

Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 10A

1 Samuel 1-14, Samuel and Kingship

Review

V. The Books of Samuel

A. General Composition and Comments on the Name

B. Important Advances in the History of Redemption

C. The Life of Samuel

1. Ancestry and Youth

a. The Birth of Samuel – 1 Samuel 1:1-28

I gave you a handout last week on Roman numeral V., “The books of Samuel.” V. A. is “General composition and comments on the name” and B. is “Important Advances in the history of redemption.” We finished our session last week, when we were looking at those advances in the history of redemption that we find in the book of Samuel. So we will start this evening with V. C., “The life of Samuel.” 1. under that is “Ancestry and youth.” I have a few sub-points here that are not on your outline, but a. under 1. is “The birth of Samuel in 1:1-28.”

In chapter one of 1 Samuel, you read the story of the barren wife of a man named Elkanah who asked the Lord for a child and promised that should the Lord give the child to her, she would dedicate that child to the service of the Lord. You read in verse 2 that Elkanah had two wives: one was called Hannah, the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah had none. You read in verse 5 the reason why she had none. In 5b you read, “The Lord had closed her womb.” You actually get a repetition of that statement in 6a: “...because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival”—that’s Elkanah’s other wife Peninnah—“kept provoking her in order to irritate her, and this went on year after year.” So you can imagine the miserable situation in which Hannah lived. So she prayed to the Lord for a child, and in verse 11 she made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” You go a little further in the

chapter and you read in 19b, “Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel.”

1) Samuel’s Importance

So this is the story of the birth of Samuel. Samuel, of course, becomes a prominent figure from this point forward in the narratives of Samuel. He is the one whom the Lord raised up to establish kingship in Israel, first anointing Saul the first king of Israel and then anointing David to be the second. I just want to say a few more remarks about Samuel and his importance. He’s the last and the greatest of the judges. In 7:15 you read, “Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life.” I think we normally think of Samuel as a prophet rather than a judge, but he combined both those functions—prophet and civil leader, or judge—and performed both tasks well. When you look at the book of Acts, there’s a passing reference to Samuel in 13:20, which says, “After this God gave them judges, until the time of Samuel the prophet.” It is giving a resume of this period of Israel’s history, and of course you have those six major and six minor characters that are mentioned in the book of Judges. And now that period of the judges overlaps into the early chapters in the book of Samuel.

He was also what you might call the first in the line of prophets. We talked about that prophetic order in Deuteronomy 18 where the Lord said that he would “raise up a prophet like unto Moses,” and that seems to be a reference to the means of divine revelation to Israel subsequent to Moses’ death. There was a line of prophets. Look at Acts 3:24: “Indeed all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.” So, subsequent to Moses, it looks like Samuel stands at the head of or in the first place of that prophetic movement in the Old Testament period.

It seems like Samuel was considered an enormously important figure in the Old Testament period. I think that when most people today think of the great Old Testament characters, you’d normally think of Abraham, you’d think of Moses, of course, and you’d think of David, and maybe Isaiah. But look at Jeremiah 15:1. Jeremiah says: “The Lord

said to me even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to those people.” Samuel is put pretty much on a line with Moses. I think the reason for that is that both Moses and Samuel interceded for God’s people. Remember, Moses interceded after that golden calf incident. Samuel also interceded. We’ll look at that in chapter 7 when we get there, where the Lord delivered the Israelites from the Philistines as a result of the intercession of Samuel. So Moses and Samuel are spoken of together in the same sentence at the same level, so they certainly are significant figures.

2) Birth Announcement

Let’s get back to chapter 1 where his birth is announced. You see a contrast in the chapter between two women. Peninnah is cool and arrogant as she flaunts Hannah. Hannah is afflicted and crushed by the situation. This is the first of numerous contrasts you will get as you move further in the books of Samuel. In the next few chapters we will see Samuel growing up as a godly man, contrasted with the wicked sons of Eli the high priest. So we get a contrast not just between Peninnah and Hannah, but also between Eli’s sons and Samuel. Then we get the contrast between Saul and David, and a contrast between Saul and Jonathan. We get a contrast between Saul’s daughter Michal and Abigail whom David later married. So the book is characterized by numerous contrasts of that sort.

In this instance even before his birth, Samuel is aligned with the side of right and godliness through his oppressed but pious mother. You get that picture here in verses 1-28. So that’s a., “The birth of Samuel.”

b. Hannah’s Song – 1 Samuel 2:1-10

b. is “Hannah’s song,” which is in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Subsequent to the birth of Samuel, Hannah took Samuel, as you notice in verses 27 and 28 of chapter 1, and says, “‘I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.’ And she worshiped the LORD there.” She took him to the High Priest Eli at Shiloh where the

tabernacle and Ark were, and gave him to the Lord.

Then you have the prayer or song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. It's a remarkable poem. It's one of the great prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God, that you can find in all of Scripture. Comparisons have often been drawn between the basic themes of Hannah's song and that of Mary in the *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55; there are certain similarities. You notice how the song begins in verse 1 with Hannah's affirmation of how greatly the Lord has blessed her. She says, "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance." There is a reversal in fortune that has come to her in answer to her prayer. God has done a mighty act in giving her a son. But I think what you find in verse 2 is that the real source of her joy is not just personal gain, but rather it's God himself. Hannah sees her own deliverance as something that both exalts the Lord and enables her to exalt in God for his grace as a response to her enemies. Notice verse 2. Hannah addresses God with a profound description of God's excellency. He is the one who is absolutely holy; there is no one holy like the Lord. He is one who is completely unique; there is no one besides him. He is one who is supremely strong, there is no Rock like our God. So Hannah understands that Yahweh alone is God; he is the one in whom God's people can find strength, refuge and protection.

In those first three verses, I think Hannah sees her own experience of deliverance as an example of how God works in the larger world of people and nations. She rejoices in her deliverance and then exalts in God in verse 2. Then in verse 3 she says, "Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed." He will hold everyone accountable with righteous judgment for everything they say and do.

Then what follows in chapter 2 verses 4-9 is a series of seven contrasts that illustrates how God providentially works in the larger world of men and nations. Notice in verse 4: "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength." The strong are brought down, but those who are weak are lifted up—you get that kind of reversal. That's what follows through all the way down from verse 4 to verse

9. I won't read it all, but notice verse seven: "The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor," and so on. So you get this idea of contrast and reversal. As I mentioned already, you have a contrast in the first chapter with Peninnah and Hannah, and then you get the contrast with Eli's sons and Samuel, and later the contrast between Saul and David. That is, as you might say, already anticipated with this song of Hannah.

The last verse of the song in 2:10 reads, "It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed." Notice that 10b speaks of a king and an anointed one. Hannah already anticipates, I would say prophetically, the rise of kingship in Israel. So that's Hannah's song in 2:1-10.

c. Judgment to Come on the House of Eli – 1 Samuel 2:11-36

c. under 1. is "Judgment to come on the house of Eli in 1 Samuel 2:11-36."

Elkanah went home to Ramah, and the boy ministered unto the Lord under Eli the priest. Samuel stays at Shiloh. Then verse 12 says that Eli's sons were wicked men who had no regard for the Lord. Their corrupt practices are described in the next few verses. Then you get this contrast drawn between Samuel and the sons of Eli. Notice verse 17: "This sin of the young men [Eli's sons] was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt." The English there is translated "very great"; the Hebrew there is *gadol*, "great." If you go down to 21b you get the same word *gadol*, this time of Samuel: "Meanwhile the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord." That "grew up" is *gadol*—he "became great" in the presence of the Lord. So you see, the sons of Eli are great in sin but Samuel is becoming great in the presence of the Lord.

In 2:18-21 you have a description of the godly home of Elkanah, Hannah, and Samuel, which is quite positive. "But Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy

wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, “May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.” Then they would go home. And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.” So you see this godly home in 2:18-21.

But that’s contrasted with the house of Eli, and you have the description of that in 2:12-17 and in 22-25. In verses 12-17 you have the description of the evil practices of Eli’s sons, and in verses 22-25 that description continues. You read in verse 22: “Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” He rebuked them, but they ignored their father’s rebuke. Now you have these two families contrasted: Eli and the wickedness of his sons on the one hand, and the godly home of Elkanah and Hannah and Samuel on the other hand.

This contrast is brought into focus by four positive comments made by the writer about the young boy Samuel that are scattered through the chapter. Notice in 2:11, the first one: “The boy ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest.” 2:18, the second one: “But Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen cloth.” 2:21b, the third one: “Meanwhile the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord.” And 2:26, the fourth one: “And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and favor with the Lord and with men.” So this is a chapter of contrasts: Samuel, coming from a godly home, served the Lord; and that’s contrasted with the house of Eli.

As I mentioned, judgment is to come on the house of Eli. In 2:27 and following, a man of God came to Eli and told him, “This is what the Lord says.” He rebukes him for the conduct of his house and then tells him that his house will not continue to occupy the place of the high priest of Israel. I won’t take the time to discuss down through that. That’s c., “Judgment to come on the house of Eli.”

d. The Call of Samuel – 1 Samuel 3

d. is chapter 3, and that is “The call of Samuel.” As Samuel worked with Eli at the tabernacle and grows to be a young man, the Lord appeared to him and called him. You notice in chapter 3 that the first verse gives a picture of the time: “The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.” Remember, you’re in the period of the judges. This is a dark period, and the word of the Lord was rare.

Then one night the Lord comes and speaks with Samuel. I’m sure you are familiar with this story. The Lord calls to him, and Samuel thinks it’s Eli who is calling. He says, “Here I am, did you call me?” and Eli says, “No, I didn’t call you.” That goes on several times. Notice chapter 3, verse 6: “Again the LORD called, ‘Samuel!’ And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ ‘My son,’ Eli said, ‘I did not call; go back and lie down.’” Verse 8, “The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you called me.’ Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, ‘Go, lie down. If he calls you say, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place and the Lord came and spoke.”

What he said to Samuel was similar to what that man of God had said to Eli previously, that judgment is going to come on the house of Eli. Verse 11, “And the LORD said to Samuel: ‘See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family from beginning to end.’” Verse 14b, “The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or by offering.” So that’s the message that the Lord gives to Samuel. The next day Eli asks him what the Lord said. Samuel is reluctant to tell him, you can imagine. But Eli says in verse 17, “Do not hide it from me.” Verse 18, “Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing. Eli said, ‘He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.’” So this is really the call of Samuel to be a prophet.

There is an interesting statement in verse 7. In the midst of that sequence of the Lord calling to Samuel and Samuel thinking it’s Eli, not realizing it’s the Lord speaking,

verse 7 says, “Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.” You wonder, what does that mean? He was raised in this godly home; he was serving the Lord at the tabernacle under Eli the priest. Why would it say that he does not yet know the Lord? I think the explanation of 7a is found in 7b. Verse 7b says, “The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed.” This experience of receiving divine revelation was something new for Samuel. He did not know the Lord in that sense; this was a new experience. Now, the Lord is giving his word to Israel, initially here through Eli but later to all Israel through Samuel. So when you come to the end of the chapter, you read in verse 19 something that contrasts very strongly with 3:1, where it says “The word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.” You read in verse 19, “The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground.” In other words, when Samuel spoke, people came to understand that what he said could be trusted. His words were reliable.

So verse 20 says, “From Dan to Beersheba Samuel was recognized and attested as a prophet of the Lord.” Here is a spokesman for God; here is someone who speaks God’s word to the people of Israel. So that’s chapter 3.

2. The Loss and the Subsequent Return of the Ark – 1 Samuel 4:1-6:21

That brings us to 2. on your outline under C., which is “The loss and the subsequent return of the Ark: 1 Samuel 4:1-6:21.” Chapters 4-6 is kind of a parenthetical self-contained story about the Ark and its capture by the Philistines. You read about Samuel’s birth, his being taken to Shiloh and then being called to be a prophet in those first three chapters. In chapters 4-6 you have the Ark narrative. When you get to chapter 7, Samuel comes back on the scene, but there’s an interval here about the Ark and its capture in which Samuel does not play a role.

So in chapter 4 you read about Israel going out to fight the Philistines, and they were defeated in battle. You read in verse 2b, “The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about 4,000 of them on the battlefield.” This puzzled the leaders of Israel; the elders ask in verse 3, “Why did the Lord bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines?” I think

what they should have realized is that maybe they were not trusting in the Lord or walking in his way in the manner in which they should. It seems to me they should have wondered about that, but they don't. What they decide to do is in verse 3b. They say, "Let us bring the ark of the LORD's covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies." They thought that what they needed to do was carry the Ark into battle with them and that would guarantee them a victory. The Ark then becomes really the theme of this chapter.

The Ark is mentioned with a variety of designations twelve times in chapter 4. In verse 4 it's described as the throne seat of the Lord Almighty: "The people sent the throne seat to Shiloh. They brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty who was enthroned between the cherubim then." Remember we talked about that previously, that Yahweh was the king of Israel and that he was enthroned upon the Ark; it was his throne seat.

Chapter 4 verse 4b says that Eli's two sons Hophni and Phineas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. Now that's kind of an ominous sign in this chapter. The Lord has already pronounced judgment on the house of Eli and on Hophni and Phineas, and said that the two will die on the same day. Now Hophni and Phineas are the ones who are going to carry the Ark into battle. And they do that, and you read in verse 5, "When the ark of the LORD's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook." When the Philistines heard, they were afraid at first. As it says there in verse 7, "The Philistines were afraid. 'A god has come into the camp,' they said. 'We're in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the desert.'" But they took courage in spite of that. You read in verse 10 that they fought and the Israelites were defeated again. But worse than being defeated, you read in verse 11, "The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons Hophni and Phineas died."

Now it seems that what Israel was doing wrongly here was when they were initially defeated, instead of looking within themselves and asking questions about

whether or not they were being faithful to the Lord, they decided to take the Ark sort of like a charm or a talisman that was somehow magically going to bring them victory or good luck. I think the idea was if you manipulate the symbol of divine presence by carrying it into battle, you can coerce the Lord into bringing victory. That's a heathen idea, not a biblical idea. I think what they forgot was that the Ark was the symbol of divine presence in the context of the covenant. When covenant is violated, the Ark is of no significance. You cannot coerce God's presence simply by carrying this box into battle.

But they do that, and the Ark is captured. The expression "The ark of God was captured" occurs five times in verses 11 and following. That becomes something that is almost unthinkable. You see in verse 11, "The ark of God is captured," in verse 17 "The ark of God has been captured," in verse 19 "The ark of God has been captured." In verse 21, it says of the wife of Phineas who gave birth, "She named the boy Ichabod, saying, 'The glory of the Lord has departed from Israel because of the capture of the ark of God.'" Then in verse 22 she says, "The ark of God has been captured." So Israel thought they could force the Lord into granting them a victory over the Philistines by carrying the Ark, but they found they were seriously mistaken.

Philistines Response to Captured Ark – Temple of Dagon

But let's hurry on to chapters five and six. The Philistines think of this as a great victory—they've not only defeated the Israelites, but captured the Ark. What do they do? Verse 2, they carry it to Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon, the god of the Philistines. The idea then was very prominent in the ancient world that if you won a battle, your deity was stronger than the deity of the people you defeated. Undoubtedly they concluded that the Philistines' god Dagon was more powerful than Yahweh, whose Ark they had captured.

They put it in the temple of Dagon. But you read in verse 3 that when they get up the next day, Dagon had fallen on his face on the ground near the Ark of the Lord. It's almost like he's bowing down to Yahweh. So what do they do? They pick their deity

up—it's almost humorous. They prop him up and set him up again. The next morning, the same thing happened. He's fallen on his face on the ground, but this time his head and his hands had been broken off. So here's a deity without a head and without hands. A pretty powerless deity—he has no head with which to think, no hands with which to do anything. Then what plays out throughout the rest of the chapter is an interesting play on words where “the hand of the Lord” is compared to “the hand of Dagon” because that hand of Dagon is broken off. But look at verse 6: “The LORD’s hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors.” When it says, “The Lord’s hand was heavy,” it’s a double play on words; it’s not only that Dagon’s hands were broken off, but the Lord’s hand was heavy. “Heavy” is the root *chabed*, to be heavy. That’s the same root, *chabod*, as the word for the “glory” of the Lord which departed from Israel when the Ark was captured. So there’s a multiple play on words here. The Lord’s hand was heavy, verse 6; verse 7 tells us that the people of Ashdod said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon.” So they move it to Gath—that’s in verse 8—but what happens? Verse 9, “When they moved it the Lord’s hand was against that city.” So the Lord’s hand is strong, and they move it again; in verse 10 they take it to Ekron. The people of Ekron don’t want anything to do with this Ark. They lament, “They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around us to kill us and our people.” So they called together all the rulers of the Philistines and say, “Send the ark away, let it go back to its own place or it will kill us and our people.” Then you read again, “God’s hand was very heavy on the city.”

Return of the Ark

But nothing was done for seven months, as you read in 6:1. Then finally the idea is, “We’d better send this ark back to its own country.” The priest and diviners were called on for advice on how to do that. What advice did they give? Those priests are still not convinced that it is the power of Yahweh that is doing all these things. They propose that this may be just coincidence that all these tumors are breaking out in all these places

where the Ark is. They say, “We’ll make a test to find out.” You find that described in chapter 6, verse 7: “Now then, get a new cart ready, with two cows that have calved and have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. Take the ark of Yahweh and put it on the cart, and in a chest beside it put the gold objects you are sending back to him as a guilt offering. Send it on its way, but keep watching it. If it goes up to its own territory, toward Beth Shemesh, then Yahweh has brought this great disaster on us. But if it does not, then we will know that it was not his hand [there, “his hand” again] that struck us and that it happened to us by chance.” So the religious leadership of the Philistines was still not convinced that the power of Yahweh was at work. They propose this, thinking that this is something that’s never going to happen. But what happens? They did it—they put the Ark on the cart, and you read in verse 12, “Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left.” These are cows that have never been hitched up and just given birth to calves and they head straight up to Beth Shemesh in Israel.

So I think what is going on here in chapter 4 is that Yahweh made it very clear that he would not be manipulated by Israel. You can’t just carry an ark into battle and thereby force God to intervene on your behalf. But in chapter 5, the Lord does not permit the Philistines to conclude that their victory demonstrated Dagon’s superiority over himself. The Philistines are forced to recognize that the God of Israel is more powerful than Dagon. So Yahweh’s heavy hand, that’s that *chabed* root, gave glory—*chabod*—for himself in these events.

So the Ark is returned in chapter 6 and taken to Kiriath Jearim, and then subsequently to Abinadab’s house, where it remained for twenty years.

3. The Victory of Ebenezer – 1 Samuel 7:1-14

Okay, let’s go on to chapter 7. I want to make just a few brief comments on this chapter. This is twenty years later, you read in verse 2 of chapter 7. This is 3. on your outline, which is “The victory of Ebenezer, chapter 7:1-14.” Twenty years later the

Philistines are still threatening Israel. Samuel now takes leadership, and in verse 3 notice what he says to Israel: “If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” The Israelites do that; you notice in verse 6 that they fasted and confessed, “We have sinned against the Lord.” While they are doing that, the Philistines attack them and they become fearful. In 7:8 they say to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the Lord our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.” Samuel offers an offering, he prays to the Lord, and the Lord answers. You read in verse 10, “The Lord thundered with loud thunder on the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.” Israel has a great victory, quite in contrast to what you see in chapter 4 when they did not repent and confess and seek the Lord’s help and therefore lost the Ark. So I think chapter 7 demonstrates how Israel can find a sense of security and can secure victory over her enemies. She must do that by walking in the way of the covenant and seeking the Lord to intervene on her behalf and protect her from her enemies as he had promised to do.

4. Samuel is Established as a Leader in Israel

We come to the end of chapter 7, verses 15-17. That is 4. on your outline, “Samuel is established as a leader in Israel.” You sort of get a summary of his life in verse 15-17 where you read, “Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life. From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also judged Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.”

5. The Establishment of Kingship and Covenant Continuity – 1 Samuel 8-12

So that brings us to number 5. on your outline, which is “The establishment of kingship and covenant continuity, 1 Samuel 8-12.” I gave you a handout on that point in your outline. I think chapters 8-12 in 1 Samuel are five of the more important chapters in

the book. Of course 2 Samuel 7 with the promise of the eternal dynasty of David is a very significant chapter as well. But this section of Samuel concerns the rise of kingship in Israel, and the introduction of kingship to Israel is a very significant change for them. It's a restructuring of the theocracy from a direct theocracy, in which Yahweh was the divine king, to a more indirect theocracy, in which the king is a vice regent for Yahweh. That raises a host of questions. So I want to spend a fair amount of time on this with you, and that's why I gave you the handout. I think that will help us work through it.

If you look at your handout, 5. is "The establishment of kingship and covenant continuity in 1 Samuel 8-12." This describes the rise of kingship in Israel. This section of 1 Samuel actually divides into five sub-sections and those are the ones that are on the screen.

In 1 Samuel 8 you have the request. In 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16 you have the story of Samuel privately anointing Saul to be king. He does that when Saul is out searching for his father's lost cattle. Saul goes to Samuel on the advice of his servant, asking where he might find the missing cattle. The Lord had already told Samuel, "Someone is going to come to you asking you for that information. He is the one I have chosen to be leader over Israel; you are to anoint him." So that's in 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16. The chapter divisions here are not in the proper places because that is a narrative unit—9:1-10:16.

Subsequent to that private anointing, there is a public selection of Saul to continue in 1 Samuel 10:17-27, where Samuel calls all Israel to an assembly at Mizpah. Here Saul is chosen by lot to be king. So in 10:17-27, Saul is chosen publicly by lot at Mizpah. That's a separate narrative.

1 Samuel 11:1-13 is the story of the threat to the northern parts of Israel by the Ammonites. Saul raises an army and goes to fight the Ammonites and is victorious. So Saul's choice to be king is confirmed by victory over the Ammonites, and that goes through verse 13 of 1 Samuel 11.

Verse 14 in chapter 11 through chapter 12 describe what I would call a covenant renewal ceremony held at Gilgal, where Saul is inaugurated as king in context of the renewal of allegiance to Yahweh. Saul is inaugurated at the covenant renewal ceremony

convened by Samuel at Gilgal. Go back to your handout: “It’s often been claimed that this section of Samuel is composed of sources that reflect differing attitudes toward the monarchy. Sections 1, 3, and 5 are said to be late, historically unreliable, antimonarchy sources that were written subsequent to a long and bad experience to kingship.” In other words, 1., the request for a king in chapter 8; 3., the selection by lot at Mizpah; and 5., the ceremony at Gilgal. Sections 2. and 4. are said to be written earlier and are said to be more historically reliable pro-monarchical sources. They have more optimistic and favorable attitudes toward kingship. That’s a pretty standard literary analysis of this section of 1 Samuel in mainstream biblical studies.

But I don’t think that sort of analysis stands up to close examination. It is true that sections 1, 3, and 5 have strong statements about Israel’s sin and request for a king, and because of that you could say that is reflecting a negative stance toward kingship. If it was a sin to ask for a king, that would be some sort of a negative attitude toward kingship. But the problem is, it’s not consistently negative in sections 1, 3, and 5. At the same time, those same passages make clear that it’s the Lord’s purpose to give Israel a king. So you could say that that piece of it is positive with respect to kingship.

a. Kingship is Represented as Sinful in Narratives 1, 3, and 5

Now let’s look at some of those statements in which kingship is represented as sinful in narratives 1, 3, and 5. In chapter 8:7b in narrative 1 you read, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.” That’s Yahweh speaking when Israel asks for a king. In narrative 3 in 10:19 you read, “But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, ‘No, set a king over us.’” So again it’s negative: you have rejected God and asked to set a king over you. In narrative 5 in 12:17, “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.” In verse 19, “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.” In verse 20, Samuel says, ““You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.”” So you have those statements that say it was sinful for Israel to ask for a king; that’s a negative attitude toward kingship.

b. Positive View of Kingship

Yet on the other hand in the same passages, look at chapter 8:7, 9, and 22. In 8:7, the Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you.” And in verse 9, “Listen to them.” In verse 22, “Listen to them and give them a king.” It was within the Lord’s purposes that Israel should have a king. Look at 1 Samuel 10:24-25 for the third source: “Samuel said to the people, ‘Do you see the man the Lord has chosen?’” The lot fell on Saul, as the Lord had chosen Saul. ““There’s no one like him.”” And then in verse 25, “Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship.” Samuel explained the function of the role of the king of Israel. It’s too bad we don’t have a copy of that document, but it probably resembled the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17. In source 5, look at 12:13: “Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you.” That’s positive: “The Lord has put a king over you.” So the tension in 1 Samuel 8-12 is not that of a conflict between sources that are either pro- or anti-kingship.

c. Kingship and Covenant Renewal at Gilgal

Kingship itself is not the issue. The tension is centered on whether or not kingship confirms or denies Israel’s covenant relationship with Yahweh. When Israel sought national security by desiring a human king like the nations around and about—1 Samuel 8:5 and 20—she in effect rejected Yahweh who was her king—1 Samuel 8:7, 10:19-20 and 12:12. This abrogation of the covenant was the sin for which Israel was condemned. That’s the issue. When Samuel gave Israel a king at the Lord’s command, he did so in the context of the covenant renewal ceremony held at Gilgal where kingship was established. It was given in a setting of the reaffirmation of allegiance to Yahweh, and that’s what you

find in 1 Samuel 11:14, 12-25. In fact, this passage is the key to the resolution of the alleged antimonarchical tension in the previous chapters, because here that tension is resolved by establishing a kingship that is consistent with the covenant rather than in denial of it.

d. God as Israel's King

Now, understanding these narratives in this way throws light on the question of why kingship did not arise in Israel until several centuries after Israel had arrived in Canaan. All the surrounding nations had kings. Why did Israel not have a king? Some would suggest that it's a consequence of the need for transition from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life after Israel came out of the wilderness. Others would say that as the tribes went out to their territorial possessions, there wasn't any central unity to the people. But I don't think those kinds of circumstantial explanations get to the real issue.

It's a principal issue. Israel had been chosen by God to be his people; he was their king. He dwelt in their midst, and the Ark was his throne seat. It was the Lord who led Israel into battle and gave them their victory, as you see time and time again at the time of the conquest. You can see a recent example in 1 Samuel 7 with that victory over the Philistines. It was the Lord who lived in the land as king. But Israel came to be dissatisfied with that arrangement. They looked at a direct theocracy as a liability and a weakness rather than a privilege and a strength. When they asked Samuel to give them a king, their request constituted a rejection of the Lord, who was their king. That's repeated in those references in 1 Samuel 8:7, 10:19, and 12:12. So Israel wanted a human king in place of Yahweh. They wanted a national hero, a symbol of national power and unity, someone who would provide them with a visible guarantee of security and rest. So their request for a king reflected skepticism concerning the adequacy of the role of Yahweh as their king. It reflected fear of their enemies who were threatening them—in this context it is still the Philistines as well as the Ammonites. Then thirdly there was an attempt to find national unity and security with the surrounding nations. So that's the background and motivation for the request. Those motivations were wrong, and the kind of king Israel

wanted was wrong.

However, in God's purposes, the time for kingship already anticipated in previous revelations had now come. I mentioned earlier that if you go back to Abraham, Genesis 49:10 says, "Kings will come out of Abraham," "the scepter shall not depart from Judah." Deuteronomy 17 describes the law of the kingship. So there are all these anticipations that kingship would arise. In the Lord's purposes, the time for kingship to arise was here and now. Even though Israel desired a king for the wrong reasons, after warning them about their error, God told Samuel to give them a king.

One might place the words of Joseph over the situation. After Joseph was sold by his brothers, he says to them, "You intended evil against me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." I think you could say that has something to do with motivation of kingship. Whether or not the motivation was right, God turned their evil motivation into something good by giving them a king.

e. Kingship Under the Law/Covenant

So kingship was established, but it was a different sort of kingship than the people had requested. In 1 Samuel 10:25, recalling Deuteronomy 17:14-20, notice that the king is placed under the law of the Lord. The Israelite king was not autonomous in his rule. If you look at the surrounding nations, the king's word was the law and the king was seen as either divine or a spokesman with divine authority. In Israel there is a different idea of kingship. In Israel the king was not to be exalted above his brethren; he was not to be worshiped; he was not to multiply horses or wives (Deuteronomy 17). He must govern in accordance with God's law. In other words, the king is not a law to himself. He is every bit as subject to the Law of Moses as anyone else living in Israel. So kingship came to Israel by God's command even though its establishment was occasioned by the misdirected desire of the people for a king. But the sort of kingship inaugurated by Samuel was designed to be a kingship within the covenant, which was better than a kingship that denied the covenant.

f. 1 Samuel 8 – Warning King as “Taker”

Now what I want to do is look at 1 Samuel 8 and then at 1 Samuel 11-14. Let me go a bit further with this before the break. Let’s look at 1 Samuel 8. That’s the chapter where the people ask for a king. They do that in verse 5. They say to Samuel, “‘You are old, yours sons do not walk in your ways, and we want a king to lead us such as all the other nations have.’” That displeases Samuel, verse 6. But the Lord says in verses 7-9 and 22, “Give them a king; listen to what they say, give them a king.”

So I think I’ll skip down a couple paragraphs there in your handout. The Lord’s instructions to Samuel show that the time had come for the establishment of kingship in Israel because he says, “Give them a king.” However, he says in verses 9-10, “Warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.” That expression in the NIV translation, “Let them know what the king who will reign over them will do,” is literally, “Tell them the manner of the king.” “The manner of the king,” or “what the king who will reign over them will do,” is not what the king of Israel should do, but what the king like the nations round about them would do. And Israel had asked for a king like the other nations.

As you read further in this warning in verses 11-17, you find that a king like the nations round about them would basically “take.” Look what it says in verse 11: “This is what the king who will reign over you will do: he will take your sons and make them serve his chariots and servants.” Verse 12, “He will take some to be commanders of thousands, commanders of fifties to plow his ground and reap his harvest.” Verse 13, “He will take your daughters to be cooks.” Verse 14, “He will take the best of your fields.” Verse 15, “He will take a tenth of your grain—your vintage.” Verse 16, “He will take the best of your cattle and donkeys for his own use.” Verse 17, “He will take a tenth of your crops.” So the government hasn’t changed much. They take, take, take, take—anywhere and everywhere they can. That’s what the king like the nations round about them would in fact do.

Now at the bottom of page 3 of your handout there’s a note. The description of the manner of the king in 8:9-17 is to be contrasted with the manner of the kingdom. In

10:25, the manner of the kingdom is a description of what a true covenantal king should be like. When Saul was selected by lot, Samuel described the manner of the kingdom, and undoubtedly that description was not much like take, take, take; it would be more like Deuteronomy 17 which describes what a king should do.

But that's the warning and in I Samuel 8:11-17. The warning falls on deaf ears, because look at 8:19. The people refused to listen. "Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." So the request becomes a demand: "We must have a king over us." I think that the issue is seen in 8:20: "We want to be like all the other nations." Israel has lost the concept of their distinctness as the people of God, and that distinctness was the very reason for her existence. She was to be different from the nations around, and Yahweh was to be her king.

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