked the Prophet, and he answers, "Not one." Our expectation should not, therefore, be that the children even of the saints would be absolutely perfect; but we are to remember that the Lord accepts the heart, the intention, the will; and that agreeably to his arrangement of nature, the mind, the intention, the will of the parents may be expressed in their child. True, the imperfect mind cannot even grasp or picture perfect things, but it can approximate them, and in that same proportion it can impress that approximation of character upon the offspring. There is an old adage that "blood will tell"--that is, that culture and good breeding will be marked in the offspring. It is surely a fact that character will tell. Christians, thoroughly devoted to the Lord and seeking day by day to know and to do the divine will, and who are under the instruction of the holy spirit in the school of Christ and somewhat developed in grace and in knowledge of the truth, whose minds are transformed by the renewing of the holy spirit, and their affections set upon things above, will surely mark and impress the spiritual qualities of their own hearts upon the natural offspring. Such children, well born and devoted to the Lord from conception, will, of course, in childhood

be trained by the same parents in the ways of the Lord, in the ways of righteousness, of justice, of truth and of love. Thus begotten and thus trained, it seems very improbable that they should afterward depart from the way of the Lord, or that they should permanently remain transgressors, even though temporarily misled through temptation.

R5615:3 - It is difficult to imagine the value to a child of being well-born--born of healthy parents, and particularly of intelligent and God-fearing parents. Few realize the dignity and responsibility of the parental office. Many are aware of the fact that vitality and constitution proceed from father to child--whether this be slight vitality or strong vitality, weak constitution or strong constitution. The mother indeed has to do with this also, since the portion assigned to her by nature is that of nourisher, provider, for the child, up to the time of its weaning.

b. Hannah's vow to God in prayer, R1671:3

R1671:3 - Of such early consecration to the Lord we have many notable examples in the Scriptures. Of John the Baptist it is said that his parents "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," and that John was given them in answer to prayer--"filled with the holy spirit, even from his mother's womb." (Luke 1:6,15,44,66,80`.) Paul was similarly endowed from his birth (Gal. 1:15`; Acts 26:4,5`), and was zealous toward God long before his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. (Acts 22:3,4`.) So also were Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5`; 3:15`), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11,24-28`; 2:11,18,19`) and Moses.--Exod. 2:1`.

c. The affect that God's answer had upon Hannah. R5615:4-6

R5615:4-6 - But the still more important part of the mother's responsibility toward the child few parents realize. The mother's mentality during the period of gestation stamps itself upon her unborn child. Her fretfulness or vacillation or discontent, or her peace, her joy, her high ideals, are affecting not only her own happiness, but stamping almost indelibly her offspring. In view of this, how serious is the responsibility of motherhood, as well as fatherhood! (5) Moreover, we must remember that the mother's attitude of mind is largely under the influence and control of her husband. He is the provider, caretaker, of his wife. The responsibility is with him to place before his wife, at this important period of life, high ideals, noble sentiments, helpful suggestions, peaceful and restful surroundings. Thus parents co-operating intelligently might produce children even nobler than themselves, as their ideals may be better than were their own birth conditions; or reversely, they may produce children inferior to themselves, while their conditions are possibly more favorable than those of their parents. (6) The Bible declares that we are all born in sin, "misshapen in iniquity, in sin did our mothers conceive us"; but, as we have seen, these conditions of the fallen race may be accentuated or diminished to a considerable degree by the mental conditions of the parents, their appreciation of their office. But how often children come into the world undesired and permanently marked thereby to their disadvantage through life! How favorable is the condition, in comparison, of the child that is desired, prayed for,

prepared for, and whose mental conditions have been well provided for by the parents! Samuel, the subject of today's Study, was such a child--such a man.

d. How Hannah fulfilled her vow and how Elkanah supported her.

R1671:6-9; R1882A:2; R4114:6; R5615:1-2

R1671:6-9 - Those of the consecrated who have children and young people under their care have much to do in shaping their course and in leading them to Christ, by throwing around them the influences of their own consecrated lives, and imparting to them such instruction as their own acquaintance with the truth and their more matured experience and judgment can give. Such efforts, properly directed, are not lost upon the young. (7) Let them see both in your example and teaching how distinctly the line is drawn between the **consecrated** believer and the world;--that there is no compromise with the world: that to follow Christ is to renounce the world with all its ambitions, its gayety and its pleasures and companionship. Let them see the hollowness of worldly pleasures, and improve occasions for calling attention to the dissatisfaction and unrest of those who pursue the delusions, and the peace and joy of those who have left the world to follow Christ. It is helpful also to tell to others how graciously the Lord has led us, to speak of the various turning points in our course, where the friendly crook of the Good Shepherd kept us from straying away into the wrong path; or how when once we strayed his mercy tenderly pursued us and brought us back to his fold; how he has shielded us from evil; comforted us in sorrow; satisfied our longing souls with the joys of his salvation; and made us to sit down with him in heavenly places. (8) Before the mind becomes engrossed with the frivolities of this world it is easily led by wise and loving hearts; and none should lose these precious opportunities, which a few years later may bring forth a rich harvest to the Master's praise. Our object, however, is not to turn aside the saints from the great work of harvesting the mature wheat of this age, to the less important work of instructing the rising generation; but, rather, to point out the wayside privileges of very many who otherwise might not observe them. Many consecrated parents have these privileges every day; and many others come in contact with the young and forget to let their light shine upon them, under the erroneous impression that they cannot be expected to understand or to have any spiritual aspirations. (9) It is a great mistake to presume that the young must first run in the race of pride, ambition, frivolity and folly with the world, and then be converted to God. It is the business of those who have to do with them to shield them as far as possible against such influences, and to help them to center their affections and hopes in God before the world throws its ensnaring charms about them.

R1882A:2 - As soon as it was possible to do so, Hannah took her son to the temple and there left him to be trained and used in the Lord's service under the care of the high-priest Eli, who was a devoted servant of the Lord. That Samuel was prompt, obedient, teachable and easily led in the right way, because his heart was right and well-disposed, is manifest from his readiness to obey the supposed calls of Eli.

R5615:1-2 - TODAY'S Study gives a little insight into the family conditions of the Israelites at a time not long after the days of Samson and of Ruth. It shows us the deep

religious sentiment prevailing amongst many of the people. The Tabernacle of the Lord, in this Study styled the Temple, was located at Shiloh, a few miles north of Jerusalem. The priest in charge was Eli. The people by Divine direction went annually to worship the Lord, to offer sacrifice, etc., at the Feast time, the Passover. (2) The father and the mother of Samuel were of these annual worshipers before Samuel was born. It was on the occasion of one of these visits that Hannah made earnest prayer to the Lord for a son, vowing that if her petition was granted, her son should be devoted to the Lord's service for life. Her prayer was answered. The child was born and named Samuel, which signifies In God's Name. When he was weaned he was presented to the Lord through Eli, the priest--to be the latter's servant, assistant, in the service of the Tabernacle and the service of the priest's home, which was connected with the Tabernacle. The word weaned we may properly understand to signify, not the time merely when the child ceased to receive suck from the mother, but the time when he was able to do without his mother's care--probably ten years old.

e. Hannah's prayer when she surrendered Samuel to serve God.R5615:1-2

2. What can we conclude respecting Samuel's character foundation when he was taken to Eli? Duet 6:1-25; Duet 15:15-22; Mark 10:17-20; Eph 6:1-3; R1671:4-5; R3114:8; R4192:7

R1671:4-5 - Those thus early devoted to the Lord escape many a snare and many an entanglement, which in later years bring distress and trouble to so many. They do not have to reap the bitter harvest that always comes from the sowing of "wild oats;" they do not find it so much against the current of their nature to live godly lives; and they have in later years the strength of character born of continued self-discipline and self-restraint, and all the blessed advantages of a long acquaintance with God and of the instructions of his Word and of the leadings of his gracious providences. (5) How wise is the counsel, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth--while the evil days come not," etc. Those evil days of bitter disappointment and despair never will come to those who in youth commit their ways unto the Lord, and trust him to guide their paths. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. They are not by any means smooth and easy ways, but they are always peaceful and pleasant, because he who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5), is always present to comfort and to bless, and to make all things work together for good to those who love God --the called ones according to his purpose.

R3114:8 - Samuel ministered to Eli in the temple; that is, he served the high priest--who was specially the Lord's servant and representative--in his dwelling apartments which were close by the tabernacle,--for the temple was not yet built. Samuel's parents, in thus subjecting him early in life to the duties of a servant, were really putting him in a most excellent school. In our opinion it is a mistake to suppose that the early years of life--from ten to eighteen--should be largely spent in play; not only is the wisdom of bringing children early into positions of responsibility, and, more or less, of routine and drudgery exemplified in the case of Samuel, but it is also exemplified in the cases of many of the prominent people of this land today. Mr. Carnegie, whose fame is world-wide, entered early upon the drudgery of life as a telegraph messenger. Mr. Edison, whose fame as an electrician is also

world-wide, began life's drudgery as a newsboy. And thus it is in perfect accord with the experiences of today in worldly things that we perceive that the consecration of Samuel as a servant of Eli at an early age had probably much to do with the firmness and grandeur of his character when, subsequently, he became the Lord's prophet, and the last and the greatest of Israel's Judges.

R4192:7 - We must not forget that Samuel's training was with Eli, and that the sons of the latter turned out to be bribe-takers and generally scandalous in their misinterpretation of the divine law and justice. It was not, therefore, that Samuel was under the best environment and best teachers that would account for his grandeur of character and fidelity to principle. We must look further back, and find it in the fact that his parents consecrated him to the Lord, not only when a child but before his birth, and that this favorable influence contributed to his being well born in the reverence of the Lord. Undoubtedly the thoughts of parents, especially of the mother, during the period of a child's gestation, have great influence upon its mental character. Every child should be born with a large reverence for God, for justice, for truth, for goodness. To be thus born surely signifies a favorable start in the way of righteousness under present conditions. And we may be sure that the child thus begotten and born was well trained up to the time of his presentation to the Lord's service under Eli. Here we have a fresh testimony to the fact that if a child be trained up in the way he should go he is not likely to depart therefrom. Oh, that Christian parents could realize what a responsibility is in their hands in respect to the training of their children, and especially during their most impressionable years!

3. How can we apply these lessons to developing the character foundation of a new creature in Christ? R1671:1-2, 4, 8; R4090:6

R1671:1-2, 4, 8 - THOSE of the Lord's children who early gave their hearts to him and committed their way to his guidance can all bear testimony to multiplied blessings as the results of that early start in the right way. And we are glad to see some very young people among us now taking the first steps in the ways of life. To all such young pilgrims we would say, God bless you! You are starting out as young soldiers of the cross, and we want you to be brave and true soldiers, and to remember that the first duty of a soldier is obedience to the Captain--Jesus Christ. Give close attention and try to understand what he would have you do, and then be very prompt to obey, whether or not you are able to comprehend the wisdom of his directions. (2) It is a question with many how early in life a child may give its heart to God and be fully consecrated to him. But the Scriptures make very plain the fact that they may and should be consecrated to the Lord by their parents before their birth or even their begetting, that thus their pre-natal influences may insure them a mental and spiritual inheritance tending to godliness, and that with the dawn of intelligence this disposition should begin to be cultivated and warmed into vital, active piety, so that at a very tender age the little ones may intelligently ratify the parental covenant of entire consecration to God. This they should be expected and led to do as early as possible. (4) Those thus early devoted to the Lord escape many a snare and many an entanglement, which in later years bring distress and trouble to so many. They do not have to reap the bitter harvest that always comes from the sowing of "wild oats;" they do not

find it so much against the current of their nature to live godly lives; and they have in later years the strength of character born of continued self-discipline and self-restraint, and all the blessed advantages of a long acquaintance with God and of the instructions of his Word and of the leadings of his gracious providences. (8) Before the mind becomes engrossed with the frivolities of this world it is easily led by wise and loving hearts; and none should lose these precious opportunities, which a few years later may bring forth a rich harvest to the Master's praise. Our object, however, is not to turn aside the saints from the great work of harvesting the mature wheat of this age, to the less important work of instructing the rising generation; but, rather, to point out the wayside privileges of very many who otherwise might not observe them. Many consecrated parents have these privileges every day; and many others come in contact with the young and forget to let their light shine upon them, under the erroneous impression that they cannot be expected to understand or to have any spiritual aspirations.

R4090:6 - We are to recognize a difference between the consecrated parents of Samuel and their prayers for a son, and the proper prayers of consecrated people of the present time. Only since Pentecost have the Lord's people been privileged to be "New Creatures in Christ Jesus," begotten of the holy Spirit; and such seek and pray for spiritual rather than natural children;--by spending their lives as did their Master, seeking to transform children of the first Adam into spiritual children of God. It is in view of this, and when addressing spirit-begotten ones, that the Apostle declares, that "he that marrieth not doeth better,"--because he will, generally speaking, find the unmarried condition most favorable to his new ambitions.

B – Developing the Superstructure – 1 Samuel 2:11 – 1 Samuel 4:1

4. Consider the following and discuss how each would have been a factor in developing the superstructure of Samuel's character:

a. The character of Eli, his Son's and how God held Eli accountable.

R1882A:3-7; R5296:2; 1 Samuel 2:17-18

R1882A:3-7 - Eli's mild disposition and gentle manners and his righteous life and teaching were all that were necessary in the way of human training and restraint to keep this well-disposed child in the way of righteousness from infancy up to manly vigor. Under his influence the child grew and waxed strong in a noble and righteous character, and was active and diligent in the service of the Lord. But it was not so with Eli's own family. His own sons were wayward, disobedient, unthankful, unholy and profligate. Eli sought to correct their waywardness by the same mild measures that were natural to him, but when these measures failed he did not further restrain them by the severer measures so necessary in their case; and so they continued to bring disgrace upon their father and upon the cause of God which he as high priest represented. (4) This negligence was culpable, and it displeased the Lord. Hence the warning message to him through the child Samuel, as recorded in `verses 11-13`. (5) It was hard for Eli to realize the displeasure of the Lord, the waywardness of his sons, and his own unfaithfulness and culpable negligence; but he

received the reproof with becoming meekness and humility, saying: "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." And when the tidings came of the fulfilment of this prediction --the tidings of the defeat of Israel before the Philistines and the death of his two sons in the battle, it was a terrible blow; but not until he heard that the ark of the Lord was in the hands of the enemy did his deep sorrow overwhelm him, and he fell from off the seat backward and broke his neck, and died. (Chap. 4:18.) But notwithstanding his weakness, his heart was always loyal and true to God, and the cause of God was dear to him; and God who is merciful and gracious and slow to anger, though he thus severely punished Eli's negligence, will doubtless remember in mercy and forgiveness his servant in the day he judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.--Rom. 2:16. (6) This incident brings forcibly to our attention the estimate which the Lord places on strength of character. After reasonable instruction in the ways of righteousness the Lord expects, and has a right to expect, strong characters. Wherefore the Apostle says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might....Quit you like men, be strong." (Eph. 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:13.) We should be strong in faith and strong in character: so shall we be pleasing and acceptable to God. If weakness and indecision be a natural failing with us, we are not excusable in failing to strive against it. Some of the noblest characters are those achieved through earnest striving against inherited weaknesses. God is also always ready to supplement our efforts with his strength, if we invoke his aid. (7) One lesson to be drawn is respecting God's view of parental responsibility in training up children in the knowledge and reverence of the Lord. We here emphasize the fact that duty always **begins** at home, however far it may reach beyond it. It is the mistake of some, to be less zealous in preaching and exemplifying the gospel in their own families, than among those outside of them. Charity (love, care, benevolence) should begin at home, and should continue there. That field, more than any other, should be prayerfully and patiently worked, even though it be slower than others to yield fruit.

R5296:2 - Eli had been a judge in Israel for many years; and so far as the record goes, he was thoroughly exemplary himself--just, in all his dealings. But his sons were styled "sons of Belial"--they were wicked in various ways. While, therefore, Eli's own influence was for the benefit of the nation of Israel, here was a contrary influence which grew up under his protection, under his sanction. Had these evil-doers been others than those of his own family, doubtless Eli would have dealt with them according to his authority as a judge. We have here an illustration of a man who, though godly himself, was weak as the head of his family. As the head of his household he should have trained up his children in the way they should go. He should have trained them up in righteousness; otherwise they should have ceased to be members of his household, and should have come under certain restraint, which he, as a law-giver, should have enforced.

b. How Elkanah and Hannah continued to support Samuel

c. How God blessed Elkanah and Hannah for their sacrifice and service

d. Samuel's initial response to God calling him three times and his final response following Eli's counsel. R3114:11-12; R5296:4; R5615:7-8

R3114:11-12 - The story of the Lord's first message to Samuel is beautiful in its simplicity. The boy evidently was accustomed to obeying the calls of Eli for various services at various times, and to this end had his sleeping apartments near by--Eli was advanced in life, about seventy-eight years of age. Three times the Lord called Samuel, and he answered, "Here am I," and went to Eli. It was after the third call that Eli instructed him to say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." (12) The record is that for a long time such a message from the Lord had been "precious," that is, scarce: Eli, although a good man, and sincere and faithful and kind in his dealings with Samuel, had been too lax in his dealings with his own sons, who were priests and had much to do with the services of the tabernacle, and who, therefore, in every sense of the word should have been pious and exemplary men. The Lord had already sent Eli a warning message respecting his sons who were profligate and open transgressors, not only in financial affairs, but also in morals. Eli should have realized his responsibilities and should have checked their wrong course and, if necessary, should have dismissed them from the service of the tabernacle even though they were his own sons; but in proportion as he had grown weak in mind and body, they had grown strong, self-willed and impious, and the old man seems not to have had the necessary strength of character to deal with them. The Lord's message delivered to Samuel was in respect to Eli's family and the punishment that should come upon them for their sins, which were much more grievous in view of the fact that they were the exemplars and instructors of the people.

R5296:4 - We are to recall that this message came to Eli through the boy Samuel. Samuel had, after the manner of a Prophet in those days, heard the voice of the Lord calling him and speaking to him. Thinking it was Eli's voice, he had gone to him and asked, What will you have? And Eli replied that he had not called him, and directed him to lie down again. This was repeated three times, and Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. He therefore instructed Samuel again to lie down, but that if the call was repeated he should answer, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth," indicating his readiness to do Him service. Samuel did as he was directed, and the Lord told him that because of Eli's carelessness in respect to the doings of his family, they should be cut off from the priesthood.

R5615:7-8 - Our lesson opens with the declaration that the child Samuel "ministered unto the Lord before Eli"; that is to say, he was a servant of the Lord by virtue of his being a servant to Eli, who was the Lord's representative and priest. The Word of Jehovah was precious in those days; that is, it was seldom that God sent messages at that time. Perhaps that of the angel of the Lord who appeared to the father and mother of Samson, probably fifty years before, was the last direct communication between the Lord and any of His people Israel. "There was no open vision"--visions and revelations were not then being given. The Divine Plan was hidden. The Urim and the Thummim answers of the Lord to the inquiries of the people had ceased. (8) It is supposed that Eli at this time was about seventy years of age--some think nearer eighty. His vision was dim. He was sleeping in one apartment and little Samuel, his servant, in another. The latter heard a voice calling

him and three separate times went to Eli to ask what service he could render, only to be told that it was a mistake, and that he had not been called. But by the third time Eli the priest realized that it was God who had called Samuel; and he instructed the lad that if the voice should again be heard, he should answer, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And so it was. The voice came again, and apparently the angel of the Lord appeared to Samuel at the same time. Then the Lord gave a message to Samuel respecting Eli--foretelling the sad end of the lives of his two sons, and Eli's own death, and that Eli's family should nevermore serve the Lord as priests. The inference is given that Eli's sons misused their position as under priests, taking more of the sacrifices than they were properly allowed in the Divine arrangement, and besides this, practising immorality, and thus misleading the people into unrighteousness, whereas, as the Lord's servants and priests, they should have been instructors of the people in righteousness, both by precept and example.

e. Samuel's fear to tell Eli and the fact that he did not withhold anything when pressed by Eli. R4090:20

R4090:20 - In the morning Samuel hesitated to tell his kind master, Eli, the unfavorable message he had received of the Lord in the night; but Eli was anxious to know whatever the Lord had to say, and importuned until Samuel told him all. There is a good lesson here for the Lord's people--a lesson of humility and kindness; the lad might have felt puffed up to think that the Lord, who so seldom spoke to any, had now spoken to him; he might have felt himself honored and above Eli, in that the message spoke of the discomfiture of the latter; pride might have made him boastful and inconsiderate of the feelings of his master so that he would have taken delight in telling him of the calamities that would come, and how greatly he had been honored of the Lord. Samuel, on the contrary, exhibited the spirit of meekness, apparently not even considering the honor that had come to him; but, rather, sympathizing with his master, he would have preferred not to burden his heart with the message of calamity.

5. What can we conclude respecting the superstructure of Samuel's character up to the time of Eli's death? 1 Samuel 2:26; 1 Samuel 3:19-21; R5626:1; R5627:1

R5626:2 - We are not to overestimate the moral and religious conditions of the people during those twenty years; but we may assume that the evil example of the priests, the sons of Eli, whom he had associated with him in the priestly office, had an injurious effect upon the people--a demoralizing effect. According to God's covenant with the nation, He was bound to reprove them, punish them. A fresh invasion of the Philistines took place. The Israelites went out to meet them in battle and were defeated. In their chagrin, and groping after some help, they looked to God, just as all the nations of Europe today are looking to God for help and praying in vain.

R5627:1 - SAMUEL the Prophet might serve Eli the Priest, but he could not become his successor, because not of the priestly family. It is probable therefore that, as he reached maturity, he found other service; but there is a blank in the record of twenty years at least. The intimation, however, is that he was faithful to God and to the interests of his people,

and that the people trusted him as a servant of God. We may be sure, therefore, that he was not idle, but engaged in some good work. Quite possibly he engaged himself in instructing the people respecting their wrong conditions, the permission of idolatry amongst them, their neglect of God, etc.

6. How can we apply these lessons to developing the character superstructure of a new creature in Christ? R1882A:8-9; R3114:13, 15-17; R4090:18-19, 21-23; R5626:15; R5296:7-14

R1882A:8-9 - Another good lesson is found in the `Golden Text`-- Samuel's answer to the Lord: "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Too often the uninstructed or wrongly instructed "servant" wants to do all the talking, and to have the Lord hear him and perform his will. How few of God's children are quick to learn the lesson that God has a message to communicate to them through his Word by which their thoughts, words and deeds are to be directed. (9) Let us never forget that the Bible is God's Word to us. And while prompt to acknowledge the channels and agencies honored by the Lord in bringing to our attention the things of his Word new and old, let us never forget that the Word itself is the final arbiter, and that if any teaching fails to harmonize with that Word it is because there is no light in it. (`Isa. 8:20`) Then, as the Apostle says, we are to be not only hearers, but also **doers**, of the Lord's Word. (`James 1:22`) And "He that hath my Word let him speak my word faithfully" (`Jer. 23:28`) --not uncertainly, doubtfully, but "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."--`1 Pet. 4:11`.

R3114:13-17 - Eli's experience with his wayward sons calls for our sympathy; yet doubtless in some respects, at least, he brought his difficulties upon himself by reason of his neglect of the early training of them in the ways of the Lord, in the ways of his righteousness. Doubtless he often looked at the faithful lad who ministered to him so patiently and industriously, and wished that his sons had been of similar disposition; but the time so to wish advantageously and profitably was long gone by; they should have been begotten in the spirit of consecration, and trained in conformity therewith, and the Lord's Word for it is that when they were old they would not have departed from it. There is a lesson for parents here, too; the fact that the Lord's service is to be considered of primary importance and is to be defended even at the expense of their own flesh and blood. (14) In the morning Samuel hesitated to tell his kind master, Eli, the unfavorable message he had received of the Lord in the night; but Eli was anxious to know whatever the Lord had to say, and importuned until Samuel told him all. There is a good lesson here for the Lord's people--a lesson of humility and kindness; the lad might have felt puffed up to think that the Lord, who so seldom spoke to any, had now spoken to him; he might have felt himself honored and above Eli, in that the message spoke of the discomfiture of the latter; pride might have made him boastful and inconsiderate of the feelings of his master so that he would have taken delight in telling him of the calamities that would come, and how greatly he had been honored of the Lord. Samuel, on the contrary, exhibited the spirit of meekness, apparently not even considering the honor that had come to him; but, rather, sympathizing with his master he would have preferred not to burden his heart with the message of calamity. (15) The Lord is speaking now to some of his faithful ones through his Word,

through his "knock" (Rev. 3:20), which tells us of his presence, through the signs which mark the incoming of the new dispensation: are any disposed now to be haughty and proud and boastful because the Lord has permitted them to hear his voice and to know something of his plan and of the calamities coming upon Babylon? Should they not rather be filled with humility so that self would be lost sight of entirely? Should not all favored of the Lord speak of the trouble coming upon Babylon sympathetically, with a disposition to assist to an escape, rather than a disposition to gloat over and rejoice in coming troubles in which present systems will be completely overthrown? (16) The Lord speaks in our day in a different manner from that in which he spoke in olden times: as the Scriptures declare, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Heb. 1:1,2.) The Word of the Lord is still precious and scarce in that it is not, at the present time, given to all, but only to a certain class; as it is written, "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear." The majority of mankind have no ear to hear at the present time, no eye to see the glorious beauty of God's plan. As the Apostle explains, "The god of this world hath blinded their minds"--earthly things, earthly ambitions, earthly hopes, earthly calls and voices, distract their attention, fill their capacity; but blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear, and blessed shall we be if, like Samuel, when we hear the Lord's message we respond promptly, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Such as thus respond shall be taught of God--by the Word of his grace--the words of the Lord Jesus, and the words of his inspired apostles--instructed and guided in the understanding of these through the holy spirit, through the various helps and channels and agents which the Lord is pleased to use--perhaps a tract, perhaps a book, perhaps a letter, perhaps a conversation, perhaps a sermon. (17) He who would continue to be taught of the Lord, must continue to listen for his voice, continue to be in the hearing and obeying attitude of heart. The difficulty with some apparently is that their own wills are not fully extinct, dead--that their consecration is not complete; hence while consecrated enough to wish not to disobey the Lord's voice, they have certain ideas of their own respecting what his voice should say, and they prefer to interpret his message in conformity to their own preferences: they will to do more or less their own wills, and will to hear the Lord's voice directing them in accordance with their own wills. This is a most dangerous situation and is generally accompanied by self-conceit and self-assertion and will ultimately lead far from the Christian's goal. Let each of us resolve by the Lord's grace that we will out of honest heart continually seek to hear the pure Word of God, and that with a desire to obey it as far as we are able.

C – The Application and Trial of a Developed Character - 1 Samuel 7:1 – 1 Samuel 8:5

- 7. Consider the following and discuss the relationship to the application and trial of Samuel's developed character:**
 - a. Israel's willingness to accept Samuel as a judge and to ultimately reform (include the timing and process that lead to the outward acts of reformation) R1882B:1-2; R5627:1-5**

R1882B:1-2 - SAMUEL succeeded Eli as Judge in Israel, and was the last of the judges, the office of Judge being superseded by that of king. `Chapter 12` contains his farewell address as judge, after he had anointed Saul to be king. But nevertheless it is written that "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." (`Verse 15`.) In a sense-- in the estimation of the people--the office of judge was superseded by that of king, and Samuel's term of office ended with Saul's elevation to the throne. But in God's reckoning he was a judge over and above the king to the end of his life; and in this capacity, under God's direction, he anointed Saul as king, and later he anointed David to be Saul's successor. (2) Prior to the events of this lesson Samuel had spent some years in endeavoring gradually to influence the public sentiment toward repentance and reformation; and finally he gathered them together at Mizpeh that there he might intercede with God on their behalf, and that they might there make a solemn confession of their sins to God and covenant afresh to walk in his ways. This solemn return of the nation to God was, in answer to the prayer of his faithful servant Samuel, followed by an immediate manifestation of the Lord's acceptance and favor toward them in delivering them from the yoke of the Philistines.

R5627:1-5 - SAMUEL the Prophet might serve Eli the Priest, but he could not become his successor, because not of the priestly family. It is probable therefore that, as he reached maturity, he found other service; but there is a blank in the record of twenty years at least. The intimation, however, is that he was faithful to God and to the interests of his people, and that the people trusted him as a servant of God. We may be sure, therefore, that he was not idle, but engaged in some good work. Quite possibly he engaged himself in instructing the people respecting their wrong conditions, the permission of idolatry amongst them, their neglect of God, etc. (2) Our lesson introduces him to us as the leader of the hour, when the people had become thoroughly aroused to a sense of their unholiness, their need of God, and their need of mutual help if they would come back into relationship with God. Having brought the people to this proper condition of mind, the Prophet Samuel appointed a general meeting at a small mountain called Mizpeh; that is, Watch Tower. They came in considerable numbers and with hearts bowed down with grief in recognition that they were sinners, and that therefore they had been foreigners--out of Divine favor. They came seeking God, and He was found of them. **A GREAT REFORMATION EFFECTED** (3) The Prophet Samuel put the matter before the people in plain, distinct terms, saying, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." Samuel was warranted in telling the people that they would be delivered from the power of the Philistines; because this was God's standing agreement with them by the Covenant He entered into with them; namely, that if they would obey His Laws and be loyal to Him, He would be their God and they would be His people, and He would guide their interests to their highest welfare, both as a nation and as individuals; but if they would not obey His statutes and be loyal to Him, then He would deliver them into the hands of their enemies and punish them Seven Times. God was keeping His part of the Covenant; it was Israel that had failed, and Samuel was properly bringing the matter to their attention and urging repentance. (4) "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah only." Baalim was the

plural name for Baal. The word Baal signifies overseer, caretaker. The Israelites had been distinctly forewarned not to make any kind of idols, and to keep themselves separate from all idols to such an extent that they might not even make an image of their own God, Jehovah. He would not have any symbols before His people, but have them worship Him in spirit and in truth. But all around them were the Canaanites, whom they had not had faith and obedience to drive out of the land. These Canaanites had the Baal idols in all their towns, and some had them in their homes and trusted in them as protective genii. (5) Ashtaroth is the plural for Ashtoreth, a female deity --the same known to the Babylonians as Ishtar and to the Greeks as Astarte. She was the goddess of fertility and the sexual relations; and connected with her worship were many licentious services supposed to promote fertility-- the propagation of the human species. If Samuel's work of twenty years reached this harvest where the whole people of Israel decided to put away their Ashtaroth of gods and to worship and serve Jehovah only, he certainly accomplished much. We may be sure also that some human agency was connected with so great an outward manifestation. Such reformations do not come by chance, nor are they miraculous.

b. Samuel's burnt offering of a Lamb, his cry unto God and God's response and reward of Samuel and the Nation of Israel. R4192:3; R5627:6-9, 13

R4192:3 - In harmony with this arrangement Eli had been a judge in Israel of recognized divine appointment, but because of Israel's unfaithfulness captivity to the Philistines ensued at the time of Eli's death. For quite a number of years Israel was subject to the Philistines. Meantime Samuel taught the people and urged them to put away their strange gods and to serve Jehovah only. He assured them that through this turning to the Lord would come divine blessing and favor. The people did so and gathered at Mizpah, where Samuel offered sacrifices on their behalf. Meantime the Philistines, learning of this gathering of the people, anticipated that it meant rebellion from their overlordship and came against them with an army. Then it was that the "Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." (1 Sam. 7:10`) As a result, the Israelites were delivered, and Samuel was recognized by all the tribes as the divine representative and judge of Israel. Throughout his judgeship he traveled hither and thither, apparently hearing and deciding such cases as were too difficult for the local judges. Under his wise judgeship the Israelites were greatly blessed; but with their returning prosperity came the ambition to be like the nations round about them--to be a united kingdom under the dominion of a king who would lead them in war and rule over them as an entire nation and centralize their power and energy. It is at this point that our lesson really begins.

R5627:6-9, 13 - Samuel prayed for the people of Israel; "and they drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord." The confession of sin was not only creditable to the people as a manifestation of their honesty and sincerity, but it was appropriate that they should do this when asking the God whom they had offended to receive them back again into covenant relationship with Himself. The poet has said that confession is good for the soul, and surely all have proven

it so. It served to commit them. The humility which was necessary to the making of such confession would be profitable in respect to their character-building. (7) The water poured out may be viewed from various angles. One suggestion is that it represented the Truth which they could not gainsay, could not take back, even as water spilled upon the ground cannot be recovered. Another suggestion is that as the water was drawn from the depth of the earth, so their confession came from the depths of their hearts. Another is that it represented their vows of faithfulness to the Lord, which would be as irrevocable as water poured out. **A LESSON FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAEL** (8) "And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh." That is to say, as a judge, a counselor, he gave advice, gave decision in respect to their affairs, disputes, proper course of conduct, right and wrong on any subject, etc. Thus the nation of Israel was making a new start; and as a people they were more drawn together than at any time in their history from the days of Joshua onward. But, as though it were a trial of their faith, at this very time, while they were resolving on the course of righteousness, their enemies, the Philistines, having heard of the gathering, sought to nip the rebellion in the bud, and came against them with an army of considerable size. (9) The Israelites had not come together for battle, but for prayer; nevertheless they were probably more or less armed. But they felt themselves quite unprepared to meet the Philistine hosts. And they said unto Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto Jehovah our God for us, that He save us out of the hand of the Philistines." They were learning to look for help in the right direction. This cry coming to the Lord after they had abandoned their idols and had vowed to be loyal to Jehovah, put them in a very different attitude toward Him from that of twenty years previous, when they called for the Ark of God to lead them in battling against the Philistines without any reformation of character, without repentance for sins. (13) While yet the offering was upon the altar, the noise of the approaching hosts of the Philistines was heard. How would God assist His people? How could they hope for deliverance against the Philistine hosts? Would they in fear scatter or would God's power to help be manifest? The deliverance came in the shape of a great, violent, sudden storm. Going hastily, it swept down the hill Mizpeh, in the faces of the approaching hosts. They turned their backs against the violent storm; and the Israelites perceiving the opportunity, rushed onward with the storm, pursuing the Philistines and driving them before them, and thus gaining a great victory. The place of the victory was the very spot where, twenty years before, the Ark of the Lord had been captured by the Philistines. Samuel there set a stone as a pillar and monument, and called it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."--`Verse 12`.

c. That Samuel judged Israel all of his life and setup a circuit judge system. R3216:1; R5627:15, 19; R5636:5

R3216:1 - THE International Lesson course now turns again to the Old Testament. Six months ago we considered the child Samuel, his parentage, training, acceptance with God, etc. The present lesson takes up the thread of history in Samuel's old age. There is not a suggestion anywhere of disloyalty to the Lord or to the people of Israel on the part of this great prophet Samuel; the Lord's love and favor continued with him to the very close of his life and made it useful to the very end. As he advanced in years, and as the nation of Israel advanced in numbers, it seemed a proper thing that, in addition to the court of justice

presided over by the prophet, there should be another court, especially on the southern boundary of Palestine, at Beersheba; and having sons, it was but natural that the prophet should expect of them considerable ability, discretion, wisdom and integrity in serving the Lord and his people according to the example which he had set them. Where could he expect to find more competent assistant judges for service in Beersheba than his own sons?

R5627:15, 19 - The record is that Samuel continued to be a judge, an interpreter of the Divine Law, a counselor to his people, "all the days of his life." The Israelites had accepted God's Law, and had agreed to abide by its decisions. Whoever, therefore, they would have confidence in as an interpreter of the Divine Law, they, in proper condition of heart, would be ready to obey his rulings, his judgments. Spiritual Israelites similarly have come into covenant relationship with God, and have bound themselves to seek to know and to do the will of God and not their own wills. Hence whoever may be the person of opportunity who can show "an Israelite indeed" the mind of the Lord in any manner, he becomes his counselor, the Lord's mouthpiece to him; thus all the people of God assist one another to judge themselves, to build each other up in the most holy faith, to guide each other to know and to do the will of the Lord. (19) The Prophet Samuel established a new order of things, which we see was the outgrowth of his reformation work amongst the people of God, his nation. He did not do as others before him had done--have his place of residence, to which all the people must go to ask his advice, his counsel, his judgment; but he introduced the circuit judge system, and went from place to place holding a court, not so much to condemn anybody, but rather to advise those who desired advice. Thus the nation of Israel began to be cemented as one people, and to realize that their interests were in common; and that all of their interests were bound up with God, His Law, His Covenant with them, and the interpretation of these through such agents as the Lord might send to them--Samuel the Prophet being one of these.

R5636:5 - As a result of the noble reform instituted by Samuel and maintained throughout his long judgeship, the people were greatly blessed, and the national spirit was strengthened.

d. Samuel's actions when he learned of the transgressions of his sons.

R3216:2

R3216:2 - We perceive that integrity of character, although transmissible to a certain degree, cannot be fully relied upon in the children, however noble and God-fearing the parent. The heart, the will, of each individual, is independent; training may indicate to it the proper course, but full consecration to the Lord is essential to the full, ripe development of character. Samuel's integrity is shown by the fact that when it was proven to him that his sons were guilty of accepting bribes to pervert justice, he promptly removed them from their positions of influence. Doubtless he had in mind the course of his predecessor, Eli, who was too lax in his dealings with his own sons, and thus permitted great calamities to come upon them and upon the people. The nobility and integrity of Samuel's course, which so commends itself to all lovers of righteousness, was no doubt to some extent guided by

the lessons of the Lord exemplified in Eli's case. Certain it is that Samuel continued in the divine favor to the end of his course.

e. The fact that God did not hold Samuel responsible for the transgressions of his sons

8. What can we conclude respecting the application and trial of Samuel's developed character up to the point that he learned of his Son's transgressions? R3216:1

R3216:1 - THE International Lesson course now turns again to the Old Testament. Six months ago we considered the child Samuel, his parentage, training, acceptance with God, etc. The present lesson takes up the thread of history in Samuel's old age. There is not a suggestion anywhere of disloyalty to the Lord or to the people of Israel on the part of this great prophet Samuel; the Lord's love and favor continued with him to the very close of his life and made it useful to the very end. As he advanced in years, and as the nation of Israel advanced in numbers, it seemed a proper thing that, in addition to the court of justice presided over by the prophet, there should be another court, especially on the southern boundary of Palestine, at Beersheba; and having sons, it was but natural that the prophet should expect of them considerable ability, discretion, wisdom and integrity in serving the Lord and his people according to the example which he had set them. Where could he expect to find more competent assistant judges for service in Beersheba than his own sons?

9. How can we apply these lessons to the application and trial of the developed character of a new creature in Christ? R1882B:3-5; R5627:10-12, 14, 16-18

R1882B:3-5 - In observing these remarkable providences on behalf of the nation of Israel, we should never lose sight of the fact that these special dealings with that nation were peculiar to them only; and that because they had come into covenant relationship with God. God's care and favor were over that nation only, of all the nations of the earth. Even their national penalties for sin were marks of the divine favor; for God wisely disciplined them for their good--to purge them from sin, to correct them and keep them near himself. And this divine favor was never taken from them until, as a nation, they rejected and crucified the Son of God. Since that time they have had no favor. Nor will God's favor return to them until, as Paul states, the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come into possession of the chief blessing, which time is now at hand. (4) In the interim the special favor of God has been shown to the spiritual seed of Abraham, the faithful overcoming saints of the Gospel age. As God led and disciplined and delivered and cared for his ancient people, so now he bestows the same attentions upon his faithful church, both collectively and individually. And how often we are similarly impelled by a sense of his care and love to sing-- "Here I'll raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I'm come!" (5) We now are God's covenant people: let us be faithful followers; "for, as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."

R5627:10-12, 14, 16-18 - Is there not a lesson here for all of God's people? Is it not as true today as it ever was that it is vain for the Lord's people to call upon the Lord for assistance and blessing while they are living in sin, in violation of their Covenant and its obligations? The first lesson of all, then, for those who realize their being in sin is repentance, and definite vows to the Lord respecting faithfulness in petition to Him for His mercy unto them. Those who thus come to the Lord now, as Christians, under the Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ, are sure to have Divine mercy and "grace to help in every time of need." (11) Our Philistines that come upon us and enslave us are our passions and weaknesses, and the oppositions of the world and the Adversary. These are our foes, and against these only Divine Power can enable us to fight a good fight and come off victorious. (12) In response to the cry of the people, Samuel the Prophet offered to the Lord a sacrifice--a lamb of the first year. He knew it not, but it was a type of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Beside this typical sacrifice, Samuel cried to the Lord on behalf of his people, and the Lord heard him. So with all that stand beside the great Antitypical Sacrifice, and in the name and merit of that Sacrifice, as people of God in covenant relationship with Him--having put away sins and weaknesses to the best of our ability, we may be sure of Divine help, deliverance. (14) So with Christians in their victories under the Lord's assistance; when by the Lord's grace they gain victories they should set up memorials or monuments in their minds, in their hearts, and not pass these blessings by or forget that the victories were gained by help from on High. Every Christian, therefore, should have his Ebenezers, his monuments of victory, as it were, of Divine assistance over his foes, the world, the flesh and the Adversary, and he should rejoice in these. This sentiment has come down to us in the words of a beautiful hymn, familiar to nearly all who read the English language: "Here I'll raise my Ebenezer, Hither by Thy help I'm come; And I hope by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at Home." (16) This office is not left to ministers, to priests, but is open to all the Lord's people; for St. Peter declares all the Lord's people are priests--"Ye are a Royal Priesthood." True, these priests have not entered into their royalty, nor yet have they entered fully upon their priestly office. These glorious offices belong especially to the future, when by virtue of the resurrection change, these priests, who are now sacrificing, will be Priests in glory, reigning with Christ and judging the world--assisting the world, counseling the world, instructing the world regarding God's will and helping them to know and do that will. (17) The Royal Priesthood are to remember that their judging in the present time is not a judging of the hearts, but merely a judging of the conduct. As respects the hearts, they are informed of the Lord that they are not competent to judge; and hence the words of the Apostle Paul, "Judge nothing before the time." The time for the judging of the hearts, when this work will be committed to the Church, will be after that which is perfect shall have come, after the resurrection change shall have made us like our Redeemer and qualified, therefore, to read the hearts of mankind and to judge a righteous judgment, a merciful judgment, a sympathetic judgment, a helpful one. (18) The only judging which the people of God may now do for and toward each other, is that which the Lord represented when He said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Men do not gather grapes off thorn bushes or figs off thistles. A good spring will not send forth bitter water. We are, therefore, to judge ourselves as to whether or not our conduct is in harmony with the principles of righteousness; and we may similarly assist in

judging one another as respects outward conduct, leaving the judgment of the heart to the individual himself and to the Lord.

D – Maintaining a Developed Character Even Unto Death (scriptures noted below)

10. Note how the following events demonstrated that Samuel maintained his character throughout the remainder of his career:

- a. His initial response to Israel's request for a King and his role as an intermediary between God and Israel. 1 Samuel 8:6 – 21; R3216:6; R4192:5, 8-9; R5636:7**

R3216:6 - Influenced by this servility to custom, the Elders of Israel brought their petition, or prayer, to Samuel that he, as God's representative, would anoint for them a king--a special ruler over them, and make them as a whole a nation of servants to one of their own nation. It is hard for us to sympathize with such ignoble sentiments, such prayers for their own degradation. Samuel seems to have viewed the matter from this standpoint, and, perhaps, also regarded it as a personal slight to himself. However, he very properly took the matter to the Lord in prayer. It was not for him to decide what and how--he was merely the Lord's mouthpiece and representative to speak to the Israelites in the name of the Lord whatever message he should receive. Ah, how grand it would be if the whole world could be under such a rule,--heavenly wisdom directing, and incorruptible earthly judges communicating and enforcing the divine message and law! And this, the Scriptures inform us, is what will come to pass eventually, the Lord's declaration being, "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning." (Isa. 1:26.) However, before that grand condition--of which the Jewish law-givers and judges were merely the crudest types--can be realized, it will be necessary for the great King Immanuel to take his great power and reign and subdue all things unto himself. Then, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"--they will be ready to hearken to the voice of the Lord through those whom he will eventually appoint and recognize as his mouthpieces.

R4192:5, 8-9 - Few characters shine out on the pages of history with such a pure light as does Samuel. When the Israelites made the request for a king Samuel was grieved. He knew he had served the people faithfully, that he had been self-sacrificing and generous to the last degree, spending his life in their interest. It seemed strange to him that a people should be so unthankful. But the Lord pointed out that their ingratitude was not to Samuel, but to their great King, Jehovah, saying, "They have not rejected thee but me." Nevertheless, the Lord bade Samuel hearken to the request of the people and anoint them a king, meantime assuring them that the truth of the divine prediction would be fully verified and that they were really choosing second best rather than the best. It was then that Samuel dismissed the people, assuring them that their request would be granted and a king anointed-- such a one as the Lord would direct. Meantime Samuel wrote out for the people a statement or report of his judgeship, recorded in `chapter 12`. In this he shows most distinctly how he had avoided bribery and in everything had sought to do the will of the Lord, and he called upon the people to witness to the truthfulness of this, and they did, and

attested it. What a noble character! 8) Respecting Samuel's moral heroism in promptly assisting to incorporate the kingdom, which would displace himself as the Lord's representative and judge in their midst, Professor Elmslie well says, "I think that one of the most magnanimous and majestic and heroic deeds ever done in our world's history was done by Samuel, when, convinced that it was the will of God, he set himself to do what no other man could do--to forsake all his past, to abandon all the lines of action on which he had worked through the best years of his life, and to put into other men's hands fresh possibilities. I call that conduct magnificent." **THE MANNER OF THE KING** (9) In recounting to Israel the manner of a king we are not to understand that the Lord or Samuel his mouthpiece meant that the description given would be the proper one for a proper king; but rather that it would be the general course of a king, of any man raised to such a place of imperial power as the kings of olden time enjoyed. The wrong course of kings is traceable to three conditions: (1) All men are imperfect and fallen, hence any king chosen would be so, and it would be merely a question of the measure of imperfection and tendency to pride and selfishness and the abuse of power. (2) The imperfection of those over whom they reign is a factor, for the recognized imperfection makes possible and to some extent makes reasonable the usurpation of great power. (3) The Adversary's derangement of all earthly affairs, putting light for darkness and darkness for light, often makes it seem to rulers and to the ruled that an abuse of power is necessary and really to the advantage of the ruled.

R5636:7 - The elders of the tribes conferred together and believed that it would be better to choose from amongst themselves a king and thus become more like the nations roundabout. They came to Samuel with the matter, as children to a father, as wise men to a statesman of extraordinary wisdom. They told him their desires. Samuel was disappointed, but gave no answer to them until he had time to confer with the Lord. The Lord bade him not be offended--that it had not been he who was rejected, but that the Lord had been rejected and His government.

b. His participation in the process of fulfilling God's will in the selection of Israel's first earthly King. 1 Samuel 8:22 – 1 Samuel 11:15; R3216:7-9; R5636:8-13, 21-23

R3216:7-9 - The Lord's answer to Samuel was that the prayer or petition of the people through their elders would be granted; but directed that he should, nevertheless, explain to them what this answer to their prayers, this fulfilment of their desires, would mean--that it would mean the surrender of their liberties and rights; that the rule of a king would be more or less despotic, tyrannical and selfish; that their sons and daughters would be taken to be servants in various capacities; that a large portion of their substance would be taken as taxes for the support of royalty, and that they would be subject to the whims of these masters whom they were desiring, whose pride and ambition would some time lead to rivalries and warfare, in which the whole people, as their servants, would suffer with them. (8) The elders heard all this delineation of the unwisdom of their course, but were, nevertheless, well satisfied to make the experiment--they wanted to be like the nations around them. How strong is the influence of imitation in all mankind! how necessary that

all should have before their minds true standards, true ideals of greatness of liberty or of righteousness,--of that which is really advantageous! Herein the Lord's people have his wisdom, his spirit--have a standpoint of observation superior to that of others, and possess the spirit of a sound mind proportionate to their education in the school of Christ. He has an education in the school of the Lord which gives him a finer acumen in respect to all the things of this present time, which seem comparatively insignificant to him in comparison with the things of the future--the eternal things. As the Apostle says, "He that is spiritual judgeth [understandeth] all things, yet he himself is judged [understood] of no man."--`1 Cor. 2:15`. (9) The Lord pointed out that the people were not rejecting Samuel, but were rejecting him. Indeed, that they had not rejected Samuel was evident from the fact that they came to him with the request. It was their lack of faith in the Lord that led them to fear what would happen after Samuel should die, or when his usefulness should become impaired through old age. The Lord points out that this had been the attitude of Israel from the first--"all the works that they have done since I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherein they have forsaken me and served other gods,--so do they also unto thee." They, of course, forsook Samuel as their judge; for the king whom he would anoint would be the judge instead. But the discredit to Samuel was nothing in comparison to their discrediting and rejecting the One whom he represented.

R5636:8-13 - But the Lord was willing to let them have their experiences with kings; nevertheless, Samuel was instructed to fully inform them what would be the consequences, what would be the manners of the kings, what would be the difficulties. He explained that their liberties would be fewer--that the kings would exercise a more or less autocratic power and would conscript their sons for servants and for soldiers and for public works, and that thus their liberties would be greatly abridged, the wealth of the people would more or less flow into the coffers of the king, and the best of their lands and of everything would gradually pass into his control. Instead of being the sovereigns, the people would be the slaves of the sovereign, retaining at best only a portion of their rights, etc. (9) The people, however, had set their heart on having a king. Already they were imagining how a king would lead them forth and give them dignity, marshal their hosts, and cause fear of them in the hearts of their enemies. **DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE ILLUSTRATED** (10) At the appointed time, Samuel, apparently by Divine arrangement, having received instructions from the Lord, came in contact with the one who was to be the future king--Saul, the son of Kish. The story reminds some of witchcraft and other occult doings. A herd of asses strayed from the farm of Kish, and Saul was sent to seek them. After searching in vain, he and his servant called upon the Prophet to ask his wisdom--that the Seer tell them where the asses were. The answer was that the asses were found, but that Saul was to come and dine with the Prophet in an appointed place where guests had already been invited, food already prepared, etc. (11) The place of honor was given to Saul; and the young man, fresh from the country, was astounded to hear the Prophet speak of him as being the choice of Israel for their leader. He modestly called attention to the fact that he belonged to an inferior tribe--a small one--the tribe of Benjamin; and that his family was not even the greatest in it. But the Prophet persisted, addressing him as the one to have future honors. (12) The next morning he was called early and directed respecting his

journey in such a manner that he would have corroborations of things that the Prophet intimated in advance. He would meet certain people, and by some he would be invited to partake of food, etc. Moreover, he would meet with certain experiences which would make of him a changed man. Meantime, as the two walked together and Saul's servant went before, the Prophet drew forth a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head, anointing him to be the king of Israel by Divine appointment. However, matters were kept secret until such time as would be indicated. (13) Saul's faith in the Prophet's declaration was strengthened by the fulfilment of the very experiences foretold. Meeting a company of those who were styled a school of prophets, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul and he joined with them in their singing and prophesying. We read, "God gave Saul another heart, and the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and he prophesied."--1 Sam. 10:9,10. (21) In due time, in harmony with the will of the Judges of Israel and with the Divine consent, the people came together to Samuel to have the matter of a king amongst them decided--to have the will of the Lord expressed in the matter. Again Samuel expostulated with them, and told them the dangers of leaving the simplicity of God's arrangement and taking up with the monarchial arrangement. But seeing that they still desired a king, he acted for them and drew lots as respected the different tribes, and then the different families in the chosen tribe, and then the different members of the family indicated. The lot fell on Saul as Samuel knew it would do and as Saul also knew; for they believed the Lord's hand was in the matter. (22) The fact that they used this method of casting lots should not be considered as an endorsement of such a method today; for we are living under different institutions; and neither the Natural nor the Spiritual Israelites are in that relationship with God in which He proposes to guide their affairs by the casting of lots. (23) When the lot fell upon Saul, the elders of the various tribes began to look for him. Where is he? Finally they found him bashfully sitting amongst the stuff--the luggage that belonged to the parties that had come to the gathering. As he was brought forth, the young man in the prime of life--probably seven feet tall, of athletic build-- he exactly filled the ideal of the people. They were pleased with God's choice, and God had already qualified Saul that he might be a successful king if he would prove loyal, faithful and obedient to Him.

c. His farewell address. 1 Samuel 12:1-25; R3222:2, 11

R3222:2, 11 - Upon the assembling of the people, the prophet Samuel opened his address (vss. 1-5) by calling upon God and the people to witness to his own rectitude of character in all of his dealings with them for the many years in which he had served them; to his justice in seeking to decide their various questions righteously; to his honesty, in that he never received even the smallest bribe, nor permitted anything to vitiate his judgment; neither had he been an oppressor of his people, but had always sought their good. With united voice the people concurred in the excellence and purity of his administration--a wonderful tribute, one which would be almost inconceivable in our day, in which we find that even the best and noblest officials are sure to have enemies, traducers, backbiters, slanderers. We are not to suppose that Samuel was merely eulogizing his own administration, but are, rather, to attribute to such a noble character a nobler object. He wished to make a lasting impression with this address and this transfer of authority to King Saul; and, to make his words more impressive and more effective in the interests of his

successor and in the interests of the Lord's people, he impressed upon his hearers the fact that his entire life had been one of devotion, and that they might well understand that his words now were in full accord with all the course of his previous life. They would thus realize that he had their best interests at heart, that he was thoroughly loyal to the Lord, and that his example, as well as his advice, would be beneficial to them. Perhaps, too, he would thus set before the people a standard of what they might look for and hope for from their new king, and before the king a standard of the ideal after which he should pattern his rule. (11) The grandeur of the Prophet's character shines out in the twenty-third verse again: he seems to have none of the petty animosities which some smaller creatures might have under the circumstances, and was a patriot to the core of his heart, as well as a faithful representative and ambassador of the Lord and mediator of his people. He says, practically: "Nothing that you have done toward me--rejecting me in choosing King Saul--shall in any manner or degree hinder my love for you and my prayers on your behalf. God forbid that it should! I should consider this a sin against the Lord who has placed me as a kind of representative of him to you, and of you to him; and I certainly would be failing of my duty and privilege did I neglect this important office of mediator. You may rely upon it that I not only will refrain from pleading against you with the Lord, but that I will petition him on your behalf."

**d. His actions relative to Saul's transgressions and God's rejection of Saul.
1 Samuel 13:8-14; 1 Samuel 15:1-35; R3224:1-2, 10-11, 15; R5430:14;
R5656:1**

R3224:1-2, 10-11, 15 - THE words of our caption, the Golden Text of this lesson, are the Lord's rebuke to King Saul by the prophet Samuel, in connection with the announcement that Saul, by disobedience to the heavenly King, had forfeited his privilege of representing him on the throne of Israel. The rending of the kingdom from the hands of Saul meant more than his own displacement: it meant that his son and successive heirs should not continue the Lord's representatives in the kingdom. (2) For a number of years Saul seems to have prospered fairly on the throne, and the people of Israel prospered with him. It was several years after his coronation, noted in our last lesson, that his first severe testing in respect to his obedience to the heavenly king came to him. At that time a war was instituted against the Philistines, who had been encroaching upon the Israelites to the east. Saul waited several days for Samuel to come to offer the sacrifices of the Lord previous to the beginning of the battle. Samuel was providentially hindered, and Saul, after waiting for a time, offered the sacrifices to the Lord himself, contrary to the arrangement, and then proceeded to battle, the result being a considerable defeat to his forces. Apparently he was not evilly intentioned, but lacked proper respect and reverence for the Lord and his arrangements. This may be said to have been the beginning of Saul's rejection by the Lord. Samuel's words were, "Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord...now thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart." (10) It is at this juncture that the Prophet Samuel came to him and the colloquy of our lesson ensued. The general narrative--the indignation of Samuel and the Lord's positive announcement--clearly indicates that Saul had not misunderstood his instructions, but had with considerable deliberation violated them. Consequently we must understand his words addressed to

Samuel to have been to a considerable extent hypocritical. He first salutes the Prophet with blessings, and assurances that he had performed the commandment of the Lord successfully. But immediately the prophet replies, "What means, then, this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" The prophet understood at once that the work of destruction had not been complete, that Saul and the people of Israel were anxious to take a spoil. This was wholly contrary to the Lord's direction. They were not to destroy their enemies to their own advantage, but simply to act as the agents of the Lord in thus executing his decree, the sentence of justice. They were not to take booty and thus to become like the nations about them--a robber nation, profiting by the troubles they inflicted upon the enemies of the Lord. This is in full accord with the Lord's character and the foregoing explanation of it. (11) Saul, seeing that the prophet was not likely to sympathize in any measure with his violation of the command, began hypocritically to represent that all those fine sheep and oxen had been captured from the enemy to be sacrificed to the Lord, and incidentally this would have meant a great feast for the Israelites, because the flesh of animals so sacrificed was eaten by them. Samuel stopped the king in his explanation and told him of the Lord's words of the night preceding (which, in Jewish counting, would be "this night," because their day began in the evening). The message of the Lord calls attention to the fact that Saul was humble when he was chosen as the Lord's representative upon the throne, and at that time he was very willing to give strict obedience to the heavenly voice, but the intimation is that now he had grown more self-confident and therefore less reliant upon the Lord and less attentive to the Lord's commands; getting into the wrong attitude of heart, he had failed to properly execute a very plain specific direction. Knowingly and in violation of the Lord's command he had the spoil separated, and spared the best when the Lord had commanded the reverse. (15) Although fully rejected, Saul's removal was not yet due. Samuel associated himself with him in a public sacrifice, commemorating the victory over the Amalekites, and on this occasion he slew Agag with his own hand--departing then to his own home. He never afterward saw Saul, yet the Scriptures declare, "Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul"--thus again showing us the beauty and strength of his character. He was ready to do the command of the Lord in any and every particular, yet was not without a feeling of compassion for those who were out of the way;--not a compassion which would make them his friends and lead him to cooperate with them in their wrong course, but a compassion which would have been glad to have cooperated with them at any time in a righteous course.

R5430:14 - As we study the narrative and note the indignation of Samuel, and the Lord's positive declaration of His displeasure and of the punishment to be meted out to Saul, we see clearly that the king had not misunderstood his instructions, but with considerable deliberation had violated them. Consequently we must understand his words of explanation to Samuel to have been to a considerable extent hypocritical. He first saluted the Prophet with blessings and assurances that he had performed the command of the Lord. But Samuel replied: "What means, then, this bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen which I hear?" He understood at once that the destruction had not been complete, that Saul had only partially obeyed the Lord.

R5656:1 - KING SAUL'S rejection by the Lord because of disobedience meant not only his own ultimate removal from the throne, but that his sons should not succeed him in it. Furthermore, it meant also the Lord's selection of another man, another family, for the office of ruler in Israel and representative of the Lord upon the throne. The Lord's choice was David, to whom the Prophet Samuel had indirectly referred, saying, "The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou [King Saul] hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."--`1 Samuel 13:14`.

**e. His actions following God's instructions to anoint Saul's replacement. 1
Samuel 16:1-13; R3225:3-5; R5656:5**

R3225:3-5 - Samuel mourned and prayed for Saul, and was apparently disappointed that this man, of whom he had expected such great things and under whose guidance he had anticipated great prosperity for Israel, should be rejected. Quite probably fearful forebodings of a civil war to result from the installation of a new king perturbed the prophet's mind. He knew that Saul would not quietly submit to lay down the scepter which he had taken up with so great modesty in obedience to the Lord's arrangement; his mental eye could see the probability of civil strife which might rupture the nation and cause great trouble. He should have had greater trust in the wisdom and power of the Almighty, but his trouble was more or less like that which assails all of the Lord's people even today. The lesson from this to our hearts should be that we will implicitly trust the Lord to manage his own affairs: that we will trust him where we cannot trace him, and be obedient to his directions, and, so far from mourning at the execution of his plans, will rejoice, knowing that all things are working together for good to them that love God--that all things will ultimately work blessings for those who are in accord with the Lord-- blessings for the future life if not for the present. (4) When sent to anoint David, Samuel exhibited a power not elsewhere noticeable in his character. He did not hesitate to perform the Lord's bidding, but intimated that he clearly understood that it meant the risk of his own life--that Saul would kill him as a traitor if he should anoint a successor to the kingdom. The Lord made it clear to him that it was not the intention to make the matter known at once, and directed him that he should go to Bethlehem and make a sacrifice there, and, incidentally, improve the opportunity of finding and anointing the one who, in due time, would be made known and exalted to the throne. At the time, he was merely to perform the initial work, which David's father and brethren would not understand, thinking, perhaps, that the anointing meant special blessing or a commission from the Lord to engage as one of the members of the school of the prophets or something else of this kind. Quite probably, however, the prophet privately informed David of the meaning of the anointing, just as he had privately informed Saul when he secretly anointed him to the office of king. (5) The lesson takes hold of the subject at the point when Samuel had arrived at the town of Bethlehem. The Elders were in fear, thinking that his presence signified some sin on their part or on the part of some of their fellow-citizens which God had sent him to reprove and to punish; hence, their inquiry whether or not he came peaceably--whether or not his presence meant a blessing or the infliction of a penalty. Their fears were allayed when they heard that his mission was a peaceable one--to offer a sacrifice there unto the Lord. Some time before

this the ark had been captured by the Philistines, and the tabernacle services thus discontinued had not yet been reestablished; for this reason this sacrificing was performed by the Lord's specially appointed prophet. The command to the people of Bethlehem to sanctify themselves if they would be participators in the blessings of the sacrifice, signified that they should wash their persons and put on clean clothes and draw nigh to the Lord with their hearts. Thus they typically represented that justification and sanctification which the Church of this Gospel age enjoys. Samuel seems to have taken supervision of the family of Jesse to the intent that he might without public display find the man whom the Lord had chosen and anoint him to the office and give him the divine blessing in preparation for it. Jesse properly introduced his sons to the prophet according to the order of their birth, his eldest, Eliab, first; and as he was of fine appearance Samuel naturally assumed that he was the Lord's choice; but as he looked to the Lord for direction in the matter he got the response (in what manner we know not) which constitutes the Golden Text of this lesson. Judging from the human standpoint of appearance, age, ability, etc., Eliab was the most suitable person in Jesse's family to be the king over the nation; but not so in the Lord's sight. The Lord was looking at the heart and had already selected David as a man after his own heart, although at this time being under age, etc., his father had not thought worth while to send for him to be present at the feast. As one after another appeared, and the prophet found not him whom the Lord's spirit indicated as the one to be anointed, he inquired, "Are all thy children here?" when Jesse suddenly remembered that he had another boy, his youngest, in the field with his sheep.

R5656:5 - The Prophet Samuel mourned and prayed for King Saul, and apparently was disappointed that this man, of whom he had expected such great things and under whose guidance he had anticipated great prosperity for Israel, should be rejected. Quite probably fearful forebodings of a civil war to result from the installation of a new king perturbed the Prophet's mind. He knew that Saul would not quietly submit to laying down the scepter which he had taken up with so great modesty, in obedience to the Divine arrangement. The Prophet's mental eye could see the probability of civil strife, which might rupture the nation and cause great trouble. He should have had greater trust in the Wisdom and the Power of the Almighty, but his trouble was more or less like that which assails all of the Lord's people even today.

11. What can we conclude respecting the maintenance of Samuel's character "even unto death"? 1 Samuel 25:1; Heb 11:32, 39-40

1Sa 25:1 KJV And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

Heb 11:32, 39-40 KJV And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: (39) And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: (40) God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us

should not be made perfect.

12. How can we apply these lessons to maintaining the character of a new creature in Christ “even unto death”? R3216:10, 14-15; R3222:10, 12-13; R3224:3, 12-13; R3225:6-10; R4192:11; R5430:4-7, 16-21; R5656:6

R3216:10, 14-15 - The Lord's people of today may draw from these incidents a valuable lesson in connection with the divine supervision of spiritual Israel. The Lord organized the Church very much along the same lines as he organized natural Israel. He is the Head of the Church--the guide and director and instructor of the Church. He guarantees that all things shall work together for good to those who love him and follow his guidance. For a time the Lord's people were content with such leadership as he raised up for them in his own way, content that the Lord should direct through the leaders of Zion and that no man should be called lord, or master, or king. For a time spiritual Israel looked only for such instructors, lawgivers, judges, teachers and assistants in the spiritual way as the Lord in his providences raised up for them. But, by and by, there came a time when they said, Let us make us a king-- let us have a head in the Christian Church such as there is in all the heathen religions around us. The Lord had already pointed out to his people a great Leader by whom he had made them free; that they all were brethren, and that only one was Lord and Master; that they should recognize no man as lord, and should recognize each other only as servants; and that the one who served most thoroughly--through the Lord's supervision--was to be esteemed as raised up and provided by divine providence for the service, and to be esteemed in proportion to his humility and loyalty to the Lord and his Word. (14) What we thus see exemplified on a large and national scale we may see exemplified in a small way closer to us. How many of us in our ignorance and blindness have at some time in life prayed for the various systems of bondage, for the various sects of Christendom, and labored, too, for their upbuilding, only to find ourselves injured spiritually by that which we prayed for and labored for. We asked amiss, as did the Elders of Israel, while, instead, our hearts as well as theirs should have inquired continually for the ways of the Lord, for his leadings, not asking to have him favor and bless that which we ignorantly and mistakenly supposed to be for his glory and our own good. Let us learn to pray aright, as well as to labor and to hope aright; and in order so to do let us be swift to hear, slow to speak, swift to hearken to the Word of the Lord and to the lesson which he has already given us, and to his method of instructing us and guiding us and blessing us. Let us be slow to tell him what our preferences are; indeed, let us seek to attain that development of Christian character which will permit us always not to seek our own wills, but the will and way of our Father in heaven. (15) The same principle will apply in the more private affairs of our daily lives. Several parents have told us, with aching hearts, of prayers answered which subsequently they could have wished never answered; they have told us of companions and children on their deathbeds for whose lives they had prayed with importunity and without either the words or the sentiment, Thy will be done, and how the Lord answered those prayers, and what terrible evils had come to them through the answers. All cases may not be alike, but the properly exercised and heart-developed children of God should expect to attain to the place where all of their prayers are answered,

and answered in the best possible way, and most satisfactorily, because the Lord's Word dwells in them richly. They would not ask amiss-- would not ask anything contrary to the divine will and providences; but rather, trusting to the divine wisdom, their prayer would be, "Lord, thy will, not mine, be done."

R3222:10, 12-13 - The sentiment of `verse 22` is very beautiful, and, doubtless, was very encouraging to the Israelites in assuring them of God's continued love and favor toward them because of his having adopted them as his people. Applying this verse to spiritual Israel, we may take great comfort from it, too. If it was a favor to natural Israel to be adopted as the Lord's peculiar people, as the house of servants, how much greater is the blessing to spiritual Israel, adopted of the Lord as the house of sons under the chief Son, Jesus; "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end!" (`Heb. 3:6`.) It is well that the Lord's people be called upon to fear, to reverence, the Lord; but if the Scriptures were entirely made up of commands and reproofs, the Lord's people would all surely have been discouraged long ago. On the contrary, with the reproofs and corrections, the Lord gives us very precious testimonies respecting his love and mercy, his goodness and long-suffering kindness, to encourage us. All the members of the body of Christ laboring against the course of this world and against public opinion and against the weaknesses of their own flesh and against the great adversary Satan, need spiritual encouragement--assurances that the Lord is for them. The Apostle points this out, saying, "If God be for us who can be against us?" --what will all the opposition against us amount to if God be on our side? He again encourages us with precious words, reminding us of the unchangeableness of God and of the fact that he has already done great things for us and is preparing to do still greater things. If while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly, much more shall his favor be with us now that we are adopted into his family and are seeking to walk in his ways as members of the body of Christ.(12) The nobility of Samuel's course may well be copied by the Lord's people under various circumstances in life. When those who are near and dear to us flag in their love and devotion, they need all the more our sympathy and our prayers; and, as our dear Master showed us, even our enemies are to be prayed for and have our good wishes--that the Lord would grant them in his providence such opening of understanding, such experiences as in divine wisdom would be for their highest welfare to bring them into full accord with himself, and thus back into harmony with us and all who are in harmony with him. The prophet indicates that, although he was ceasing to be their judge and ruler, he would not cease to be their instructor in the good and right way so long as the Lord's providences might permit him to serve them, and so long as they would accept his aid. (13) Recurring, however, to the principal point of his instructions, he points out that reverence for the Lord, serving him in truth with all their heart, was not only a proper course, but a course which would bring them the Lord's blessing. And as a help to our flagging zeal, we should continually remind ourselves of the Lord's great blessings to us. As we learn to appreciate the goodness of the Lord, if rightly disposed at all, the influences will be to strengthen us and to make us more and more loyal to him. Failing to seek with our whole heart the Lord's service after we have become his people and entered into covenant relationship with him, receiving of his favors and blessings in this life, and also, by promise, in the life to come,

would mean wickedness which, persevered in, will surely bring destruction. Faithfulness to God should be the keynote of all our desires. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." - Psa. 19:14`.

3224:3, 12-13 - The lesson of this incident is as applicable to spiritual Israel today as it was to Saul and natural Israel in their day--"Obedience is better than sacrifice." In how many ways we may see expressions of this same condition amongst many who profess the Lord's name today! Many are "workers" in the Lord's cause in the various denominations of Christendom, and many are their sacrifices of time and money; but inasmuch as they are not obedient to the Lord, they fail of the blessing they would have, and, indeed, in a considerable measure cut themselves off from greater privileges and opportunities. Yea, many of them, we fear, are cutting themselves off from the kingdom, from glory, and from joint-heirship with the Lord in that Kingdom. We should learn from this lesson, given us in Saul's experience, that our heavenly Father wishes us to be very attentive to his Word, and not to think for a moment that we can improve thereon, or that times and circumstances will alter the propriety of our obedience to him. Had Saul been obedient and the results disastrous, he would at least have had a clear conscience; he could have said that he had been obedient to God and was not responsible for the results. But if he had been obedient God would have been responsible for the results, and we know that divine power would have brought about the proper results. Let us apply the lesson to ourselves in respect to our daily conduct in every matter of life: let us hearken to the Word of the Lord and keep close to it, not fearing the results, but having faith that he who keeps us never slumbers nor sleeps and is too wise to err, as well as competent to meet every emergency that could possibly come upon us as a result of our obedience. How many of the Lord's people in Babylon would be blessed by following the instructions of this lesson. They have said to themselves, time and again, "I see that present institutions and arrangements are contrary to the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ and the practice of the early Church, but what can I do? I am identified with this system and am engaged in sacrificing for its upbuilding; if now I withdraw my hand it will mean more or less disaster. I wish I were free from human institutions and that I had my hands filled with the Lord's work along the lines of his Word, but I cannot let go, for necessity seems to be upon me. I must perform a sacrifice and this seems to be my most convenient place for so doing." The Lord is not pleased with such argument. His message to us is that to obey is better than sacrifice: leave the matter of your sacrifice in my hands;--it will amount to nothing anyway unless I accept it, and I accept sacrifices only from those who are first obedient. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues." (12) If, in applying the principles of this to the Lord's people of today, we think of the Amalekites as representing sins and of how the Lord's command comes to us to put away sin entirely, utterly destroying everything that is related to it, we may get a good lesson. Like Saul, many are disposed to destroy the vilest things connected with sin, but to save alive the king sin, merely making him a prisoner. Many are disposed, too, to seek out the things which they realize to be condemned of the Lord to destruction--such things as would be choice and desirable to their taste-- and frequently, like Saul, they claim that even these sins of the less obnoxious

kind are held on to for the purpose of sacrificing them and thus honoring God. How deceitful above all things is the heart! How necessary it is that all who would be in accord with the Lord should be thoroughly true-hearted, thoroughly sincere, and that under the Lord's direction we should seek to take away the life of every sinful principle, evil teaching, evil doctrines, evil engagements, unholy words and thoughts and deeds. (13) Saul sought to defend his course, to put as good a face upon the matter as possible and to lay the responsibility for the saving of the spoil for the sacrifice upon the hosts of Israel, who, with himself, were so desirous of offering sacrifices to the Lord. Samuel's answer is the pith of this lesson and contains its Golden Text. He clearly points out to Saul what the latter should have known, and what all should recognize, namely, that offering sacrifices is far less pleasing to the Lord than obedience to his Word. No one could offer an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord unless obedient in his heart and unless the sacrifice represented that obedience. So with the Lord's people today. It is not so much of ill-gotten wealth that we may sacrifice to the Lord; it is not so much the proceeds acquired directly or indirectly by wrong doing that we may sacrifice acceptably. Our sacrifice must be from the heart, and, first of all, must be the will. He who gives his will, his heart, to the Lord, gives all; he who gives not his will, who comes not in obedience of heart unto the Lord, can offer no sacrifice to the Lord that could be acceptable. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice," is a lesson which should be deeply engraved upon the hearts of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. To have the spirit of obedience is necessary, too, and whoever has the spirit of obedience will not only obey the divine will, but will seek to know the divine will more and more that he may obey it. It is of this class that the Scriptures declare, "His word was found and I did eat it;" and again, in the words of our Lord, "I delight to do thy will, oh my God; thy law is written in my heart."

R3225:6-10 - Our Golden Text appeals to all in connection with the high calling of this Gospel age, and year by year experience shows us its general applicability. We, too, as the Lord's messengers, are seeking for those to be anointed with the oil of gladness, the holy spirit, that they may be kings and priests unto God in the Kingdom he is about to establish, which will supersede present kingdoms. We too, like Samuel, might feel afraid to proceed with this work of anointing the successors of present institutions, did we not realize that the work of sealing the elect of the Lord, which is now in progress, is a secret work which the world cannot understand. Indeed, none understand this matter of the sealing, the anointing of the holy spirit, except those who have received it, and they are all of the David class. The name David signifies "beloved," and as it applied specially to our Lord and Master, of whom it was said by Jehovah, "This is my beloved Son," so also it applies to all the members of his body, each one of whom must be beloved, else he cannot be acceptable as a member. The Head says of such, "The Father himself loveth you," and again he says that we should love one another as he has loved us. It is not too much to say that all who receive this anointing of the Lord must ultimately be of this David, or beloved, character--the spirit of love must be in them, love for the Lord and love one for the other, else they are none of his. (7) In seeking for the Lord's anointed who shall by and by reign in Millennial glory for the blessing of the world, as antitypes of David, we notice that as he was counted by his brethren too insignificant to be considered in this connection, so also

are those whom the Lord is choosing and anointing for his heavenly Kingdom. Our Lord Jesus was disesteemed of his brethren, and when the suggestion was made that he should be the Lord's anointed, his people hid, as it were, their faces from him--disdained him, despised him, and considered him hopeless in respect to anything great or glorious, --"as a root out of dry ground." The same has been true respecting the members of his body, the true elect Church; they also have been despised and rejected of men, and of them the Apostle declares, We are counted the filth and offscouring of the world; we are counted fools all the day long for Christ's sake.--`1 Cor. 4:13`. (8) Again he declares that "not many great, not many wise, not many learned, hath God chosen; but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the Kingdom." And this principle of the divine selection of things that are not [esteemed amongst men], to bring to naught the things that are [esteemed by men], is noticeable all throughout this Gospel age. Often have we, like Samuel, looked about us amongst men seemingly eligible to a place in the Kingdom--upon those who are high in position,--socially, intellectually, morally, educationally,--and in the esteem of men, and expect that surely the Lord would sanction their anointing with the oil of gladness, and grant them a knowledge of the truth pertaining to the Kingdom, etc., only to find ourselves mistaken, and to get a fresh lesson that God looketh not on the outward appearance but upon the heart. We concede that we are unable to read the heart, but we are fully satisfied to accept the divine decision in such matters, and to trust that when in due time all the secrets of this present time shall be disclosed, we then shall be able to understand the meaning of the Lord's selections more completely than we do now--we shall then be able to see what a difference there was between the hearts of those the Lord accepted and the hearts of those outwardly humble, whom he did not so highly favor in respect to the Kingdom call. Meantime, we must simply wait and trust the Lord and accept his decisions, as expressed by our dear Redeemer when he said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight.--`Luke 10:21`." (9) Instructed respecting the Lord's methods, we are not to despise the least, the most ignoble or illiterate of those who give evidence of a purity and honesty of heart toward God, and to whom he seems to give the anointing of his spirit and the "ear to hear." Rather, while making known the message to all as we have opportunity, we are to rejoice specially with those upon whom the Lord's favor is manifested, regardless of their earthly surroundings, etc. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and it is for us to recognize, to honor and to cooperate with all such, as the ambassadors and representatives of our Lord and Master. (10) Often have we thought as we have looked over a congregation of the Lord's people and beheld some not prepossessing in personal appearance, some not well educated or refined, some ignoble, but, nevertheless, bearing the marks of the anointing of the Lord, the light of the truth shining in their faces, the confidence and hope of the truth inspiring them, and their lives indicating a transformation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son,--often have we thought of such, that had the Lord sent us forth to seek his bride, we might have ignorantly passed by some of his choice jewels and have gathered in some whom he rejects as unworthy--because we are unable to read the heart. This thought should make us very humble, gentle and meek toward all, and very

trustful of the Lord and very much inclined to look for his leading in respect to our labors as his servants, just as Samuel looked to the Lord in connection with the anointing of David.

R4192:11 - Let us remember also that the Church now being selected from the world is composed only of such as have their Master's Spirit and delight to lay down their lives for the brethren and for the truth in cooperation with their Lord and Head and Bridegroom! Let us remember that according to the divine predestination none shall be of that elect class save those who are copies of God's dear Son, and that the tests of discipleship are such as to prove them--their love and loyalty to God, to the brethren, to their neighbors, yea, also to their enemies! Who need fear an autocratic government in the hands of such a glorious King? Indeed, we may say that such a government will be the most helpful, the most profitable, that the world could possibly have--wise, just, loving, helpful! While others are seeking for earthly honors, earthly name and fame and substance, let us who have been called to this high calling lay aside every weight and every besetting sin and, by the Lord's assistance, gain this great prize of joint-heirship with our Master in his Kingdom and have a share with him in the blessing and uplifting of mankind in general!

R5430:4-7,16-21 - We are not to judge, decide, in an unfavorable manner in the case of any with whom we have to do, without indubitable proof. If they claim to be trying to do right, we should give them credit for sincerity wherever possible. We are not to call them hypocrites, for we cannot judge their hearts. Our Lord called some hypocrites in His day; but He had a superior power of discerning the heart, and we have not that power. We are not to judge the motives of others. We are not to go beyond their declaration, for we are not competent to do so. (5) We may at times judge the outward action as wrong or improper, but we are not to attempt to judge the heart, where there is possibility of misjudgment. We have pledged ourselves to strive to observe the Golden Rule in our every action and word and thought, and we are to remember that God would be more pleased with us if we did not sacrifice and merely maintained our relationship to the Golden Rule, than that we should manifest ever so much zeal in **sacrifice** and yet violate the rule of **justice**. This rule requires love for our neighbor as for ourself. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in that matchless chapter on **Love**--`1 Cor. 13` : "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not **love**, it profiteth me **nothing**." (6) The proper course for us as disciples of Christ is that we observe the Golden Rule in our conduct, watching over our thoughts and our lips; and also that we present continually all that we have and are in sacrifice to the Lord. But obedience, justice, **must come first**, for this is demanded by the Law of God. Before we can make much development in the cultivation of sacrificial love, we must learn to have a love of justice, righteousness. There is a trite and true proverb that a man must be just before he is generous. It behooves the children of God, as members of the New Creation, to study with diligence this subject of strict justice toward all, and to put into practice day by day this quality of character which is absolutely essential if we would be acceptable to God; for it lies at the foundation of all Christian character. (7) We are not able while still in the fallen flesh, to keep perfectly this Law of strict justice in act, word and thought. But it should be our prayerful endeavor to do so as far as possible. The merit of Christ will then make up for all unintentional and

unavoidable deficiencies. Those only who have this foundation of character well laid can make proper progress. A love which is built on a foundation of injustice, or wrong ideas of righteousness, is delusive, and is not the love which the Lord's Word enjoins and which He will require as a test of true discipleship. Obedience to God demands that we strive to be just in deed and word and thought. (16) Ordinarily considered, sacrifice is a step beyond mere obedience. Obedience is a **duty** toward God. We ought to obey God. To His creatures God's will is **Law**. This is duty of the very highest type. But the privilege of sacrifice granted to the people of God goes beyond duty, beyond obligation. We may **give** unto the Lord what He has not **required** of us; but what we give in sacrifice is voluntary, not commanded. (17) The question now arises, How can we apply these texts to ourselves? In the first place, we find some who desire to be the Lord's people, who seem to grasp the thought that there is a privilege of sacrifice in the present time, but who fail to note that the Lord has given some direct commands which must be considered first. Such should come to perceive that obedience is a prime requisite. No one can perfectly keep the Law of God, but he must exhibit the true spirit of obedience, the earnest endeavor to be in harmony with that Law. Then consecration to sacrifice is in order. For all who have met these conditions full satisfaction has been made, and they are accepted in Christ. And "if any man be in Christ, he is a New Creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new."--2 Cor. 5:17. St. Paul says of these, "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:4.) If we are not thus walking after the Spirit, we are not hearkening to the Lord; and while we are in that condition, He does not take pleasure in what we do. Even though we sacrifice some of our time for the Colporteur work, the Pilgrim work, etc., we shall not be pleasing to God if we do not keep His requirements of justice toward others. (18) If when one decides to make a consecration of himself to God he realizes that he has been unjust to another, restitution must be made. No one has a right to be generous with the money of another--to take another man's money and offer it in service to God. This is a form of injustice which must be very offensive to the Father--one which He would disdain altogether as a sacrifice. Yet we see that this is very largely practised. There are a great many who have gotten money in a way not altogether right, and who, to quiet conscience, give some of it to religious work. This class are overlooking the weightier matters of the Law of God. They have taken from others unjustly; then they desire to give to the Lord that which belongs to another. God's Law demands justice, and it is no wonder that He is not pleased with this course of action. (19) Coming down to the ordinary affairs of life, we see that justice should be the very foundation of everything --between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, teachers and pupils, employers and employees, etc. The lesson of our text is a very important one to us of the Church. In Christian character justice, obedience to God's Law, comes first; mercy and benevolence come afterwards. We do not know of a principle that the Lord's people need to learn more particularly than this one of **justice**. (20) Injustice seems to crop out in many ways in the fallen human nature. Little injustices are daily practised in respect to trifles. These are thought not worth considering. But whoever cultivates injustice in even a small way is building up a character which will be unfit for the Kingdom. As justice is the foundation of God's Throne and of God's character, so justice must be the foundation principle governing the lives of His people. **THE OBEDIENCE**

OF THE CHRIST (21) The lesson of obedience is one which should be deeply engraved upon the hearts of all the sanctified in Christ Jesus. It is necessary, too, that we have the **spirit** of obedience and not obey merely the letter. Whoever has the true spirit of obedience will not only obey the expressed commands of the Lord, given in His Word, but will seek to know the Divine will in everything. He will seek to note the providences of his life, that he may be guided in the way the Lord would have him go. It is such faithful, obedient children of God who exclaim in the language of the Prophet: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart!" (Jeremiah 15:16.) These can say with our dear Master: "Lo I come! I delight to do Thy will, O my God!" Let all, then, who would be wholly acceptable to our Father in Heaven be very diligent to build character in harmony with His Law, having justice in thought, in word and in deed at the foundation, justice in our relationship to God, to the brethren and to all, and then building thereupon all the various qualities of love, that thus we may grow up into Christ our living Head in all things, and be able to render up our account at last with joy and not with grief.

R5656:6 - The lesson to our hearts should be that we will implicitly trust the Lord to manage His own affairs; that we will trust Him where we cannot trace Him and will be obedient to His directions; and that so far from mourning at the execution of His plans we will rejoice, knowing that all things are working together for good to them that love God--that all things will ultimately work blessings for those who are in accord with the Lord--blessings for the future life, if not for the present.