

## Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

### May 8 – 1 Samuel 4 and 5

The fourth and fifth chapters of 1 Samuel mark a dark period in Israel's early history. Eli and his wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, have died as a result of a battle with the Philistines. The Ark of the Covenant, the dwelling place of God, has been lost to the Philistines as well. The Philistines take the Ark as a trophy of their victory and they place it in the temple of their god Dagon. By doing this the Philistines were trying to say that their god was greater than Israel's God. But just because God had allowed the Philistines to defeat the Israelites, that didn't mean that the true God of Israel was inferior to the god of the Philistines. In fact, chapter 5 proves just the opposite is true. In some ways you can't help but chuckle as you read what happens to Dagon every night while the Philistines sleep. Each night this man-made idol of the Philistines is forced to bow and worship the true God of Israel.

Men can stand against God only as long as God allows them to. Men can choose to reject Jesus as their Lord today, but the day is coming when every knee will have to bow before him and every tongue will have to confess that Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**Philippians 2:9-11** *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

It is not a question of if this will happen it is just a question of when.

**Revelation 19:11-16** *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Dagon had no choice but to bow before the true and living God of Israel, and neither do we. The choice we have is will we willingly bow today and confess that Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords or will we wait for the day we are forced to do it by the rod of his justice?

## **May 9 – 1 Samuel 7**

We have already seen in chapter 3 that Samuel was chosen by God to be a prophet, a spokesman for God, and now here in chapter 7 we see Samuel act as both Israel's ruler (judge) and priest. Look at verse 15. All the days of Samuel's life he acted as judge or ruler over the people of Israel. Soon Israel will have a king, but, as we will see, even King Saul will have to answer to Samuel and give an account for his actions. But in this chapter we are also told that Samuel acts as a priest over Israel. Look at verse 10. Samuel is the one who offers the sacrifice of burnt offering. Look at verses 8 and 9; Samuel cries out to the Lord on behalf of Israel. That is exactly what a priest does. Samuel is the only man other than Jesus to act as prophet, priest and king, so in that he is a picture of Jesus.

As we looked at chapter 3 we saw how Jesus acts as the great prophet who reveals God to us, and yesterday we saw Jesus as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who will lead us in triumph over our enemies of Satan, sin and death. But Jesus is also our Great High Priest who offers himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

*1 John 2:1-2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

And Jesus also cries out to God for us and intercedes for us.

*Hebrews 7:24 - 8:1 because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. <sup>26</sup> Such a high priest meets our need-- one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup> For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the*

*oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

## **May 10 – 1 Samuel 8**

As you read this passage it is easy to jump to the conclusion that God never intended for Israel to have a king, but that is just not the case. God's intention always was that one day Israel would have king. We can see that very quickly just by looking at a few passages of Scripture.

**Genesis 17:5-7** *No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*

God's plan was that all the nations of the world would be blessed through a king that would come from Abraham and his offspring.

**Genesis 49:9-10** *You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness-- who dares to rouse him? <sup>10</sup> The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

That verse is a clear reference by God to the fact that his plan was to raise up a great ruler from the tribe of Judah, who would rule not just over Israel, but over all of the nations.

The Law of Moses also pointed ahead to the day when Israel would have a king.

**Deuteronomy 17:14-20** *When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," <sup>15</sup> be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite. <sup>16</sup> The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." <sup>17</sup> He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. <sup>18</sup> When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. <sup>19</sup> It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees <sup>20</sup> and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn*

*from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.*

The problem that we find in 1 Samuel 8 isn't that Israel wanted a king, it is that they wanted a king for the wrong reasons. They wanted a king so that they could be like the other nations. They wanted a king to rule over them rather than to have God rule over them.

In some ways, we can make a comparison between Israel's rush to have king over them and Abraham and Sarah rush to have son who would become the heir to the promises God had made to them. God always intended Abraham and Sarah to have a son, and He also always intended for Israel to have a king. But in both cases God had a plan for how that was to happen and in both case humans tried to rush God's plan and manipulate things to rush the process. If you remember, Sarah had Abraham sleep with her servant and Ishmael was born. This caused lots of problems for Abraham and Sarah, just like having king ahead of God's timetable would cause lots of problems for Israel. If Israel had just been patient and waited on the Lord they could have avoided all of the problems that resulted from Saul's kingship. It was God's intention for Israel to have David as their first king, but Israel wanted a king before David was ready to assume the role. God's plan all along was for David to be the first king of Israel and from David's family the ultimate king would come—our great King Jesus who will reign forever and ever.

***Ephesians 1:19-23*** *That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

## **May 11 – 1 Samuel 13: 1 – 14**

These verses tell the story of the first of Saul's failures as king. We get a glimpse of the root of Saul's problems in verses 3 and 4. It is Saul's son, Jonathan, who attacks the Philistine outpost, but it is Saul who takes the credit for it. As we look at other accounts from Saul's kingship we will see that this is a recurring pattern. Saul is all about himself. His heart is for himself. His trust is in himself, rather than in God. That is the root of his problem as king and it is the root of his problem in this account from his life. Jonathan has gone and stirred up the Philistines,

and now the very large powerful Philistine army is ready to attack the Israelites.

As you can see, this strikes fear in the heart of the Israelites. Verse 6 tells that many from Saul's army went into hiding, and so Saul felt compelled to do something to rally his troops. He knew that it was critical for them to offer a sacrifice to the Lord before going into battle. Say this much for King Saul, at least he knew they needed God's help if they were to win. But Samuel was delayed in getting to the army of Israel to offer the sacrifice. After waiting 7 days, Saul loses patience and takes it upon himself to offer the sacrifice to the Lord. This was not part of the job of king. It was reserved for the priests, those who had been consecrated (set apart) to God, to serve God through the offering of sacrifices, But Saul saw himself and his agenda as being more important than what God wanted, so Saul made the sacrifice himself. Saul says something very interesting in verse 12. As you read that verse it becomes obvious that the only reason Saul cared about the sacrifice was for his own agenda. He didn't offer the sacrifice to please God, but rather to please himself. Because of Saul's failure, Samuel is sent by God to Saul that his kingdom will not endure. Saul was a man after his own heart—that is Saul cared more about what Saul wanted than what God wanted. Notice what Samuel says to Saul in verse 14, "the Lord has sought a man after his own heart." That man would be King David, who is characterized in the New Testament as being exactly that.

**Acts 13:21-23** *Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. <sup>22</sup> After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' <sup>23</sup> "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.*

Samuel's words to king Saul point us to David, but they also ultimately point us ahead to Jesus.

**Hebrews 10:5-7** *Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup> with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'"*

God is looking for those who will radically align their purpose in life with His purpose. No one did that like Jesus. Jesus was a man after God's own heart to the point where Jesus cared about was doing the will of the Father. The reason King Saul's kingdom ended in failure is because

ultimately King Saul cared more about his will than he did about God's will. The reason Jesus never sinned as he walked this earth is because he cared more about doing the will of the Father than he did about his own. Jesus is the only one who can truly claim he loved the Lord God with all of his heart, all of his soul and all of his strength. Our ability to live a life that is pleasing to God is directly linked to having a heart after God's own heart.

### **May 12 – 1 Samuel 13: 15 – 14: 15**

As you read this passage, it soon becomes apparent that Israel was in a bad way. Saul had only a very small army at his disposal (13: 15), and apparently the Israelites were so oppressed by the Philistines that they were not even allowed to have any blacksmiths in Israel. The text tells us that this was used by the Philistines to ensure that there were no weapons available for the Israelites to fight with against the Philistines. In fact, verse 22 tells us that only King Saul and his son Jonathan had swords to fight with. Chapter 14 tells us that Jonathan took what was given to him and put it to good use. He and his armor bearer went out by themselves to take on a Philistine outpost located high up on a cliff.

There are two things I want us to notice as we look at these verses. The first is found in chapter 14 verse 6. In spite of the odds seemingly being stacked against them Jonathan decided to go up and take on this Philistine outpost. Look what Jonathan says in verse 6, "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."

God is the God of salvation, and as we have seen before God frequently, in fact all most always, works through the weak and insignificant to save his people. In many ways, Jonathan was a picture of Jesus. From the day Jesus was born the people of his world sought to kill him, first it was King Herod, then the Pharisees, and finally it was the Romans who nailed him to the cross. His whole life Jesus was seemingly nothing more than a penniless preacher with nowhere to even call his home. If the odds seemed stacked against Jonathan and his armor bearer as they scaled the walls of the cliff to attack the Philistine army, think how more stacked they were against Jesus. In order to save us Jesus had to take every temptation you and I are faced with, yet still be without sin.

**Hebrews 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.*

Do you really appreciate what that verse is telling us? Think of the very worst sins you have been tempted and fallen prey to, and Jesus faced everyone of them and fell. Jesus had every power in the world arrayed against him, but he persevered and went to the cross, because like Jonathan, Jesus was utterly convinced that salvation came from God.

**Hebrews 12:2-3** *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Before we leave this passage would you think for just a moment about Jonathan's armor bearer? Look what he says in response to Jonathan in 14: 7, "Do all that you have in mind. Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul." Have you said that to Jesus? Are you just along with Jesus for the ride to heaven, or are you with him heart and soul as he seeks to bring salvation to the world.

**Matthew 28:18-20** *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

There is no question that Jesus is with us, the only real question is are we with him heart and soul?

### **May 13 – 1 Samuel 15: 1 – 23**

In 1 Samuel 13 we read that Saul took it upon himself to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and as a result of Saul's failure, God decided to take the Kingdom away from Saul's family. God's decision was to allow Saul to remain as king, but that future generations of Saul's family would not rule over Israel. Instead, at the appropriate time God would choose a new king and a new family line to rule over Israel. In chapter 15 the appropriate time has come. Samuel comes to Saul and tells Saul that not only will the throne be taken from his family in future generations, the throne will be taken from Saul. Once again it is because of Saul's disobedience which is rooted in Saul's desire to carry out his own agenda. As we look at verses 1-3 Samuel comes to Saul with a message from God. Saul is to completely destroy the Amalekites for what they have done to Israel in the past. God's instructions are very specific. Saul and the Israelites are to totally destroy everything that belongs to the Amalekites. But as we read on what do we see Saul do? Rather than obeying God completely, Saul offers partial obedience

(which is nothing more than disobedience!). In verses 7-9 we read that Saul spared the life of the king as well as the best of what the Amalekites owned. The result of Saul's partial obedience is that God is grieved that he has made Saul king, which means that God is done with Saul.

What is amazing as we read this is that in Saul's mind his partial obedience equates to full obedience. Look at verse 13. Saul believes he has completely carried out the Lord's commands. But the bleating sheep and the lowing of the cows is evidence that Saul has not obeyed God. Verse 12 gives us a very interesting insight into Saul's character. After the battle, rather than giving glory to God, Saul goes and erects a monument to himself. We get further insights into Saul's character in verse 15 as Saul blames the soldiers for the lack of complete obedience.

As Samuel continues to question Saul's obedience, Saul once again tries to defend himself. In Saul's mind it is clear that he has fooled himself and rationalized his obedience to the point where Saul believes his partial obedience should please the Lord. But notice Samuel's response in verses 22-23. God doesn't delight in people who just go through the motions, who just pretend to love and serve God. God wants people who sincerely love Him to the point where they obey God completely. The truth is we can never do that. But there is one who could. His name is Jesus and through the cross his perfect obedience becomes our perfect obedience.

**Romans 5:18-21** *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup> The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## **May 14 – 1 Samuel 15: 24 – 31**

Today's reading is a continuation of what we read yesterday. As Saul realizes that his obedience was less than complete, he becomes aware that he is a sinner. But as this awareness dawns on Saul, rather than being concerned about truly repenting of his sin, Saul starts by making excuses. Look at verse 24. Saul blames his sin on others—he was afraid of what the people would think of him. Now we know why he



sinned. He was more concerned with people's opinion of him than he was with what God thought of him. But even as Saul realizes his sin, and the consequences of his sin, he is still more concerned with people's opinion of him than anything else. The reason he wants Samuel to go with him and sacrifice to the Lord is because he doesn't want to be dishonored before the people. Saul's whole problem is his fear of shame. What if Jesus had been driven by that? Jesus allowed himself to be put to shame for our sake, Jesus allowed himself to be beaten and spit upon, to be mocked to be hung naked on a cross and executed as a common criminal. What a difference between Saul, the failed King of Israel, and Jesus our great king!

**Hebrews 12:2-3** *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Each day of our lives we have a choice to make. Will we be swayed by popular opinion and seek to please the crowd, or will we be obedient to the God who created us and gives us life? Each day we have a choice, will we be willing to be put to shame for Christ, or will we seek to honor ourselves? Will we join Jesus in his shame by uniting with him in his death, or will we mock Jesus as he hangs there on the cross for our sin?

**Hebrews 13:12-15** *And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. <sup>14</sup> For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

Here's the funny thing. Saul chose to honor himself by doing his own will, and was put to shame. Jesus chose to be put the shame by doing the will of his Father, and the Father raised him to glory. That is why Scripture says that if we trust Jesus in faith we will never be put to shame.

**1 Peter 2:6-12** *For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," <sup>8</sup> and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for. <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but*

now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

God will only use those who are willing to be disgraced for His sake—those who are willing to become fools for Christ (in the eyes of the world) to be used by Christ.

**1 Corinthians 1:25-29** *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. <sup>26</sup> Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him.*