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**Growth Group Studies**

**Term 4 2019**

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# Background

## ***Approach***

1 Samuel is a detailed but easy to read narrative with some very well-known stories like David and Goliath. Apart from providing dramatic Sunday school illustrations, the book skilfully relates a part of Israel’s history, as it transitions from the period of Judges to that of an established monarchy under the headship of David[[1]](#footnote-1). The transition to a monarchy poses many challenges for the Israelite nation with leadership a recurring theme.

These studies explore the main themes of the book as they are developed and have an emphasis on reading chunks and considering the context for the original hearers. Having appreciated that message in context we can then consider how it relates to us today post Jesus’ death and resurrection.

We can learn generally from the life of Samuel, Saul, David and others such as Hanna and Jonathan as they face their challenges. Whilst 1 Corinthians 10.6 says they are “examples for us” our first question must always be, ‘What does this passage teach me about God? The first concern of 1 Samuel is not to teach us *moral* lessons but *theological* – it is written to teach us about God. God graciously provides and leads his people and teaches them what a king should be like and in doing so there are many parallels to the Christian today post Jesus’ death and resurrection.

One difficulty faced in studying the Old Testament is the lack of familiarity we have with names, places and the historical context. Handouts associated with these studies look to provide enough background information to help you read 1 Samuel. Each Study also has a brief introduction to help set the scene. Another challenge is the volume of material to cover. Sections of the book are skipped to reduce the amount of reading - where this is done a brief summary of the text is provided to help with continuity.

A question followed by a number in superscript (eg 1) indicates that the supporting notes at the back have more information.

## ***Quick Facts***

**History:** Originally 1 book, later split into two by translators. Ending at chapter 31 is unhelpful, but possibly done so that it ends with the death of a major figure.

**Author:** Not known. Given key figures’ deaths (Samuel, David in 2 Sam) and book covers a long period of time implies several authors and assembled later.

**Purpose:** Creates a unified story that tells of the transition from the period of the judges to an established monarchy under the headship of David. Note that not all events are chronological. This restructuring emphasises that there is a purpose to the narrative.

**Themes:** Leadership. Blessing comes from obedience to God’s word. The Lord is able to save them from their enemies.

**Timing:** 1105BC to 1011 BC.

## ***Bonus Material***

We gain insight into David’s mental state during events particularly in 1 Sam 19-24. Read the following Psalms (noting in their introduction they tell you when they relate to). Psalms 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63, 142. Compare the situation, with his response. Also contrast this with Saul’s attitude.

## **Reading Plan**

It is worth reading 1 Samuel as a book. To help a reading plan is suggested below. In fact, once you start reading you might find it hard to stop (why not read 2 Samuel as well, after all originally it was all one book). As you read:

* Make a character profile of each of the main characters
* Make an outline of the book – what are different ways to group the chapters
* Note how each chapter relates to themes from Hannah’s prayer (ch2)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Day | Reading | Day | Reading | Day | Reading |
| 1 | 1 Sam 1:1 – 2:11 | 8 | 1 Sam 11:1 – 12:25 | 15 | 1 Sam 20:1 – 21:14 |
| 2 | 1 Sam 2:12 – 2:36 | 9 | 1 Sam 13:1 – 13:22 | 16 | 1 Sam 22:1 – 23:29 |
| 3 | 1 Sam 3:1 – 4:1 | 10 | 1 Sam 13:23 – 14:52 | 17 | 1 Sam 24:1 – 25:44 |
| 4 | 1 Sam 4:2 – 5:12 | 11 | 1 Sam 15:1 – 35 | 18 | 1 Sam 26:1 – 27:7 |
| 5 | 1 Sam 6:1 – 7:17 | 12 | 1 Sam 16:1 - 23 | 19 | 1 Sam 27:8 – 28:25 |
| 6 | 1 Sam 8:1 – 22 | 13 | 1 Sam 17:1 – 58 | 20 | 1 Sam 29:1 – 30:31 |
| 7 | 1 Sam 9:1 – 10:27 | 14 | 1 Sam 18:1 – 19:24 | 21 | 1 Sam 31:1 – 2 Sam 1:27 |

# Study 1 1 Sam 1 - 4:1a Samuel – Prophet and Judge

***Introduction***

Israel has just experienced 200 years of “extraordinary social upheaval, verging at times on anarchy.”1 The book of Judges concludes with “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25). Israel may be in the promised land, but they are threatened by the Philistines, have no judge to lead them and their priesthood is corrupt.2 Thus around 1050 BC the book of 1 Samuel begins and we are left to wonder who will lead God’s people and how will God achieve his promised purposes in the world.

1 Sam 1 Hannah’s helpless situation

1 Sam 2:1-11 Hannah’s response in song/prayer

1 Sam 2:12-4:1a Samuel’s rise and Eli’s demise

*Discuss*

What has happened in the history of Israel leading up to this point of time?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 1:1-28

1. Describe the ways Hannah is suffering? What does she do about it? (1:9-11)

Read 1 Sam 2:1-113

1. What parts of this song relate to Hannah’s situation with Peninnah? What aspects go beyond? (note change in pronouns from “my” v1 to “your” v3)
2. What actions are ascribed to the LORD in this song?
3. What happens to those who oppose or are proud before the LORD? (v9-10)

Read 1 Sam 2:12-36

Eli’s sons are described as scoundrels, with no regard for the LORD – they take food by force, and sleep with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Eli fails to restrain them. In v30 the promise to Eli is revoked as “those who despise me will be disdained.”

Read 1 Sam 2:34-4:1a

1. Amongst the judgement what is God’s offer of grace? (v35). What does this teach us about God’s purposes? 4
2. What does 1 Sam 3:11-14 tell us about God’s attitude towards sin? Do you think Eli & sons are being treated harshly? (cf 1 Sam 2:25, 29, Heb 10:26-31)
3. What do we learn about Samuel at this time? (cf 2:11, 2:21, 2:26, 3:19-20)
4. In 1 Sam 3:1 it says in those days the word of the LORD was rare. What has changed by 4:1a?

## ***Reflection***

1. 1 Sam 2:3 reveals we should not be proud as God weighs our deeds. He is not fooled by outward appearance as we see with Eli and sons. In what ways can we be tempted to be proud today?
2. 1 Sam 4:1a shows that after a period of “silence” God’s word was heard again via the prophet Samuel and is a good thing. What is your attitude towards hearing God’s word today? (noting that in Heb 1:1-2 God has spoken his word to us via his son, Jesus)
3. Hannah praises God for his salvation (2:1). Today we have Jesus who has saved us, is God’s king and His faithful priest. Spend some time praising God for his gracious provision of salvation.

# Study 2 1 Sam 4-7 God is powerful

## ***Introduction***

God is powerful, but does he need our help to achieve his purposes? Chapters 4-7 contrast two approaches taken by Israel over 20 years. Faced with opposition will Israel trust in the LORD or not? Chapters 5-6 focus on the LORD and his sovereignty; are the Philistines able to thwart his plans or not? By layering the chapters this way, it emphasises that God is sovereign, has the power to achieve his purposes and Israel must relate to him on His terms.

1 Sam 4 Ark is captured – Glory departed?

1 Sam 5:1-7:1 LORD’s hand heavy on Philistines and Israel!

1 Sam 7:2-17 A lesson learned: Samuel leads Israel to repentance & victory

*Discuss*

Society might say religion can be characterised as human’s attempt to harness God’s power to protect or help themselves. Is this a fair assessment? What is right/wrong with it?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 4:1-11

1. Responding to defeat (v2) the elders turn to the ark of the LORD’s covenant (v3). How does Israel respond to this plan? How do the Philistines respond?
2. The approach fails miserably (v10), what was wrong with the approach?
3. Do we attempt to manipulate God’s power by our activity today (eg church attendance, giving, bible study…)? What should we be careful to do/not do?

Read 1 Sam 4:12-21

1. Eli (v18) and his daughter-in-law (v21-22) both have an extreme reaction to the capture of the ark. From their perspective what does this mean to the purposes of God?

Read 1 Sam 5:1-6:2

1. How does LORD interact with the Philistines god (Ashdod), and with the Philistines themselves?

Summary 1 Sam 6:3-18

Incredibly in v6 the Philistines compare their situation to that of Egypt and Pharaoh, so they propose a test. They take two cows that have calves and separate them. Then they yoke the cows to a cart with the Ark and without guiding them see which way they will go. If the cows take the Ark straight back to Israel, then they will know their afflictions are the LORD’s doing, not chance. The cows go back to Israel.

Read 1 Sam 6:17-7:1

1. Despite sacrificing to God, in 6:19 seventy Israelites are put to death. The LORD’s hand was heavy on the Philistines and now the Israelites, what does this teach us about God?
2. How can we answer the question posed in 6:20? (hint: Heb 10:19-23)

Read 1 Sam 7:2 – 15

1. Compare 7:2-11 to ch4. What is different about Israel’s behaviour/attitude?
2. What roles do you see Samuel taking as leader of Israel?

## ***Reflection***

1. The Philistines and Israelites have learnt God’s power cannot be coerced and He is sovereign and able to achieve his purposes. As a church, do we need to change our attitude or actions considering what we have learnt?
2. How is Israel’s response a model to us today? (Mk 1:14-15, 1 Thess 1:8-10)

# Study 3 1 Sam 8-11 Transition to monarchy

## ***Introduction***

In Ch 7 we saw Israel heed the prophets’ word, repent of their sin and serve God. In Ch 8 they ignore the prophet, reject God’s kingship and refuse to be distinctive. In Ch 4 they looked to the ark for security, but now in Ch 8 they look to a king for security. However, God is gracious and chooses Saul to be king, but will he lead Israel in following God or not?

1 Sam 8 Israel rejects her King to ask for a King!

1 Sam 9:1 – 10:16 God sovereignly chooses Saul

1 Sam 10:17 – 11:15 Saul empowered to lead – saves Jabesh

*Discuss*

If God is gracious and sovereign, should we entrust every detail of our lives to Him? Why/Why not?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 8:1-22

1. Why does Israel ask for a king?
2. Is the request a good or a bad thing? Why?
3. What will the king take from the people?
4. Comparing Ch 7 to Ch 8 we see Israel rejecting their King (the LORD in v7). As Christians Jesus is our King, when/in what ways can we be tempted to reject him as King? (cf 1 Pet 2.9)

Summary 1 Sam 9:1-24

The narrative introduces Saul on a quest to find missing donkeys. They eventually arrive in front of Samuel via events controlled by the LORD. Samuel was expecting them as the LORD instructed him to anoint Saul leader over Israel to save them from the Philistines (v16). Worth noting that Saul is described as a leader, someone to govern, not king.

Read 1 Sam 9:25 – 10:16

1. In Chapter 9 God is clearly orchestrating ordinary everyday events to ensure his purposes – how many do you note?
2. What encouragement does this provide for us as God’s people today? (cf Rom 8:28)

Read 1 Sam 10: 17 – 25

1. Initially it looks like Samuel will pronounce judgement on the people. However, instead of judgement Saul is chosen by lots and Samuel says, “do you see the man the Lord has chosen?” How do the people respond to Saul?

Read 1 Sam 10:26-11: 14

1. In 10:26 people question whether Saul can save them. Who saves God’s people from the hand of Nahash?
2. What is your opinion of Saul from 1 Samuel so far? What is the basis for deciding whether he will be a good king?

## ***Reflection***

1. We’ve seen God’s sovereign power in action & his grace towards his people even when they were sinful. How is that relevant to us today? (Rom 8:28, 5:8)

# Study 4 1 Sam 12-15 Kingship renewal, Saul rejected

## ***Introduction***

Samuel calls to renew the kingship in 11:14, and in chapters 12-15 we learn what that entails. The LORD is still Israel’s king, he expects obedience to his word even from their king. We see Jonathan trusting in God to save Israel, his actions contrasting with Saul. We see Saul faced with several difficult situations, but he acts foolishly and ultimately doesn’t live up to the standard God expects, Saul’s kingdom will not last.

1 Sam 12 Samuel addresses King & Israel: repent & serve the LORD your king

1 Sam 13 Saul not obey (wait for sacrifice) – kingdom not endure

1 Sam 14 Jonathan saves Israel not Saul

1 Sam 15 Saul not obey (destroy Amelakites) – king rejected

*Discuss*

What does obedience to God’s word reveal about our attitude and our lives?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 12:1-15

1. Samuel vindicates his leadership and then confronts Israel with the righteous acts of the LORD v7, what is the point of his speech?

Read 1 Sam 12:16-25

1. After the people have their sin pointed out to them, what actions does Samuel promise to do for them?

Read 1 Sam 13:1-15

1. Describe the situation as Saul waited for Samuel (1 Sam 10:8). What action does he take?
2. 13:11-15 do you think Saul is harshly dealt with? Why/why not?

Summary 1 Sam 13:16-14:52

A lot happens. We are told that Israel had no weapons and faced the heavily armoured Philistines (no wonder the people were quaking in 13:7). There’s a strong contrast between Saul & Jonathan - Jonathan faith & wisdom, cf Saul’s faithlessness & folly (x3). We may want to make excuses for Saul, but Jonathan’s dependant faith is very different to Saul’s independence and leaves him no excuse for what happens next. Ultimately it seems Saul was a good military leader (14:47) as Israel had hoped (8:20), and he rules for some 40 years, but he is not a model for God’s future king, a man after his own heart.

Read 1 Sam 15:1-15

1. Samuel relates to Saul God’s message - as God’s king he was to enact Judgement and destroy the Amalekites.1 What does Saul actually do?

Read 1 Sam 15:11-35

1. Summarise the “confrontations” between Saul & Samuel

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ch 15** | **Saul** | **Samuel** |
| v13-19 |  |  |
| v20-23 |  |  |
| v24-29 |  |  |
| v30-35 |  |  |

## ***Reflection***

1. Based on the summary and preceding chapters, how would you characterise Saul’s relationship with God?
2. Israel wanted a king to lead them, but Saul failed to obey God and was rejected. However, in Jesus God has graciously provided a true king who was perfectly obedient. How do you see yourself behaving independently like Saul? How can we avoid repeating his mistakes?

# Study 5 1 Sam 16-18 A king who sees truly

## ***Introduction***

Israel are at a difficult point in their history, their king, Saul has failed to obey God and is rejected, now a new king is anointed. Meanwhile the Philistine threat looms large (literally) and terrifies the Israelites. Will their king save them as hoped? How will they see the situation, upon whom will they depend?

1 Sam 16 God sees the heart, chooses David

1 Sam 17 David sees defiance and trusts God

1 Sam 18 Israel sees a leader to love, Saul sees a threat

*Discuss*

In which ways does society today look at the outward appearance in its evaluation of Jesus. Of Christians?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 16:1-131

1. When Samuel saw Eliab he thought he was the one (why?). What does God see that Samuel doesn’t? (v7).
2. In vs 13 the Spirit of the LORD comes powerfully on David. What expectations should we have on David now? (cf Judges 3:10, 6:34, 14:6, and 1 Sam. 11:6)

Read 1 Sam 17:1-15

1. Israel see and hear Goliath. What does he say to them (particularly v8, v10)?
2. What is Israel’s response? What is wrong with this?
3. Vs 16 – 24 relate how David came to be present at the battle line. Read vs 24-25. David sees and hears Goliath’s routine. What does vs 24-25 tell us about David?

Summary 1 Sam 17:26-39

David’s attitude draws a cynical response from his elder brother, and the attention of Saul who brings David before him. Saul says you cannot fight you are but a youth, but David responds that the Lord, who has saved him from wild animals, will save him from the hand of the Philistine. Ironically Saul offers his armour to David to do the fighting! David declines and goes to fight Israel’s enemy.

Read 1 Sam 17:40-53

1. How does David approach ‘the Philistine’?
2. What should Israel, the Philistines, and even us the reader, learn about God from this section (hint: v47)

Read 1 Sam 18:1-16

1. David has just won a great victory for God’s people, something the king was meant to do. Note the different responses to David in the table:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ch 18** | **Who** | **Response** |
| v1-4 | Jonathan |  |
| v5 | Troops, officers |  |
| v6-7 | Women |  |
| v8-15 | Saul |  |
| v16 | All Israel |  |

## ***Reflection***

The LORD was clearly with David and people respond positively, they love David. David sees things the way God does (eg Goliath defiance) and puts his trust in God to defeat Goliath. In a way David foreshadows Jesus. Jesus saw things his Father’s way and trusted him, even to death on a cross, resulting in victory over sin and death. Paul too sees this world through God’s eyes and knows that the gospel is the power to save (1 Cor 1:18-2:5).

1. Do you see what God has done for us in Jesus? He is our true king; do you love him and seek to follow him today?

# Study 6 1 Sam 19-22 A king after God’s heart?

## ***Introduction***

Saul initially thinks well of David, 1 Sam 16:21, but by 18:29 Saul was afraid of him and became his enemy. Saul behaves irrationally, with murderous intent & paranoia, an anti-king! (cf Deut 17:18-20). David lives by his wits, as he trusts the LORD to save him. We see a stark contrast: Saul, from whom God’s spirt has been removed (1 Sam 16:14), who no longer seeks God’s purposes and spirals downwards and out of control; David, fleeing for his life, trusts in God’s goodness and acts in a kingly manner, even saving God’s people who don’t thank him!

1 Sam 19 Saul’s heart harbours murder

1 Sam 20 Jonathan & David’s covenant of peace

1 Sam 21 David flees but in his heart trusts God

1 Sam 22 Saul murders innocent priests, David cares for lone survivor

*Discuss*

What does it mean to take refuge in God? How might it help in difficult times?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 19:1-24

1. Using the table below list out how Saul attempts to kill David and how David was saved each time.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ch 19** | **Murder Plot** | **Who helps David** |
| v1-6 |  |  |
| v7-10 |  |  |
| v11-17 |  |  |
| v18-24 |  |  |

1. This is not a set of lucky escapes, how is God protecting his anointed one?
2. David has written about this episode in his life in Psalm 59. What do v1-2 & v16-17 tell us about how David was thinking about this?

Summary 1 Sam 20:1-42

Saul’s son Jonathan readily submits to David’s future kingship and makes a covenant with him (v16). He is actively working to promote David’s cause even though he is the next in line! (cf 1 Sam 20:31). They devise a plan to test Saul’s intent towards David – which is clearly shown to be death. In fact, Saul nearly kills his own son in his rage (v33). David and Jonathan separate in peace, but David can no longer hold any hope of peace with Saul.

Read 1 Sam 21:1-9

1. Why does Ahimelek help David? Why give the bread that only the priests were allowed to eat1 (cf Lev 24:9)?

Summary 21:10-22:5

David flees to the Philistine town of Gath (Goliath’s home town) but is recognised as the king of the land, in fear he feigns madness until he can escape. See Ps34 and Ps 56 for how David relied on God during this stressful time. David, living in a cave, is joined by 400 others unhappy with the current situation, he also takes care of his parents placing them with the king of Moab. He now starts a journey of moving from place to place.

Read 1 Sam 22:6-23

1. What do vs 6-8 tell us about Saul’s state of mind?
2. What do vs 9-19 tell us about Saul’s kingship and attitude towards God?
3. What does v20-23 tell us about David?

## ***Reflection***

1. Saul once had God’s Spirit and as a king promised much. But now he has set himself up in opposition to the LORD. What attitudes/behaviours led him down this path? How can that be a warning to us?
2. David was God’s anointed one, yet his life was not easy! From the Psalms we get an insight into his response to these events. How can that be an encouragement to us?

# Study 7 1 Sam 24-26 Kingly attitude to God’s purposes

## ***Introduction***

Jonathan states that Saul and he both know David will be king (1 Sam. 23:17). The question is how will this happen? Saul is still on the throne and, abusing his power, uses the army and the people to relentlessly seek out David and kill him. David has every right to fear for his life. Are God’s purposes to come to fruition by David’s hand or by the LORD’s? Speeches by David, Saul and Abigail are the focus of Ch 24-26, they reveal much about the individuals and their understanding of God’s plans.

1 Sam 24 David spares Saul’s life in cave. Saul acknowledges sin

1 Sam 25 David spared bloodshed by Abigail’s good judgement

1 Sam 26 David spares Saul’s life in desert. Saul acknowledges sin

*Discuss*

Are God’s kingdom purposes advanced by human power? Why/why not?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 24:1-7

1. The men urge David to action. Should David strike down his enemy or not?
2. David instead cuts the royal robe. Why is he conscious stricken?

Read 1 Sam 24:8-15

1. David’s speech. What do we learn about David?

Read 1 Sam 24:16-22

1. David has been righteous and shown mercy, how does Saul respond? Is he genuine?

Read 1 Sam 25:1-22

Samuel dies. David and men protect a wealthy man’s (Nabal) sheep and shepherds. During a festival they ask for food but instead Nabal rejects them and insinuates David is but a rebellious runaway servant. David is incensed, claiming Nabal has repaid him evil for good, and strapping on his sword, together with 400 men, he vows to kill all the males. David, confronted by Nabal’s animosity, is facing a similar situation to that he has with Saul, and yet he acts very differently. Meanwhile a servant of Nabal has rushed to Abigail and alerted her to the problem, she responds swiftly and rushes to meet David.

Read 1 Sam 25:23-35

1. Abigail’s eloquent speech. What does she say the LORD has/will do for David (v26, 28-30)? What is the main point of her speech?
2. David’s change of heart is breathtaking. What does it tell us about David/God?

Read 1 Sam 25:36-26:6

The LORD keeps David from doing wrong & deals with Nabal – who dies in v38. David marries Abigail but Saul gives David’s wife Michal to another. The Ziphites (23:18) once again tell Saul where David is hiding, and Saul brings 3000 men to hunt David down. Chapters 24 & 26 have similarities, but Ch 25 is sandwiched between them to show us that David learns from this experience.

Read 1 Sam 26:7-25

1. Once again, we see David with an opportunity in vs 8 to strike. How might the interaction with Abigail have helped shape David’s responses this time?
2. V22-24 are striking words. In what way has David been righteous and faithful?

***Reflection***

1. How have we seen God at work lifting up the humble and bringing low the proud?
2. David trusts God despite incredible circumstances, but we know from 2 Sam 11-12 that David isn’t perfect. In the New Testament we see Jesus, who comes from David’s line, also trust God despite the circumstances (1 Peter 2:21-25). How is this an example to us today?

# Study 8 1 Sam 27-31 Compare the kings

## ***Introduction***

In 1 Sam 26:10 David is confident that the LORD will achieve his purposes and deal with Saul. However, faced with the constant threat of death, David’s seems to take matters into his own hands, acts deceitfully and lands in hot water. But God, in his providence guides and protects him. Saul too faces difficulties, but without God he becomes desperate and turns to Samuel (who is dead 1 Sam. 25:1). Both have their failings, but they are different in one key area – their willingness to call upon and listen to God.

1 Sam 27:1-28:2 David joins the Philistines, a conflicted king?

1 Sam 28:3-25 Saul the desperate and abandoned king

1 Sam 29 David saved from his actions

1 Sam 30 David destroys the Amalekites, a Conquering king?

1 Sam 31 Saul a defeated king.

*Discuss*

At a funeral people typically reflect on a person’s life – what aspects are focussed on?

## ***Investigate***

Read 1 Sam 27:1-12

1. David hides in the Philistine area and lies to king Achish. Are his actions wise/prudent or lacking in faith?

Read 1 Sam 28:1-20

1. Compare the situations David (v1-3) and Saul (v3-7) find themselves in. What might they be feeling, thinking?
2. Vs 8-16 can raise many questions for us today1, but what is the focus of the narrative? (v15)
3. Vs 16-20 Samuel’s response – is it expected or not? Do we learn anything new?

1 Sam 28:21-29:11

David’s situation is critical. Marching to battle with the Philistines against the very people he is meant to be king over! The Philistines see this folly & force Achish to send David home. David protests (though relieved) & returns to Ziklag.

Read 1 Sam 30:1-8

1. David is distressed v6. How does he respond to this situation? How is that different to Saul in Ch 28?
2. Is it fair that the LORD responds to David’s questions but does not answer Saul? (30:7-8 vs 28:15)

Read 1 Sam 30:9-27

David does indeed overtake the raiding party who were Amalekites (remember them? – 1 Sam 15:3). He defeats them and recovers everyone safely. David shows kindness to his men, who were too tired to fight, by sharing the plunder with them, he even distributes plunder to other Israel townships where he had roamed. Here we see a king who saves his people from their enemies and gives gifts (cf 1 Sam 8:10-12 where the king will “take”). At the same time as these events we now switch back to Saul in Ch31.

Read 1 Sam 31:1-13

1. In what ways are the events describing a tragedy?

## ***Reflection***

1. Israel had in 1 Sam 8:19 requested a king to lead them and fight battles like the other nations. In what ways has Saul, their king failed? (1 Chron 10:13-14)
2. 1 Sam has summarised the lives of Saul and David and contrasted their relationship to God. What do we learn about God and his purposes and the response he requires of us?

The LORD has graciously provided another king to lead Israel, yet he too will fails (later). The kingship is a ‘shadow’ of things to come, another king, Jesus. But he faithfully trusts & obeys God & will defeat the enemies of sin & death. (Col 2:15, Matt 28:18-20). Jesus is the God’s final king that we can ever put our trust in.

# Supporting Notes

Study 1

1. John Woodhouse, 1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader, p18-19
2. P. Satterthwaite, Samuel: New Bible Dictionary of Biblical Theology p178-180
3. Hannah’s prayer/song - why is it here?

In Judges there is a pattern of Israel Sin/Forget God 🡪 Judgement 🡪 Crying out 🡪 God raising a Judge 🡪 Salvation/time of peace 🡪 Death of Judges 🡪… Here rather than Israel crying out, we see Hannah crying out.

Her language as she praised God who looked on her affliction helps us see that God’s goodness to her was a representation of God’s goodness to Israel. The birth of Samuel stands at the beginning of 1 Samuel because there is an unfolding connection, between Samuel & God’s salvation of his people.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Her song is seen as a joyous response to her situation, but by the end becomes prophetic, talking of God’s King being exalted. Given there is no king this is surprising but points forward to Jesus. As Andrew Reid summarises: “The song of Hannah is so profound and so infused with theology that it functions as a thematic, structural, & theological introduction to the book.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Samuel’s sons do not continue in his ways (1 Sam 8:1-3), Zadok continues the line in 1 Kings 2:35 after replacing Abiathar but the line stops in the exile. Heb 7:26 Jesus is the ultimate faithful high priest.

**Study 2**

God’s glory is a big deal, in Exodus 40:34-38 his glory settles on/fills the tabernacle – a symbol of his presence amongst his people. The Glory leaves because Israel fails to meet covenant, not because the ark captured. As J Woodhouse says, “You cannot put your trust in God’s kindness towards you in the Jesus Christ – as the Israelites shouted with joy in the promises represented by the ark of the covenant – and at the same time ignore God’s demand for holiness in your life.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In Chapter 4 the Israelites did not call the Lord “our God”! Calling for the ark in that situation was a preposterous arrogance. They were expecting the Lord to

honour his covenant with them even though they had broken it. No wonder the whole thing led to disaster[[5]](#footnote-5)

But there is another tragedy, and that is to have no interest in the power of God – or as the Apostle Paul described it, “holding on to a form of religion but denying the power of it” (2Tim 3:5) Formal religion, or merely intellectualised religion that reduces God’s power to a concept, an idea, is as tragic as the pursuit of the power of God in ignorant ways. What could be more bizarre than a religion that in reality knows nothing of the power of God?[[6]](#footnote-6)

Study 3

Israel were chosen to be distinctive – to stand out from the nations. If their motivation for asking for a king is to be like the nations, then this is not good (as Samuel points out in ch12). Application to us today? God has made followers of Jesus into a new Israel, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession’ (1 Peter 2.9). As such, we are to live distinctive ‘holy’ lives, abstaining from the passions of the flesh and seeking to honour Him  
in every area of our life (e.g. 1 Peter 1.15; 2.11-12). But all too often we fail to live out our distinctive identity as God’s chosen people, preferring to blend in with the people around us – serving their idols and mirroring their behaviour[[7]](#footnote-7)

Study 4

1. Why destroy the Amelakites?

Amalek was a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12) his descendant had a long history of violent hostility towards the Israelites. They were the first human threat to the people of Israel after the exodus (Ex 17:8-16). On that occasion God told Moses to write down this promise “I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” Ex 17:14. (Also 40yrs later in Deut 25:17-19.) Judges 3:12-14 and others relate more recent hostilities.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Can God Regret?

Regret used in 15:11 and 35. In 15:29 we are told he doesn’t change his mind!

A straightforward answer is found when we consider the semantic range of a word. It is possible that the LORD could be filled with regret in the sense of sadness at a course of events, whilst not regretting in the sense of not wanting to change his mind. Both of these sentiments are possible in a God who does not change but has feelings nonetheless.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Study 5

1. 1 Sam 16:14 …An evil spirit from the LORD?

The Hebrew word for ‘evil’ here can a have a broad range of meanings ranging from evil or wickedness through to such things as general misfortune, or badness, injury, disaster, pain, misery, or calamity. So a better translation might be, ‘a bad spirit’. Second, the word translated as ‘torment’ here might be better translated ‘terrorise’.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Study 6

1. Eating the bread

Lev 24:9 tells us this bread is for the priest only. In Mark 2:23-27 Jesus refers to this incident when the Pharisees challenge his disciples’ actions on the Sabbath. He uses it to show the Pharisees what it means to the son of man – the true king.

Study 8

1. Consulting a spirit

In Deut 18:9-13 it is clear that these practices are not to be done – this is part of the reason the current inhabitants are being thrown out of land. Saul seems to have done the right thing in v3 by expelling them from the land, but now he swears ‘as Surely as the LORD lives you will not be punished for this’ – a sad state of affairs.

# Resources

1. Child, J and Clarke, “1 Samuel bible study resources” [Cited 14 Sept 2019]

St Helen’s Bishopgate resources – Central Focus leaders' notes 2012/13. They have a lot of content which is worth reading – particularly some of the introductions to books – detailed but targeted at bible study leaders.

1. Dever, M. *The Message of the Old Testament:* Illinois Crossway Books

Series of sermons each on a book of the Bible. p247-268. “Faith in Faithless times” Focuses on what we can learn from Israel’s history about leadership and ourselves. Uses four portraits:

* 1. Samuel a man of God’s word marked by obedience
  2. Saul an impressive man marked by self-reliance
  3. David an impressive man marked by faith
  4. God our necessary leader

1. Reid, A. *1 and 2 Samuel Hope for the Helpless (Reading the bible today series)*: Australia Aquilla press

Very accessible and straightforward. Provides great insights without being too detailed, and is really helpful in thinking about how it relates to us.

1. Woodhouse, J. *1 Samuel Looking for a leader. (Preaching the word series)*: Illinois Crossway Books

Based on a series of sermons providing a detailed review of each chapter it is not a quick read. Looks at leadership, what type should we follow, what does God expect. Ultimately human leadership fails, but in Jesus we God’s leader who we can truly trust and follow. Uses

* 1. Samuel: The leader God provided (1 Sam 1-7)
  2. Saul: The leader the people asked for (1 Sam 8-15)
  3. David: The leader: “According to God’s own heart” (1 Sam 16-31)

1. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology:* England Inter-Varsity Press
2. Maps and Geography

[Cited 14 Sept 2019] Online: <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-maps-conquest-timeline-chronology-judges-1samuel-eli-samuel-philstines-capture-ark-1088bc.htm>

Many other sites exist but this one has a lot of maps relating to history and events (exodus, roman empire etc). Worth exploring for more details.

# Prayer Points

1. *1 and 2 Samuel, Hope for the helpless*. Andrew Reid p265 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. Woodhouse, *1 Samuel Looking for a leader* p42 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A. Reid, *1 and 2 Samuel Hope for the helpless* p18 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. J. Woodhouse, *1 Samuel Looking for a leader* p94 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. J. Woodhouse, *1 Samuel Looking for a leader* p131 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. J. Woodhouse, *1 Samuel Looking for a leader* p86 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Child, J and Clarke, “1 Samuel bible study resources” p22 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. J. Woodhouse, *1 Samuel Looking for a leader* p260 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A. Reid, *1 and 2 Samuel Hope for the helpless* p88 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A. Reid, *1 and 2 Samuel Hope for the helpless* p95 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)