

Single Kingdom Period: The Reign of King Saul / *Sam 1:1-31:13*

The nation of Israel, born of God, nurtured in Egypt, delivered into the Land of Promise, unsettled in the period of the Judges comes now to the time of their Kings. There will be only three Kings before the nation is divided by God to form two separate nations. Saul, David and Solomon will reign over the single kingdom for about 120 years. The scriptures and lives of these three are intertwined and overlap making it difficult to study them chronologically.

The books of *I Samuel and II Samuel* are only one book in the Hebrew Bible. They are named for Samuel who is the first important figure in them. Samuel probably wrote the first 25 chapters with Nathan and Gad writing the rest.

There are many significance things in the book of *I Samuel*. The office of the prophet will become more important than the office of the priesthood. God has sent His message until this point in Israel's history by the office of the Priest. Now His messengers will be the prophets. The form of government also changes from a theocracy (God ruled) to a kingdom (King ruled).

I Samuel will focus on three main characters. Samuel, the last judge, as the first prophet and was also a priest. Saul was the first King of Israel and David the second and greatest King of Israel.

Outline:

I- Samuel- The Transition Figure. 1
Sam 1:1-8:22

II- Saul- The First King of Israel. 1
Sam 9:1-31:13

I- Samuel- The Transition Figure.

1 Sam 1:1-8:22

When the book of *I Samuel* begins the Priest is a man named Eli. A lady named Hannah comes to the temple to pray, as she did year by year. She was praying for a son and made a vow to give him to God if He would bless her with one. As she prays silently only her lips move. Eli assumes that she is drunk and rebuked her. She is granted a son and named him Samuel which means, "the upright judge." Hannah remembers her vow and brings him to Eli to be raised in the temple when he is weaned. Hannah is given other children because she was faithful. (*I Sam 2:20-21*).

Samuel, as he grew up in the temple, saw the wickedness of Eli's sons and Eli's failure to discipline them. God sends His prophet to prophesy their demise. Samuel is called in the night by God's voice and answers God at Eli's instructions. (*I Sam 3*)

Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, are slain by the Philistines and Eli falls off his stool and breaks his neck and dies. (*I Sam 4*). The Philistines steal the Ark of the Covenant from the temple. They place it in their temple and the false god Dagon falls on his face before the Lord's Ark. God curses them for having His ark and in time they want rid of the ark and return it to Israel. David will later move it to Jerusalem.

Samuel replaces Eli as priest of Israel and serves as her judge as well. He leads them into repenting before the Lord as recorded in *I Sam 7*. God gave deliverance from the Philistines because of this repentance. Samuel became a

circuit-riding judge in the last part of his life. (*I Sam 7:15-17*)

Samuel as an old man attempts to make his sons judges over Israel. Samuel had failed in his sons' upbringing as Eli had failed with his sons. They did not do what was right and the nation of Israel cried out for a king. (*I Sam 8:4-5*) God makes a simple statement in *I Sam 8:7* that is of utmost importance. Remember this is a time of transition for Israel. The natural thought would be the transition was from bad to good but we see that it was in fact a step away from God. God said, "***They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.***"

So we might ask was it ever God's plan for them to have a king? I say, "yes it was." According to *Deut 17:14ff* God knew they would have a king. He wanted it to be in His time and not theirs. Saul was not in God perfect plan for a king because he was of the wrong tribe, Benjamin and not Judah. (see *Gen 49:10*)

II-Saul- The First King of Israel. 9:1-31:13

The name Saul means, "Asked For". We might say today, "you asked for it you got it." Saul was revealed to Samuel as the first king by circumstances that God arranged. Saul was a mighty warrior and stood head and shoulders above all others in Israel. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, which was almost destroyed during the time of the Judges.

Samuel anoints Saul king in private in *I Sam 10:1* but he will be anointed in public later. Israel at first rejects him being their king. (*I Sam 10:27*) but God delivers a great military victory at his hands. Afterwards the

nation of Israel anoints Saul king in Gilgal. (*I Sam 11:15*)

The life of Saul was one of tragedy and failure. He began as a very humble king (*I Sam 10:22*) with self-control (*I Sam 10:27; 11:13*). He turned out self-willed (*I Sam 13:12-13*), disobedient (*I Sam 15:11-23*), jealous and full of hate (*I Sam 18:8; 19:1*). His end would be suicide (*I Sam 31:4*).

Lets look at some of the major events in his life as well as those who interacted with him.

I Samuel 13 records an event in which Saul oversteps his authority as King. He intrudes into the authority of the priest and offers a sacrifice for which he is rebuked by Samuel. (see *13:10-13*)

1 Sam 14 records a military victory that Jonathan, Saul's son lead. *14:24* shows just one of the foolish decree of Saul. "***...Cursed be the man that eatheth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemy.***" This caused the people to become so hungry they eat the blood of the animals which was a sin. (*I Sam 14:32; 34*). The people prevented Saul from killing his own son, Jonathan for eating a little honey.

1 Sam 15 records the rejection of Saul by God for disobedience. Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites. Saul in disobedience to God spares Agag and takes the best of the spoils. Saul tells Samuel he did what God asked him to do. Samuel asks him what the bleating and lowing of the sheep and ox were. Saul said he did it to bring sacrifice unto the Lord. This leads Samuel to make a great statement. "***Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.***" (*I Sam 15:22*)

STEP 11

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1 Sam 16 is another transition chapter. Samuel is sent by God the house of Jesse in Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel. After passing all of his sons before Samuel the last and least physically is anointed king. The little shepherd boy David will become the king after Saul.

1 Sam 17 records possible the best know event of the book, the battle of David and the giant Goliath. David fights Goliath after all the men of the army had been refused to for 40 days.

1 Sam 18 records the covenant of David and Jonathan. David and Jonathan loved each other as brothers.

18:6ff record the song of the women as the Army returns from battle. They said, "**Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.**" Saul was moved to jealousy. The next day will be the first time of many that Saul tries to kill David. Jonathan has trouble believing that Saul is after David at first. After Saul throws his javelin at him for defending David he realizes it is true. David becomes a fugitive in the wilderness from Saul. Saul turns all his forces and energy into finding and killing David. David on two different occasions however could have killed Saul but did not and would not allow his me to do so. (See **1 Sam 24 and 26**)

Probably the saddest event of the life of Saul is recorded in **1 Sam 28**. Saul had put out of the land all those who had familiar spirits and wizards. (**1 Sam 28:3**) Then Saul disguises himself and goes to the Witch of Endor. He asks her to bring up the spirit of Samuel from the dead. This might seem a far-fetched idea of consulting the dead but I remind us all that as recent as President Reagan's term in office that Nancy

consulted an astrologer on a regular basis and Hillary Clinton tried to communicate with Eileen Roosevelt. This type of stuff is going on today in America.

The last chapters of **1 Samuel** give us the remaining time of Saul's reign and his suicide when he fell on his sword. David at this time is living in the land of the Philistines.

Application to Life:

- 1- Eli and Samuel's failures to properly discipline and raise their children teaches us the importance of our families.
- 2- Hannah teaches us that our faithfulness results in God's blessings.
- 3- To obey is still better than sacrifice.
- 4- Consulting the spirits of the dead and evil spirits is still an abomination to God.

Review of Session:

- 1- The move from Judges to Kings involve moving from a _____ form of government to a _____ form of government.
- 2- What was the great failure of Eli and later Samuel concerning their sons?

- 3- Why did God reject Saul as Israel's king? _____

- 4- Who did Saul want the Witch of Endor to call up? _____
- 5- What is better than sacrifice in our relationship to God? _____
