

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 17: The Book of I Samuel, Part I

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF I SAMUEL

Introduction:

We continue our study of the Old Testament books of history by looking at six books sometimes called The Six King Books or The Royal History of Israel. The books are often studied together because they tend to cover similar periods of time and overlap much information.

I Samuel deals with man's choice of a king, Saul

II Samuel presents God's choice for a king, David

I Kings gives us a picture of Solomon and his Israel

II Kings follows up with Israel's remaining kings and their Israel

I Chronicles deals with Solomon and the Temple

II Chronicles returns again to the other kings and the Temple

The approximately 350 years of leading by the judges ends with a judge who is actually a Judge/Prophet named Samuel. Remember a judge leads the repentant people out of bondage and a prophet is one who speaks God's message to the people.

When Samuel came into civil leadership the nation was back in a state of rebellion and sin, again. They have not just rejected God as their king, they now are screaming for an earthly king so they can be like the nations around them (I Samuel 8:4-7).

There will be about 500 years of human king rule in Israel (from 1050 to 586 BC.). Of this period about 115 years are recorded in I Samuel.

We tend to not remember God's prophecy through Jacob recorded in Genesis 49:10 that a king would come on the scene. *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff between his feet, until Shilo comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."*

So, it should be no surprise to us that God allows a king to be chosen. The great sin of Israel is not just wanting a human king, but insisting on a king of their own choice as opposed to waiting for God to choose a man.

I and II Samuel were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. The Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate first divided it into two books. They called them Kings or First through Fourth Kings. In AD. 1488, at the first printing of the Hebrew Bible, the books were split into two parts and named I and II Samuel.

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Author:

It is clear that the books of Samuel were written and compiled by more than one person. Jewish traditional writings agree and they name Samuel and the prophets Nathan and Gad as other contributors. Among the materials used were eyewitness accounts, archival records, independent narratives, and poetry.

Theme:

Through the prophetic ministry of Samuel, God sovereignly established a monarchy in Israel, choosing David, "*a man after His own heart*" to rule, thus overruling Israel rebellious, short-sited and disastrous choice.

Characters:

I Samuel presents the story of four men: Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David. The stories of these men are interwoven and are totally realistic and believable because even the most heroic, Samuel and David, have fatal flaws.

Today we will introduce these four men and next week we will follow an outline to flesh out their characters in historical context.

1. Eli:

Samuel was born in the midst of the dark ages of the judges in Israel. As we saw last week, the nation was fragmented into individual tribes and the priesthood was weak since many Levites set up independent places of worship, some even housing foreign idols.

The official priesthood was represented by a High Priest named Eli who was a physically and spiritually feeble old man. His sons, the heirs apparent to the office of High Priest, were ungodly, wicked and morally corrupt.

It is a commentary on the power and faithfulness of God that he could use a man who couldn't even control his own children to direct the young man who was in his care to listen to and obey God.

2. Samuel:

Samuel was an unusual young man. He learned early in his life to hear and obey the voice of God and he had great courage. His first message as a Prophet of God was one of judgment on his mentor, Eli.

As a judge he would lead his people out of the bondage of the Philistines. As a prophet he encouraged his people that their future was in God's hands and warned them to repent and follow God.

Samuel traveled from his home in Ramah to teach the Word of God to his people and even founded a "seminary" or school for young prophets to teach young men to read, write and teach Scripture.

It was also Samuel who crowned the kings and gave them their orders as God instructed him to do.

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3. Saul:

Saul, a Benjamite, was Israel's first king. He was not at all conceited as a young man even though he was head and shoulders above other men and extremely handsome and popular. He is a great study in contradiction.

He never seemed to allow God to become "Lord" of his life and so was unable to control his natural impulses, impatience, jealousies, and temper. He attempted to kill David nine different times and eventually ended up under the power of an evil spirit.

He had, however, a son named Jonathan who was David's greatest friend. Jonathan was the antithesis of Saul, even though David was obviously God's choice to take away the throne that would have legitimately been his.

4. David:

David was God's choice for Israel's king. David was one of the greatest men in all of history. From David came the entire race of kings and through his line the Messiah was born to bring salvation.

He was a man, with great faults that God will not hide from us, but he had a heart for God. Much of I and II Samuel is dedicated to his life and his personal relationship with God.

Homework:

Read: Read or re-read the Book of I Samuel.

Think: Notice the strengths and weaknesses in each person mentioned. Don't miss secondary characters such as husband and wife team Elkanah and Hannah or Saul's son, Jonathan.

Apply: Try for this week to emulate one character trait you see in observing this great cast of characters.

Bible Survey Lesson 18, The Book of I Samuel, Part II

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF I SAMUEL

Introduction:

Our study of the King Books begins with I Samuel and will introduce us to a human monarchy that will rule Israel for over 500 years. As Bob Dylan said in his song, "Ya gotta serve some body, 'It might be the devil, it might be the Lord, but ya gotta serve somebody.'" That somebody was designated by God, *"In the beginning."* God intended to have the man He created serve Him in a relationship of love and obedience.

Man soon chose to serve Satan and/or himself and that choice brought him into conflict from that time forward to our own day. And so men find themselves coming face to face with the challenge of Joshua to the Nation of Israel, *"Choose you today who you will serve."*

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Israel might serve God, they might serve oppressing nations, they might serve false gods, they might even serve themselves, but, they will be in subjection to someone. Serving God brings peace and prosperity, serving self, Satan or false gods brings problems and pain.

As we begin I Samuel, Israel is again fighting for freedom. The Philistines migrated into the region about the same time as Israel escaped from Egypt. Now, from their fortified cities along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, they gradually worked their way into the heart of Canaan. They had a better-trained, organized and equipped army than Israel had, especially since Israel had become a loose confederation of 12 separate tribes with no national armed force.

The Philistines brought a threat not just to individual tribes of Israel, but a national threat. They actually presented the possibility of the destruction of Israel throughout the "Promised Land." The people of Israel had the answer. "Give us a king, like the powerful nations around us have so we can fight a united struggle for survival." Thus the stage is set for the history presented in I Samuel.

The Book of I Samuel is much like a modern novel, in that the first three chapters move from one character to another, introducing and placing them in the scenario and setting the scene for this period in history. (Notice the outline below.)

I. FAILURE OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE--ELI

We'll start with Eli, even though the book starts with Samuel, since it was during his leadership that the story unfolds.

A. Eli's Failure as a Priest (1:9,13 and 2:27-36)

1. Eli was the High Priest in the Tabernacle at Shilo. His job was to lead the nation in the worship of God (Sacrifices), and obedience (Events). He was not just an ineffective priest, but a selfish and evil one. He participated in corruption and allowed his servants and sons to practice graft and immorality in and around the Tabernacle.

2. To illustrate these problems we are told several episodes relating to the temple and sacrifices and their perversion by Eli and company.

B. Eli's Failure as a Father (2:12-17, 22-25)

1. Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They were the heirs apparent to the High Priesthood, but their hearts were evil.

2. They, according to 2:12, "*Had not regard for the Lord*" and showed it by:

1) Stealing choice meat from sacrifices for personal use 2) Engaging in temple prostitution (just like the pagans). 3) Misunderstanding and misusing the Ark of Covenant.

II. FORMING OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE--SAMUEL

There had been people prophesying from time to time as the Spirit of God "*came upon them.*" Remember, Deborah was told by God to prophesy to the people. However, the office or title of Prophet was not yet established. Samuel was to be the last judge (civil leader) of the people but was also chosen by God to be His Prophet.

The beginning of I Samuel introduces Samuel in juxtaposition to Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel's righteous upbringing, response to his calling, and his obedient service vs. Hophni's and Phinehas' permissive upbringing, misuse of their God given office, and disobedience to their father and their God.

A. Samuel the Person

Many think that environment determines the unrighteous or the righteous response of a person and so say that Samuel had an unfair advantage over other young men. However, compare his birth and childhood to that of Judge Samson and you will see that a heart for God, moral integrity, wise choices and obedience makes the ultimate difference.

1. His birth (1:1-8, 10-28 and 2:1-10)

Samuel's unusual birth was an early indication of what God had in store for him. Hannah was barren and prayed, promising God she would raise her child under a Nazarite vow if God would allow her to have a son. (Sound familiar?) He did and she did. Her heart is clearly unmasked in her prayer in ch. 2.

2. His boyhood (2:11, 18-21, 26 and 3:1-21)

--Did he grow up in ideal circumstances? No, Eli and his sons are perverting their office every day and he is supposed to be learning to serve God with a pure heart.

--Did he succeed in staying pure and focused? Yes, (2:26)-"*And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.*"

--Did his presence make a difference? Yes, even though (3:1) tells us that because of sin, the "*word of the Lord was rare*" and "*not many visions were seen,*" (v. 2) the Lord spoke to Samuel.

--Did Samuel continue to be faithful? Yes, (v. 19)--"*The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of His words fall to the ground.*"

--Did the people respond to Samuel? Yes, **READ VV. 20-21**

B. Samuel the Prophet

Chapter 3 ends with the phrase, "And Samuel's words came to all of Israel. "

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1. Teaching the people . . . (4:1-7:14)

In these chapters we will observe:

- Samuel as a Judge (he will lead the people in subduing the Philistines);
- Samuel as a Priest (he will clean up the Tabernacle worship);
- Samuel as a Prophet (he will warn the people to follow God);
- Samuel as a King-Maker (he will anoint Saul and later David)

a. To wait (4-6)

One of the hardest things to do is to wait. Hophni and Phinehas had this problem as did Saul. This episode illustrates this problem.

Israel went to battle against the Philistines and lost. There is no record of asking God to lead or why they lost. When the elders tried to figure out why they lost, they determined that they needed more power. So they sent to Shiloh to get the Ark of the Covenant brought to the battle-field, (v. 3)--*"so it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies."*

Do we have a problem here? They will rely on the Ark of God instead of the God of the Ark. Does the Ark have any inherent power? Sorry, Indiana Jones, it does not. Any powerful events surrounding the Ark, including parted seas, falling walls, defeated foes, or pestilence to come were miracles of God, NOT THE ARK.

God fought His own battle against Dagon and the Philistines and they sent the Ark to Abinadab in Kirath Jearim (ch. 6) where it remained until David's time.

b. To war (7:1-17)

Just like the judges before him, Samuel led his people away from the Philistine and Canaanite deities and to repentance. When they repented God heard, responded and allowed him to lead them to victory.

Samuel commemorated the victory by erecting a huge stone "Ebenezer" (stone or memorial of help) because he said, "thus far the Lord has helped us." (v. 7)

Samuel spends his entire life as an itinerant Judge, Priest, and Prophet. leading, teaching and training Israel's leaders.

III. FOUNDING OF THE PRINCELY OFFICE--SAUL AND DAVID

"As Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges (civil leaders) for Israel . . . But the sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice."

A. Tragedy of Saul (8-15)

Israel's disappointment with the priesthood under Eli and the sins of Samuel's sons seemed to make them ready to try a different kind of leadership.

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1. Finding of Saul (8-10)

The people wanted the benefits of a king like the people living around them. Most of chapter 8 recounts their debate with Samuel giving them God's arguments and the elders insisting. Finally Samuel repeated their words to God and God said, "Listen to them and give them a king."

For the details on the choosing and anointing of Saul, see chapters 9 and 10. It is interesting to note that Saul was a shy and reticent candidate, but the people loved their tall and handsome king.

2. Fitness of Saul (11-12)

The first test of Saul's leadership came when the Ammonites attacked Jabesh Gilead. (v. 6)--"the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul in power" and he went from shy Saul to super Saul.

He called his people together (oxen--unique way) and mustered an army of 330,000 and routed the enemy. This confirmed to all Israel that Saul was a worthy king.

In chapter 12, Samuel installed Saul and retired. Accompanied by a miraculous thunderstorm, he heard the people's confession and reminded them that they had nothing to fear if they continued with the Lord. If they failed to obey however, they and their new king, would be swept away.

3. Failure of Saul (13-15)

One of the first signs of Saul's impatience comes right on the tail of his great victory. His son, Jonathan initiated military action against the Philistines at Michmash. Saul called for Samuel to seek God's blessing on the action, but after seven days of waiting he took it upon himself to usurp the job as priest and offer his own sacrifice and prayers.

This major act of arrogance would cost Saul the throne. In fact, Samuel prophesied his deposing that very same day.

Jonathan was a hero and God miraculously brought a victory, but Saul also issued the edict against eating that almost caused his son's death.

Because of his disobedience, Saul never totally defeated the Philistines, or was a successful king, even though God gave him some great victories and a large family.

THE LAST STRAWS: God, through Samuel, told Saul to totally destroy the Amalekites and everything belonging to them. In fact, he said, (v. 3) "Do not spare them; men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."

Saul's army did defeat the Amalekites, but he let Agog, the king live and saved the best of the spoil. To make matters worse, Saul came back and built a monument to himself (v. 12), and lied when Samuel confronted him about his sin (vv. 12-19). "The Lord grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel." and Samuel "never again saw Saul until the day he died."

Saul never learned the key truth of I Samuel 15:22- "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." Saul's consulting the witch at Endor (28) and tragic suicide (31) are the culminating examples of a disobedient and troubled life.

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B. Training of David (16-31)

Although Saul is king until the end of the book, the story switches to his already chosen successor. We will see David's life in detail in II Samuel but now we get just a look at him from three views.

1. Lover of God (Shepherd) (16-17)

Samuel is sent out to anoint the new king. He finds Jesse's family of eight fine strapping young sons. This is encouraging to Samuel, but (v. 7) the Lord said to him, *"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him for God sees not as man sees for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

God will have a man after His own heart.

When they ran out of sons, they called the youngest from the field where he is tending the sheep. Later, when David is called to play the harp for Saul, he says, *"Send me your son David who is with the flock"* (v. 19). Still later, when he is summoned to go to his brothers at the battlefield to take food and messages to his brothers, he went to the battlefield from tending his fathers sheep (Ch.17:15).

2. Lord over self (Servant) (17-26)

David was an unusual young man. He was a man of courage, obedience, and self-control. He considered himself a servant of God and of Saul. Whether it was:

- An irate King Saul (18)
- Fleeing for his life from Saul's search parties (19-31)
- Dealing with Nabal who defied him (25)

Or perhaps the greatest example of them all;

- Sparing Saul in two situations where he had him dead to rights and could have killed him (24 and 26)

HE WAS DETERMINED TO LET SAUL BE KING AND SERVE HIM AS LONG AS GOD LET HIM AND NOT TAKE THINGS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.

"HE WOULD NOT TOUCH GOD'S ANOINTED"

3. Leader of Men (Soldier) (18-31)

Beginning with his defeat of Goliath, as a very young man, David showed the ability, courage and aptitude for leading men. In fact, one of the reasons Saul hated and feared David was David's military prowess.

As David lead Saul's armies to victory after victory, the people responded in excitement and with love, saying, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." (18:7)

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David, with the sometimes miraculous help of the Lord, defeated Israel's enemies, the Philistines, time after time (27 and 28) and finally His job is to make us perfect (mature). Our job is to be obedient and responsive.

2. God is sovereign.

He can and will choose whoever he wants to do the job he wants done. Samuel was not a Levite, but God chose him to serve the office of Priest, as well Judge and Prophet. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, not Judah, but God allowed him to be king.

David was the runt of his family, but God chose him to be a great king and perhaps the best known king of all time.

God accomplished his plan and fulfilled prophesy despite human frailty and opposition.

3. God's chosen leaders should be honored and respected.

David showed respect to Saul because he was God's anointed. The punishment of a sinning civil leader will be well handled by God himself.

4. God is a God of great grace.

--God heard the cries of Israel and sent Samuel, Saul and David to deliver them.

--God heard the cries of Hannah and gave her, not just any son, but a great man of God.

--God heard the cries of Israel and gave them a king, eventually, a number of great kings.