

## April

### ABC — Chronological Bible (Back to the Bible format--2018)

April 1 — Judges 6-7 — **Insecure Gideon** (about 1169 BC). God chose Gideon for a big task but not because of his ability or his faith. He actually showed lots of insecurity. When called, he protested that he was from the weakest clan in his tribe and that he was the least in his family (6:15). He asked for God to give him a sign that it was really Yahweh who spoke to him (6:17). Twice he laid out a testing fleece for God to prove that His promise of deliverance was true (16:36-37, 39). God patiently gave him all he had asked for and even gave him a bonus to overhear a prophetic dream from the enemy camp (7:9, 15). God chose Gideon because He was going to empower him to do far beyond his own ability or strength. God addressed him as a "*mighty man of valor*" (6:12), not because of his own qualities but because "*The LORD is with you*" (6:12). If we feel insecure, we should remember that when God is with us, we "*can do all things*" through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

April 2 — Judges 8-9 — **Who Will Rule?** (period of 1169 – 1126 BC). Gideon had a tremendous influence over Israel, resulting in 40 years of peace from its enemies (8:28). Gideon was a judge and a warrior but the people wanted him to be the beginning of a dynasty, serving as king. They said, "*Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also*" (8:22). But Gideon refused and added, "*my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you*" (8:23). He had 70 sons (8:30) but one of them, Abimelech, refused to heed Gideon's declaration, wanting to be the "*one [to] rule over you*" (9:2). After his father's death, Abimelech killed all of his brothers except one, Jotham (9:5). With a prophetic curse (9:57), Jotham challenged his brother and the leaders of Shechem (9:19-20), who crowned Abimelech king for a treacherous three-year reign. Who will rule over us? Will we look primarily to human leaders to provide direction and protection or will we have a greater desire that God would rule over us?

April 3 — Judges 10-12 — **Foolish Vows** (period of 1118 – 1090 BC). Six of the 12 judges in this book are presented in our reading today but the bulk of the material is about Jephthah. He had a bad start, being the son of a prostitute (11:1), which resulted in rejection by his brothers (11:3). Jephthah had some good qualities, however. He "*was a mighty warrior*" (11:1), was a gifted leader (11:6), the Spirit of the Lord was upon him (11:29), and he tried negotiating with the opposing Ammonites before going to war with them (11:12), during which he showed a good understanding of Israel's history. He had some glaring character deficiencies as well. He collected "*worthless fellows*" around him (11:3) and worst of all, he made a foolish vow to God that he would offer as a burnt offering "*whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me*" (11:31). What was he expecting, a goat?! Make sure your vows are wise; the result may be painful.

April 4 — Judges 13-15 — **The Need to Know** (period of 1090 - 1075 BC). When I worked in aerospace engineering with a government "secret" clearance, there was a rule that required "the need to know" before someone was given information classified as "secret." It was not enough to be *cleared for "secret,"* one also must also have the "need to know." Samson's father and mother were curious but did not have "the need to know" regarding certain information about their promised son. She was to "*drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean*" (13:4) and Samson was to "*be a Nazirite to God*" (13:5) and not cut his hair. Samson's father was interested to know more so he asked for a second visit of "*the angel of the LORD*" (13:8). He wanted to know Samson's "*manner of life*" and his mission (13:12). The angel, however, did not answer his question but only reiterated what He had told his wife (13:13-14) because Manoah did not have "the need to know." Still, he asked one more question, "*What is your name?*" (13:17). I love the response of the angel of the LORD, who was likely the pre-incarnate Son of God: "*Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?*" (13:18). Again, no "need to know"! When you have questions about something you read in God's Word or something that God allows to happen in your life, remember Manoah. The answer to your "whys" may have to wait if you don't have a need to know.

April 5 — Judges 16-18 — **Departed Power** (period of 1375 - 1075 BC). Three times in yesterday's reading, it was said that "*the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him*," when Samson killed the lion (14:6), the 30 men of Ashkelon to satisfy his debt (14:19), and 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (15:14). Today, we read that "*the LORD had left him*" (16:20) after his hair was cut in violation of God's command (13:5). Finally, at the end of his tragic life, blind Samson pleaded, "*O Lord GOD, please remember me*" (16:28). The presence and power of God were dependent on Samson's obedience. Today, for those who are born-again, the Spirit's presence will not leave us when we sin but His power certainly does when we persist in it.

Side note: According to the Bible timeline we are referencing for possible dates (BibleHub.com), the events of chapters 17-21 could have occurred 300 years before the death of Samson. This was likely because of the connection between the loss of the land assigned to Dan (Joshua 19:47 and Judges 1:34) and their seeking for a new location mentioned now in Judges 18:1.

April 6 — Judges 19-21 — **Moral Depravity** (perhaps 1375 BC). The moral wickedness into which Israel had fallen is obvious in this tragic story of the murdered concubine. There is evidence of some good human qualities in this story, like the acts of hospitality by the concubine's father in Bethlehem (19:4) and the old man in Gibeah of Benjamin (19:20-21). However, the depth of depravity in Gibeah was not only shown in the abusive homosexual "*worthless fellows*" (19:22) but that those men were identified as "*the leaders of Gibeah*" (20:5). It was widespread wickedness. When the whole tribe of Benjamin was challenged to deliver those men for punishment, they "*would not listen to the voice of their brothers*" (20:13). The moral depravity that permeated the whole nation was summarized twice, at the beginning and end: "*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes*" (17:6 and 21:25). This is why we need to learn what is right in the eyes of God and obey it.

April 7 — Ruth 1-4 — **Ruth and Boaz** (perhaps 1140 BC). The book of Ruth is a classic love story told from a woman's perspective and it also has a hero in the person of Boaz, the godly relative of Naomi's husband. One purpose of the story is to identify the foreigner Ruth as David's ancestor, therefore also an ancestor of the Messiah. Although the story was written after David became king (4:17-21—about 1010 BC), the events of the story were "*In the days when the judges ruled*" (1:1), perhaps over 100 years earlier, around 1140 BC. There is a theme of kindness throughout this story of Ruth's love and care for Naomi and of Boaz's love and care for Ruth. Redemption is also a theme, as the marriage of Boaz to Ruth kept the property of Naomi's husband in the family and provided a continuation of the family name through the birth of Obed. God's protecting and providing love permeates the whole story.

April 8 — 1 Samuel 1-3 — **Persistent Prayer** (perhaps 1170 - 1100 BC). The books of 1 & 2 Samuel focus on three main characters: Samuel, Saul, and David. Samuel was both a prophet (3:20) and a judge (7:15) who served as the transition leader between the period of the judges and the period of the kings of Israel.

Hannah was in a troublesome situation. Her husband Elkanah loved her (1:5) and it was also shown that she greatly loved him when he asked, "*Am I not more to you than ten sons?*" (1:8). But Elkanah had a second wife who "*used to provoke her grievously to irritate her*" because she was barren (1:6). She was loved by one and hated by another. Hannah's inability to become pregnant and the constant irritation from the other wife caused her to be "*deeply distressed*" and she "*wept bitterly*" (1:10). She "*would not eat*" (1:7) and spoke of herself as having "*affliction*" (1:11), being "*troubled*" (1:15), and having "*great anxiety and vexation*" (1:17). In anticipation that "*the LORD has granted me my petition*" of bearing a son (1:27), "*her face was no longer sad*" (1:18). Hannah was a great

example of not only bearing up under disappointment and persecution but of being focused and persistent in pleading with God to answer her prayer. Are we distressed enough to persist enough?

April 9 — 1 Samuel 4-8 — **Rejection or Submission?** (perhaps 1070 - 1043 BC). During the time of the judges, the spiritual condition of Israel slid into widespread disobedience to God and was mimicking the superstitious religious attitudes and worship practices of nearby nations and unconquered neighbors. It is noteworthy that the elders asked, “*Why has the LORD defeated us*” (4:3), however, they asked this of themselves and not of God. Their shallow spiritual condition was also shown by their plan to bring the ark to the battle scene because they seemed to think that magically, “*it may ... save us from the power of our enemies*” (4:3). Slipping away from wholeheartedly following God’s directions leads to deterioration in other parts of one’s life. When Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king for them (8:5), God said that it was because “*they have rejected me from being king over them*” (8:7). Disobedience is rejection; obedience is submission.

April 10 — 1 Samuel 9-12 — **Tall, Dark, and Handsome** (period of 1043 - 1042 BC). What a beginning for this man Saul! He had significant physical advantages: he was both tall and handsome (9:2). He was also given several privileges: Samuel gave him a seat of honor at the head table of a feast (9:22) with a choice lamb leg (9:24) and he was privately “*anointed ... to be prince*” (10:1) and then publicly made a king (11:15). He also had spiritual advantages: When he met the prophets, the Spirit rushed upon him and turned him into another man (10:6) — “*God gave him another heart*” (10:9), which was a very unusual Old Testament experience. He also showed positive character qualities: He was humble, referring to being from the small clan of Benjamin (9:21) and hiding among the baggage in the process of being selected as the future king (10:22). He was also forgiving toward men who opposed his leadership, holding his peace (10:27) and refusing to have them put to death (11:13). But all these advantages evaporated later when he began disobeying God and “*the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul*” (16:14). We have advantages and blessings from God, too, which continue through wholehearted faith and obedience.

April 11 — 1 Samuel 13-14 — **“I forced myself.”** (about 1041 BC). Samuel had instructed Saul not only to wait at Gilgal for seven days but also to wait “*until I come to you and show you what you shall do*” (10:8). He wasn’t to do *anything* until Samuel arrived. However, Saul and his small army were afraid. Three thousand Israelites faced 36,000 chariots and horse-mounted soldiers, not counting the ground troops (13:5). Saul’s poorly-armed soldiers were scattering to hide (13:6) until there were only 600 left (13:15). Saul wanted to seek “*the favor of the LORD*,” so he said, “*I forced myself*” to offer a burnt offering to God (13:12), breaking “*the command of the LORD*” (13:13) that only a priest may offer sacrifices to God. Saul “*forced*” himself to be disobedient because of the pressing circumstances around him, even though he knew it was wrong. It is similar to when we sometimes “*force*” ourselves to lie because of circumstantial difficulties. Saul was called “*foolish*” because of his decision (13:13) and his kingdom was thereby doomed (13:14). Our sinful acts have negative consequences. Rather, let us “*force ourselves*” to be obedient when difficult situations pressure us!

April 12 — 1 Samuel 15-17 — **Better Than Sacrifice** (period of 1028 - 1024 BC). Saul had a hard time with complete obedience. In a college class, he might earn a B+ (or 90%) but in God’s course of life, he had failed. God said, “*I regret that I have made Saul king, for he ... has not performed my commandments*” (15:11) and the Lord refused to extend his reign to his descendants. Saul argued for a B+, saying, “*I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me*” (15:20). When confronted with his *partial* obedience, he began making excuses: “*But the people took of the spoil ... to sacrifice to the LORD*” (15:20). Then he blamed his soldiers for saving the best things, claiming that it was for a good purpose: to use the animals in sacrifice to God. When Samuel pressed him again, he made a full confession: “*I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice*” (15:24). In reading about this story, has God brought to your mind an area of incomplete obedience

in your own life? You can't compensate for it by worshiping on Sunday. Obedience is better than worship.

April 13 — 1 Samuel 18-20, Psalms 11, 59 — **Poor Aim** (period of 1015 - 1013 BC). King Saul was made crazy by the harmful spirit sent to him through God's direction in order to accomplish His purpose. Three times in these chapters, Saul tried to kill David with a spear (18:11; 19:10) and even once trying to do the same to his own son Jonathan (20:33). He missed all four times. His poor aim was a part of God's plan to sustain the life of David until he would replace Saul as king. Saul was also poor at reading the motives of others because this "enemy" David was completely innocent (20:1). Although he had been anointed by Samuel as the next king, David did nothing to attain that position until God would cause it to happen. In the meantime, he had to endure undeserved persecution. Have you ever suffered unjustly? It is painful and humiliating but it builds character and it allows time for God to accomplish His purposes for us. Psalm 11 and 59 were written by David during this terrible time of persecution by Saul.

April 14 — 1 Samuel 21-24 — **What is Man?** (period of 1012 - 1011 BC). In two of David's psalms, he asked the question, "*What is man that you are mindful of him?*" (Ps. 8:4; cf. 144:3). Often, mankind doesn't seem worth caring about. In our chapters for today, even David, the man after God's heart (13:14), lied to the priest Ahimelech about being sent from the king (21:2) and he deceived the king of Gath by pretending to be insane (21:13). In spite of his failures, God protected him from the murderous pursuit of Saul. The spy Doeg not only squealed on Ahimelech but ended up killing 85 priests and essentially all people living in their town (22:18-19). What is man? Sinful! How about the ungrateful people of Keilah? God sent David there to save them from Philistine attacks (23:5), yet after being rescued, they were willing to surrender David to King Saul (23:12). But there were kindnesses shown in these chapters as well: The servants of Saul refused to obey his command to kill the priests of Nob (22:17), Jonathan sought out the fleeing David to "*strengthen his hand in God*" (23:16), and David cut off the corner of Saul's robe instead of killing him (24:11). What is man? Though sinful, still loved.

April 15 — Ps. 7, 27, 31, 34, 52 — **At All Times** (about 1011 BC). David was often in trouble. These five psalms were written when David was running from Saul's intent to kill him: he "*was in a besieged city*" (31:21), he was driven out of Gath by King Abimelech (34:1—called "Achish" in 1 Sam. 21:13), and he was betrayed by Doeg (52:1). Yet, in these times of trouble, David's practice was to not only cry out for help but he said, "*I will bless the LORD at all times*" (34:1). It is easy to bless the Lord when circumstances are favorable but harder when we are knee-deep in trouble. Notice David's many positive expressions in the midst of difficulties: "*I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to ... the Most High*" (7:17); "*I will rejoice ... in your steadfast love*" (31:7); "*his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD ... Oh, magnify the LORD with me!*" (34:1-3); "*I will wait for your name, for it is good*" (52:9). If you run into trouble today, ask the Lord for help but don't forget to praise Him as well.

April 16 — Ps. 56, 120, 140-142 — **Fearful but Trusting** (about 1011 BC). David was on the run. He fled to Gath where the Philistines seized him (Ps. 56) and he hid in caves (Ps. 142). His enemies were not only Saul, who wanted to take his life, but also many foreigners in the places where he ran to hide. What does one do when in deep trouble? David said, "*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you*" (56:3). **Trust** God when in trouble! Then, he said that "*With my voice I cry out to the LORD ... I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him*" (142:1-2). **Ask** God when in trouble! It is interesting to me that even in the midst of these life-threatening circumstances, David took time to write psalms of prayer and praise. While he waited, he worshiped: "... *my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord*" (141:8), "*God is for me ... whose word I praise*" (56:9-10), and "... *you know my way ... you are my refuge*" (142:3, 5). **Worship** God when in trouble! When we are in trouble or are

fearful, we need not only to call on God for help but we should also trust and worship Him.

April 17 — 1 Samuel 25-27 — **Acting Foolishly** (about 1011 - 1010 BC). There are examples of much foolishness in these chapters. First, there was Nabal, whose unfortunate name means “fool”— or was it an earned nickname?! He was “*harsh and badly behaved*” (25:3) and was called “*worthless*” by one of his own servants (25:17) and by his own wife (25:25). Secondly, David was prevented from acting foolishly by killing Nabal and all his men in revenge against an insult. When Abigail arrived with pacifying gifts, David recognized that it was “*the LORD ... who sent you ... to meet me!*” (25:32). She confirmed that “*the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt*” (25:26). Sometimes God protects us from acting foolishly. The third evidence of foolishness came from the confession of Saul, who was seeking to kill innocent David. He said, “*I have sinned ... I have acted foolishly*” (26:21). Be on guard against foolishness. Is what you are about to do or say really what God would desire? Let that question be your check today against being nicknamed “Nabal.”

April 18 — Psalm 17, 35, 54, 63 — **Apple of the Eye** (about 1010 BC). I thought that it was God who called David “the apple of His eye” but we see today that it was actually David who asked God to treat him as “*the apple of your eye*” (17:8). Our eye is precious to us. I was in the optometrist’s office recently to have my eyes checked. When she started to put a drop of fluid into each of my eyes, I had a very hard time keeping my eyelid open because it is precious to me and I naturally protect it. Four times in Scripture this eye-apple expression is used. Besides the desire here of David to be the apple of God’s eye, Israel is referred to as “*the apple of his eye*” twice (Deut. 32:10; Zech. 2:8), and Wisdom urges, “*keep my teaching as the apple of your eye*” (Prov. 7:2). God’s people are cared for and protected like we value and protect our own eyes. That is God’s part. Our part is to value His teaching to the same degree. That is what we are doing as we daily submit ourselves to reading God’s Word. Protect that exercise! It is precious.

April 19 — 1 Samuel 28-31, Psalm 18 — **Getting Answers** (about 1010 BC). King Saul was desperate for direction from God. He feared the opposing Philistine army and wanted to know what to do. But “*when Saul inquired of the LORD, the Lord did not answer him*” (28:6). Why not? Samuel reminded him that God had turned away from him, “*Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD*” (28:18). Disobedience causes distance. There was a great contrast between Saul’s disobedience and David’s devotion to God and His ways. Even the Philistine King Achish said about David: “*I have found no fault in him*” (29:3). Like Saul, David was also in a situation that made him desperate for God’s direction. The Amalekites had raided David’s undefended town of Ziklag and captured all its people and spoils. So “*David inquired of the LORD*” and “*He answered him ...*” (30:8). Why? David gave the reason in his psalm: “*because he delighted in me. The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness ... for I have kept the ways of the LORD*” (Ps. 18:19-21). Obedience brings answers.

April 20 — Psalm 121, 123-125, 128-130 — **Songs of Ascents** (period of 1010 - 979 BC). Today we are reading seven psalms in the 15-psalm section carrying the titles, “Song of Ascents” (Ps. 120-134). The meaning of that title is not certain but it may be connected with “going up” (in elevation) to Jerusalem for worship. Of the psalms for today, only Ps. 124 is said to have been written by David. In our chronological reading, David had been anointed king by Samuel but he is only now about to be crowned king after Saul’s death. Ps. 125, 128, and 129 all mention Jerusalem or Mount Zion, which had not been conquered and made the center of Israel’s worship until about 10 years into David’s reign. So, our psalms for today may be spread out a bit in time. One expression stood out for me today: “*But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared*” (130:4). Fear of punishment is not in view here but fear in the sense of awe. It is awesome that God is forgiving, which is one reason we should worship Him in gratitude.

April 21 — 2 Samuel 1-4 — **How the Mighty Have Fallen!** (period of 1010 - 1004 BC). Three times in David's lamentation over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, he exclaimed, "*How the mighty have fallen!*" (1:19, 25, 27). These first chapters of 2 Samuel are filled with men who might be called "mighty." The man who brought Saul's crown to David wanted to be considered "mighty" by lying about killing Saul (1:10). Instead, he entered the category of the "fallen" as he died for his sin. The two brothers who killed Saul's son and brought his head to David (4:8) wanted to be considered "mighty" but also fell for their sin. The two army commanders, Joab and Abner, were also mighty men. Both of them felt strong enough to stand up to their king. Joab demanded of David, "*What have you done?*" (3:24) when he allowed Abner to depart unharmed. Abner also angrily confronted his king who had charged him, perhaps falsely, of sleeping with Saul's concubine (3:8). Yet, mighty Abner became one of the fallen at the hand of Joab (3:27). Mighty Joab falls later for his sin at the hand of Solomon (1 Kings 2:31). The real mighty man in these chapters was imperfect David who feared God and sought to do right. The people of Israel recognized this quality and praised him: "... *everything that the king did pleased all the people*" (3:36). We are mighty when we strive to follow God's leadership.

April 22 — Psalm 6, 8-10, 14, 16, 19, 21 — **Fools** (about 1003 BC). David said, "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'*" (14:1). A fuller description of the way this fool thinks is given in Ps. 10. It provides an interesting progression of his thoughts and motives. First, he claims, "*There is no God*" (10:4), thinking that God doesn't exist. But later, "*He says in his heart, 'God has forgotten'*" his sin (10:11a). So now, he admits that God does exist but that "*He has hidden his face, he will never see it*" (10:11b). Finally, he claims that God sees his sin but, "*You will not call to account*" (10:13). He thinks that God doesn't care and would not hold him accountable for his sin. The progression of this thinking is, 1) no God, 2) a forgetful God, and 3) an uncaring God. This same kind of thinking is prevalent today. Many people claim that they don't believe in God but in their hearts, most of them really know He does exist. In order to continue in their sin, however, they tell themselves that God is so distant that their sin doesn't matter to Him. It is a fool's excuse to sin. God is not only real but He sees man's sin and will judge it.

#### April 23 — 1 Chronicles 1-2 — **Genealogical Surprises** (about 1003 BC)

We start reading today in the pair of books, 1 & 2 Chronicles. These books cover a very wide historical time period and focus on the religious life of the Jews. They were written after the Babylonian exile by a Levite scribe, widely thought to be Ezra. It draws much information from 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings but surveys only the reigns of the kings of Judah, essentially ignoring the apostate kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. It focuses on King David and his descendants, on the temple and worship, and on the Jewish people. The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are primarily historical genealogy and are not easy reading. After reading two days ago about the military brothers, "*the three sons of Zeruiah ... Joab, Abishai, and Asahel*" (2 Sam. 2:18), we discover today that Zeruiah was not a man but a sister of David (1 Chron. 2:16). So, these three brothers were David's nephews. See what interesting things you can find in reading genealogies?!

April 24 — Ps. 43-45, 49, 84, 85, 87 — **Sons of Korah** (about 1003 BC). Do you have a "black sheep" in your family history? Some people, through programs like Ancestry.com, have discovered outlaws in their past. The sons of Korah had a notorious ancestor named Korah, the Levite who rebelled against Moses and was swallowed into the ground with his family (Num. 16). In a later summary of this story, an interesting note was added: "*But the sons of Korah did not die*" (26:11). Why not? My guess is that while their father was rebelling, they were faithfully serving at the tabernacle, Israel's worship center. Sons of Korah were appointed as "*keepers of the thresholds of the tent*" (1 Chron. 9:19) and "*gatekeepers*" (1 Chron. 26:1, 19). Korahites also served as worship leaders, being singers "*with a very loud voice*" (2 Chron. 20:19). We also know that they wrote 11 Psalms of praise to God and six of them are in our reading for today. These men were very different from their black-sheep ancestor who lived over 400 years earlier. In one of our psalms for today, they

sang, “*For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness*” (Ps. 84:10).

April 25 — 1 Chron. 3-5 — **Names** (about 1003 BC). If you ever want to search for names for the birth of anticipated children or grandchildren, there are plenty of suggestions in these chapters! A few of the names are still used in our time, like David (3:1). I have two grandsons named Michael (5:13) and friends named Joel (4:30), Reuben (4:30), and Joseph (5:1), and a former student in the Philippines named Jotham (2:47). One of the ancient names that may stick out to us is Jabez (4:9) because of the book, “*The Prayer of Jabez*,” written by Bruce Wilkinson in 2000. Jabez was exemplary in these long lists of people. He “*was more honorable than his brothers*” and he “*called upon the God of Israel*” in his famous prayer (4:10). What will you be famous for? What quality will be most commonly mentioned at your memorial service? Hopefully, like Jabez, it will be a godly quality worth emulating.

April 26 — Ps. 73, 77, 78 — **Historical Psalm** (about 1003 BC). Today we read three of the 12 psalms of Asaph. He had been appointed by David to be the chief of Levites who served “*as ministers before the ark of the LORD*” (1 Chron. 16:4-5). Psalm 78 could be called a historical psalm because it surveys God’s involvement with Israel during their delivery from Egyptian slavery and their 40 years of desert wandering. It was said that these were stories “*that our fathers have told us*” (v. 3) and that God “*commanded our fathers to teach to their children*” (v. 5) “*... so that they should set their hope in God and ... keep his commandments*” (v. 7). The history of God’s deeds in the past is important to our spiritual wellbeing in the present. Reading through the Bible this year is part of your historical training regarding what God has done in history. It is going to benefit you spiritually.

April 27 — 1 Chron. 6 — **Genealogy and Geography** (about 1003 BC). Wasn’t it fun reading this chapter?! Okay, it was a challenge. Genealogy and geography. The genealogy was important because it described the sons of Levi (Levites) who served in the tabernacle. The priests were also Levites, the descendants of Aaron, who ministered by offering sacrifices at the altar and incense inside the tent of meeting. I thought it was interesting that the three sons of Levi were named and listed by generations *forward* to the exile into Babylon (6:15) and later, the primary Levites in charge of worship during David’s time were named (vv. 33, 39, 44) and their genealogies traced *backward* to the three sons of Levi. Complete circle. The geography was also important because it described places allotted to the Levites throughout the whole land. The Levites were given only small centers of land within the boundaries of each of the other tribes. This says to me that God not only provides for those in charge of leading religious activities but He also wants them to live with the people. The Levites were “one” with the Israelites as our pastors today are “one” with their congregations, not living above on a higher plane but being called out of the midst of people just like us.

April 28 — Ps. 81, 88, 92, 93 — **Calling and Listening** (about 1003 BC). There is a mixture of statements in Ps. 81 and 88 about divine and human communication. Mankind is first ordered to “*Sing aloud ... [and] shout for joy*” to God (81:1). That shows that we are to speak to God in praise. We should also call to Him when we are in need. The psalmist said that he cried out to God (88:1, 13) and that “*I call upon you*” (88:9). He begged God to “*incline your ear to my cry!*” (88:2). Did God listen? Yes. God said, “*In distress you called, and I delivered you*” (81:7). God responds to the desperate needs of His people. On the other hand, sometimes God’s people do not listen to Him. God declared, “*Hear, O my people ... if you would but listen to me!*” (81:8, 13). What happens when we don’t listen to God? Here it is: “*But my people did not listen to my voice ... so I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels*” (81:11-12). We are to talk to God but we are also to be sensitive to what He says to us in His Word. Pray that the Holy Spirit will make you sensitive and willing to obey as you read the Bible each day. Otherwise, we will head down our own destructive pathways.

April 29 — 1 Chron. 7-10 — **Historical Summaries** (about 1003 BC). Chapter 9 ends the long genealogies of this book. Chronologically, it stretches even beyond the time in our current reading, listing the descendants of Jews who came back from the Babylonian captivity (9:1) over 450 years later. Chapter 10 also reviews the death of Saul and Jonathan in battle with the Philistines that we already read about at the end of 1 Samuel. It is interesting that at first, the king of Israel was not given an elaborate burial in a prominent place. Saul was buried “*under the oak in Jabesh*” (1 Chron. 10:12) by the valiant men from Jabesh-gilead who risked their lives to rescue the bodies of Saul and his sons hanging from the public square of a Philistine city (2 Sam. 21:12). Later, as we already read in 2 Sam. 21:14, David had those bones dug up to be reburied in the tomb of Saul’s father.

April 30 — Ps. 102-104 — **Bless the Lord** (about 1003 BC). Both Ps. 103 and 104 begin and end with the exclamation, “*Bless the LORD, O my soul!*” To “bless” is to praise. Our soul (inner being) should be filled with praise to God. We should praise Him for the benefits He gives to us (103:2), for His justice (103:6), His mercy and patience (103:8), His forgiveness (103:10, 12), His greatness (104:1), His creation (104:5), His provision for our food (104:14), and for the sun and moon that mark time (104:19). We also recognize that “*In wisdom have you made them all*” (104:24). I like the way Ps. 104 closes this long list of God’s accomplishments: “*...may the LORD rejoice in his works*” (104:31). If God can rejoice in what He has made, so can His people: “*I rejoice in the LORD*” (104:34). Let’s dedicate this day to an exercise of blessing the Lord, praising Him for the things we notice throughout the day—His creation and His provision.