

MAY 12

1 Samuel 12:1-13:22

“Israel Under Saul,” Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 444. (There is a copy of this map at the end of this document.)

1 Samuel 12

After this victory over the Ammonites, Israel gathered at Gilgal, near the Jordan, and celebrated. Samuel used this occasion to confront the people with the choice they had made and to help them understand that a king was not the answer to all of their problems. They, together with their king, would still need to follow and obey the Lord.

Vs. 1-5 This sounds like Samuel revisiting their demand to him to give them a king. He mentions that he obeyed their voice and that he is old. The thing he does here, asking anyone to name a way he used his office for his own advantage, sounds like what Moses did when he gave his final address to the nation. I guess pastors should do this too.

Vs. 6-18 This address tells the people that they didn't need to demand a king. God had always looked out for them, even when they had disobeyed. When they had cried out, God had answered them, sent a judge whom the people had followed and obeyed. Demanding a king now, without the due diligence of seeking the Lord and asking for His favor, was a major break in God's working with them. In a way, it was showing that sin was so powerful that a “theocracy,” that is, God ruling over His people without a king, would not work. The people themselves were to have looked to the tabernacle, to the Levites and to their elders and men (who were all to have appeared at the tabernacle three times a year) to guide the people. Seeking the Lord as individuals and as a nation would have been all they needed, because God was present and caring for them. It hadn't worked, and it wasn't God's fault. Compare this to what the Lord is doing today through His church. So, 300 years after Joshua and Moses, what is happening here is a major change. Now the people's devotion and hope will be directed toward a king.

And to boot, having a king wouldn't relieve them of their personal responsibility to follow and love the Lord. The thunder was the Lord's "amen" to Samuel's words. This confirmed that their actions were very wrong.

Vs. 19-25 Samuel confirmed that God would always remain faithful to His people. We know that God would be faithful, because of the promise to Abraham, not because of their obedience to God through the law. Samuel continued ministering in Israel for the next (?) years, almost up to the time Saul died.

1 Samuel 13

V. 1 This verse is a mess. A scribe might have spilled his coffee on the original manuscript here. In Acts 13:21, Paul says that Saul reigned for 40 years. That is a help, but not here. The real question is how old Saul was when he began. The best guess is that Saul was 40 when he became king. All of this is discussed in the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, pp. 443-445. This would explain Jonathan being old enough now to be a soldier (v. 3). If Saul had a son at 17, which was common in that culture, Jonathan would be 23.

The reference to *two years* could mean the time frame when this particular situation arose, in other words, "and after he reigned for two years, this happened."

Actually, the entire time frame takes some careful thought. Later when David is anointed, he appears to be a pre-teen; and he is still young (15-16?) when he kills Goliath. Saul will die when David is 30 years old. If Saul reigned for 40 years and was eighty when he died, it means that Saul reigned for 10 years before David was born.

Vs. 2-4 There was a lot of fighting with the Philistines with a substantial victory by Jonathan. Apparently Samuel told Saul to call the people together at Gilgal. This would be a sacrifice and consecration of the kingship of Saul. In the meantime, Israel had made some problems for the Philistines. Saul called the people there, but the Philistines are amassing an army.

Just for a comparison, remember in 1 Samuel 7:10 that on the eve of Samuel's first battle with the Philistines, they were ganging up on him as he was getting ready to sacrifice. Samuel was totally unprepared and leading the people in worship, but God honored him and completely routed the Philistines with noise.

Vs. 8-15 This was the event that Samuel had spoken of earlier, where Saul was to wait for Samuel for seven days. Waiting, when waiting is easy, is easy; but waiting when it stretches your faith to the breaking point is what makes real faith. The people were already afraid and Saul had no faith to bind them to the Lord. As the people were scattering and it was the seventh day, Saul offered the sacrifice. No non-Levite was allowed to sacrifice. Also, Saul was given a direct command. And wouldn't you know it, no sooner had he burned the bull, than Samuel showed up.

V. 14 This will burn in Saul's mind and blaze into an irrational hatred of David. This is the first mention of *a man after His own heart*. It is good to begin trying to understand what that means. David will be that man, but he will test our understanding of what it means to be a man after God's own heart.

My question for us as disciples is what did Saul teach or fail to teach the people by doing this? Saul did the thing anyone would have done. It seems excusable, reasonable, and human. This would be a good point to stop and ponder this story. It is easy to follow when everything is good, but waiting in faith separates the men from the boys. Also, it is easy to lead when everything is good; but in a situation like this, it shows what you really believe. If we are to be disciples, who make disciples, we ourselves need to be proven in the fire and found faithful.

Also, when you think of Saul, worried about the army coming against him and his people scattering, what stories of the recent past would you have used to remind him that he could still depend on God? Oh, by the way, do you remember that there was a command for what the king was supposed to do regarding the Word? I wonder if Saul ever did that.

Vs. 16-22 This is just setting us up for the adventures of Jonathan tomorrow. Although I have to say, if I had been a king, I would have been working to get my merry men armed.

John 7:1-29

This section of John, from 7:1 to 10:21, is during the two-week festival around the Day of Atonement and the *Feast of Booths* (or Feast of Tabernacles). This took place six months before Jesus died and it is His presentation of Himself to the nation as their Messiah. John concludes chapter 10 with a situation that took place two months later during Hanukkah, in December, as Jesus' final teaching about Himself in Jerusalem, completing the presentation. These are very important chapters.

Vs. 1-2 The passage of time here is about six months. If the feeding of the 5000 was just before the Passover in April, this would be October. This was one of those three times of the year (Passover, Pentecost, Day of Atonement/ Feast of Tabernacles) when all males had to appear before the Lord.

Vs. 3-9 Jesus was being taunted by His half-brothers.

V. 8 has the word "yet" in some manuscripts, but not in others. Jesus obviously didn't lie to them, so there are three theories as to what He meant here. First, there was a time element in the original language that was inherent to the words that we don't see in the English. Second, there was a "yet" in the original manuscript, or the time element was very plain in the original and some scribe added the "yet" to make it clearer. Or, third, at this moment, Jesus had been told not

to go to the feast and after the brothers left, the Father told him to go to the feast. Jesus wasn't lying here regarding attending the feast, and it gives us a look at how He abided in and followed the Father.

Vs. 10-13 I can't imagine the intensity of being in Jerusalem during that time. In some respects, this visit to Jerusalem was the time of their visitation and they didn't realize it. In the next chapters we'll see how bold Jesus became. He made them an offer they couldn't refuse, but they did.

Vs. 14-19 Isn't it ironic that the leaders were amazed at Jesus' teaching but hated Him all the same. It is interesting that Jesus said that whoever wanted God's will would recognize the source of His teaching. Later, Jesus will tell the Pharisees that their will was to obey their father the devil.

Vs. 20-24 Apparently most of the visitors to Jerusalem were not familiar with the effort on the leaders' part to kill Jesus. Jesus is referring here to His healing of the man at the pool in John 5. Even a year and a half after that event, that confrontation was still stuck in the throats of the leaders.

Vs. 25-27 I like this. Suddenly some of the people from Jerusalem must have pushed forward and begun saying they knew about the plot of the leaders to kill Jesus. Their objection was that they thought the coming Messiah would be more mysterious and shrouded in mystery.

Vs. 28-29 Jesus will talk more and more about His being sent from the Father, and their problem of not knowing God at all. They knew Jesus was from Nazareth, but didn't grasp that He was the Son sent from the Father.

For us as disciples, it is instructional and motivating to see how much conflict Jesus was willing to endure to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to hear and respond to His message. We have been given that same Spirit for our work in the harvest.

Psalm 108

I would guess that David is in his early years as king. The beginning of the psalm is in remembrance of what God had done. Based on that past faithfulness of God comes the dire request in vs. 10-12.

Vs. 1-4 This is David's personal devotion to God in gratefulness for all of His deliverance. We'll meet David in a few chapters in 1 Samuel and then we'll witness David's long, God-given education in crying to God for help and rescue. As a result, Israel was given a great king and the Spirit gave us some great psalms.

Notice the witness to the nations.

Vs. 5-6 David's prayer for God's exaltation means that He would be exalted in defeating Israel's enemies.

Vs. 7-9 God had shown His strength in defeating these countries because He promised to protect His people.

Vs. 10-13 Apparently Israel had suffered some minor attack from Edom, and David was asking the Lord to show His faithfulness and fulfill His promise again by defeating Edom.

By this time David was an experienced warrior-king and knew that real victory only came from the Lord.

As we work in the harvest, whether the work is hard or easy at any particular time, we always need to remember that our successes only come through the Lord; and in our difficulties, He is present and teaching us. Our strength comes as we abide in Him.

Proverbs 15:4

It is easy to be hard and biting, but Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. I think I'm more interested in my "abundance" being truthful, healing and encouraging, than truthful, correct and biting. I think this is something the Lord has worked on to change in me.

I remember a time I was preparing for a church interview, making notes, praying about what questions to ask. I know that all of us are under the weight of this life, the weight of sin, trying to go forward for Christ. I know that nothing is easy. Church isn't easy. I had a feeling about the situation, but wrote under all of my notes, "Be an encouragement." It was the world's shortest telephone interview; but for my part, even in the few words I was actually able to say, I did try to follow this verse.