



1 Samuel

Following The Shepherd King In An Age Of Personal Freedom

Life Group Discussion / Week Two

INTRODUCTION TO 1 SAMUEL

When the history of our age is written, it could be summed up as a time when “everyone did as they saw fit.” Those words could be the anthem of our time. In fact, they are actually the closing words of the book of Judges. This attitude is not new.

In the Hebrew bible, unlike in our English bibles, the order of the books means that 1 Samuel follows judges. So the last thing you read before the opening of the book of Samuel in the Hebrew Bible is the last verse of Judges: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”

In many ways, the story told in 1 and 2 Samuel is the solution to this problem. The days when Israel had no king were days of moral anarchy. They are ugly and brutal. This is what life is like when there is no king and everyone does as they see fit. But the solution is more ambiguous. It is true that Israel had no king; but fundamentally, that was because they refused to acknowledge God as their king. The Lord was to be Israel’s king. The real problem was not the lack of a king, but a lack of obedience to God as king.

This ambiguity continues into the book of Samuel. We will see Israel asking for a king, and we will see God regarding that as a rejection of his rule. We will see the rule of the first king, Saul, and wonder whether Israel having a king is much of an improvement on Israel having no king. Even the rise of King David in the second half of 1 Samuel and his rule in 2 Samuel prove a mixed blessing.

So 1 Samuel leaves us looking beyond this history of ancient Israel. Israel’s kings were anointed with oil, so they were known as “the anointed one”—“messiah” in Hebrew, or “christ” in Greek. As we see the disastrous reign of Saul the king Israel asked for, and as we see the flawed reign of David, the king God blessed his people with, we are being pointed towards the Christ, the one man who rules God’s people in the way God wants. God himself promised David that one of his sons would reign over God’s people forever. And so the history of the first christ leaves us longing for the rule of the ultimate Christ.

As we study 1 Samuel together, we will see Jesus Christ. And seeing him in and through 1 Samuel will enable us to see him with fresh color and texture, and see afresh what it means for us to follow him as King in an age that worships personal freedom.

READ

1 Samuel 2:1-10

STUDY & APPLY

1. Much more than one woman's suffering and prayers is going on in this passage. Some of the greatest clues are in her prayer-song (2:1–10). List some of the elements of her prayer that seem surprisingly grand and far-reaching, considering the occasion.
2. Which phrase of Hannah's prayer particularly encourages you or speaks into something you are struggling with today?
3. Hannah's prayer is a prayer of reversals. It could be said that *wherever we are at this moment, we can expect God to flip us*. If we are comfortable in our self-sufficiency and pride, then God will humble us. If we are humbled by the knowledge of our sin and awareness of God's grace, then God will raise us up. If you were to monitor your own heart today, in what area of your life would you be in most danger of substituting human achievement for full dependency on God?

Read Philippians 2:1-11

It could be said that when God's King comes he will turn the world upside down. What is lost in this life is gained for eternity. How do we know? Because Jesus himself paved the way. Christ's humility is our salvation. The basis of our salvation and forgiveness of sins and hope in the future is that God's promised King became a servant and defeated our greatest enemy—Satan and death itself. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is the clearest evidence in all the world that those who seek to find their joy and purpose in life by doing things as they see fit will lose their life. And those who lose their life for the sake of submitting to Jesus will find it. In a time in our culture where personal freedom and living your life as you see fit is one of the most popular things we all have much to lose by willingly submitting oneself to God, His Word, and his King Jesus. But, if you do, you will never be sorry that you did for only in laying down your life will God raise it back up.

4. How will you allow the truth that God's King has come to make a difference in your life today?

PRAY

Close your discussion praying earnestly, empathetically, and boldly for one another.