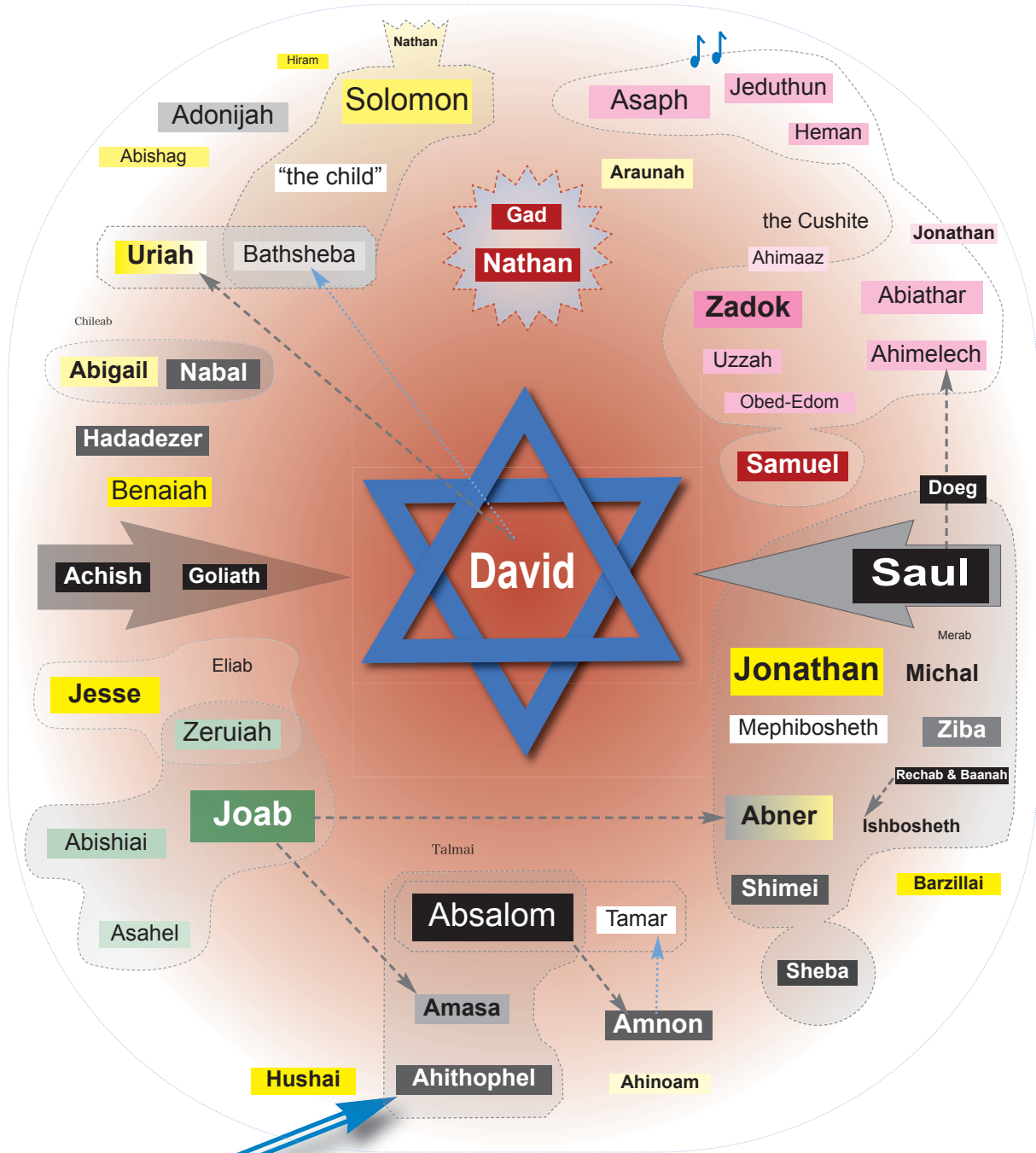


surrounded



people in the life of David

about Ahithophel

1.) Ahithophel was King David's counselor (1 Chr. 27:33), whose wise practical advice was greatly appreciated (2 Sam. 16:23). Unlike Hushai, however, he apparently was not David's friend (2 Sam. 16:17, 1 Chr. 27:33). Therefore when David's son, Absalom, rebelled Ahithophel joined the rebellion (2 Sam. 15:12), while Hushai only pretended to do so.

2.) Because of his great wisdom in political and military matters, Ahithophel was probably the most dangerous single enemy that David ever faced. Humanly speaking, if Absalom had followed his advice (2 Sam. 17:1-4) David would have been killed and Absalom would have succeeded. Thus his wisdom made him more dangerous to David than any of Saul's soldiers or even Goliath had ever been.

3.) King Saul had had his soldiers; but he often acted foolishly, rejecting the wisdom of his godly son, Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30-34). Near the end he even consulted a medium (1 Sam. 28) in a desperate attempt to gain some insight regarding the future and what to do. Absalom, however, had Ahithophel at his side to advise him from early on in his rebellion (2 Sam. 15:12).

4.) Like a skillful psychologist, sociologist, and political scientist, Ahithophel understood how people think and react. So his "how to" advice was based on humanistic insight (16:20-17:3), totally apart from God. Nothing in Second Samuel chs. 15 through 17 indicates that he had faith in the Lord.

5.) We don't know why Ahithophel betrayed David and joined Absalom. However, some things are clear. Neither faith nor friendship were deciding factors. He wasn't David's true friend, though David may have thought of him as such (Psa. 55:12-14). He was only an advisor, doing his job. Probably (like Judas in the N.T.) he simply wanted to be on the winning side.

6.) Some speculate that Ahithophel betrayed David because he was angry at the king because of his sin with Bathsheba. Those who argue this way claim that Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather based on 2 Sam. 11:3 and 23:34. It's not clear, however, that this is correct, for the Ahithophel in 23:34 may be a different man. More importantly, there is nothing to show that Ahithophel was concerned about sin.

7.) Back in the text, itself, God used the advice of Hushai, David's friend who was acting as a spy for the king, to counter and defeat the counsel of Ahithophel (17:14). Like the physically powerful Goliath, the mentally powerful Ahithophel was a loser in the end, despite his years of experience and great ability. However, God delivered David who trusted in him (Psa. 55:22-23).

8.) When Ahithophel saw that his advice wasn't followed he calmly went home, set his household affairs in order, and hanged himself (17:23). Again, he was correct, in that he foresaw that Absalom would lose. Yet, his wisdom did him no good. Like Judas he never truly repented.

Ahithophel was...

Read Second Samuel 15:12, 15:31-34, 16:20-23, 17:1-14, and 17:23.

() a wise man?

- () a political expert (16:21-23)?
 - () a military expert (17:1-4)?
 - () well-organized (17:1, 23)?
 - () defeated by a wiser man (17:14)?
 - () wise like Solomon?
-

() an evil man?

- () a traitor, a hireling (15:12)?
 - () quick to follow Absalom (15:12)?
 - () like Hushai, formerly David's friend (16:17)?
 - () more like Absalom than like David (15:12)?
 - () immoral (16:20-22, 12:11-12)?
 - () like Judas in various ways?
-

() an expert in worldly matters?

- () experienced and appreciated (15:12, 16:23)?
 - () a secular advisor, not a prophet (16:23)?
 - () focused on "how to" matters?
 - () like many experts around us today?
-
-
-
-
-

conclusions and applications

Mark the descriptive terms and phrases above as correct (), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).*

people in the life of David series, study #18

Lessons from Ahithophel: being cautious with wise but godless experts

Perhaps David was referring to Ahithophel in Psa. 55:12-14. If so, he was greatly pained by Ahithophel's betrayal. He was dangerous to David, of course, but there was a painful personal element to his betrayal, as well. David should have been more careful. Indeed, if Ahithophel was as godless as he appears in Second Samuel, David probably should have been aware of his sinfulness much earlier. On the other hand, Ahithophel probably was able to skillfully hide his dark side from the king, until it was nearly too late. (His dark side was much more obvious after he joined Absalom.) Either way, Ahithophel shows that we should not be overly enthusiastic about the help and advice of an expert who is an unbeliever, no matter how correct he or she may be. Being correct and helpful to us in worldly ways is not as important in the long run as knowing the Lord and living a godly life.

One of the most interesting and important things that's said about Ahithophel is that advice from him was like a word from God (2 Sam. 16:23). He was so wise that his advice was nearly always correct. When others were wrong; he was right. This doesn't mean that he was a prophet of God, however. In fact, it indicates that he actually took the place of God's prophets. Instead of consulting God through a true prophet like Nathan, Absalom consulted Ahithophel. This was much like Saul consulting the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28). In a way Ahithophel was much more dangerous than a spiritual medium, for he wasn't as obviously evil as someone involved in the occult.

This doesn't mean, however, that we, as believers, should never listen to non-Christian teachers or experts. Ahithophel was correct; and it's usually far better to listen to people that are correct than to those who are consistently wrong. The problem was that Ahithophel's advice was sometimes evil, as well as correct in an earthly sense. For instance, he advised Absalom to go in to David's concubines (16:21-22). This was correct advice politically speaking, but it was also immoral because David was still alive. In essence, he advised Absalom to commit adultery for political gain. The scriptures were ignored.

Finally, we must not forget that Ahithophel was an advisor in Israel, rather than a pagan prophet like Balaam who worked outside (Num. chs. 22-24). This made Ahithophel all the more dangerous, though the danger was not clearly seen at first. Likewise, there is great danger to evangelical churches from the influence of the social sciences (especially psychology and sociology). Unbiblical social science ideas have come into many churches through the church growth movement and various theories of "Christian" counseling. As in David's day, it's still dangerous to mix secular expertise and sacred ministry.