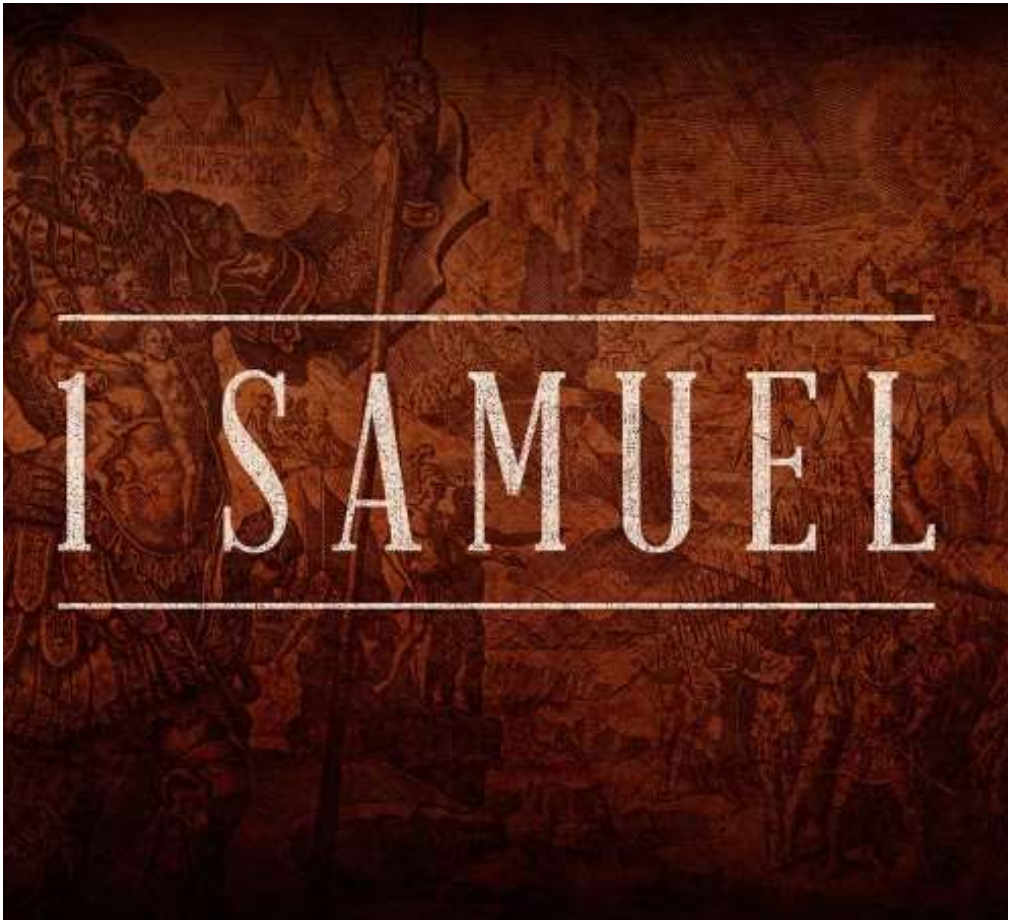


Let's Worship God

1st-6th June 2020
1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 7 - When God Rules His People

As the calendars turn over towards November, more and more news coverage will be devoted to the US Presidential Election. The identity of the next President is important to many people. Most of our news is about politics and politicians. This is a topic we are deeply invested in. Why is this so? It is because the identity of the next president, and the actions, or inaction, of our politicians, determine much about our earthly lives. We want to know which 'ruler' will be best for us. Who will bring prosperity, peace, provision, and plenty? If these are important questions in the political sphere, how much more important are they in the spiritual part of our lives, where things are of the greatest weight and importance? In the matters of our souls and eternity, the questions of who rules over us and where can we find blessing, are of the utmost importance.

One of the fundamental pictures of God and his work in the Bible is that of a king and a kingdom. God is a king who rules over his people, blessing them with peace and prosperity when they submit to him and serve him. In 1 Samuel 7 we have a picture of life under the rule of God, and the blessings that God's rule brings. This chapter is the climax and summary of Samuel's ministry, and shows us life under the rule of God.

This is the end of an era. The phrase, "Samuel judged Israel" is used again and again. He is the last of the Judges, last in a line of leaders and deliverers raised up to rule and bless Israel. In chapter 8 Israel asks for a king, rejecting God as king (8:7). They are tired of being ruled by Judges. But before we get their request for a king, God gives us a picture of life when he is their king. This chapter shows us the blessing of being under God's rule. It is highlighted by the parallels with chapter 4 (which is full of disobedience and punishment), not immediately apparent in our English translations: the Philistines approach for battle (4:2, 7:7); there are mighty sounds (4:5; 7:10); soldiers are struck down (4:2-3, 10; 7:10); Israel cry out for salvation (4:3; 7:3,8); places named Ebenezer (4:1; 7:12). It's like it's being played out again, but this time, under God's rule. In the matters of our souls and eternity, here we can find blessing: under his rule.

Questions

1. Why is the identity of our rulers so important, on earth?
2. Why is it even more important spiritually?

Prayer Points

1. Pray "Your kingdom come" in my life, here and now, more and more.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you...." -
1 Samuel 7:3b

Praise: Psalm 18:1-4 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 7 - Samuel - Shadow and Signpost

Samuel, the last Judge of God's people, shows us the ideal of life under God's rule. This chapter shows us how it is meant to be between God and us. We'll look at this in more detail over the next few days. But now we must fix one thing in our mind about Samuel. He is a shadow and signpost. That's two things, but they dovetail into one thing. He is a shadow: like a shadow shows an outline of a reality. You can't tell what colour my hair is from my shadow, but you can tell if it's long, or short, or curly. Samuel shows us an outline of someone else. He is a signpost: like a signpost points to some greater reality. You don't eat your picnic at the sign for the beach. You follow the sign to the beach. Samuel points us to someone else. He is a shadow and a signpost to a leader and deliverer of God's people who would bring the reality of God's rule - Jesus. When we look at Samuel we are meant to look through him to Jesus.

As Samuel leads God's people, delivers God's people, blesses God's people, shows the ideal of life under God's rule, he points us to Jesus, the true and better source of blessing under God's rule. He does this as he fulfils three functions: prophet, priest, and ruler. These three roles were people chosen by God in the Old Testament, through whom he worked out his rule. They were anointed with oil to mark them out for this role. These anointed ones (Hebrew: 'Messiahs'; Greek: 'Christs') were the channel through whom God brought blessing to his people. Normally they were three separate people, sometimes one person fulfilled all three in himself, even if it was just functionally, rather than officially. For example, Moses was not technically a priest, yet he stood between the people and God, like a priest. The point is, when God rules and blesses his people, he relates to them through three types of people. Samuel shows us all this, all the while pointing to the true and better prophet, priest and ruler - Jesus.

Questions

1. We will come to it in the days ahead, but how do you see Samuel acting as a prophet, priest, and ruler in this chapter?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to give you the Holy Spirit's help to see Samuel pointing us to Jesus in this chapter.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you...." -
1 Samuel 7:3b

Praise: Psalm 18:5-8 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 7:1-6 - The Prophet: Telling People How to Come to God

One of our chief blessings as the people of God is that he speaks to us. As God rules over his people in 1 Samuel 7 he speaks to them through Samuel, his prophet. In the Old Testament prophets did not just predict the future, they proclaimed God's message to his people. This is what Samuel had been called to, and was known for throughout the whole nation (3:20).

It's 20 years since the defeat of chapter 4, and the Philistines have been oppressing Israel for 40 years (Judges 13:1). These are dark and difficult days, yet Samuel has been faithfully ministering throughout them(4:1). Now it bears fruit - v2. The Israelites "lament after God". They've been taxed till the pips squeak, under severe economic sanctions (see 13:19), and enduring terror raids (13:17). They are groaning under the weight of this hardship. But simply being sad and seeking the Lord is not enough. So Samuel brings God's Word (v3). The people are called to repent, not simply seek after God. Here is the essence of Christianity, what our faith requires of us. Here is how we are to approach God. Repentance is not simply seeking God, or looking to God to change your situation. Repentance is turning from sin and turning to God "with all your heart" (v3). It's putting away our idols and directing our love and worship to him instead. We no longer look to men, women, family, work, sport, or anything else for happiness. We direct our heart to the LORD and serve him only. We submit all that we are, our gifts, our wills, our minutes, our resources, to him. We rely on him, fixing our hearts on him as our chief love. This is how we come to God.

Jesus brings the same message today by his Word and preachers. We are not saved by general belief in his existence. We are not saved by attending church. We are not saved by being good people. We are not saved by being sad about the situation we are in. Even seeking him isn't enough. We must, with all our heart put away sin, and fix it upon him. He must be our consuming love. This is what Christ the prophet proclaims to us.

Questions

1. What is the difference between merely seeking God and repenting? Do you know of anyone who is seeking God, but so far unwilling to repent.

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to uncover the idols in our hearts and direct our hearts to him and to serving him only.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you...." -

1 Samuel 7:3b

Praise: Psalm 18:9-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 7:5-11 - The Priest: Bringing People to God

I don't know what comes to your mind when you think of the term 'priest'. It has a lot of baggage now. In the ancient Near East, where these events happen, a priest was ago-between, a mediator. A priest represented the people to God and brought the people to God. This is what we see Samuel doing here.

As the people gather at Mizpah (v5) the Philistines sniff revolt and muster their forces to crush it (v7). The people panic. It all looks very similar to the Battle of Aphek in chapter 4. But this time the response is different. They don't resort to superstition, they resort to God (v8). Samuel acts as priest. He brings the people to God by sacrifice and by prayer (v9).

Those who would come to God must know first that they cannot, that their sin is a barrier that must be repented of (v6b). The only way sin can be dealt with is by sacrifice. So an innocent lamb is slaughtered as a substitute for the people. The barrier between them and God is removed. Samuel brings them to God by sacrifice. Then he brings them to God by prayer in their hour of need and national crisis. And God answers his prayer with a miraculous deliverance. The thunder storm shows that the God of Israel is far mightier than Baal, the thunder god of the Philistines. The battle has not been won by might, but by the LORD (2:9). Samuel is "a general who makes war by prayer"

Here is life under the perfect rule of God: we are brought to him by his priest, who deals with our sin and presents our needs to him in prayer. Again, Samuel is a shadow and a signpost to Jesus. He is the priest who offered up himself as the sacrifice on the cross to bring us to God. He is the praying man at God's right hand even now. Are you burdened by your sin? Is "We have sinned against the LORD" (v6) your cry? If you trust in Christ, your sin is dealt with by his sacrifice. It does not separate you from God. Have you ever been comforted by someone saying they were praying for you? You are on his daily prayer list. He is bringing your needs to God right now.

Questions

1. How does Samuel sacrificing bring the people to God, and how does he point to Jesus?
2. How does Samuel praying bring the people to God, and how does he point to Jesus?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks to God that he has provided a priest to bring you to him, by sacrifice and prayer.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you...." -
1 Samuel 7:3b

Praise: Psalm 18:12-16 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 7:12-17 - The Ruler: Bringing Peace from God to the People

Traditionally we speak about Jesus' work under the three categories of prophet, priest, and king. However, using 'king' maybe isn't helpful in 1 Samuel. Samuel is a Judge, and later the people will ask for a king instead. Either way, the basic idea is that of ruler. Judges and kings both ruled God's people.

In these verses we see Samuel ruling as a Judge. He defeats the enemies of God's people, the Philistines and Amorites. These native inhabitants of the Promised Land had been a constant menace, but now they do not bother them any more. In verse 16 we're told he had a 20 mile circuit he would travel adjudicating cases and teaching God's law. He is a bringer of peace and justice. Verses 15-17 cover about 35 years. 35 years of justice and prosperity and peace. This is life under the rule of God.

It is a picture that is eclipsed by life under the rule of God through Jesus. He conquers all his and our enemies. He defeats sin, breaking the chains that bind us to it. It has no power over you. He defeated death by his resurrection. He does and will bring justice on wicked men. This is what we have from him - the peace and blessing of God in our lives.

But this wonderful rule he brings, it is not all now. It is both now and not-yet. That's the lesson of many of Jesus' parables in Mark 4. This kingdom is like a field after sowing. It doesn't look much different, but it bears fruit later. It is like a net in the sea, doing its work unseen, before a final full revealing. It's like a mustard seed - it starts small but grows big. Jesus rule is not yet full. Sin is not yet fully removed from our lives The curse of death is not yet removed. Satan is doomed but not yet fully defeated. This is why we and our churches struggle. But there is a now as well. Now the grip of sin has lessened a bit. Now the grief is not as raw as it might be or was. Now the temptations are a bit less strong. Little by little, the rule of God is coming in our lives. "Thus far has the LORD helped us" (v12).

Questions

1. Where have you seen the kingly power of Jesus at work in your life?
2. Where do you feel the longing tension of living in the 'not-yet' of the fullness of Jesus' rule?

Prayer Points

1. Your Kingdom come...your will be done...give us daily bread...forgive us our debts...lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. All so that your name may be hallowed and honoured.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you...." -
1 Samuel 7:3b

Praise: Psalm 97:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 7 - The Man of Prayer

There's one final lesson for us to chew over as we leave this chapter. We need to step back and see the panoramic of what has happened.

We have mentioned before that it seems that Samson and Samuel overlap, acting as Judges at the same time. The Battle of Mizpah in chapter 4 happens around 1104BC. Israel have been oppressed by the Philistines for around 20 years. It is possible that the Philistines attack then as retaliation for some of Samson's early maraudings (like we read about in Judges 14-15). Samson dies after 20 years of Judging (Judges 16:31). If we put the dates together (I'll spare you the detailed calculations!) it seems like Samson dies around the time of these events in chapter 7. Israel are still under the tyranny of the Philistines. Samson the strong man has not been able to rescue them. There is now a void. Samuel steps into it and brings about a decisive deliverance from the Philistines (7:13-14). Key to his deliverance is prayer (7:9)

The writer wants us to see this contrast. He draws deliberate parallels between the two men in 1 Samuel 1-2. Both are born, miraculously, to barren mothers. Both are Nazirites. That is, under a vow of dedication to God (Numbers 6). Both are Judges who fight against Philistine oppression. These two men are set side by side so that we see the difference. What the man of strength could not do (deliver from the Philistines), the man of prayer did. Remember the theme song? 1 Samuel 2:9 - "not by might shall a man prevail."

Often we default to Samson. Strong men and women who will accomplish things, in our lives and for God, by our own might. God says to you through this chapter: "No you won't. Not by might shall a man prevail." But by prayer we shall prevail. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16). How many times do we set ourselves to do something without prayer? Then the task is like pushing water uphill. The pesky 'Philistines' of sin and ineffectiveness remain, until we become men and women of prayer.

Questions

1. Where have you been trying to prevail "by might"?

Prayer Points

1. Father, make me a person of prayer, before my might and my efforts.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you...." - 1 Samuel 7:3b

Praise: Psalm 25 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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