

History of Israel – 1000-537 BC

Harmony of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles – Part 3

REVIEW OF 1 SAMUEL 1-8

So far, we have seen Samuel's life come into focus: He is chosen by God to replace Eli because of the sins of Eli's sons and Eli's lack of confrontation.

Samuel is commissioned as a judge and leads Israel to many years of peace until he is about to retire, and Israel finds his sons unjust.

Instead of petitioning YHWH for a fix, the tribes of Israel demand a king. But they want one after their own design, not God's. God permitted it to teach a lesson to Israel.

1 SAMUEL 8-15 – The Rise and Fall of Saul

The earthly human monarchy in Israel was established by Samuel with the agreement of God. At the pressing desire of the people, Samuel installed the **Benjaminite** Saul as king.

Saul's reign can be divided into two periods:

1. The establishment and vigorous development of his regal supremacy (1 Samuel 8–15)
2. The decline and the gradual overthrow of his monarchy (1 Samuel 16–31)

The establishment of the monarchy is introduced by the negotiations of the elders of Israel with Samuel concerning the appointment of a king (1 Samuel 8).

This is followed by the anointing of Saul as king (1 Samuel 9:1–10:16), his election by lot, his victory over the Ammonites, the confirmation of his monarchy at Gilgal (1 Samuel 10:17–11:15), and Samuel's final address to the nation as a judge (1 Samuel 12).

Next, the history of Saul's reign is marked by war with the Philistines and it proves to be the beginning of his downfall, even though victory was eventually established (1 Samuel 13:1–14:23).

Also, the history of Saul's reign is marked with foolish actions and oaths while putting his son in danger with his unusual vow (1 Samuel 14:24–46).

The rest of the historical account is summarized by war with various enemies; war was the main characteristic of Saul's rule (1 Samuel 14:47-52).

Finally, we have the account of his disobedience to the command of God in the war against the Amalekites and God's rejection with which Samuel threatened him in consequence (1 Samuel 15).

The people of Israel saw a problem, but they did not appropriately seek the godly response. They wished to have a king like all the other nations, who would conduct their wars and conquer their enemies. Their self-willed obstinacy in demanding a king, not heeding the warnings of Samuel, was an actual rejection of the sovereignty of YHWH.

Saul, who was chosen from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest but yet the most warlike of all the tribes, was a man of battle, valor, and surpassed all the people in the beauty and stature (1 Samuel 9:1-2).

Saul was reluctantly anointed to be king but was convinced by the prophecy of God (1 Samuel 10:9). His choosing was to satisfy the desires of the people (1 Samuel 10:20-24; 1 Samuel 16:7).

History of Israel – 1000-537 BC

Harmony of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles – Part 3

Saul possessed bravery and had many successes in war, but he also had an inconsistent desire for the nation. That desire for the nation cannot be ignored. Saul also had a desire and zeal for God, for the provisions of the Law, and the promotion of devotion to God by the nation.

He would not start the conflict with the Philistines until a sacrifice had been offered (1 Samuel 13:12); during the hot pursuit of his enemies, he opposed the people's sin of eating flesh with the blood, instructed the people away from sin, and built an altar to the Lord (1 Samuel 14:31-35). Saul appears to have been inconsistent in keeping a strict watch over the observance of the Mosaic Law in his kingdom.

But Saul's power, coupled with his presumptuous character, led him to callously disregard the commands of God; his zeal in the prosecution of his plans hurried him on to reckless measures. The results can be described as an up-and-down life and a reign with bi-polar-like emotions.

Saul's errors are incredibly clear in the three events of his reign that are the most detailed in the narrative about his life:

- 1) When Saul was preparing for war against the Philistines and Samuel did not appear at once on the day appointed, he presumptuously disregarded the prohibition of the prophet and offered the sacrifice himself without waiting for Samuel to arrive (1 Samuel 13:7-14).
- 2) In the engagement with the Philistines, he hastily pronounced a ban that kept everyone in his army from eating before Saul gained victory over the Philistines. In this action, Saul not only diminished the strength of the people so that the overthrow of the enemy was not great, but he also had to renounce his vow when it was found that Jonathan, his son, broke the vow (1 Samuel 14:24-46).
- 3) But the final straw with God was with the war with the Amalekites when Saul violated the express command of the Lord by executing the ban upon that nation only as far as he thought best, and, thus, by such utterly unpardonable conduct, renounced the obedience that he owed to the Lord his God (1 Samuel 15:1-35).

All these acts of transgression seem to be done with sincerity but not in accordance with the knowledge of or in respect for the exact and clear instruction of the Lord. The consequence of his actions as a whole was that Saul not only failed to deliver the nation out of the power of its foes as the Israelites had anticipated their king would, but he was unable to inflict any lasting humiliation upon the Philistines. This undermined the stability of his reign and brought about his rejection from God.

The brevity of the account of Saul's reign is not a reflection of the amount of time he reigned. This is because he is not treated as the king but as an object lesson. In the end, Saul thought it was about himself instead of him being a sub-shepherd for God over His Chosen Nation.

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

Sincerity is not a replacement for truth.

Even though God knew Saul would not succeed, He still sets Saul up for success.