

*Who is your  
raison d'être?*

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LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

GOD HAS HEARD—THE KING EXPERIMENT FAILS, FOR NOW—BETTER NOT CALL SAUL  
 (1 Samuel 12) Lord's Day, July 3, 2016

OVERVIEW

"Session 5" for this week in the *Explore the Bible Series*




God is dead? So asked *Time* in 1966. In so-called "modern" times we think the Lord God has stopped actively disciplining us when we disobey. Perhaps, He is dead. We certainly don't want to blame Him for the 250,000 lost in the southeast's tsunami in 2004. What about the 6-7 million lost in the holocaust? We commit idolatry by ascribing "mother nature" to the tsunami's of the world, and mental illness to the propitiators of Nazi Germany.

A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:  
**WHY DID THE LORD GOD STAY WITH US  
 EVEN WHEN WE WANTED A SECULAR  
 KING AND REJECTED HIM AS KING?**

You see, it is not very useful for us to see the connection between the natural consequences and disobedience. Nor the connection between the natural world and natural consequences. Like the pagans around us, we want to blame "mother nature."<sup>1</sup> But shudder at the reality of the Lord God's pronouncement in Isaiah 45:6-7—

*I am the LORD, and there is no other.  
 I form the light and create darkness,  
 I bring prosperity and create disaster;  
 I, the LORD, do all these things.*

Remember. Remember. Remember the reason for God's commands, and the obedience they demand. Remember. He is not dead. Look around.

<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, the MicroSoft *Word* spelling program wants to capitalize "mother nature." Hmmm. What does this tell us?

# 1 SAMUEL

## CONTEXT<sup>2</sup>

Chemists learn very quickly to record in precise detail their amalgamations, manipulations, and combinations of molecules. Not all experiments succeed, and the true measure of success is more often determined by what “failed,” not what “succeeds.”

And so it is with our experiment with facism in the promised land. We wanted the comfort of a sovereign king—as long as he didn’t press us too hard. We wanted the fealty heirarchy of a kingdom—as long as it didn’t get in the way of building our herds and families. We wanted the security of a king—as long as our deployment on the lines was limited. And so it is with Holy Spirit’s record recorded in what we call “1 Samuel.” An experiment. A failed experiment, yes, but one which is detailed, down to the molecule. Let us learn from the great Chemist.

We see a great example of the “tall man” thesis—tall men think everything should be given to them; after all, it’s always been that way. Saul, the tall one thought he could disobey the Lord God and stay king. Nuts.

We also see a great example of the “short man” thesis—short men are always starting something to prove something. David learned to slay, and slay well. And, he died in the arms of a girl brought to him just to keep him warm.

Listen carefully to 1 Samuel. As the rise and fall of Saul with the rise of David, we see in politics what would become the true contest between people and the Lord God Jehovah. Better to obey than sacrifice? Better than burnt offerings? You betcha!



Humans are not all that smart. Nonetheless, we think we are. Such was the case with our first few generations in the land promised to Abraham, and his descendants—us.<sup>3</sup> The Lord God gave us clear direction through a variety of judges—from Yeshua (*Yahweh saves*), son of Nun, to Samuel (*God hears*), son of Elkhanah—we decided we knew best. Sure some of the judges were great—Deborah created 40 years of peace. Some were lousy with short hair—Samson loved Delilah more than the Lord God.

In the midst of all this disobedient chaos, the presumably wise among us said we need a king. We had one, of course, but did not recognize Him. We thought His judges were the authority, rather than regents for the real King. Nonetheless, we persisted. We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king! We want a king!



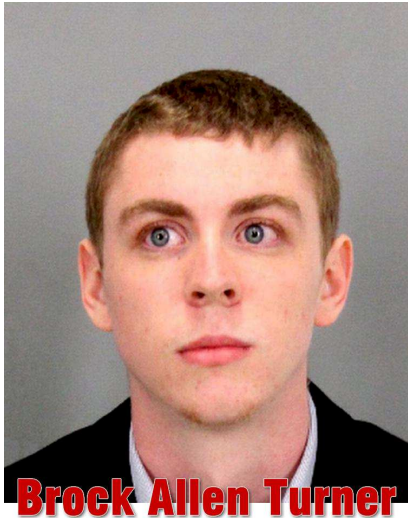
I’m sure the Lord God smiled. Wryly. You know how your father smiled when you told him you were going to climb that elm tree, the tree which had no

<sup>2</sup>See <http://DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies>

<sup>3</sup>Galatians 3:28-29 reads... “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

stepping or holding limbs... And, so the Lord God prepared us for a king. Of course, none of us knew then, we were being prepared for the King.

1 Samuel tells the tale of two of our first kings—Saul from the tribe of Benjamin, the very tribe who had just stolen wives from Shiloh, and David from the tribe of Judah. Even his heritage wasn't pure—his great grandmother wasn't even Hebrew. Yes, the great woman Ruth revered by all as noble was a Moabite. Saul would pretend not to hear sheep bleating. David would murder, tolerate idols in his house, and commit a heinous act of adultery and cover up. And, these were just the first of our two “kings.”



What gave rise to the patience of the Lord God with us? He had a long, tedious lesson to teach. May we learn it well. The writer of Judges summed it up well lesson to be learned...

Everyone did as he saw fit.

And so do we, when we allow the powerful to ravage the weak.

## CONTEXTUAL ISSUES 1 SAMUEL 12

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After Samuel warned the people about the nature of a king “like all our neighbors have,” the second king of Israel should have been out hunting jackasses who had wandered away; instead he was searching for donkeys (see 1 Samuel 10).



Intriguingly, the Lord God told Samuel to appoint the Benjamite Saul as king; even though a head taller and not of the tribe of Judah, Saul was indeed anointed king of Israel.

Samuel did his job ... But even at first, it did not bode well. For example, here's the record of Saul's initial time as king:

*Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the Lord God Yahweh. Then Samuel dismissed the people, each to his own home. Saul also went to his home in Gibeah, accompanied by valiant men whose hearts God had touched. But some troublemakers said, "How can this fellow save us?" They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent. —1 Samuel 10:25-27*

What a great way to begin as king.

All during Samuel's time as judge, the Ammonites had been peaceful. But now, Saul was king. And guess who was making demands on Israel. At first the folks were freaked, and Saul was angry. Saul sent pieces of ox throughout Israel reminding them of their fate if they did not follow Saul and Samuel. And, now we were freaked for a better reason. Well, the Ammonites were virtually destroyed, except for a few who we wanted to execute. Saul reminded the people that *Yahweh* rescued Israel. After that, Saul's kingship was reaffirmed at Gilgal, and they partied for a long time.

Chapter 12... It was there that Samuel gave his swan song. Reminding them that he had never cheated them nor oppressed them, you now have a king. Remember it is the Lord who is in charge—He has been from the times of Egypt and it is still today! But, why are you freaked about today? The Ammonites? Seriously?

## TEXTUAL ISSUES 1 SAMUEL 12:12-25

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1 Samuel 12:12-15. *A warning for we who doubt*. Hey! When you saw the Ammonites were threatening you—even though the Lord God has protected you from them for forty years—you said to me...

“We want a *king* to rule us.”

And you said this, even though the Lord God *Yahweh* is your King.

So, here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for—the Lord God *Jehovah* has now set a king over you.

If you respectfully revere the Lord God *Yahweh*, and serve Him, and obey Him, and do not rebel against His commands, and if you *and* the king, who now reigns over you, follow the Lord God *Jehovah* your God—**good!**

BUT ... If you do rebel against the Lord God by not obeying His commands, His hand will wup up on you—just as He did when your ancestors disobeyed.

Q Why did we need a king? What was so antiquated, so old-hat about a judge ruling over us?

Q About what was Samuel ticked?

Q And, what was the essence of his warning to us?

Q How is the Lord God's hand against you when you disobey?

### 1 SAMUEL 12:12-15

But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to rule over us'—even though the LORD your God was your king. <sup>13</sup>Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the LORD has set a king over you. <sup>14</sup>If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! <sup>15</sup>But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers.



1 Samuel 12:16-19. *God means business, and He can easily mess up yours.* To prove to believers in a very substantive way that the Lord God Yahweh means business, Samuel proclaimed the Lord God's existential lesson...

Stand still. Look. Yahweh Himself is about to do something grand—you won't be able to ignore He and His message. Think about it. Are we not harvesting our wheat now? Watch this. I will call upon the Lord God Almighty to send thunder and rain.

That will teach you, remind you, and commemorate your rebellion—the evil thing you did in God's eyes when you asked for a king, and didn't follow what He told you in the days of Moses about wanting and having a king.<sup>4</sup>

When they heard this news about the weather and its connection to their sins, they freaked, and stood in awe of the Lord God Almighty and Samuel. They implored Samuel to...

*Pray to the Lord God Yahweh your God for us, your servants, so that we won't die. We have added the sin of asking for a king to all of our other sins.*

Q What was so evil about wanting a king like other nations in the area, especially given Deuteronomy 17:14ff?

Q What was the purpose of calling thunder and rain? Why were we frightened for our lives?

Q Why did we recognize that asking for a king was a "sin?" Just what is "sin?"

## 1 SAMUEL 12:16-19

"Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes! <sup>17</sup>Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king."

<sup>18</sup>Then Samuel called upon the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel.

<sup>19</sup>The people all said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king."

<sup>4</sup>The Lord God knew we would ask for a king—just like our neighbors—even before we got to the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 17:14, God provides a clear set of instructions regarding the Law, wives, silver/gold accumulation, and the nature of the king versus his citizens. To wit:

*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.*



1 Samuel 12:20-25. *Samuel explains how we can avoid the rain during harvest.* To their fear, Samuel provided an answer...

Chill. Yes, you've been and done evil, but do not turn away from the Lord God Almighty—make sure He is your *raison d'être*. Don't go around sniffing the butts of idols. They will not sniff back—they're useless, nor can they rescue you from the rain at harvest time. They are indeed worthless.

You are, nonetheless, His people; His honor, His great name, His glory will not be diminished. The Lord God Almighty was pleased to make you His own.

As for me, far be it from me that I sin against the Lord God Yahweh by failing to pray for you. I will teach you what is good, what is right, what is righteous.

As for you, ensure that you reverently respect the Lord God Jehovah—serve Him faithfully with your entire *raison d'être*. Don't serve Him just when it is convenient. Remember the wonderful, the great and the powerful things He has done for you.

BUT... If you persist in doing evil, you and your king will be swept out with the garbage.

- Q Why did the Lord God have to remind us not mess with useless idols? Was it not self-evident?
- Q Why are idols useless indeed? Yet, why are idols useful?
- Q Why weren't we abandoned by the Lord God when we committed such an evil act of asking for a king, just like the neighbors?
- Q Why were we, the stiff-necked, "people without a country" made God's "very own?"
- Q What did Samuel see his duty in all this? What three things did he promise to do for us?
- Q What was his advice on how to avoid the rain at harvest? Respect. Serve. Devote it all—*raison d'être*. Meditate on the great things He has done for you.
- Q So, did the Lord God ever rain on our harvest? Syria, Babylonia, Persia, Alexander, Syria (again), Rome?
- Q What is the cost for continuing to do ("persist," verse 25) evil? Just, what does being "swept away" mean?

## 1 SAMUEL 12:20-25

"Do not be afraid," Samuel replied. "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. <sup>21</sup>Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. <sup>22</sup>For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own. <sup>23</sup>As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. <sup>24</sup>But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. <sup>25</sup>Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away."

**12:3** *Testify against me.* When Samuel presents the newly inaugurated king to the people, he seeks to establish publicly his own past faithfulness to the covenant as leader of the nation. His purpose is to exonerate himself and provide an example for Saul in his new responsibilities.

*Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken?* See Ex 20:17; 22:1,4,9. Samuel has not used his position for personal gain (see Nu 16:15). *Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed?* See Lev 19:13; Dt 24:14. *From whose hand have I accepted a bribe . . . ?* See Ex 23:8; Dt 16:19. The NIV commentary adds this rather poignant note...

*Unlike some political and religious leaders who get caught in financial scandals, Samuel considered himself publicly accountable. He began his farewell speech by offering an opportunity for anyone to stand up and testify that he, Samuel, had been dishonest or had taken advantage of his leadership position. Before going on, he asked those present to witness aloud to his honesty.*

**12:7** *confront you with evidence.* The terminology is that of a legal proceeding, as in vv. 2-5, but now the relationship of the parties is reversed. This time Samuel is the accuser, the people are the defendants, and the Lord is the Judge.

*righteous acts performed by the LORD.* These righteous acts (see vv. 8-11) demonstrate the constancy of the Lord's covenant faithfulness toward his people in the past and, by way of contrast, serve as an indictment of their present apostasy.

**12:11** *he delivered you.* The Lord repeatedly delivered Israel from her enemies right up to Samuel's own lifetime (see 7:3,8,10,12), demonstrating again the people's apostasy in desiring a king.

**12:12** *when you saw that Nahash . . . was moving against you.* In the face of the combined threat from the Philistines in the west (9:16) and the Ammonites in the east (11:1-13), the Israelites sought to find security in the person of a human king.

*the LORD your God was your king.* The Israelite desire for and trust in a human leader constituted a rejection of the kingship of the Lord and betrayed a loss of confidence in his care, in spite of his faithfulness during the time of the exodus, conquest and judges. Anticipations of kingship in Israel are present already in the Pentateuch (Ge 49:10; Nu 24:7,17; Dt 17:14-20); Samuel is therefore instructed to listen to the people's request (see vv. 9,22). *it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.* Cf. Jdg 8:23.

The sin of Israel in requesting a king (see 10:19; 12:12,17,19-20) did not rest in any evil inherent in kingship itself, but rather in the kind of kingship the people envisioned and their reasons for requesting it. Their desire was for a form of kingship that denied their covenant relationship with the Lord, who himself was pledged to be their savior and deliverer. In requesting a king "like all the other nations" (v. 20) *they* broke the covenant, rejected the Lord who was their King (12:12; Nu 23:21; Dt 33:5) and forgot His constant provision for their protection in the past (10:18; 12:8-11).

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<sup>5</sup>Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.



**12:13** *the LORD has set a king over you.* In spite of the sinfulness of the people's request, the Lord had chosen to incorporate kingship into the structure of the theocracy (his kingdom). Kingship was given by the Lord to his people and was to function as an instrument of his rule over them (see Introduction: Contents and Theme).

**12:14** *If you fear the LORD.* Samuel relates the old covenant condition (see Ex 19:5-6; Dt 8:19; 11:13-15,22-28; 28; 30:17-18; Jos 24:20) to the new era Israel is entering with the establishment of the monarchy.

*if both you and the king . . . follow the LORD your God--good!* Israel and her king are to demonstrate that although human kingship has been established, they will continue to recognize the Lord as their true King. In this new era where potential for divided loyalty between the Lord and the human king arises, Israel's loyalty to the Lord must remain inviolate. For similar use of the expression "to follow" see 2Sa 2:10; 15:13; 1Ki 12:20; 16:21.

**12:15** *But if you do not obey.* Samuel confronts Israel with the same alternatives Moses had expressed centuries earlier (see Dt 28; 30:15-20). The introduction of a kingship into Israel's socio-political structure did not inherently change the fundamental nature of Israel's relationship to the Lord. We poisoned the relationship.

**12:16** *see this great thing.* Samuel calls the people to observe as the Lord himself demonstrates his existence and power and authenticates the truthfulness and seriousness of Samuel's words.

**12:20** *yet do not turn away from the LORD.* Samuel again brings into focus the central issue in the controversy surrounding the establishment of kingship in Israel.

**12:23** *I will teach you the way that is good and right.* Samuel is not retiring from his prophetic role when he presents the people with their king. He will continue to intercede for the people (see v. 19; 7:8-9) and will instruct them in their covenant obligations (see Dt 6:18; 12:28). Saul and all future kings are to be subject to instruction and correction by the Lord's prophets.