

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

Fleming H. Revell Company

Copyright © 1906

by

Fleming H. Revell, Westwood, New Jersey

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

LESSON TWELVE

I SAMUEL

There are five leading characters in First Samuel, see if you can name them without assistance.

What shall we call the first fact? The birth and call of Samuel? This may be said to cover chapters 1-3.

- give the names of his parents.
- give the meaning of his name.
- how did Hannah celebrate his birth (chap. 2)?
- of what New Testament song does this remind you?
- what beautiful promise of guidance and preservation is found in verse 9?
- how was Hannah rewarded for her gift to the Lord (vv. 20, 21)?
- how does this illustrate verse 30, last clause?
- what New Testament promises does it illustrate?
- how are Eli's sons described, and on what ground?
- who is held responsible for them, and what judgment is pronounced against him?
- with whom might he be contrasted (Genesis 18:19)? Compare also I Kings 2:27.
- what shows that GOD can teach His will to a little child?
- how does 3:19, 20 illustrate Isaiah 44:26, first clause?

It is to be observed that Samuel is the true founder of the Old Testament prophetic order (Acts 3:24). Soon after his call, as our next great fact discloses, the ark was lost to Israel for a while,

the Tabernacle, therefore, ceased to have its significance as a center of worship, the high priest's functions were suspended, and the mediatorship between GOD and the people rested altogether in the prophet.

Let us call the next great fact

The Loss of the Ark, Chapters 4-7

- what nation is Israel's particular enemy at this time?
- what mistake was made in bringing the ark into the battle?
- how can this error of trusting in the symbol instead of the One symbolized, be shown to be paralleled by any in our day?
- what prophecy was fulfilled in 4:11?
- what is the meaning of Ichabod?
- was the possession of the ark a curse or blessing to its captors?
- how were their idols put to ridicule?
- how does 6:10-12 attest the supernatural?
- what judgment befell the Bethshemites, and why?
- where, and for how long a period did the ark subsequently rest?
- how would you account for the changed condition of affairs in chapter 7? Examine prayerfully verses 4, 6 and 12.
- what was Samuel's "circuit" (v. 16)?

Note that Israel's conduct about the ark was not justified by such passages as Numbers 10:35; 14:44, or Joshua 6:4, because they had not sought counsel of GOD through His prophet. It is more likely they were following the example of their heathen enemies, who carried their idol, or its symbols, with them to battle, believing power to be in separately associated with it. By permitting the capture of the ark, therefore, GOD sought two ends, the discipline of Israel, and the vindication of His supremacy over the gods of the nations.

In referring above to the time of the ark's abode in Kirjath-jearim, attention should have been called to II Samuel 6, and I Chronicles 13, which indicate that a much longer period elapsed before its removal. But the explanation probably is that the twenty years passed before the people "**lamented after the Lord,**" and the revival sprang up.

The Call of Saul, Chapters 8-12

Although it had been clearly predicted in Deuteronomy (17:14-20), that they would have a king, yet observe how naturally it came about that the prophecy should be fulfilled. There was no collusion on the part of any of GOD's agents to bring it about, but the free acting of the people themselves.

Thus has it been always under such circumstances, furnishing one of the incontrovertible evidences of the divinity of the Word.

- How does 8:7 show the identity of GOD with His servants?
- what parallel do we find in Acts 9:4?

- what lesson about making requests of GOD may we learn from verse 9?
- who originally chose Saul to be king (9:15-17)?
- by what divine ceremony was he set apart for the office (10:1)?
- what divine testimony was given to confirm his faith (10:10-13)?
- of which of the judges does this experience remind us?
- who now chooses Saul to be king (10:24)?
- how does this illustrate the relation between divine foreknowledge and human free agency?
- what beautiful text for a discourse on the church does verse 26 contain?
- what parallel as between Saul's experience and that of CHRIST, is furnished in the next verse? (Compare the parable of the nobleman, Luke 19:14).
- Under what circumstances was the kingdom finally established to Saul (chap. 11, especially vv. 14, 15)?
- what illustration of GOD's merciful kindness is found. in chapter 12, especially verses 12-15?
- on what ground was this kindness shown (v. 22)?
- have you ever noticed what it is that GOD does for His own sake? (Psalm 23:3; Isaiah 43:25; Ephesians 1:6, etc).
- how does verse 23 impress Christians with the obligation of intercessory prayer? (Ephesians 6:18).

The Rejection of Saul, Chapters 13-15

- of what presumptuous sin was Saul guilty (13:9)?
- did he show a penitent spirit, or a self-justifying one?
- what striking text for a discourse on the world-spirit in the church is found in verse 12?
- how is Saul's successor described (v. 14)?

It might be well to pause here long enough to inquire how a sinner like David could be so described. One part of the answer is found in a comparison between the two men, Saul and David. Both were sinners indeed, but while the latter was a regenerated, converted sinner, the former apparently was not. The present instance affords such a point of comparison, for David, when rebuked for sin, as we shall see further on, is always humble and penitent, while Saul never is (Isaiah 66:2).

- under what circumstances was the rejection of Saul subsequently confirmed (chap. 15)?
- how does he justify himself in this case (vv. 15, 21)?
- what fundamental and universal principle is enunciated by Samuel in verse 22?
- how does verse 30 indicate the superficiality of Saul's humility?

If you will carefully peruse the preceding chapter again, verses 47-52, it will probably appear that several years had passed in successful military operations before this second test of Saul's character Godward was applied to him. It may be that an opportunity was thus given to retrieve his former error by an exact obedience.

Who can tell how different it may have been with him had he improved it? It will be well for us to notice as we pass along, how frequently this occurs in the history of GOD's dealings with men and nations. He gives; them tests now and then, not surely that He may discover what kind they are, for He knoweth all things, but that they may be discovered to themselves, and in the

presence of His judgments stand self-condemned (Psalm 51:4; Romans 3:19; Rev. 15:3).

How much we need the aid of the HOLY SPIRIT to endure what GOD may thus send upon us! (James 1:12).

Observe that all through this business Saul follows his own ideas and wishes rather than GOD's decree, showing a selfish, arbitrary temper, and, as another expresses it, "An utter unfitness to perform the duties of a delegated king in Israel."

Steps are now taken to indicate his successor, and as David is kept prominently before us in most of the following chapters, and especially in connection with Saul's treatment of him, let us designate the fifth great fact in the book as

The Persecution of David, Chapters 16-26

- What gave rise to Saul's jealousy (18:6-9)?
- who comes prominently into view as David's friend (19:1-7)?
- who else stands by him (vv. 18-24; also 21:1-9)?
- how does Ahimelech suffer for his kindness (22:6-23)?
- where is David's hiding-place at this time, and who are with him (vv. 1, 2)?
- what city of Judah does he deliver (chap. 23)?
- how does GOD interpose on his behalf?
- under what circumstances does David spare Saul's life (24:4-7)? And again (26:5-25)?

David Compared with Saul

It might be well to pause again at this point for a further comparison between these two men.

Does not Saul know that David has been chosen of GOD as his successor (20:30,31)? And yet observe how he seeks in every way to destroy his life and thwart GOD's purposes. How different in the case of David! Twice is Saul in his power, and though strongly and plausibly urged to slay him (24:4), yet does he refuse to do it. And why does he refuse?

- is he afraid of Saul, or his bodyguard, or the anger of the nation?
- is his hand restrained by the fear of man, or the fear of GOD (vv. 5-7)?
- what further light this sheds on that expression, "**a man after God's own heart!**"

David knew he was to receive the kingdom, but his choice was to receive it in GOD's own way and time (26:7-11).

- to what alien people does David finally flee for refuge (chap. 27)?
- what city is given him to dwell in (v. 6)?

Some Things Hard to Understand

In Peter's second Epistle he speaks of some things in Paul's writings as "**hard to be understood,**" and there are things of that kind here also. But it is a great thing for a teacher to

have courage enough to say to his class that he "doesn't know," sometimes. Do not be afraid to say that to those whom you teach, when it is true. It will not weaken but rather increase their respect for you. And yet on the other hand, let it not put a premium on laziness. Do your best to find out, but when your best fails, own it frankly.

One of the things in the present case hard to understand is the apparent irreconcilableness of 16:14-23 and 17:55-58. Must not Saul have known David in the first instance? How then had he forgotten him in the second? Let us remember that David doubtless had been at home a good while, and grown from a boy to a man, that Saul had rarely seen him before except in moments of madness, and that possibly Abner had been absent from court when David was there. Let us remember also that these old narratives give very brief and partial views of certain occurrences, making it necessary sometimes for us to suspend judgment in the absence of more light.

Another "**hard thing**" is the allusion to the Spirit of the Lord departing from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubling him (16:14, etc). As to the first, it must be kept in mind that there is a difference between the Spirit of the Lord coming into a man in the sense of regenerating him, as we have it expressed in the New Testament, and that same Spirit coming on a man in the sense of enduing or equipping him for some special service.

The former transaction would seem to be an enduring one, and when the HOLY SPIRIT comes to us at regeneration, He comes to abide forever (John 14:16); but the latter may be a changing experience, and as true of a man who is not a child of GOD as of one who is. You can easily recall men already treated of, who received the Spirit of the Lord in this sense. Balaam, for example. May we not believe that He came and went on him the same as on Saul?

But what about the evil spirit from the Lord?- well, that is deep and mysterious surely. But this is not the only place where such allusions occur (Job 1:6; I Kings 22:19-23). Some would resolve this whole circumstance into an experience of melancholy on Saul's part, but the narrative clearly speaks of an objective spiritual wicked power that had control over him. But how did this come from the Lord? Only in the same sense that Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the Lord. "The Lord gave him over to the power and might of this spirit as punishment for his disobedience and defiant self-will."

The Close of Saul's Life, Chapters 28-31

We may now return directly to the consideration of Saul's history again. David's persecution at his hands is over, but his persecution of himself continues.

- what is the great fact in chapter 28?
- how is Saul's spirit of rebellion still evinced in this act?
- what chapter in Deuteronomy contains a solemn warning against it?
- as you read the text, do you think Samuel was actually brought up?
- may not the witch have been deceived (v. 12)?
- may not Saul have been deceived (v. 14)?
- but what about the words of the inspired historian (vv. 15, 16)?
- do not these make for a belief in the actual appearance of the prophet?

Did Samuel Appear?

Suppose we admit this, what then?

- will it stultify GOD's teachings in Deuteronomy 18?
- will it give countenance to spiritualism?

I think not. First, it may be lawful for GOD to do a thing, which He will not permit man to attempt to do. We cannot deny GOD the right or the power to bring back the spirits of the dead if He shall so please. But this is not to say that spiritualistic mediums possess either the right or the power to do this.

- how, then, shall we explain the phenomena in their case?
- is spiritualism all fraud?
- have mediums no communication with spirits?

It is possible, and quite probable that at times they have such communication; but we must bear in mind that there is an important distinction between evil spirits as such and the spirits of the dead. The first are demons, angelic beings, wicked in nature, like their head, Satan; but the second are still human beings, separate and distinct from them, always have been, and always will be.

These demons may sometimes personate the dead, deceiving the mediums as well as their clients, it may be, and furnishing another argument why we should have nothing to do with them, but they are not the dead whom we knew and loved.

Was Saul Regenerated?

We now come to the last act in Saul's life (chap. 31).

What kind of death did he die? Poor fellow! we instinctively say. What a contrast his life shows between the first time he appears before us, and the last!

His life-story furnishes suggestive, if sad, material for a strong sermon to young men.

Picture how favored he was.

- favored in his personal appearance, his family influence, his selection as the first king of Israel;
- favored in his counsellors;
- favored in his association with Samuel;
- favored in his acceptance by the people, and in his earlier victories at arms.
- favored all the way along in one grand career of triumph, till when?

Show what was the turning point in his life, and how he then began to go down hill, almost without stopping, till he reached the foot of it, and ended his life practically by his own hand!

It is this that suggests the question at the head of this section.

Some will answer, "Yes, Saul was regenerated, 'converted,' as we may judge from such a passage as 10:9; but then, there was his disobedient and unholy life, and finally his awful death. How can these things be harmonized?"

For one, I do not think chapter 10:9 is conclusive as to Saul's regeneration. The language is peculiar. "**God gave him another heart,**" not a "new heart," or a "clean" heart, but another heart. That is, He qualified him for his work or office, as king. I think Matthew Henry is about right, whose comment is, "He has no longer the heart of a husbandman, but that of a statesman, a general, a prince."

But what about Samuel's words (28:19), "**To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me**"?

"Was not Samuel in Heaven," some one may say, "and do not his words indicate that he expected Saul soon to be there?" It is doubtful if GOD's people went to Heaven prior to the resurrection and ascension of CHRIST. They went to "*Sheol*," a Hebrew term for the place of the dead considered generally. A place this, apparently of two compartments, one for the righteous, and one for the unrighteous dead. Saul might have been with Samuel in Sheol, but not in that particular part of Sheol where Samuel was. The writer has a little booklet on this general subject. published by Revell, entitled, *Progress in the Life to Come*, which some may be interested to read.

~ end of Lesson 12 ~
