

God's Providence in God's People

Contra Costa Gospel Church
Adult Sunday School

SAUL

We celebrate the birthday of George Washington, but not John Adams. The fame of Neil Armstrong is slightly more prominent than his partner, Buzz Aldrin. And Nadia Comaneci will always stand apart from others like Daniela Silivas and Yelena Shushunova. What do the former have in common with one another?

If this is the case, it must seem strange that Saul does not hold a candle to David. No one disputes the fact that David was and is the greatest king of Israel (save for Jesus Himself). Yet, Saul reigned just as long as David did (40 years for both; see Acts 13:21 and 1 Kings 2:11) *and* he came first. Why then does Saul not get the credit he should be due?

The Book of Samuel (broken up into two halves, but really should be considered a single work) is the story of the rise of David to the position of King over Israel. He is chosen from humble roots, has a heart patterned after God Himself, and is given the promise no other king received: that the Messiah would come from his line and would rule over the house of Israel and Judah forever. And yet, his reign does not shine as brightly without Saul's failure to lead Israel properly. This is Saul's legacy in the annals of Israel - to be the precursor to the real first and only dynasty of Israel.

- 1) It seems that in the beginning of the Israelite monarchy, the Lord's intention was not to set up a king over Israel. Read 1 Samuel 8:1-22.
 - a. Why was the request to have a king over them an act of unfaithfulness on the part of the Israelites?

 - b. What does the Lord say is the potential outcome of having a king? Is that always true?

- 2) Saul is coronated at the end of 1 Samuel 10, following a lengthy process of choosing his very family from the very clan from the very tribe to which he belonged. Read 1 Samuel 10:20-21. Additionally, his anointing occurs at the beginning of the chapter, which is the "spiritual" coronation by the prophet, Samuel. Considering these things, what do we make of the fact that he was hiding "among the baggage"? What does that tell us about him? Have we seen this kind of attitude before?

- 3) Read 1 Samuel 11. How do you evaluate what Saul did? Did he do right or not?

- 4) Read 1 Samuel 13:1-14. This is Saul's first major gaffe as king of Israel, when he offered the sacrifices only the priests were allowed to offer. How is this action similar to the kinds of things Samson did in violation of the Law?
 - a. Do you think the punishment (his rejection as king) "fit the crime"? Why or why not?

- 5) In 1 Samuel 14:1-15 we read of the military exploits of Saul's son, Jonathan, and his armor bearer, how they valiantly defeated over 20 men in a small area. As a result of this attack, the rest of the Philistine army scattered, thus making Jonathan a hero for his bravery and tactics. This is the set up for what follows.
 - a. Read 1 Samuel 14:24-30. Once again we find in this passage something reminiscent of something else we've read previously. Can you name that event? How are they similar?

 - b. Sometime later Saul inquires of the Lord for direction, but receives no answer (see 1 Samuel 14:36-37). He surmises that the reason for the silence is because there is sin in his camp, which he is determined to identify and remedy (see 1 Samuel 14:38-44). This finally leads to Jonathan's deliverance by the other men in Saul's army (1 Samuel 14:45), presumably because Jonathan was just hailed as a hero. How does story color the way we see Saul? And Jonathan?

- 6) As we approach the end of Saul's kingship, the author makes a statement about Saul's reign as king in 1 Samuel 14:52. What theological/spiritual statement is the author making about Saul and his kingdom with this statement?