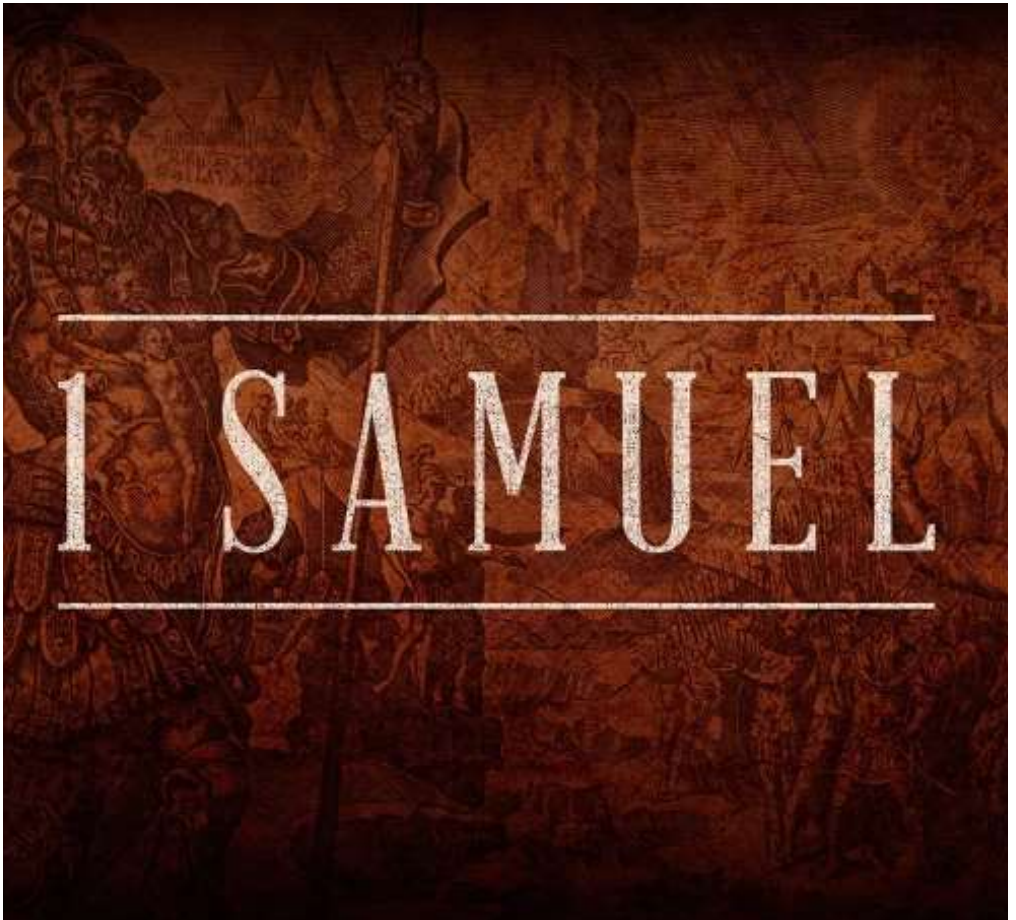


Let's Worship God

20th-25th July 2020

1 Samuel



1 SAMUEL

Monday - 1 Samuel 13:1-15a - A Bright New Era

Before we look at the message of this chapter we need to resolve what may be a difficulty to some of us. Verse 1 is a challenge to Bible translators. What you read will depend on what translation you have. The first edition of the ESV simply has "... " in two places. The NIV adds in the numbers "thirty" and "forty", to say that Saul was thirty years old when he became king and reigned for forty-two years. If you have a new ESV or are using it on your phone or tablet it says: "Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel." Your Bible translation may also have a footnote or brackets that explain why there are differences in translation.

It literally reads: "Saul was son of a year (which normally means 'a year old') when he became king and two years he ruled over Israel." The problem is, it doesn't make much sense to us. It is very similar to the form of words used about later kings when the writer is explaining how long they reigned for, for example, 2 Samuel 2:10. Normally the age they started reigning at and the length of time they reigned for is included. That's why some translators try to insert numbers. They assume that the numbers got left out somewhere along the way, either by accident or deliberately. But any explanations that involve guessing numbers which may have dropped out just create more problems than they solve, and are unnecessary. The simplest explanation is that it is just hard for us to understand and translate. It's far from the only place where the Bible is hard for us to understand and/or translate. The new edition ESV translation above, and the similar KJV translation, seem to be best.

I think the point is this: the writer uses the traditional form of words to note the start of a new reign (see also 2 Samuel 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; 22:42). This is a new era - the beginning of the annals of Saul. It should be a bright new era...

Questions

1. . How would you explain verse 1 to a child, or to an unbeliever who thinks it shows the unreliability of the Bible?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God that he has preserved his Word, and given us the Holy Spirit to give understanding of parts that are hard to understand.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." 1 Samuel 13:14

Praise: Psalm 19A:5-9 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Tuesday - 1 Samuel 13:1-15a - The 'Have it Your Way' King

As we noted yesterday, the point of verse 1, though hard to translate and understand, is to signpost to us the beginning of a new era for Israel with Saul as their king. It should be bright and glorious. He is exactly what they asked for. He is a king like the nations (8:5) - tall, handsome, and from a rich and influential family. He is a king who will go out and fight their battles (8:20) - he has already proven himself in battle, crushing the Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead. He is as his name: 'Saul' means 'asked for' - he is the 'asked for king'. But he wasn't the king that they needed. They didn't need a king like the nations, because God was their king. They didn't need a king to deliver them, because God was their deliverer. But God gives them what they want - Saul is the 'have it your way' king.

'Have it your way' is the motto of our day. Whatever you think is best, do it. "I know what's best for me; I know what I need; I know what makes me happy; I know what will deliver me from my worries and fears; I know what will give me a hope of a happy future." This thinking pervades every area of life: family, work, religion, lifestyle, sexuality and gender.

Can we have it our way? Do we know what we need? Can we choose our own deliverers? Can we decide what we hope in for safety and blessing? The closing words of chapter 12 hang ominously in the air (12:25). What if our way is the wrong way? What if our way is a wicked way and leads us to be swept away in God's judgement?

It may seem strange to linger on these thoughts. We haven't even got to the detail of the chapter yet. But we need to read the chapter in light of this: Saul is the 'have it your way king', and now we are going to see the results of going our own way. Miss this and you miss a message for the age.

Questions

1. Where have you heard or seen the 'have it your way' motto echoed or expressed in recent days - in the news, in conversation?

Prayer Points

1. Ask that God will show the folly of the motto of our age to us as we consider this chapter this week.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." 1 Samuel 13:14

Praise: Psalm 107:13-16 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Wednesday - 1 Samuel 13:1-7 - The Crisis That Develops

The newly crowned King Saul begins to develop a standing army of 3,000 chosen men, splitting them between himself and his son Jonathan. Jonathan defeats the Philistine outpost that was in Saul's own backyard of Gibeah (Geba in verse 3 is either an alternative spelling or a nearby area). Saul trumpets his victory (verse 3). He uses the word "Hebrews" for Israel, which seems to have been used of them in an offensive way by the Philistines. Saul is saying: "Here's what we 'Hebrews' can do!" The Philistines hear (verse 3) and Israel hears (verse 4). They hear of Saul's victory, and also that they have become a stench in the nostrils of the Philistines. Trouble is brewing. They muster to their King at Gilgal (verse 4), perhaps in optimism, hope, or joy, but things quickly sour. The Philistines muster in 30,000 chariots, 6,000 cavalry and innumerable troops (verse 5). It is an overwhelming display of power right in the middle of Israelite territory. Saul has provoked a sleeping giant, and Israel now finds herself in a tight spot; they are hard pressed and take to hiding in caves, holes, and tombs. Some even flee across the Jordan River, like they are fleeing the Promised Land. The ones that stay with Saul at Gilgal are trembling with fear (verse 7).

Israel is in great trouble: the Philistines are a more developed nation, better equipped, bigger, and more powerful. The Philistines have the technological advantage (13:19-23). Of the Israelites, only Jonathan and Saul have iron swords, since the Philistines had not shared the secret of turning iron into steel. The Israelite army are likely only equipped with shorter bronze swords. Furthermore, chariots were like tanks. To have 30,000 arrayed against them is staggering. Israel are outnumbered and out-equipped. But they have God.

Saul is not the first leader of God's people to be hugely outnumbered - think of Gideon (Judges 7). Nor will he be the last to be unnerved by the scale of the foes around him - think of Paul in Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:3; Acts 18:9-10). It has always been so for God's people in the world. So we don't wait for the battle odds to turn in our favour; we wait on the God who defies the odds.

Questions

1. Do you find yourself unnerved by the scale of the foes around us in our culture?
2. How has Satan been displaying his strength to you in recent days?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for confident faith in the midst of developing crises.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." 1 Samuel 13:14

Praise: Psalm 3 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Thursday - 1 Samuel 13:8-15a - Saul's Response to the Crisis

Faced with the incursion of a huge force into his territory and a frightened and fleeing people, new King Saul stands at a critical juncture. He is reluctant to engage the Philistines without "seeking the favour of the LORD" (verse 12) by offering sacrifices. He has been waiting for Samuel (verse 8), as told to in 10:8, which seems to have been a general instruction for times of need. He is waiting for Samuel, as priest of God to offer sacrifice and, as the prophet of God, to bring guidance. Seven days is a long wait when you are trembling with fear. Picture Saul asking each day, with increasing panic, "Is he here yet?" By the sixth day he's standing watching constantly, surely half expecting to see the Philistines sweeping down the hills before Samuel has arrived. Day by day his camp is getting smaller (verse 8) until he only has 600 left (verse 15).

Here is Saul's position: trouble is looming; he has a clear command to wait on God, but circumstances are deteriorating and hope is dwindling. Faced with these fears he makes a fatal decision in verse 9, offering the sacrifice himself. But Samuel comes on that day, the seventh day, as he had said (verse 10). Saul's faith had failed, and his fears got the better of him. He disobeyed the command of God and refused to wait on God's guidance. He relegated the importance of God's Word and put religious ritual above listening to God's Word. He tried to obtain God's favour through disobedience. He does it his way, and it will be disastrous.

Don't you see yourself here - faith giving way to fear in the face of frightening circumstances? We take matters into our own hands, often by doing something we know to be wrong. Like beginning a relationship with an unbeliever because we fear singleness and childlessness. Taking Sunday hours in work because we fear financial difficulties. Or often we think that going through the religious rituals of worship are more important than actually obeying God, as if that will bring us God's favour. Doing it your way will be disastrous.

Questions

1. Where in your life are fears looming large, and disobedience beginning to look attractive?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for faith to hold to God's Word when faced with fearful situations where God is asking you to wait on him.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." 1 Samuel 13:14

Praise: Psalm 31:21-24 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Friday - 1 Samuel 13:8-15a - The Folly of 'Having it Your Way'

In verses 11-12 Saul lists his excuses for having taken matters into his own hands: the people were scattering, Samuel hadn't come, the Philistines were mustering and threatening to attack, he had not sought God's blessing on his battle, and he forced himself to do it - he was a reluctant disobeyer! But Samuel cuts right through all the excuses in verse 13. Despite the difficult circumstances and mounting pressures, disobedience to the command of God is foolishness. Rejecting the Word of God is foolishness. 'Having it your way' is foolishness.

Amplifying the folly of Saul here are the echoes of Eden that the writer includes. Samuel's searching question, "What have you done?" sounds like God (Genesis 3:13). Saul's blame shifting to the people (verse 11) sounds like Adam (Genesis 3:12) and Eve (Genesis 3:13). You see, Saul's sin is symptomatic of all sin. Sin is rejecting God's word, disobeying the command of God, and going our own way when faced with mounting difficulties. It is having it our own way, not God's.

God is showing us the problem with Saul, the 'have it your way' king. He has the same problem as the people: a disobedient heart that rejects God's Word. When you 'have it your way', there is always the problem of sin. 'Having it your way' is folly: it cannot save us, make us happy, bless us or rescue us. When we are confronted with troubles and pressures, God's path of obedience is the only way.

Saul's disobedience brought punishment (verses 13-14). He is told that his kingdom will not be established, his dynasty will not be founded, his family will not rule forever, and his name and family line will not continue. Saul's folly robbed him of blessing. There is no future, nor hope, in sin. Saul's punishment is a warning of a far greater judgement for those who go their own way - there is no future and no hope, only suffering.

Questions

1. Why does the writer echo the Fall in the Garden of Eden?
2. Are there any areas where you are being confronted with two choices: the way of obedience and the way of folly?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to point out to you the folly of going your own way, rather than the way of obedience.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." 1 Samuel 13:14

Praise: Psalm 53 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

1 SAMUEL

Saturday - 1 Samuel 13:1-15a - God's Response to our Folly

As we look back over this chapter, it has been pretty gloomy this week. We've focused on fears, folly, and the fallout. But there is hope here too. Saul and the people have done things their way, and it has and will lead to pain. But God will do things his way, and provide for them despite their folly - read verse 14.

In place of Saul's family, God will raise up a king of his choosing. Not the king they asked for, but the king they need: one who will be subject to God's Word and will. Soon we will be introduced to David, God's king after his own heart - God's choice of king.

David will be loved by God and bring great blessing, but even he isn't the full answer to the problems of rejecting God in chapters 8 and 13. God's people would have to wait for the king after God's own heart, who would be fully subject to God's will and obey completely his law. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ to be that king. He was God's choice. He was after God's own heart - loving what he loved, doing what pleased him. He was subject to God's law, perfectly. He was the king not afflicted by the same problem as us - sin. He was the king who would deal with the problem of sin once for all by dying on the cross. He is the king whose kingdom is established forever. He is the bright hope in this dark chapter.

Isn't God so merciful and kind? We repeatedly choose to go our own way, yet he provides a Saviour to rescue us from the fallout. And he provides a king to rule and bless us, that we may live in his everlasting kingdom, experiencing his everlasting love and enjoying everlasting peace. So don't 'have it your way'. Have life his way.

Questions

1. How does this chapter look forward to David?
2. How does it look beyond David to Jesus?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks to God for his provision of a king and a kingdom that is established forever, and that we can enjoy this by living life his way.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.” 1 Samuel 13:14

Praise: Psalm 37 - 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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