

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 20 – October 17th, 2021

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalms 58-60

John 9-12

Readings in Class:

1 Samuel 1-15

Introduction to Samuel

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book. It picks up with the theme established at the end of Judges: In those days Israel had no king. It tells of the establishment of the kingship in Israel. 1 Samuel largely deals with Saul, 2 Samuel with David.

1 Samuel starts with another birth narrative, which should be familiar at this point. A woman is barren. The Lord promises her a son. The son that is born plays an important role in God's plan. In this case we get the birth of Samuel, who is the main prophet during the reign of Saul and the one who anoints both Saul and David. He is also considered a judge. The emphasis on his birth narrative highlights the important role God's Word still plays in the events about to happen, even as the Israelites reject God as King.

A brief overview of 1 Samuel 1-15

1. Birth of Samuel and Israel's continuing decline (1 Sam. 1-3)
 - a. Faithful Family: Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1-2:11)
 - b. Unfaithful Family: Eli and Sons' (1 Sam 2:12-36)
 - c. Call and Ministry of Samuel (1 Sam. 3)
2. The Ark of God is on the Move (1 Sam. 4:1-7:2)
 - a. God gets himself captured and toured around (1 Sam 4:1-11)
 - b. Eli and sons die (4:12-36)
 - c. God isn't impressed with Philistine temples (1 Sam 5)
 - d. God goes back home (1 Sam 6:1-7:2)
3. From Judges to Kings (1 Sam. 7:3-8:22)
 - a. Israel Repents, Samuel Restores Them (1 Sam. 7:3-17)
 - b. The Desire for a King (1 Sam. 8)
4. Transition from Judgeship to Monarchy (1 Sam. 9-12)
 - a. Saul selected by God (9:1-10:8)
 - b. Saul selected by People (10:9-27)
 - c. Saul wins victory and popular support (1 Sam. 11)
 - d. Samuel's farewell speech (1 Sam. 12)
5. The Rise and Fall of Saul (1 Sam. 13-15)
 - a. Saul's impulsive sacrifice (1 Sam. 13:1-14)
 - b. Saul vs. Philistines (1 Sam. 13:15-14:52)
 - c. Saul's third strike against God (1 Sam. 15)

God goes on Vacation

After we get the story of Samuel's call, we get a curious narrative of the Ark getting captured by the Philistines. The Israelites are losing the battle against the Philistines and think if they just bring the Ark along with them, they'll start winning. They are essentially treating the Ark as an idol and trusting their action of bringing it into the camp instead of God.

So the Ark is captured and God starts traveling around the Philistine territory bringing devastation upon the people there. Even their god, Dagon, can't stand before the true and living God. He does more damage to the Philistines in this way than the Israelites had managed in battle. After only seven months of this, the Philistines send the Ark back to the Israelites. The Lord also strikes fear into the Israelites who first come across the returning Ark after 70 of them get struck down for looking inside of the Ark.

No King like all the nations' kings

After Samuel has been a Judge for many years, the people come to him demanding a king like those of the nations around them. They are rejecting God as their king, much in the same way they rejected Him as their God in Judges, seeking after the gods and idols of the nations around them. They want a king to give them security, something they should be relying on God for. The people are warned about what they are asking for, what a king will do, but they still demand one, so God gives them Saul.

Saul is in many ways exactly what the people asked for: a king like those of the nations around them. He even begins to reject the Word of God, first by offering a sacrifice before a battle even though Samuel told him to wait, and Samuel would offer the sacrifice. Later he refuses to destroy everything when attacking the Amalekites, keeping the best of the livestock. His downward spiral continues even after God rejects him as we will see next week when he summons the ghost of Samuel.

God regrets and rejects?

Saul's failures lead to God regretting making him king. This perhaps brings into question God's omniscience. Didn't He know what was going to happen? We saw something similar in Genesis. God regrets making man and wipes out all but 8 people in the flood. Here He rejects Saul and replaces him with David. One way to look at this is that God knows what is going to happen but is still grieved and disappointed when it does. Knowing something is going to happen doesn't change the fact that it shouldn't happen. It didn't need to be this way, but sin creeps in.