

a lesson:

ON THE BOOK OF I SAMUEL

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I. OVERVIEW

I SAMUEL bears the name of the Israelite prophet Samuel, who bridges the history of That Nation from the closing of the time of The Judges to the birth of the monarchy. Scofield dates the events of I SAMUEL as covering “a period of 115 years,” from 1171 BC to 1056 BC.¹ However, Wycliffe observes there is difficulty fixing the exact dates of I and II SAMUEL, as “...most portions of the two Books deal with events that occurred after Samuel’s death. The early part of I SAMUEL could have been written about 1,000 BC, the remainder some thirty to fifty years later.”² Howard observes that “I SAMUEL unfolds against the backdrop of the end of the early Iron Age (...1200-1000 BC).”³

Howard notes that The Jewish Talmud “...attributed authorship of The Book (singular) of SAMUEL, along with the Book of JUDGES, to Samuel himself.”⁴ Although Samuel anointed both Saul and David for the kingship of Israel, he never lived to see David replace Saul on the nations’ throne, Saul’s death being recorded in I SAMUEL 25.1. And though the Old Testament does state Samuel wrote of events in his time, “...to what extent... [these works] coincided with the Canonical Books of SAMUEL [it] is impossible to know.”⁵ In any event, Howard concludes that “we do not know who wrote I & II SAMUEL.”⁶

II. THE NATURE OF I SAMUEL

Howard offers that This Book may be seen in two parts based on several key questions: “The first questions of whether and how the monarchy should be established dominate the first portions... These are followed by the question of who should be the king of Israel.”⁷ Once Saul and David enter the picture, the question then becomes how the David would come to replace Saul as King of Israel. Scofield divides I SAMUEL

¹ 1, Scofield, I SAMUEL, page 355, introduction, paragraph 3.

² 2, Wycliffe, FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL, Date and Authorship, page 273.

³ 3, Howard, FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL, Historical Setting of The Events, page 148, paragraph 1.

⁴ 3, Howard, I & II SAMUEL, Authorship, page 142, paragraph 1. Howard cites The Talmud, T.B. Baba Bartha 14b).

⁵ 3, Howard, I & II SAMUEL, Authorship, page 142, paragraph 1. Howard cites mention of “the records of Samuel the seer” in I CHRONICLES 29:28 and Samuel’s “writing about the kingship” in I SAMUEL 10:25.

⁶ 3, Howard, I & II SAMUEL, Authorship, page 142-143, paragraph 2.

⁷ 3, Howard, I & II SAMUEL, Introduction, page 141, paragraph 2.

into these four sections: “I. The story of Samuel to the death of Eli...; II. From the taking of The Ark [of The Covenant by the Philistines] to the demand [of the people of Israel} for a king...; III. The reign of Saul [as Israel’s first king] to the call of David...; IV. From the call of David to the death of Saul.”⁸

III. SAMUEL THE MAN & HIS CONTRIBUTIONS

Wycliffe offers that the name Samuel, according to the German Hebrew scholar Gesenius, means “The Name of GOD.”⁹ Samuel was anointed by The LORD to lead Israel through as almost or as much of a monumental a task as was Moses, “...to lead Israel out of the period of The Judges and into that of the kings.”¹⁰ Wycliffe observes the great contributions of Samuel to the people of GOD: Samuel “...finished the work of The Judges.” He “...laid the foundation of the prophetic office ...[into the two separate Divinely ordained offices of] “priesthood and the kingship.”¹¹ And though he anointed two kings – Saul and David – to the kingship of ancient Israel, Samuel did not live to see David ascend to the throne.¹²

IV. THE PEOPLE CRIED OUT FOR A KING LIKE THE HEATHEN NATIONS

If there was one greatest heartache and dread in Samuel’s heart, it was that the people of GOD cried for a king like the nations around them. I SAMUEL 8:5 records that the elders came to him on behalf of the people, “And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”¹³ These events in I SAMUEL 8 reflect the struggle of all men down through all ages, that they know in their hearts that they should put all their faith and trust in The Creator first, but that they are constantly tempted to take comfort in the strength of “horses and chariots” – just in case!

⁸ 1, Scofield, I SAMUEL, page 355, introduction, paragraph 2; dates noted central margin, page 319, 354

⁹ 2, Wycliffe, FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL, Introduction, Title, page 273.

¹⁰ 2, Wycliffe, FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL, Historical Background, paragraph 1, page 273.

¹¹ 2, Wycliffe, FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL, Historical Background, paragraph 2, page 273.

¹² 4, Bible Works, KJV, I SAMUEL 25:1 records Samuel’s death immediately after events of I SAMUEL 24, where The LORD delivered Saul into David’s hands, but David would not take the life of the king of Israel placed there as The LORD’s anointed.

¹³ 4, Bible Works, KJV, I SAMUEL 8:5.

Samuel saw what this meant: The people were rejecting JEHOVAH as their King in Heaven. Their corrupt hearts sought for the security of the world that they saw in the heathen nations around them. They had not learned to trust in The LORD for their protection and deliverance, in spite of The Almighty's great works on their behalf down through time. He cried out to GOD in the distress of his soul. And The LORD directed Samuel to do as the people had bidden him, for He answers him as in I SAMUEL 8:7, "...for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." ¹⁴

V. WHAT THIS BOOK MEANS TO US TODAY

So I SAMUEL is a record of the struggle of Israel – seen by us through the persons of Samuel, Saul and David – to keep The Almighty alone as our Object of Worship and One true Source of strength and deliverance in all the battles of life! But like ancient Israel, we in our own lives are always tempted to the idolatry of placing our hopes in passing strengths of this world. Samuel warned the people of their desire for earthly kings to deliver us, which tempt us to allow them to displace our faith in The Almighty. So Samuel's words are recorded in I SAMUEL 8:20, "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." ¹⁵

This is why Samuel rebuked Saul for his consultation with the witch of Endor, for we read his words in I SAMUEL 15:23, "For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king!" ¹⁶ But as Isaiah declares in ISAIAH 33:22, "For T LORD is our judge, The LORD is our lawgiver, The LORD is our king; He will save us!" ¹⁷ Indeed, our Lord JESUS CHRIST anoints us to be His saints by the sacrifice of his Blood and Body given to save our souls.

When we who are saved in CHRIST, but then stray into seeking earthly security in "horses and chariots," do we not grieve the very Heart of JESUS? Are we not in

¹⁴ 4, Bible Works, KJV, I SAMUEL 8:7.

¹⁵ 4, Bible Works, KJV, I SAMUEL 8:20.

¹⁶ 4, Bible Works, KJV, I SAMUEL 15:23.

¹⁷ 4, Bible Works, KJV, ISAIAH 33:22.

danger of receiving The holy Eucharist unworthily? Is it not a mocking of the loving sacrifice which The Son of GOD has made to redeem our souls to Himself? GOD forbid that we might in our hearts come to blasphemously boast before The Cross of our Lord – standing there with the hardhearted scribes and chief priests who rejected Him as King over Israel and over their very souls - as in MARK 15:32, “Let CHRIST The King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe!”¹⁸

O Lord JESUS CHRIST, let it never be so, that though we stray often from You as Lord and King over our lives and souls, that we never be found on our day of judgment to have rejected You as the only true Ruler of our earthly and eternal lives! O Eternal and Everlasting King JESUS CHRIST, may we ever be found to be your humble and thankful subjects, trusting only in you to bring us victory over the battles of life. For it is truly written in I JOHN 5:4-5, “For whatsoever is born of GOD overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that JESUS is the Son of GOD!”¹⁹ May it ever be so with us! AMEN.

¹⁸ 4, Bible Works, KJV, MARK 15:32.

¹⁹ 4, Bible Works, KJV, I JOHN 5:4-5.

VI. REFERENCES

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3. "An Introduction To The Old Testament Historical Books." David M. Howard, Jr. Moody Press. Chicago, Illinois. 1993.
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4. "King James Version Bible." Bible Works 6 [computer program]. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.