

# Route Sixty-Six

*Part Nine*

*1 Samuel*

*(John 5:39; Hebrews 2:14, 15)*

*With Study Questions*

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*1 Samuel*

*(John 5:39; Hebrews 2:14, 15)*

**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).**

**Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,<sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14, 15).**

## **Introduction**

Our nation is in a bizarre and tumultuous political season. Rational dialogue is near impossible. This is likely due to an increasing lack of any point of philosophical contact. If we do not agree on what the end should be, we most certainly will not agree on how to get there. Pundits launch ambiguous terms in hopes of applause and votes (perhaps power). Freedom, choice, education, happiness, are all words which appeal to our flesh.

What we do with our freedom is often left undiscussed, at least from the platform. Choice is heralded as a virtue irrespective of however abominable the decision might be. Education is the happy ending to the movie without heed to the curriculum and the recognition that the vilest depots in human history were academically refined. And the nefariousness of happiness may be the most subtle. Not only is happiness difficult to define-who is not caught off guard with the simple question, “so are you happy?”-but happiness at what expense?

In an effort to fill the void in an increasingly godless society in the early 1700s an Irish reverend<sup>1</sup>, of all people, brought a political and

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Hutcheson.

irrational interpretation of the primacy of happiness to the west, which has regained traction among today's neo-atheists. It reads:

**That Action is *best* which accomplishes the *greatest Happiness* for the *greatest Numbers*; and that worst, which in like manner occasions Misery."**

When put to the test, such a shallow aphorism fails instantly and miserably. One simply need ask, "what if the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers includes the intense misery of the minority?" Now the maxim must move into the arena of ethics and it all becomes much more complicated.

But a thoughtless people will still be moved by the nebulous. Ambiguity has become its own skill. Freedom, choice, education and happiness, left undefined, is the platform. All people will rally behind, and wish to be governed by those, and similar, words with very little thought given to the chief end of all these disciplines. What should I do with my freedom? What choices are best to make? Why am I being educated? From where or whom may true happiness be derived?

In all of this, there is one word that will not make an appearance. Whether the speaker is religious or irreligious, theist, atheist or agnostic, the uninvited word is *theocracy*. Theocracy, as the compound word suggests (*theos*-God and *kratos*-rule) means the rule of God. About now we are greeted with the corporate and amplified grinding of teeth by those indoctrinated by a phrase which is not in our Constitution, that phrase being the *separation of church and state*.

Though not in our Constitution I will argue that I agree with the separation of these two institutions. I do not believe the church should have the power of the sword or that the state should have the power of word and sacrament. But the separation of church and state is not the same as the separation of God and state. This is a fact that anyone perusing our founding documents should immediately recognize with its numerous allusions to a Creator.

I begin with this discussion in our meditations upon 1 Samuel because 1 Samuel records a transition from God's people being ruled by Judges (which might be called a strict and unmediated theocracy) to God's people being ruled by a king (generally called a monarchy). In the history of Israel, we have moved from theocracy (rule of God) to monarchy (rule of

a king). Let that settle in our minds while we present a brief survey of 1 Samuel.

## Survey of 1 Samuel

1 Samuel opens with the miraculous birth of Samuel (Samuel the first of three primary personalities introduced in the book) by Hannah. Hannah utters a beautiful prayer (so similar to the Magnificat by Mary). The condition of Israel had become deplorable. Eli, the priest had corrupt sons and we are told that the word of the Lord was “rare” (1 Samuel 3:1). Samuel grows in stature and favor with the Lord and men (words used to describe Jesus-1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 2:52).

The most formidable enemy of Israel at this juncture are the Philistines who have formed a virtually unbeatable military (1 Samuel 13:5). They defeat the Israelites and so the elders of Israel decide (on their own and without seeking the wisdom of God) to bring the ark into battle. Let this be a warning that even the elders can go south. It’s been said that they had a committee meeting instead of a prayer meeting. In an effort to avoid this, the elders in our church will have meetings where we don’t do business but only pray. We call them shepherding meetings that we might ever remember our primary call to shepherd the flock.

The death of Eli’s sons and Eli is accompanied by the birth of Eli’s grandchild. He is given a name that appropriately captures the condition of Israel-*Ichabod* (meaning the glory has departed. 1 Samuel 4:21). In their victory, the Philistines capture the ark of the covenant which does not prove beneficial to them. God cannot be used in such a utilitarian manner. Let the church be cautioned that the things of God are to be lived out in a manner directed by God and to the glory of God. It causes my heart to bristle when I see the Gospel presented as if it is a lucky charm for my personal fortune. The Philistines end up being cursed with tumors and are advised to send the ark back to Israel, along with a very odd ritual which included golden rats and tumors.

Israel’s vulnerabilities, which included an aging Samuel, who himself had corrupt sons, motivates them to ask for a king. Whereas there is some debate regarding the appropriateness of having a king at all, the request is viewed by God as a rejection of Him. That they want a king “**like the other nations**” is likely their primary offense. They want a king who will fight their battles (1 Samuel 8:20). There is an undue trust in what a human

potentate can actually accomplish. We do not today live in a monarchy, but we must be cautious of this same mentality-that we would have the government be the hands and feet of good deeds. It has been said:

**A nation of individuals who do not love their neighbors will never create a government that does.**

In a very interesting exchange, God tells Samuel to forewarn the people of the behavior of the king who will reign over them. This king will take your sons to drive his chariots. He will take your daughters to be his perfumers, cooks and bakers. He will take your fields, vineyards and olive groves. He will take your servants and your sheep. In short, if you give this kind of power to a mere man, he will take all of your stuff. Their response:

**Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us,<sup>20</sup> that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles (1 Samuel 8:19, 20).**

So, Israel gets Saul (the second personality introduced in the book) the tallest and most handsome guy available. Enter *Personality Politics*. Personality politics works in an environment where people don't believe in ideas, they believe in people who believe in ideas. Statements of mission or conviction are replaced with images of the person's face plastered in the town square or on the bumpers of cars.

One can hardly help think of Kennedy defeating Nixon in 1960 (the first televised debate) largely due to how much better looking he was<sup>2</sup>. King Saul hits the ground running. We read of wonderful, sanctifying interactions between Saul and God. We are told that Saul is turned into another man. God gave him "**another heart**" (1 Samuel 10:9). And he immediately wins a battle over the Ammonites.

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<sup>2</sup> Television audiences thought Kennedy won the debate by a **landslide**, while radio audiences thought Nixon won it by a **landslide**.

As Samuel grows older, he gives counsel to Israel that they are to obey the king and the Lord, and the king is to obey the Lord. And if they do so, it will go well. But it does not take long before Saul starts taking small steps in the wrong direction. Saul feels compelled to offer a burnt offering that he should not have offered (a responsibility belonging to the prophet and not the king) and it is here that he is informed that a replacement is on his way-**“a man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14).**

It’s all downhill for Saul at this point. He offers rash vows. He fails to obey God in his dealings with the enemy. Saul’s heart problem is aptly stated in a phrase from Samuel that today’s statesmen (indeed any person who the Lord has deemed fit to place in a position of leadership) would do well to take to heart.

**So Samuel said, “When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:17)?**

We are then introduced to the final major personality in the book, David. David is just the opposite when it comes to impressive stature. In Samuel’s hunt for David, he is instructed not to look for someone like Saul, with his height and beauty. It is in the context of Samuel’s search that we read:

**But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him (Eliab, the eldest and most impressive son of Jesse). For *the Lord* does not *see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).**

There is now a changing of the mantle as the Spirit of the Lord comes upon David and departs from Saul. In fact, Saul is sent a distressing/harmful/evil spirit. So Saul hires a musician to play when the spirit is vexing him and the musician happens to be David.

It is at this juncture that we read the very famous account of David and Goliath. And here, understandably, the tide of public opinion does not so much turn against Saul as it elevates David. Even though what David accomplished through Goliath was beneficial to Israel, it did not please the

king of Israel to see credit given elsewhere. Pride and envy are killers. Add to the drama that David becomes best friends with Saul's son, Jonathan and is given in marriage to Saul's daughter, Michal (which was designed to be a snare to destroy David).

It is remarkable how evil people (even people who were once so hopeful and godly) can get. Saul, in his pursuit to kill David, engages in the slaughtering of eighty-five priests. His own men wouldn't obey his order. He relies upon the Edomite, Doeg, his lap-dog to carry out the horrible task.

Something remarkable in Saul's pursuit of David are the two times David had easy opportunity to kill Saul and refused to do so because Saul was still God's anointed king. Saul, like Pharaoh, has momentarily relents but it doesn't take long before he is once again seeking to kill David, even though David had done nothing to do deserve it other than serve his nation.

The darkness which subdued Saul's heart finally culminates in his efforts in the dark hearts and the consulting of a medium (which in sounder times he had put out of the land-1 Samuel 28:3). Saul receives no comfort here (nor should we seek comfort in dark places). He is informed of his pending defeat and death, which sadly takes place (along with his family) shortly thereafter.

## **A Monarchial Theocracy**

Referring back to our introduction, it may be true that a pure and unmediated theocracy (as in the time of the Judges) is quite impossible today. When the last Apostle died, the pure, authoritative, infallible and inerrant communication from God to man came to an end. We have all the information necessary for faith, practice and life (in every category of life) in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (2 Timothy 3:16).

But the time of Saul should have been a monarchial theocracy<sup>3</sup>. It is God ruling through a king. It should not have been a ruling king who happened to believe in God. And regardless of the system of government, whether a monarchy (a king), an oligarchy (rule of a few), a democracy (rule of the people), plutocracy (the rule of the wealthy) or a constitutional republic (where leaders are voted in and must yield to a set of laws), if

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<sup>3</sup>Dt 17:14-20

there is a lack of willingness to bow before an ultimate and absolute Law-Giver the product will be political anarchy (disorder due to no legitimate leader). This is one clear message in 1 Samuel.

## Jesus in 1 Samuel

Finally, where is Jesus in 1 Samuel? Perhaps the most beautiful and powerful (certainly the most popular) foreshadow of Christ in Samuel is found in the account of David against Goliath. Goliath stands as a champion in opposition to the people of God. He stood six cubits and a span (approximately nine feet). Six is the number of a man (Revelation 13:18), the span seeking to be more than a mere man. He carried all the weapons of death and was covered with impenetrable armored protection.

Like death itself, he would taunt. For forty days, morning and evening he, like the devil with Christ **“presented himself” (1 Samuel 17:16). “Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me” (1 Samuel 17:8).** It might be said that Goliath was the federal head of darkness (the singular representative of a people) seeking a conflict with a federal head of light and life. Whoever wins, wins for all those he represents!

Saul and all of Israel were **“dismayed and greatly afraid” (1 Samuel 17:11).** Who would Israel send? Nobody is stepping up. It is here we see the description of David. He was the youngest of Jesse’s sons (three of whom were in Saul’s army), he occasionally would feed his father’s sheep. And David’s initial exposure to this episode with Goliath was as a delivery boy. He was to bring some bread and cheese to the fearless warriors who stood petrified on their side of valley.

As David greeted his brothers, he finally hears the words of the Philistine. As the men of Israel fled, one can imagine an incensed David turning and looking. **“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God” (1 Samuel 17:26b)?** And like Christ, the prospect of David’s mission was not well received by the Israelites. Israel had no answer for Goliath, but they were unwilling to allow the answer to be found in David.

Finally Saul, almost reluctantly, grants that David be the man. And like many of the zealots during the time of Christ, Saul wanted David to fight the way he would have fought so he seeks to dress him in armor. But David could not function in armor. David was the anointed one of God

(anoint is translated into the New Testament as Christ). The Christ figure would not fight as men fight. He would use a sling, a seemingly useless weapon against such a great foe.

It is in the verbal exchange between David and the giant that we learn the lesson of ultimate deliverance:

**Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands (1 Samuel 17:47).**

Then David struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into it. After this he took Goliath's own sword and killed him and cut off his head. It is the head that is used in God's own prophecy of His promise. The seed of the woman will crush the head of the seed of the devil. We see in David's slaying of Goliath, a foreshadow of Christ's ultimate victory over the devil and his death.

It is worth noting that David uses the very instrument of death (the sword of Goliath) to conquer death. Truly death is the final enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). But we, in a sanctified awe, must come to appreciate that it is death itself (the ultimate enemy of God's people) becomes the means by which that enemy is conquered. As Hebrews so indicates,

**...that through death he (Jesus) might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).**

David's victory became a victory for the entire nation. Similarly, Christ's victory becomes a victory for all who trust in Him. As Paul so indicated, that even though they were being killed all day long, in Christ **"we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).**

## Questions for Study

1. Discuss some reasons why our nations seems to be in such a tumultuous political season (pages 2, 3)?
2. What were things like in Israel as we open 1 Samuel (page 4)?
3. Was it profitable for Israel to bring the ark of the covenant into battle with the Philistines? Why or why not? Are there examples of this type of thing happening today (page 4)?
4. Why was it wrong for Israel to ask for a king? Do we see this disposition anywhere today (pages 4, 5)?
5. Evaluate the downfall of Saul. How did it happen (pages 5-7)?
6. In what sense is a theocracy today impossible? In what sense is it necessary (pages 7, 8)?
7. In what ways do we see similarities between David and Jesus in his conflict with Goliath (pages 8, 9)?