

The GPS Reading Map - May

Now is a good time to stop and assess where we are. We've seen sin enter the world (Gen 3) and God's plan to deal with sin and restore humanity to Himself through the Messiah, His son (Gen 12). Fellowship with God and His people is temporarily and provisionally restored through the Law of Moses (Exo 20). So why are we now reading about kings, Israelites and Philistines? The answer is that God wants a prepared people to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. To do that the Israelites need to cleanse the land of Canaan of idolatry and idolaters lest Israel become like the nations around them (as they did in Judges). That task requires leadership, a leader who can bring the nation together as no judge could. Further, kings were always part of God's plan as well (Gen 17:6). God's people need to be trained as to what a king is and does! In our reading this month we will see good kings who lead the people to do what is right, and bad kings who let wickedness overrun the land. All of it points to our need for Jesus, the King of Kings!

Week 19 - May 6-12 - 1 Samuel *8 *9 *10-11 *12 *13

SNAPSHOT - In **1 Samuel 8** the people request a king. What they want is a military leader (note verse 20), even though God has repeatedly fought for Israel (note 7:8). Watch the repeated use of "take" by Samuel in his response. Kings are expensive! **1 Samuel 9** introduces us to Saul, the man who fits what the people want: a big man who can lead them into battle. He is, however, not very spiritually minded. He doesn't seek God (verse 5) or seem to have ever met Samuel (verse 17). In **1 Samuel 10** Saul is anointed. **1 Samuel 11** is Saul's coming out party. Notice that Israel is so weak Nahash doesn't mind if they send for help (verse 3). He assumes none will come! Samuel realizes his leadership role is over in **1 Samuel 12**. Verse 22 is an excellent summary of the Old Testament up to this point. **1 Samuel 13** is Saul's first failure, and it is a terrible one. Verse 9 may indicate he had the priest do the offering, not that Saul personally offered it (see 2 Sam 24:25). But it does mean Saul disobeyed Samuel and went ahead without God. How can he lead God's people if he doesn't depend on God?

DANGER/UNDER CONSTRUCTION - 1 Samuel 13:1's date information is tremendously uncertain in the original text. Various translations attempt to translate it but there is no consensus.

RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD - Are we like Israel of old in wanting a visible, "out front" kind of leader who could solve our problems? Israel wasn't happy with an invisible God they couldn't see and that chose to save when and how He decided in His sovereignty. Are we any different? Think about how serving a God that requires us to walk by faith continues to be a challenge.

IN THE MINIVAN - Saul seems to come out of nowhere to be Israel's king. He is a mixture of good characteristics (like humility, verse 22) but seems uneasy with the mantle of leadership. Talk about what makes a good leadership and be on the look out for Saul's mistakes and what he could have done differently to please the Lord and serve God's people more effectively.

Week 20 - May 13-19 - 1 Samuel *15 *16 *17 *19 *28

SNAPSHOT - We continue to see the vast need for godly leadership, and we continue to see that Saul will not be that kind of leader. 1 Samuel 14 (which we skipped) records another failure of Saul's, but **1 Samuel 15's** failure is much worse. Watch the repeated use of the terms "listen," "voice" and "word of the Lord" to see who Saul will, and will not listen to (notice especially verse 24). In **1 Samuel 16** we meet the man who will be right kind of king. Verse 7 becomes the hallmark of David's reign: David has the right kind of heart. David does more than talk a good game. He defeats Goliath in **1 Samuel 17**. His words are important however. Notice how David frames the battle as being between Goliath *and God* (verses 26, 45-47). Not surprisingly, God wins the battle. Saul's jealousy consumes him and he begins plotting against David (1 Samuel 18). **1 Samuel 19** describes more of Saul's attempts to murder David. 1 Samuel 20-27 tells of David's various adventures trying to stay alive while Saul pursues him (and neglects the kingdom). We close Saul's life by reading **1 Samuel 28**, where he commits one of the most horrible sins imaginable, divination. Saul won't speak to God so God won't speak to him (verse 6). Samuel's prophecy in verse 19 is correct, as 1 Samuel 31 shows.

DANGER/UNDER CONSTRUCTION - 16:14-23 is difficult. Is this a spirit of depression (Saul has the "blues") or is it demonic? We cannot be sure. **17:55** is also uncertain. 16:21 seems to say David was already in Saul's service. Why doesn't he know him now? Did he forget? Perhaps Saul had many armor bearers. It is also possible that this material is not in chronological order. The woman in **chapter 28** is famous for being a "witch," but she really is a medium: she claims to be able to consult the dead. What she does is absolutely forbidden in the Law (Deut. 18:11; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27).

RUBBER - Watch carefully as you read along here for the theme of Saul fighting against God. There is much here on what God has done and how God is with David (18:12,14, 28; 19:5, 20-24; see also 20:31; 23:17 and 24:19-20 to see how Saul knows he is trying to hold onto the throne despite God's clear will that David be king). Think about what it means to fight against God today. Are people still doing that? Are you?

IN THE MINIVAN - What do we do when we don't get what we want? Children often throw fits (if their parents allow it). The readings about Saul provide a great opportunity to talk about the consequences of one's actions, and throwing a tantrum when one is unhappy with what he/she has brought upon self. Saul also shows how sin progresses: he goes from being disobedient to God to trying to murder David to consulting a witch.

Week 21 - May 20-26 - 2 Samuel *5 *6 *7 *11 *12

SNAPSHOT - The first five chapters of 2 Samuel discuss a time of civil war as the house of Saul tries to hold onto the throne while the house of Judah makes David its king. **2 Samuel 5** finally sees David anointed as king over a re-unified nation. Notice the heavy emphasis on David's reliance on God. We finally have the right man for the job! **2 Samuel 6** records David's efforts to make Jerusalem the capital of all Israel in a religious and civil sense. He makes a crucial mistake doing this, but will learn from it. **2 Samuel 7** is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. It contains the promise to David that God will make of him an everlasting house, i.e. a ruling dynasty that will never end (verses 11-16). This promise

ultimately is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Once again we're brought back to the big picture of the Bible. We need a Savior, and we need a King. We will have both in Jesus, who will be of the House of David (see Matthew 1:1). Like a puzzle, piece by piece the picture of the Messiah the Old Testament is putting together for us is becoming clearer. *2 Samuel 7 is a giant piece of that puzzle.* **2 Samuel 11** tells of David's lowest point, the sin with Bathsheba. However **2 Samuel 12** shows how different David is from Saul. Instead of blaming everyone else he repents (verse 13)!

DANGER/UNDER CONSTRUCTION - **Chapter 6** is fraught with questions. Why did God kill Uzzah? The answer is simple: he violated God's law! Read 1 Chron 15:11-15 to see how David learned from what went wrong. Then we wonder about David dancing (6:14). Michal accuses him of being naked (verse 20) but he was most certainly not naked (see 1 Chron 15:27). Michal despises David for laying aside the royal robes to humble himself before God. She is truly her father's daughter, only interested in power and exalting self.

RUBBER - David's sin in chapter 11 well illustrates the power of sexual lust and seeing what one shouldn't. What steps can you take in your life to address this very prevalent temptation?

IN THE MINIVAN - It's quite common today to hear "Everyone makes mistakes." That line is quickly tossed out to excuse sin. What we want our children to learn this week is that yes, all are sinners but those who seek God will repent! Even someone as good and spiritually minded as David sinned. But he refused to excuse his wrongdoing and instead turned to God for forgiveness. He also accepted without complaint God's punishment.

Week 22 - May 27-June 2 - 2 Samuel *15 *16 *17 *18 *19

SNAPSHOT - The three chapters we jumped (2 Samuel 12-14) tell us how David and his son Absalom's relationship soured. In **1 Samuel 15** all of that comes to a head as Absalom leads a rebellion designed to murder his father and seize the throne by force. If David thought things couldn't get worse, they do in **1 Samuel 16**. Shimei (perhaps an old advocate of the house of Saul?) curses David, making what is a bad day even worse. The tide turns in **1 Samuel 17**, as Hushai's counsel answers the prayer of David (15:31). Hushai plays off of Absalom's vanity with deadly effect (17:11). **1 Samuel 18** is one of the saddest chapters in the Bible. When Absalom doesn't strike quickly as Ahithophel counseled the rebellion is lost. Time is on David's side now. He can gather his forces and with his advantage in military experience, intelligence and leadership he and his generals can decide where and when to fight the battle. Absalom's forces are routed and he is killed. David is crushed (verse 33). It has been more than ten years since David committed adultery with Bathsheba. What a sad and bitter toll that terrible sin has cost David! **1 Samuel 19** sees David receiving a needed rebuke from Joab (verses 1-8) and then getting back to the business of governing the kingdom. David is gracious and kind in victory, even to his foes. That said, there is a developing rift in the kingdom (verses 41-43).

DANGER/UNDER CONSTRUCTION - Absalom using David's concubines (**16:15-23**) seems odd to us but in that world the man who possessed the royal harem had a huge claim on the throne (as we will see again in 1 Kings). It also guaranteed the breach between Absalom and David was permanent. There is no going back for Absalom now.

RUBBER - How do you accept adversity? David shows the right heart in 15:25 and 16:10. He refuses to use the ark as a “lucky rabbit’s foot,” to try and control the Lord’s good graces. He even accepts the cursing of Shimei. David realizes that this problem is of his own making and that he is now in the hands of the Lord. He is resigned to do the best he can where he is with what he has but he won’t rail against God or try to manipulate the Lord. Do we do as well in the hour of trial?

IN THE MINIVAN - Don’t let these battle scenes become dull and dry. David is running for his life, and the scene with the counsel of Hushai and Ahithophel should keep us on the edge of our seats! All of this should be used to reinforce the terrible consequences of sin. David was punished as God said he would be. Here is the place to make sure children don’t decide to sin a while and then repent later and all will be well. We reap what we sow, and it was for David a very bitter harvest.