



Wednesday Bible Education
Biblical Theology
Lesson 10: 1 Samuel

REVIEW

Questions from last week's lesson:

1. What is in the book of Ruth?
2. How does Ruth help us today?

Answers:

1. Ruth tells the story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Naomi's family go to Moab because of famine in Israel. Her husband and her two sons die, leaving her and her daughters-in-law. Naomi returns to Israel and Ruth goes with her. Ruth meets Naomi's kinsman Boaz. Ruth and Boaz get married and live happily ever after.

The book of Ruth is about the mercy and kindness of God in his providence to those who trust him, and his working in ordinary events of life to accomplish salvation for his people and fulfill his ultimate purpose for the universe he created.

2. Understanding Ruth will help us understand the mercy and kindness of God in the midst of trials. We can easily relate to the ordinariness of life in the book. We can learn from Naomi not to judge God's ways too quickly, nor by only what we can see. Ruth teaches us God is working and it will be for his glory and the good of all who trust in him as all his promises are fulfilled.

Understanding Ruth should help us see that God's laws are good and good for us. The mercy in God's law are evident in this book and save Naomi and Ruth. We tend to always think of law as negative restriction, but God's commandments are wise, good, and positive blessing. Think of the positive blessing of the Sabbath law as Jesus clarified, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Understanding Ruth helps us understand how we all stand on the same ground before God. We see his mercy is upon all who believe and trust him, no matter their nationality, ethnicity, status, sex, etc.

Ruth should help us be reminded to show kindness to others. Kindness runs thematically through the book—Naomi to Ruth, Ruth to Naomi, Boaz to Ruth and Naomi, and most importantly, God's kindness to them. Ruth reminds us to treat others with compassion and particularly those in most need of help.

INTRODUCTION

What is in the book of 1 Samuel? Hannah praying for a son and the birth of Samuel. Samuel hearing God's voice in the night and mistaking it for Eli. Saul becoming king of Israel. David being anointed as king. David killing the lion and the bear and the giant Goliath. 1 Samuel is about God establishing the kingship in Israel in accordance with his prior promises and in anticipation of the coming kingdom and kingship of David's son, Jesus Christ.

This lesson covers the book of 1 Samuel. We will consider the structure and content of the book, along with major themes and practical applications to modern readers. We will consider what 1 Samuel reveals about Christ and his kingdom as it fits into the Bible's global story.

OBSERVATION

1 Samuel is the fourth book of history and continues the account from the books of Judges and Ruth that come before it. 1 Samuel covers about 100 years in the land of Israel. It is mostly historical narrative centering on three important leaders in Israel—Samuel, Saul, and David. Recall that Ruth ended with the birth of David's grandfather and 1 Samuel begins fairly soon after that.

Samuel is the first leader in the book. Samuel was a mixture of judge, priest, and prophet who was a transitional leader in moving Israel from the era of the judges to the era of the kings. Samuel's birth was an answer to Hannah's prayer for a son. He was given to the Lord to serve him and so grew up with Eli the priest. Samuel was the priest after the death of Eli and his sons. He set up Saul as the king of Israel, anointed David as future king, and prophesied the removal of Saul and death of his dynasty.

Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin and became king over Israel. He represented the kind of king the people wanted. He was a tall, imposing figure and good warrior. The reign of Saul began well with his defeat of the Ammonites in Chapter 11, but by Chapter 13, he was trying to offer sacrifices as a priest. His disobedience continued through Chapter 15 and his failure to obey God's commands concerning the Amalekites. God rejected him as king and refused to establish his dynasty.

David comes on the scene and it's not long before Saul becomes jealous and his jealousy escalates to murderous rage. Saul spends the rest of his life consumed with pursuing David to kill him. However, God delivers David and protects him from death. 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul.

David was the youngest son of Jesse and was anointed to be king by Samuel, though it would be many years before he would actually reign as king. David was God's chosen king and was empowered by the Holy Spirit such that he became a mighty warrior. He defeated

the Philistine champion, the giant Goliath, and was successful in Israel's army under King Saul. David spends most of the second half of the book running away from Saul and hiding while wreaking havoc on Israel's enemies. David's history is obviously marked by God's providence as he is continually delivered from death and maintains his integrity through to the death of Saul.

A brief outline of 1 Samuel:

1. Chapters 1-8 Samuel's birth, call, and judgeship
2. Chapters 9-15 Saul's kingship and disobedience
3. Chapters 16-31 David's anointing and faithful service

INTERPRETATION

1 Samuel is mostly a dark time in Israel's history, similar to the book of Judges. The book opens with the corruption and failure of the priesthood with Eli and his sons (2:12-36). Israel is still idolatrous and God's rejection of their worship is dramatically played out as the Ark of the Covenant is taken by the Philistines in Chapter 4. Eli and his sons die that same day. Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, hears the news of their deaths and goes into labor. She delivers a son, whom she named Ichabod, meaning the glory is departed (4:17-22). Samuel is the last of the judges and leads the nation in repentance and rebukes their idolatry when the Ark is return through God's afflicting the Philistines (Chapter 7).

Chapter 8 tells how Israel wanted a king to be like the other nations and have a king to lead them in battle. They did not want a king according to God's purpose but according to their own purpose. The kingship in Israel had already been prophesied and prepared for (Genesis 17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:8-12; Deuteronomy 17:14-20), so Israel's sin lay in not wanting God's king in his time, but rather wanting an immediate king like the other nations.

The narrative revolves around the three main leaders in the book and each has a distinct characterization relevant to God's word. Samuel is characterized by hearing God's word, obeying it, and speaking it to others. Saul is contrasted with Samuel. Saul is characterized by hearing God's word, partially obeying it, and also reworking it to fit his own notions. David is contrasted with Saul. He is characterized by hearing God's word, obeying it, trusting God with his own life, and being more concerned for God's honor and glory than his own.

1 Samuel does contribute to the expectation of the Messiah and his kingdom. The Messianic expectation is set early in the book in Hannah's prayer. Though David's role relative to the Messiah is not revealed until 2 Samuel, he certainly foreshadows the Messiah in this book. The establishing of the kingship in Israel is a major development in the progress of revelation concerning the future Messianic kingdom. It looks forward to the King and kingdom to come (24:20).

APPLICATION

How does 1 Samuel speak to modern readers? Understanding 1 Samuel helps us understand God's sovereignty over all history to bring about his promises. It teaches us to trust in him to do all he has said he will do. We are particularly to look forward to the coming of the Messiah, which is his second coming, or return.

Understanding 1 Samuel teaches us from the three primary characters with positive and negative examples. Samuel and David heard God's word and obeyed. They waited patiently on the Lord, trusting him to keep his promises. Saul provides us a sobering warning against disobedience. We are like Saul often when we are not outright rejecting and rebelling against God's word, but rather we twist it and rework it to our own purposes and preferences. In the end, Saul was more concerned for his own honor and glory than he was the honor and glory of God.

Understanding 1 Samuel helps us to check our motives in what we ask for. Hannah wanted a son and here request was of faith (Chapter 2). Israel wanted a king, but it was not a request of faith. Rather, they were rejecting the rule of God (Chapter 8).

CONCLUSION

1 Samuel recounts God's purpose worked out in Israel's history with the establishing of the kingship in Israel and the anointing of the Davidic king of the line of Judah. Just as the judges failed in the book of Judges, the priesthood has failed and the kingship has failed in 1 Samuel, leaving the expectation for a future judge, prophet, priest, and king who will not fail.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This series is a study in biblical theology going book by book through the entire Bible. Each lesson typically covers one book of the Bible, though occasionally covers more than one book when the books are short. This PDF is provided for personal study, small group study, or use in a church class. Unless otherwise noted, all lessons have been prepared by Jeff Short, the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church.

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