
Day 89 - March 30

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

The Reign of Saul

**Readings: *1 Samuel 14:46-48, 53; 1 Chronicles 5:10, 18-22;*
*1 Samuel 15:1-35***

Reflections:

- Interesting verse for leadership: "...whenever Saul saw a mighty or brave man, he took him into his service." Always be on the lookout for good people to join your team.
- Reubenites are described in terms that should help us understand in the Old Testament paradigm of a physical kingdom what God was looking for in a warrior: "able bodied men who could handle shield and sword, who could use a bow, and who were trained for battle.... [God] answered their prayers because they trusted in him." It goes on to say "The battle was God's." In the New Testament we see a spiritual parallel in Ephesians 6:10 ff where Christ-followers are trained and equipped for a spiritual battle and again we see in the Ephesians passage the importance of prayer for victory.
- We see in the attack on the Amalekites another mission with the aim of complete extermination. As much as we may loath this kind of killing, it was a part of the Old Testament paradigm. And so the verses that indicate that "they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed." In this situation it is viewed a selfish act of disobedience.
- God shows human emotion as he grieves having appointed Saul. God knew things would go bad but sin still grieves his heart. Samuel is troubled as well and cries out in prayer all night long.
- When Saul returns he tries to rationalize the disobedience of keeping the best for himself and his men, "it was to honor God." You can see the rationalization clearly.
- Samuel rebukes Saul with this key statement: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice (religious acts) as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed (that is, the voice of God) is better than the fat of rams." Notice that knowing and following God's heart, even if it seems to go against your own intuition is more important to God than simply trying to honor him religiously. As Saul tears Samuel's robe trying to cling to or strive for his leadership position, Samuel

uses that to show him that the kingdom is being torn from Saul. Another key statement: "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; he is not a man that he should change his mind."

- Samuel does go with Saul so that he may worship (not likely sacrifice for his sins). After this is we have two brief accounts. The foolishness of the king of Amalekites ends in his death and the judgment of Samuel who never returns to be with Saul. This is a sign that God's favor has left Saul and his leadership. Again it is stated that God is grieved over making Saul king. This is similar to Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (see Luke 19:41). God's foreknowledge of a situation does not diminish his emotions in seeing the brokenness or sinfulness of people. God's overarching revelation of his grace and in the case of Israel, exposing all that doesn't work, does not mean he sits back in cold indifference to the sins or brokenness of people. He still is a full participant in the drama and feels the emotions. His grief is not that he thought everything would be fine and now he is surprised, but rather his divine emotion is expressed as the drama is played out.