

SAMUEL II...Saul

(I Samuel 2:16—19:23)

Samuel did very well growing up with Eli. Each year Hannah came to see him, bringing a little robe she had made for him. As 2:16 says, “Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and men”---very much like Jesus was described many years later.

But as Eli continued to tolerate the evil actions of his sons, the Lord’s anger against him grew. Samuel was awakened one night to be told with a message from the Lord of the punishment to Eli and the end of his family’s role in the priesthood.

Shortly thereafter the Philistines defeated the Israelites, capturing the Ark of the Covenant. Hophni and Phineas, Eli’s sons, also died. When word came to Eli, the old man fell off his chair, dying of a broken neck. He had led Israel 40 years.

Chapters 5-6 relate the interesting story of what happened with the ark of the covenant, including its return. (The ark of the covenant was a box-like structure usually kept in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. It held the tables of stone from Moses’ day, a pot of manna from the days in the wilderness, and a rod of Aaron’s that had sprouted buds in an earlier display of God’s approval of Aaron’s leadership. This was a very holy item in the religion of the Israelites.)

Chapter 7:6 records that Samuel became the new leader. Under his rule the Philistines were subdued. Peace prevailed in the land.

As Samuel grew old the people demanded that a king be appointed. Very disappointed and feeling rejected, Samuel brought the matter to the Lord. Samuel was told to remind the people of all the unpleasant things that would happen if they had a king, but the people continued to insist. The Lord also told Samuel that it was the Lord who was being rejected---not Samuel.

Chapter 9 tells the story of Saul, a very tall young man who would become the first King of Israel. In 10:1 he is anointed king by Samuel. Chapter 12 records Samuel’s touching Farewell speech.

Saul began to reign at age 30 and ruled for 42 years. But it was an unhappy time as he displeased the Lord by his disobedience to Samuel’s instructions (see chapter 15). God decided to replace him and had Samuel to anoint the young man David as the future replacement of Saul. In the years that followed, Saul’s fear and hatred of David continued to grow, to the point that Saul repeatedly tried to kill David.