

Route 66

1 Samuel: Trust and Obey

Part 9 – June 7, 2009

1st Samuel gives us the historical stories of Israel's last judge (Samuel), and Israel's first king (Saul). How many of you are familiar with the story of Samuel? How many of you are familiar with the story of Saul? How about the story of David and Goliath?!

So, it's time to let poor Samuel and Saul sit in the front seat! Samuel's mother, Hannah was barren while her husband's *other* wife, Peninnah [pih-NIN-uh] was poppin' kids out left and right!



The land of Shiloh

Every year they visited the tabernacle at Shiloh, to celebrate the feasts. And *every* year Hannah's husband would give *Hannah* a *double* portion because he loved her and felt so sorry for her. And *every* year Peninnah would get jealous, and taunt poor Hannah mercilessly.

And *every* year Hannah would cry and refuse to eat. But, one year Hannah wept *and* prayed ... *intensely*.

And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord ..." - 1 Samuel 1:11 NIV

Eli, the good-hearted high priest sees her carrying on, assumes she's drunk, and rebukes her. *That's it!* Hannah breaks down and pours out her heart ... and Eli asks God to grant her request. And about nine months later: Ta-da! Hello baby Samuel.

When Sammy was weaned (about three), Hannah allowed Eli to raise him in the tabernacle. And she made him little priest robes, and he ministered! And Hannah had three more sons and two daughters.

Now, Eli's two sons were wicked: they stole from God, threatened worshipers, and seduced the women who served at the tabernacle. But young Samuel had a heart for God. And one night as he slept in the tabernacle, God spoke to him *so audibly* that he thought it was Eli. He woke Eli up three times before Eli clued in. Eli tells him to ask the Lord to speak. And when he does, God says He's going to bring disaster on Israel *and* Eli's household.

It begins when Israel goes to battle against the Philistines, and 4000 Israelites are wiped out, and they hatch a plan:

Let us bring the ark of the Lord's covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies. - 1 Samuel 4:3 NIV

Notice they say: "so that it may go with us and save us" Instead of repenting, they treat the Lord like an idol, and they attempt to *control* His power by using the ark as a charm.

Eli's two sons bring the ark. And when the Jewish army sees the ark they celebrate so loudly that the Philistines hear them. And out of fear, the Philistines resolve to fight *extra* fierce. And 30,000 Israelites are killed (including Eli's two sons). *And* the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence, is captured!

- Without obedience our faith is powerless.

And when 98-year-old, blind Eli heard the news, he fell backward off his chair and broke his neck and died. In one day Israel lost its high priest and its most sacred object!



Coastal ruins at Ashdod

The ark was taken to Ashdod [ASH-dahd] and put in a temple to the fish-god, Dagon. And twice the idol fell on its face. And then a plague of tumors came. So the ark was passed from town to town, and everywhere it went, a plague broke out.

So, they sent it back home ... with some strange gifts:

They placed the ark of the Lord on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold **rats** and the models of the **tumors**. - 1 Samuel 6:11 NIV

The plague was probably bubonic which causes tumors *and* is spread by rats (especially in coastal towns where the Philistines lived).

So, the ark returned home and Samuel led all Israel to cast away their idols and repent. And just then the Philistines attacked, but God sent a violent thunderstorm to throw them into a panic. And the Israelites trounced the Philistines and went on to recapture and restore several conquered Jewish cities.

Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life. - 1 Samuel 7:15 NIV

He was like Moses: spiritual leader, political leader, judge, priest, and prophet. When God answers Jeremiah's prayer (400 years later) about Israel's coming exile, He says:

Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. - Jeremiah 15:1 NIV



Looking out from Ramah

Sadly, Samuel's two sons are nothing like their dad.

They were dishonest. So, when Samuel grew old, the elders gathered at his home in Ramah to reject his sons and demand a king.

We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles. - 1 Samuel 8:19b-20 NIV

This gets a bit confusing, because God says to Samuel: "It isn't you they've rejected; they've rejected me as their king." (8:7) And then later Samuel says, "You have today rejected your God." (10:19) Yet, God instructed Moses (Deut 17:14-20) that a king was compatible with His plan for the Promised Land. And when Samuel presents King Saul, he says: "Do you see him whom *the Lord* has chosen?" (10:24)

So, if it's part of God's plan, how are they rejecting Him? What upset Samuel, *and* the Lord, was their immoral motives. They wanted to: "be like all the other nations"

Other nations worshipped their kings. Israel's king was supposed to be a humble earthly servant of the Great King of Kings! Their confidence was in an *earthly* king: to lead 'em ("lead us"), guide 'em ("go out before us"), and protect 'em ("fight our battles"); terms Moses and Joshua (*and Samuel*) reserved for God.

So Samuel seeks to correct this as he selects their king.

Saul was thirty years old when his father's donkeys escaped. So, he took a servant and went searching. When they couldn't find them, the servant suggested that they ask the prophet for help. The day before, God had told Samuel this meeting would happen.

When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the Lord said to him, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people." - 1 Samuel 9:17 NIV

Saul asks Samuel if he knows where the prophet lives. And Samuel tells him that his donkeys have been found, and that a meal has been prepared in his honor; and 30 guests are waiting!

Q: Remember at the end of Judges when the Benjamites protected those men who had raped and murdered an innocent woman – and the other tribes rose up and all but wiped out the Benjamites?

Saul answered, "But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel ..." - 1 Samuel 9:21 NIV



The land of Mizpah

Despite Saul's protest Samuel summoned the people to Mizpah and called forth the tribe of Benjamin, the clan of Saul's father, and then ... Saul! But he was nowhere to be found! They looked all over. Finally, Samuel asked the Lord; and God said ...

He has hidden himself among the baggage. - 1 Samuel 10:22 NIV

Samuel then called the people into repentance and renewal of the covenant as part of the inauguration. And Saul was made subject to the law of God and the word of the prophet (11:14 - 12:25)



The land Jabesh Gilead

Not everyone is thrilled with Samuel’s choice. But shortly after this, the Ammonites overthrow the Jewish city of Jabesh Gilead and threaten to gouge out the right eye of all its inhabitants. Saul quickly gathers 330,000 men by threatening them, and *crushes* the enemy!

But, the power and pressure proves too much for him:

- A. Later, while waiting for Samuel to arrive on a battlefield, Saul grows fearful and impatient, and unlawfully sacrifices a burnt offering himself, in place of the priest.
 - He was unwilling to obey and therefore *unable* to trust.
- B. When he was sent to exact God’s judgment on the Amalekites he illicitly confiscated the best of the plunder. And when Samuel caught him, he justified, lied, and then blamed.

Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? **To obey is better than sacrifice** ...” - 1 Samuel 15:22 NIV

His disobedience was displayed in his half-hearted obedience. Our worship is worthless if it’s not grounded in obedience.

And God removed His Spirit from Saul, and an evil/tormenting spirit was allowed, even directed, to take its place.

Meanwhile, God sent Samuel to Jesse’s farm to anoint a *new* king. One by one seven sons were presented and passed on. Samuel asked if there was another, and Jesse said, “Well, there’s the kid.” And Samuel anointed David, and he was filled with God’s Spirit.



The Valley of Elah

And one day David was taking food to his brothers on the battlefield near the Valley of Elah [EE-luh] and he saw a nine foot tall Philistine challenging the terrified Israelites to settle the battle with a one-on-one death match.

Because of his faith in God, David couldn’t understand why there where no takers – especially since Saul had promised the victor wealth, his daughter (in marriage) ... and *total* tax exemption!

Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. - 1 Samuel 17:40 NIV

David ran toward Goliath and took him down with one shot! But here’s a question: Why did David take “five smooth stones”; lack of faith in his own abilities or in the Lord’s empowerment?

Maybe neither; according to 2 *Samuel* 21:15-22, Goliath had four brothers: Ishbi-Benob [ISH-high-BEE-nahb], Saph, Lahmi [LAH-migh], and a huge man with six fingers and six toes! I think David was just getting ready for the next four giants!

- He was willing to obey and therefore *enabled* to trust.

Saul's son, Jonathan develops an amazing friendship with David, but Saul becomes obsessively jealous. Twice while David played his harp for Saul, Saul tried to pin him to a wall with a spear!

David fled to a Philistine city where he had to pretend to be insane in order to save his own life. And then he begins living in caves and on the run with 600 outcast men and their families! And on two occasions he has the opportunity to kill Saul, but he spares his life out of continued faith in the providence of God.

Now, over the course of several years, three things happened:

1. David and his men continued saving cities and fighting Israel's enemies, which greatly increased his popularity.
2. Samuel died, and all Israel mourned for him.
3. Saul continued his downward spiral.

David and his men move their families out of Saul's reach, in the land of the Philistines for a year and four months. During this time the Philistines gather their forces to fight Saul. And racked with terror and dread, Saul turns to a witch to try and bring Samuel back from the dead for a consultation. And the amazing thing is – it works!



Mount Gilboa & Beth Shan

This isn't a validation of mediums, it's an actual miracle. The witch must be an ordinary fraud, because when she does her conjuring and Samuel actually appears, she screams in horror! But God only sent Samuel back to proclaim Saul's impending doom.

The next day, on Mount Gilboa, Saul and his sons met their fate.

The Philistines ... killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. ... so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. - 1 *Samuel* 31:2-4 NIV

And suicide becomes Saul's final act of disobedience. And when the Philistines found Saul's body, they cut off his head and hung his and his son's bodies on the wall at Beth Shan (in the lower portion of the photo).

And the final verse tells us that valiant men journeyed through the night, took down the bodies, and buried them at Jabesh - where a once Spirit-filled Saul first led 330,000 Israelites to victory.