

Saul

Background of government of Israel prior to the appointment of kings.

Joshua started wreaking God's judgement on the people of Canaan as per God's instruction via Moses in Deuteronomy 9:1-5, also read God's earlier instruction to Israel in Deuteronomy 7: 1-5. Compare this and what today we might call 'ethnic cleansing' with earlier judgement sentences carried out by God directly - Noah Genesis 6&7 and Sodom & Gomorrah Genesis 19.

Canaan is invaded and as they conquer, the Israelites divide the land into 11 counties named after each of the twelve tribes of Israel, with the exception of the Levites whose function was to attend to the tabernacle and religious matters.

Later a warning from Joshua, Joshua 23:10-13. Joshua dies part way through the dispossession of Canaan. Judges 1:1-2. The campaign goes on, in charge are leaders of the tribes and Caleb. As early as Judges 1:21 things start to slip. Jebusites were spared by Tribe of Benjamin and cohabited alongside each other. Further exceptions in verse 22 (Tribe Joseph) and 27 (Tribe Manasseh). So Joshua's warning was forgotten or ignored.

Judges 2:1-4 & 10-14. 1st invasion by Mesopotamia but Israel rescued by Othneil. He lived 40 years, everything went well then Othneil died. Moabites next rescued by Ehud etc ...

To summarise - Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges finishes and 1 Samuel starts with Israel being ruled by the Philistines.

The book of Judges. The downside is succession, without a leader the country goes down the tubes, gets invaded and God raises another judge to lead a rebellion. The last judge is Samuel.

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-4 - Israel demands a king. God's response 1 Samuel 8:5-22

1 Samuel 9 - Saul is chosen. Starts with a man and his dad's servant looking for lost donkeys. Having searched many counties they find themselves near where Samuel lives. Between them they come up with 50p and offer it to Samuel for a divine insight as to the whereabouts of the donkeys. 1 Samuel 9:14-21 Saul being coy. 1 Samuel 10:1 Saul is anointed. Samuel tells Saul how to find his donkeys - plus more than he could ever have expected! 1 Samuel 10:2-7 Wow! Saul was told he was going to meet prophets, find the donkeys, sacrifice to God, be filled with the Holy Spirit and will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.

Saul's response - a mock burst of humility at being appointed King: tribe, clan, family and Saul. Maybe he read that in Judges 6:15. Saul is introduced to Israel and proclaimed King 1 Samuel 10:23-24 - Size matters!

Saul goes back to his dad's farm and life returns to normal.

1 Samuel 11 - Then the Ammonite army comes to a district called Jabesh Gilead and their leader gives them an ultimatum. We're going to make everyone blind in their right eye

which will give a loud message to Israel. Response: 'We'll get back to you on that in a week.' Jabesh calls for help, Saul hears the call and battle commences, read 1 Samuel 11:7-14. What an amazing start to his reign as 1st king of Israel.

1 Samuel 12 - Saul's coronation and Samuel's speech to Israel. 1 Samuel 12:13-15, a last warning!

1 Samuel 13:1-6. 2 years in Saul starts the rebellion against the Philistines but Israel realise they may have bitten off more than they can chew. Samuel had promised to meet Saul 7 days later but he was late. Saul was impatient and offered a burnt offering sacrifice to God. Soon after Samuel shows up and blows a gasket at Saul. The only ones permitted to offer sacrifices were from the tribe of Levi and then only the appointed priests were authorised. Anyone from the Benjamin tribe was not permitted to sacrifice, even if they were the king. 1 Samuel 13:11-14. Saul's days were numbered. Saul's son Jonathan comes to the rescue and starts a rout of the Philistines, even though they had 30k chariots, 6k horsemen and foot soldiers; too many to count! Israel had only 2 swords because the Philistines had regulated and taxed blacksmiths output. No swords or spears and a tax on farming implements.

1 Samuel 15 - Saul and the Amalekites. Rewind to Deuteronomy 25:17-19. God's commandment to Israel. 1 Samuel 15:1-4 & 7-11 Saul's next task and his disobedience. Samuel's response 1 Samuel 15:13-26. Saul repents. Samuel's message to Saul: 1 Samuel 15:27-28.

1 Samuel 16 - God chooses Saul's successor. 1 Samuel 16:13-16 - a distressing spirit comes on Saul. Verse 19, Saul meets David and all's well, for now.

1 Samuel 17 - David and Goliath.

1 Samuel 18 - David meets Jonathan and strikes a friendship. 1 Samuel 18:5 David appointed a general. 1 Samuel 18:6-9 Saul views David with suspicion. verses 10-16 Saul attempts murder and demotes David to captain.

1 Samuel 19 - Saul's conspiracy to kill David thwarted by Jonathan who negotiates a temporary reprieve which lasts only until David's next successful battle with Philistines. David stays at Samuel's and is followed there by Saul's henchmen with instructions to murder David. The henchmen become prophets, replaced twice and so Saul goes to Samuel and goes naked and starts prophesying. David goes on the run.

1 Samuel 22:14-19 Saul martyrs 85 priests and goes on a murderous rampage in Nob, the city of priests because one of them had allowed David's band of followers to eat the shewbread.

1 Samuel 23 David hides in the countryside. Jonathan finds him and makes a pledge - 1 Samuel 23:17-18

1 Samuel 24 - David spares Saul's life in the wilderness of Engedi. Whilst sleeping, sneaks into his tent and cuts the corner off his garment. David challenges Saul, who breaks down 1 Samuel 24:16-22.

1 Samuel 25 - Samuel dies.

1 Samuel 26 Saul seeks to kill David and tracks him down in Hachilah and there's a repeat performance. Saul's army sleeps, David sneaks in and steals Saul's spear and jug of water. Later challenges Saul who again repents.

1 Samuel 28 - Philistines line up a huge army against Israel. But in 1 Samuel 28:5-6 Saul asks God; God ignores him. Saul engages a witch to organise a seance and she calls up Samuel. Samuel's response - 1 Samuel 28:16-20.

1 Samuel 28 - Saul's last battle. Jonathan killed. Saul wounded, he commits suicide.

Lessons -

1,) Israel was a difficult nation for God to love. They tested Him almost to the limits. Jesus said of them: - Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." Matthew 11:20-24

Yet God confesses: "I have loved you," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the Lord. "Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness." Malachi 1:2-3 NKJV

2.) 9th August 2022 an unknown lucky winner won £195m on the Euro Millions making him or her richer than Adele. Saul had one even better day than that. Out of several million Hebrews only Saul was chosen to be king of Israel. Where did he go so badly wrong and why did it end so badly for him?

3.) God's Spirit came upon Saul and he was described as a changed man. Later His Spirit was withdrawn and replaced with a distressing spirit 1 Samuel 16:14-16. Similarities with Judas? Was this spirit from God or one He created earlier? Colossians 1:16