A Big God for a Big Crisis

Studies in 1 Samuel 1-15

***From Anarchy to Monarchy*** - how God took Israel from the brink of collapse and made them a united, all conquering kingdom!

Judges 21:25 sets the scene for 1 Samuel…

* Little regard for God. Everyone doing as they saw fit. No king / leader in place to help.

The opening chapters…

* **Chapter 1:** The answer to Hannah’s prayer, for a son, will be the answer to Israel’s need for spiritual leadership – Samuel!
* **Chapter 2:** Israel’s current spiritual leadership is no better than the culture around them – doing as they see fit… putting their own desires above God’s honour.
* **Chapter 3:** God provides what Israel needed most – HIS WORD. He speaks to Samuel… and through Samuel God will speak to all Israel.

**Know Who You’re Dealing With! (1 Samuel 4-6)**

## *The Ark takes centre stage – a symbol of God’s presence.*

## *These chapters are a case study in how NOT to relate to God.*

## **1. Superstition**

## The defeat was a shock, but the real shock… God was responsible! (v3a)

## They ask the right question: *“Why?”*

## They find the wrong answer: *“Get the ark to save us”* (v3b)

### - The real problem was disobedience (Lv 26:17)

### - They are using the ark as a superstitious mascot.

## The result: heavy defeat (v10) and the ark captured! (v11)

# The Tragedy of God’s Departure

## The whole town is in mourning… Why?

##  - 30 000 men lost… AND the ark has gone!

## Eli dies of shock… why?

##  - His 2 sons have been killed… AND the ark has gone! (v18)

## Phineas’ wife goes into labour and dies… why?

##  - Her husband has been killed… AND “*Ichabod*” – the Glory has departed *(v21-22)*

##

## ***For reflection:*** God wants repentance and faith not superstition.

# **2. Pride**

## God’s Supremacy

## God bowing down to Dagon?

## Dagon bowing down to God! (v3)

## Dagon is dependent on human help (v3)

## Dagon is destroyed (v4)

## Man’s Pride

## Rather than submit to God… they get rid of God!

## The Ark is sent from Ashdod…to Gath (v8)… to Ekron (v10)…

## 7 months of devastation (6:1).

## ***For reflection:*** Are we willing to honour God above other gods? One day every knee will bow.

# God’s Grace (6:7-12)

## The test: 2 cows abandoning their new born calves?

## The result: The ark went straight up to Israel!

## Note: God wants to be back with his people. (Cf. Rev 3:20)

## **3. Compromise (6:13-7:2)**

## Beth Shemesh rejoices at the ark returning (v13)

## But 70 are killed (v19) - for disobedience (cf. Num 4)

## They want God back… ON THEIR TERMS (v20-21)

## For reflection: When it comes to holiness we can’t be casual. We can’t worship God on our terms.

# **The Right Response (7v20)**

## Question: “*Who can stand in the presence of the Lord?*”

## Answer: No-one without a saviour!

## We need to fear God and cry out for his mercy through the sacrifice of Jesus.

**A King In God’s Place! (1 Samuel 8)**

**Chapter 7** was a high point **–** Israel returns to the Lord with all their hearts.

* Sadly this didn’t last long.

**Chapter 8** reveals the next rebellion. God had been a great King, but they wanted another!

God exposes several universal weaknesses. The chapter functions like a mirror**.**

**1. We have a passion for substitutes**

* “We want a king!” (v5)

*Is this a fair request?* (v1-3 cf. Deut 17:14-20)

* Deut 17:14-20 seems to suggest a time would come when Israel would need a king.
* 1 Samuel 8 is clear - this is a rejection of God! (v7-8)
* They want a King in God’s place (12:12)

Beware of substitutes / misplacing your trust. It may seem reasonable and yet be totally godless.

***What is an idol?*** *It is anything more important to you than God; anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God; anything you seek to give you what only God can give. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, “If I have that, then I’ll feel that my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.”* – Tim Keller “Counterfeit gods”

*“A desire for a good thing becomes a bad thing when that desire becomes a ruling thing, because I am only ever meant to be ruled by King Jesus.”* – Paul Tripp

How to deal with idols

* Recognise them
* Replace them

**2. We have an aversion to holiness**

I.e. We don’t like to be different for God’s sake.

* Israel want to be like the other nations (v5, v19-20)

BUT… Israel was unique (Deut 4:32-40). Their king was to be unique (Deut 17)

* We are a holy people (1 Pet 2:9) – God calls us to live like it! (Eph 5:3-4)

**3. We have an immunity to wisdom (v11-18, 21-22)**

Wisdom is agreeing that God knows best!

* God’s warning: Their choice would lead to dire consequences. (v9-18)
* The people’s response: *They ‘refused to listen.’* (v19)

Note: We are free to choose how we live. We are not free to choose the consequences.

**For reflection**: take a gaze in the mirror…

* Are you misplacing your trust?
* Are you ashamed to be different?
* Are you resisting God’s wisdom?

**What happened next?**

* Israel’s new king started well
	+ God empowered him to lead a historic victory over the Ammonite army (11:6-7).
* Then it all went horribly wrong
	+ Saul disobeyed God’s command 10:8 cf. 13v8-9
	+ Saul disobeyed God again15:3 cf. 15:9

## The sad conclusion: ‘The Lord was grieved that he had made Saul king.’ (15:35)

* + Officially Saul is still king until he dies in chapter 31 but in God’s eyes it’s all over in chapter 15.
* God had chosen another – **David (ch 16).** He failed too.
* God then made **Solomon** King – he failed spectacularly!
* The history of the Kings of Israel is generally a history of disappointment and failure.
* It points us forward to the One KING who would never fail…

**JESUS, the CHRIST!**