

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (45)

Period of the Judges (6)

Samuel

1 Samuel 1-8

Tonight, we continue our study through the period of the judges. We have addressed a number of judges up to this point including: Othniel, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, plus a number of other “minor” judges. We now come to the final phase of judges, with Eli and Samuel and his 2 sons, Joel and Abijah. Samuel serves several roles as prophet, priest and judge. He will transition Israel from the period of the judges to the united kingdom. Let us consider Samuel and surrounding events.

I. Samuel, the account:

- a. 1 Sam. 1:1 – we are introduced to Elkanah. We learn from 1 Chronicles 6:25-28 he was of the lineage of the Levites which could tie him to temple service (he was not a priest).
- b. 1:2-7 – he had 2 wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah was barren and mocked by Peninnah. But Elkanah loved Hannah and treated her well. But she wanted a child.
- c. 1:8-18 – Hannah vows to God that if He gave her a son, he would be dedicated to His service for life (and not cut his hair – thus a perpetual Nazarite). We are here introduced to Eli who was High Priest. He assumes Hannah is drunk as she prayed. She clarifies her grief and sobriety. Eli grants that she receives her request.
- d. 1:19-28 – when Samuel is born, after he is weaned (likely several years, but not too many), she takes him to the temple and gives him to Eli to serve YHWH.
- e. 2:1-11 – records a song of Hannah praising God for giving her a child.
- f. 2:12-17 – Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas were corrupt and defiled the sacrifices of the people. Eli rebuked them but did NOT restrain (punish) them. Vs. 17 notes that because of this behavior, “*men abhorred the offering of the LORD.*”
- g. 2:18-21 – every year, Hannah would visit with Samuel and give him a new linen ephod (a priestly garment). Eli would bless her and Elkanah. YHWH visited Hannah after this and she had 3 sons and 2 daughters.
- h. 2:22-36 – YHWH sends a prophet to condemn Eli because he allowed the priesthood to become corrupted. It is prophesied that both his sons would die in one day and his lineage would not prosper.
- i. 3:1-21 – Samuel is called by YHWH and we find his first prophecy. It was directed against Eli. AT night Samuel hears a voice and thinks its Eli. After the third time, Eli perceives it is God and tells him the next time he was to answer and ask what He wanted. God foretells that he would judge Eli’s household and do something that would cause all of Israel to tingle.
- j. 4:1-18 records war between Israel and the Philistines. The enemy was prevailing, so Israel brings the ark to the battlefield along with Eli’s sons. Israel is defeated, both of Eli’s sons are killed and the ark is captured. When this is reported to Eli, as he hears that the Ark has been captured, he falls back, breaks his neck and dies. Eli had judged Israel for 40 years. NOTE: The timing of this likely parallels the time of Samson. Recall that Samson judged Israel for 20 years (with 40 years of oppression). Likely, Eli was High Priest while Samson was causing havoc among the Philistines. The war between the Philistines and Israel on THIS occasion could have been related to what Samson did.
- k. 4:19-22 – when Phinehas’ wife hears of his death AND the capture of the ark, she goes into labor. She was dying and names her son, Ichabod which means, “The glory has departed from Israel.”

- l. 5:1-12 records the ark in possession of the Philistines. Placed in the temple of their god Dagon in Ashdod, the next morning they find the statue fallen before the ark. The next morning, it falls again with its head and palms broken off. Also, wherever the ark was sent throughout the land of the Philistines the people were cursed with tumors (and likely an infestation of rats). They send the ark to Gath where they too are cursed. They attempt to send it to Ekron but the people do not want it.
- m. 6:1-19 records the return of the ark to Israel. The Philistine lords determine to return it to Israel. They build a cart and place the ark on it along with a trespass offering – 5 golden tumors and 5 golden rats. Note vs. 5-6 – God makes his presence known to them. They take 2 milk cows never yoked and place everything on the cart and return it to Israel. The cows are separated from their calves and steered toward Israel (assuming if the cows returned to the calves that the disease was only coincidence. But the cows lowing all the way move toward Israel and come to Beth Shemesh. The cart and cows are sacrificed to YHWH by the men of the city. But the men of Beth Shemesh were also struck with a plague (50,070 died) because they looked into the ark.
- n. 6:20-7:2 – the ark is then carried to Kirjah Jearim where it rested for 20 years in the house of Abinadab (in Judah – Joshua 18:14).
- o. 7:3-17 describes this time as all Israel lamenting after the LORD (still oppressed by the Philistines). Samuel has them put away their gods. The people gather together at Mizpah and Samuel prays for them. But the Philistines hear they are there and engage in battle. But the Philistines were defeated by God & Israel and subdued. Vs. 12 notes that Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called it Ebenezer, which means, “Stone of help”. (NOTE: Stones were often used as markers and memorials. Here, Israel FINALLY found some peace from 40 years of oppression. This stone marked the spot of victory. Some 20 years earlier, 1 Samuel 4:1 records that it was Ebenezer where the ark had been captured) Israel had rest and even recovered its territory from the Philistines. This remained all the days of Samuel. Vs. 16-17 notes that year by year, Samuel would make a circuit and judge Israel throughout the land.
- p. 8:1-22 - Samuel is now old and makes his sons judges over Israel - Joel and Abijah, but they were corrupt and perverted justice. So, the elders of Israel come to Samuel and tell him, “Make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (vs. 5). Samuel is displeased and prays to YHWH. He is told to listen to them and to warn them about what a king would do. **Note vs. 7**, “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me...” Samuel warns the people what a king would do – tax them, take their sons and daughters for war and his pleasures, take their lands, etc. Vs. 18, one day you will cry out to the LORD, but he will not hear you. But the people wanted a king “that we also may be like all the nations.” (19-20). Samuel prepares the people and our lesson ends here.

II. Lessons to consider:

- a. 1 Samuel 1:11 - The power of prayer – Hannah prayed to God. God hears the humble (1 Peter 3:12). We know God hears our prayers and can answer them, OFTEN in ways we do not know (cf. 1 John 5:14-15).
- b. 1 Sam 1:27-28 – keeping your vows. Hannah kept her promise concerning Samuel. We need to be people of integrity. Our word must be our bond.
- c. God knows what we are going through – consider Hannah’s oppression, cries and eventual blessing.
- d. Parental responsibilities to adequately discipline your children – 1 Sam. 2:29. Eli failed at this. Proverbs 22:6. NOTE: Sometimes words are NOT enough! Proverbs 13:24, *He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*
- e. Worship God HIS way – we read of abuses to the sacrificial system and the damage it caused. John 4:24 – we must worship in spirit and in truth.
- f. Will you listen to God? Samuel did – 1 Sam. 3. Do NOT withhold any truth! (3:17).
- g. Serving God with divided loyalty – 1 Sam. 4 – Israel ASSUMES that bringing the ark into battle will bring victory. BUT, God was not with them. Prov. 3:5-6 – trust in the Lord... Matthew 6:24.

- h. The futility of idolatry – what happened to Dagon (1 Sam. 5) illustrates this.. In this chapter we also see the ONE true God, YHWH. There is none other.
- i. The Ark of the Covenant demonstrates the need for reverencing God. There are multiple lessons related to the Ark in this and other passages. It shows His power, respecting His rules, His presence, His holiness, the joy it produces in those who understand what it is, etc.
- j. A time of repentance and confession – 1 Samuel 7:1-9. When we have sin, these are crucial to forgiveness (Acts 8:22, 1 John 1:9).
- k. Ebenezer – 1 Samuel 7:12 – “stone of help.” It was a place where Israel was stopped by God (4:1) and where Israel was delivered from bondage by God. A marker that this is how far we have gone (whether speaking of our spiritual defeat or where it was stopped). We sing the song, O Thou Fount of Every Blessing” – which mentions, “Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither from thy help I come...”
- l. Ebenezer - A recognition that God has delivered me THUS FAR. Do NOT cast that away (Hebrews 10:35 – do not cast away your confidence; Galatians 5:7 – you ran well, who hindered you...? Galatians 5:1, Stand fast in your liberty “and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage...”, etc.)
- m. When we seek man’s solutions over God’s – asking for a king in 1 Samuel 8 was rejecting God. Far too many today are creating their own solutions in religion. It is the works of men, superseding God’s will. Never forget that when we set aside God’s will, HE is the one we are rejecting.
- n. “Like all the nations” – 8:5, 19-20. Again, this is the goal of many today in the religious world. They have created churches that cater to society’s want and material needs, setting aside the spiritual need that is DESPERATELY needed and the ONLY solution that will draw us closer to God. Colossians 3:17 – all that we do must be “in the name of the Lord.”

And thus we bring to a conclusion the line of judges as recorded in scripture. HOWEVER, there is still some text to address dealing with both depravity and hope (Judges 17-21 & Ruth). We will address these in 2 upcoming lessons.

We can also glean many lessons from the annals of God’s history as recorded in scripture (Romans 15:4). As you study and learn, are you living for God or for yourself? Think about it!