

PREACHING THROUGH I SAMUEL

A Book of History, this record tells the story of Israel for a period of three generations, approximately 1100 to 1000 B.C. It marks several important changes. Before this the tribes of Israel had been united only in God, their King; now they seek a human ruler. God's ministers had been the priests and Levites; beginning with Samuel the order of the prophets, or God's special messengers to men, arose.

Here the Philistines first come into prominence as enemies of Israel. They were the inhabitants of the plains along the Mediterranean Sea, especially in Southwestern Palestine. The Canaanite god, Dagon, was their principal deity. Perhaps more than other pagans, they rejected and reviled Jehovah (Compare Num. 33:55).

For the Christian the Book has special interest as it shows how the kingly line of David, from which Christ came, was established. Note also the emphasis upon righteousness as an element of acceptable worship, trust in God as essential to the life of the nation, and obedience to God's commands as of more value than sacrifice.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF I SAMUEL

- Chapters 1-3 Samuel is born, serves in the tabernacle, and is called to be prophet.
- 4-7 The Ark of the Covenant is captured in battle and finally returned.
- 8-10 The Kingdom of Israel is organized, and Saul made king.
- 11-15 Saul reigns, disobeys God, and is rejected.
- 16-17 David is secretly anointed king, and comes into prominence.
- 18-27 David flees the jealous wrath of Saul.
- 28-31 Saul declines in power, is defeated, and dies.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

"Boys at Home" (I Sam. 2:12-26)

"The Ark That Saved No One" (I Sam. 4:1-11)

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“A New Administration” (I Sam. 12:12-25)

“Obedience Better Than Sacrifice” (I Samuel 15:10-23)

Other Suggested Sermon Topics:

“Like All the Nations” (I Sam. 8:1-9, 19-22)

“The Lord Will Not Forsake” (I Sam. 12:12-25)

“God Looks on the Heart” (I Sam. 16:1-13)

“There Is a Friend” (I Sam. 18:1-4; 23:14-18)

“When He Was Hungry” (I Sam. 21:1-10)

QUESTIONS OVER I SAMUEL

1. Who was Samuel's mother? (1:20)
2. Name the priest whose sons were worthless and did not know the Lord. (2:12)
3. God revealed to whom His judgment against Eli's house? (3:11-14)
4. What news caused Eli to fall and be killed? (4:18)
5. Why did Israel desire to have a king? (8:5)
6. Who was the first king of Israel? (9:17)
7. Who anointed the first two kings of Israel? (10:1; 16:13)
8. Why did the Philistines not want the Israelites to have blacksmiths? (13:19, 20)
9. What man and his armor bearer led in surprising and routing the Philistines at Michmash? (14:1-23)
10. Samuel told Saul that obedience was better than what? (15:22)
11. How does I Samuel describe the youngest son of Jesse? (16:11, 12).
12. Goliath, the giant killed by David, was from what army? (17:4)
13. Why did Saul try to kill David? (18:6-11)
14. Who was David's first wife? (18:20, 27)
15. How did she save David's life? (19:12, 13)
16. Who was David's second wife? (25:14, 42)
17. Saul went to a witch at what place in an effort to talk with Samuel who was dead? (28:7, 8)
18. Saul killed himself after who refused to kill him? (31:4)

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BOYS AT HOME

(I Samuel 2:12-26)

INTRODUCTION —

Nothing more important in this fate-filled time than children.

A. In the year 1809, Napoleon's battles made news, but babies of 1809 made history:

- William E. Gladstone, born that year in Liverpool.
- Abraham Lincoln born in a Kentucky log cabin.
- Oliver Wendell Holmes born in Massachusetts.
- Alfred Tennyson born in a Somerset rectory.
- Felix Mendelssohn at Hamburg; Frederick Chopin at Warsaw.

B. If we lose out with the children we can't recover.

— Better to form character than try to reform what is deformed.

C. Focus of attention to this matter.

1. From FBI on down, finger is being pointed to the home.
2. State law makes parents financially responsible for children's deeds.

D. In our Scripture, we have a story of Eli's success with Samuel, and failure with his own two sons— why?

I. SAMUEL'S COURSE WAS LAID OUT TOWARD GOD; ELI'S SONS' WAS NOT.

A. See names: Samuel (Name of God); Hophni (Fighter); Phinehas (Brazen mouthed).

B. With the coming of a child, one accepts responsibility of determining his course.

1. In physical matters, as food and health.
2. In education, that he may have opportunity.
3. In spiritual matters. If one seeks to withhold training, the very silence trains one to think that God is not important.

C. The child may rebel at discipline as a river rebels at

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dikes, but he will despise and be made insecure by the lack of it.

- D. See Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the Scriptures" (II Tim. 3:15). So each needs church, prayer, Scripture memory; part in home worship.

II. SAMUEL HAD RESPONSIBILITIES; ELI'S SONS HAD PRIVILEGES.

- A. For his own sons, Eli seemed to think that life's goal is pleasant fortune; it is really spiritual growth.
- B. A mark of manhood is the acceptance of responsibility.
1. Employers note the lack of it among employees.
 2. Churches suffer for lack of it among members.
 3. Criminals make their own wishes the law.
- C. The U.S. Senator whose son carries newspapers in Washington has the right idea.
- D. In the church, youth is best served when youth is most serving.

III. SAMUEL HAD CLOSE AND ACTIVE ASSOCIATION WITH ELI; HIS OWN SONS DID NOT.

- A. That sort of association produced Elisha with Elijah; Timothy with Paul—and even the Son of God on earth, through contact with His Father.
- B. One reason the farm is a good place to bring up a family.
1. City workers have to make the associations that come naturally on the farm.
 2. Need to include work as well as play together.
- C. (Illus.) Judge, sentencing young criminal, says, "How can you so disgrace a splendid man like your father?" Reply: "Yeah, I hear tell he's an all right guy. I wouldn't know. He never had much time for me."

CONCLUSION —

Philippians 2:19-22 — Timothy who also had known —

1. A course turned toward God from the beginning.
2. Responsibilities of service.
3. Association "as a son with his father."

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THE ARK THAT SAVED NO ONE
(I Samuel 4:1-11)

INTRODUCTION —

There is religion-abuse just as deadly as drug abuse.

- A. The Bible used as a good luck piece. One says, "If you have bleeding, there's a certain verse in Ezekiel you can read and the bleeding will stop."
- B. Religion used to benefit business or politics.
- C. Church used to enhance social status.
- D. So Israel sinned in using the Ark of the Covenant to protect them in war.
 - 1. Early in Samuel's prophetic career, Philistines were oppressors.
 - 2. Scene opens with battle at Aphek.

I. ISRAEL LEFT THE ARK AT SHILOH (vv. 1, 2).

- A. The tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant rested at Shiloh in the central highlands.
- B. In battle near Ebenezer Israel suffered 4000 casualties. — They called it an act of God and asked why.
- C. The answer had been given already (Numbers 33:50-56).
 - 1. They had not obeyed God in clearing the land of idolatrous inhabitants.
 - 2. "To obey is better than sacrifice." (I Sam. 15:22).

II. ISRAEL BROUGHT THE ARK TO EBENEZER

(vv. 3, 4).

- A. It was a foolish move.
 - 1. The very act was an imitation of their pagan enemies.
 - 2. They had no command of God (as they did at Jericho) to bring the Ark.
 - 3. They said of the Ark, "*It* may save us." They didn't mention God.
- B. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, concurred in the folly.
 - 1. As priests, they had the care of the Ark.
 - 2. They came along, following, the military men.
 - 3. Tragedy follows when men try to use God for men's purposes.

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III. ISRAEL TRUSTED THE ARK TO WIN THE BATTLE (vv. 5-9).

- A. They rejoiced loudly in their false hopes of victory.
 - 1. Some people still rest on such assurances as "once in grace, always . . ."
 - 2. Others depend foolishly on the symbols of religion.
- B. The Philistines also were impressed.
 - 1. They were frightened, remembering Jericho and Egypt.
 - 2. They thought that God was present in the Ark.
 - 3. They exhorted one another to desperate courage (touch of nobility here).
 - 4. They feared slavery more than they feared the dangers of battle.

IV. ISRAEL LOST THE ARK, THE BATTLE, AND THEIR ARMY (vv. 10, 11).

- A. The Philistines fought with desperate human courage, and won.
- B. The Israelites —
 - 1. Lacked God's help; the enterprise was their own.
 - 2. Lacked human force because they pinned false hopes on the Ark.
 - 3. Such is the tragic situation of those who believe in faith, rather than believing in and obeying God.
- C. Disaster for Israel was complete.
 - 1. Casualties numbered 30,000—seven times greater than former defeat.
 - 2. The presumptuous priests died. Phinehas' posthumously born son was "Ichabod" (glory has departed).
 - 3. The Ark in which they trusted was taken from them.

CONCLUSION —

Observe contrast of two thieves on crosses with Christ.

- A. One, like the foolish Israelites, demanded magic from religion: "Save thyself and us!" (Luke 23:39).
- B. The other acknowledged Christ as King and pled His mercy (Luke 23:40-43). "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!" (Matt. 6:33).

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A NEW ADMINISTRATION
(I Samuel 12:12-25)

INTRODUCTION —

A farewell address from a retiring administrator.

- A. Notable is Washington's Farewell Address. He expressed himself at length and laid down sound principles for the ongoing of the U.S.A.
- B. So I Samuel 12 records Samuel's farewell address.
 - 1. Samuel felt himself rejected in Israel's demand for a king.
 - 2. Saul chosen, anointed, and established as king.
 - 3. Samuel announces his retirement from administration as a judge in Israel, but assures his continuing concern.

I. WHAT SHALL THE NATION DO? ("You and your king" appear as one entity.)

- A. They shall confess their sin of rebellion against God.
 - 1. That sin was noted in Samuel's recital of history.
 - 2. That sin was called to attention by a miracle of summer storm (vv. 16-19). — Rain just didn't happen at harvest time (Proverbs 26:1).
- B. They shall accept God's cleansing and go on.
 - 1. They are to fear God (vv. 14, 24), but not fear the consequences of repented and forgiven sin (v. 20).
 - 2. The judgments and blessings of God depend on their future actions.
- C. They shall live righteously before God (vv. 14, 24).
 - 1. Thanks for God's blessing will motivate their service.
 - 2. Awareness of God's judgment will warn them against idolatry.

II. WHAT SHALL THE MAN OF GOD DO IN RETIREMENT?

- A. He shall face the evil for what it is (v. 20).
 - 1. Love for his people does not blind him to their faults.
 - 2. Hatred for sin does not destroy his care for the people.

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- B. He shall continue to pray for them, people and leader (v. 23). — The admonition in I Timothy 2:1-4.
- C. He shall instruct the people “in the good and right way.”
 - 1. The knowledge of right and wrong is a treasure to be cherished and conveyed (I Kings 3:9).
 - 2. The learner never outgrows need for refresher courses.
 - 3. The teacher never outgrows opportunities to admonish. — Observe that Samuel remained an unofficial counselor to Saul.

III. WHAT WILL GOD DO?

- A. He will remain the constant element amid all changing circumstances.
- B. He will leave mankind free to choose his own course.
 - 1. God had been Israel’s King (v. 12), but gave them Saul at their demand (14).
 - 2. He will judge on basis of their choices, but will not compel.
- C. He will reward and punish according to men’s relationship to Him.
 - 1. Both king and people are responsible to God.
 - 2. God’s judgments demonstrated in history, and certain for the future.
- D. He will accept the penitent sinner (v. 22).
 - 1. Punishment does not mean utter abandonment: “He will not forsake.”
 - 2. His identification with His people is part of His unchanging nature.
 - 3. In Christ He has chosen a “peculiar people” (I Peter 2:9, 10).

CONCLUSION —

In 1865 the news of Abraham Lincoln’s assassination brought near riot in New York City. The seething multitude near the stock exchange was quieted when James A. Garfield stepped to a balcony and shouted a brief assurance, concluding, “God still reigns, and the Government in Washington still stands!” — Among all changes in administration, and if government falls, God still reigns.

OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

(I Samuel 15:10-23)

INTRODUCTION —

The story of self-satisfied partial obedience to God's command leaving God dissatisfied and Saul rejected.

The Amalekites—Israel's first enemy out of Egypt; Joshua defeated them. They sniped at the helpless in Israel's rear columns. God now commanded that they be "devoted"; destroyed utterly. Saul fought and conquered; but kept Agag and choice beasts.

I. SAUL'S FAILURE.

- A. He obeyed partially—conquered but did not destroy.
- B. He listened to others to disobey; God made him responsible as king.
- C. He offered sacrifice instead of obedience. —Failed to realize that the value of sacrifice is only in obedience.
- D. He claimed to have obeyed (his own interpretation).
- E. He blamed others for his failure.
- F. He was rejected—Compare Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; "I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).

II. CONTRAST CHRIST.

- A. He obeyed fully—"I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).
- B. He refused to be deterred by temptation. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Deut. 6:13). Rebuked Peter when he would have forbidden the crucifixion (Matt. 16:21ff.).
- C. Offered obedience rather than sacrifice—His only sacrifice was Himself.
- D. Gave deeds, not words, in evidence of His obedience. "The works that I do bear witness of me" (John 5:36).
- E. Instead of blaming others for His failure, He prayed forgiveness of *their* sin, as He hung on the cross.
- F. He was exalted by the Father—"Became obedient unto death . . . wherefore God also highly exalted Him" (Phil. 2:9-11).

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III. APPLY TO PEOPLE IN OUR OWN TIME.

- A. Nearly every one obeys *some* of the commands of Christ. "These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).
1. There are the formal commands seen in the plan of salvation.
 2. There are the continuing commands of faithfulness to the church.
 3. There are the commands to righteousness, purity, love, generosity.
- B. Partial "obedience" is not obedience to Him, but to one's own will (James 2:10, 11). He who obeys the law only where he approves of it obeys only his own judgment.
- C. The voice of the multitude must give way to the voice of God.
1. Saul finally acknowledged his sin in listening to it.
 2. Jesus claimed all authority, leaving no place to hearken to men.
 3. Peter rightly said, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).
- D. Sacrifice cannot replace obedience. (Matt. 7:22, 23.)
- E. Many, like Saul, claim to have obeyed—to have done the "important things," and to have been negligent only in those things that don't count anyway.
- F. Many blame others for their disobedience.
1. "Hypocrites kept me out of the church."
 2. "Friends led me astray." "Had too much religion as a child."
- G. The disobedient rejected—"Depart from me, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23).

CONCLUSION —

Moody's illustration of the father who asked for a drink of water, and refused to be satisfied when the child brought fruit, candy, and other things thought to be more acceptable than water.