

Dr. J. Robert Vannoy, 1 & 2 Samuel, Lecture 3 of 4

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, 1 & 2 Samuel, Lecture 3 of 4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Robert Vannoy analyzes the narrative of King Saul in 1 Samuel through the lens of **kingship and covenant**. It argues that **Saul's reign ultimately failed** because his actions, particularly his disobedience in 1 Samuel 13 and 15, did not align with the **covenantal ideal of a king** submitted to God's commands. The lecture details instances where Saul prioritized his own will or the desires of the people over God's directives, highlighting the central issue of whether he would rule under or in place of God. Ultimately, **Saul's lack of obedience and trust** led to his rejection as king, paving the way for a ruler who would better represent the covenantal relationship with God.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, 1 & 2 Samuel, Lecture 3 of 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → 1 & 2 Samuel).



Vannoy_Samuels_Session03.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, 1 & 2 Samuel, Lecture 3 of 4

Executive Summary:

This briefing document analyzes Dr. Vannoy's lecture on 1 Samuel 13 and 15, focusing on how these chapters illustrate the failure of King Saul to embody the ideal of a covenantal king. Vannoy outlines a four-part structure for understanding kingship in 1 and 2 Samuel, with the third proposition being that "kingship as practiced by Saul failed to correspond to the covenantal ideal." The lecture meticulously examines Saul's disobedience to God's commands in these two key chapters, highlighting the contrast with the expected role of a king under God's covenant. Ultimately, Saul's actions demonstrate a preference for self-interest and the will of the people over divine obedience, leading to his rejection as king.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. Kingship and Covenantal Ideal:

- Vannoy frames the narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel through the lens of "kingship and covenant." He proposes four stages:
- Kingship requested as a denial of the covenant.
- Kingship instituted by Samuel as consistent with the covenant.
- **Kingship as practiced by Saul failed to correspond to the covenantal ideal.** (Focus of this lecture)
- Kingship as practiced by David was an imperfect but true representation of the ideal.
- The lecture concentrates on the third proposition, using 1 Samuel 13 and 15 as primary examples of Saul's failure.

2. Saul's Disobedience in 1 Samuel 13:

- **Context:** Saul's reign formally begins after the covenant renewal ceremony at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13:1). The regnal formula at the start of chapter 13, though textually defective, signals this new beginning.
- **Jonathan's Initiative:** Jonathan's attack on the Philistine garrison precedes Saul's direct action, contrasting with Samuel's earlier instruction to Saul to attack the Philistines at Gibeah after his private anointing (1 Samuel 10:7-8).

- **Saul's Impatience at Gilgal:** Instructed by Samuel to wait seven days at Gilgal for sacrifices and further instructions (1 Samuel 10:8), Saul disobeys due to the precarious military situation and the desertion of his men. He offers sacrifices himself before Samuel's arrival.
- **Samuel's Rebuke:** Samuel confronts Saul, asking, *"What is this you have done?"* (1 Samuel 13:11). He rebukes Saul for his foolishness and disobedience, stating that his dynasty will not endure and that the Lord has chosen *"a man after his own heart"* (1 Samuel 13:14) to be the future leader.
- **Central Issue:** Vannoy argues that Saul's actions reveal a critical flaw: *"Would he be a king under God? Or would he be a king in place of God?"* Saul prioritized his own perceived needs and the immediate circumstances over obedience to God's command.
- **Distinction between Piety and Obedience:** Vannoy emphasizes that *"religious words and religious acts do not necessarily coincide with walking in the way of the Lord."* Saul's seemingly pious motive of seeking the Lord's help does not excuse his disobedience. He quotes Gordon McDonald's description of such a person: *"A person who had not much notion of obedience to God, but he had some idea of respect of religion."*

3. Saul's Disobedience in 1 Samuel 15:

- **New Command and Opportunity:** Samuel delivers a clear command from the Lord to Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites as divine judgment for their past actions against Israel during the Exodus. This was an opportunity for Saul to demonstrate obedience despite past failures.
- **Partial Obedience:** While Saul defeats the Amalekites, he spares King Agag and the best of the livestock, keeping only what was *"worthless or of poor quality"* (NLT). This is a direct violation of the command to *"totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them..."* (1 Samuel 15:3).
- **Lord's Rejection:** The Lord tells Samuel, *"he has turned aside from following the Lord; he has not carried out the Lord's command"* (1 Samuel 15:11). This highlights the dual nature of covenantal kingship: following God and obeying His specific instructions.
- **Saul's Monument and Self-Importance:** Saul erects a monument in his own honor at Carmel before going to Gilgal. This act signifies that he viewed the victory as his own accomplishment, demonstrating a shift from being an

instrument of God to seeking personal glory. Vannoy argues this reveals Saul has *"become the autonomous absolute monarch in effect has become the anti-theocratic king."*

- **Saul's Evasive Claims:** When confronted by Samuel, Saul claims, *"the Lord bless you. I have carried out the Lord's command"* (1 Samuel 15:13), directly contradicting the Lord's statement to Samuel.
- **Justification through Sacrifice:** Saul attempts to justify sparing the best animals by claiming they were intended for sacrifice to *"the Lord your God"* (1 Samuel 15:15), notably distancing himself.
- **Samuel's Profound Rebuke:** Samuel delivers the powerful message: *"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king"* (1 Samuel 15:22-23).
- **True Religion vs. Ritualism:** Vannoy underscores that God desires obedience from the heart, not merely outward religious acts performed as a cover for disobedience. He quotes Isaiah and Matthew/Mark to illustrate this enduring prophetic theme.
- **Saul's Inauthentic Confession:** When faced with rejection, Saul confesses his sin but immediately qualifies it by saying he feared the people and gave in to them (1 Samuel 15:24). He prioritizes the voice of the people over the voice of God. His request for Samuel to join him in worship is seen as a desire to avoid public shame.
- **Symbolic Tearing of the Robe:** When Samuel refuses to accompany him, Saul tears Samuel's robe. Samuel uses this as a symbol, declaring, *"The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to someone else—one who is better than you"* (1 Samuel 15:28). This foreshadows the rise of David.
- **Samuel's Final Act:** Samuel completes the Lord's command by executing Agag. He then parts ways with Saul permanently, marking the end of Saul's legitimate covenantal kingship.

Conclusion:

Dr. Vannoy's analysis of 1 Samuel 13 and 15 clearly demonstrates Saul's failure to embody the ideal of a covenantal king. Through his disobedience to specific commands and his prioritization of self-interest and popular opinion over God's will, Saul forfeited his right to rule. These chapters serve as a crucial turning point in the narrative, setting the stage for the rise of David, who would, despite his own imperfections, better represent the concept of a king who is ultimately accountable to God's covenant. The lecture highlights the enduring importance of genuine obedience and a heart devoted to God over mere religious ritual and outward displays of piety.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, 1 & 2 Samuel, Lecture 3 of 4

Study Guide: 1 Samuel 13 & 15

Key Themes

- **Kingship and Covenant:** Understanding the role of the king in relation to the covenantal agreement between God and Israel.
- **Obedience vs. Sacrifice:** Examining the importance of heeding God's commands over performing religious rituals.
- **Consequences of Disobedience:** Analyzing the repercussions of Saul's failure to follow God's instructions.
- **True Piety vs. Outward Appearance:** Differentiating between genuine devotion to God and superficial religious acts.
- **Rejection of Saul's Kingship:** Understanding the reasons and implications of God's decision to reject Saul as king.
- **Contrast between Saul and Jonathan:** Recognizing the differing behaviors and attitudes of Saul and his son.

Quiz

1. According to the lecture, what were the four propositions for organizing the content of First and Second Samuel under the theme of kingship and covenant? Briefly describe the third proposition.
2. What specific command did Saul disobey in 1 Samuel 13, and what was the immediate consequence of this disobedience as stated by Samuel?
3. Describe the situation in Israel as the Philistines gathered their forces in 1 Samuel 13. How did the Israelites react, and what irony does the lecturer point out about this situation?
4. Why did Saul offer sacrifices before Samuel arrived at Gilgal in 1 Samuel 13, and how did Samuel respond to Saul's justification?
5. What was the central issue of covenantal kingship highlighted by Saul's actions in 1 Samuel 13? Explain the difference between being "a king under God" and "a king in place of God."

6. In 1 Samuel 15, what specific command did God give to Saul regarding the Amalekites? What was the historical context for this command?
7. Describe how Saul carried out the command regarding the Amalekites. What did he do that constituted disobedience, according to the lecture?
8. What were the two main reasons the Lord rejected Saul as king, as stated in 1 Samuel 15:11? Explain the significance of "following after the Lord."
9. What action did Saul take after his victory over the Amalekites that revealed his underlying attitude and led the narrator to question his sincerity?
10. How did Samuel respond to Saul's confession of sin in 1 Samuel 15? What were the key deficiencies in Saul's confession that made it unacceptable?

Answer Key

1. The four propositions are: (1) kingship is requested by the people as a denial of the covenant; (2) kingship as instituted by Samuel was consistent with the covenant; (3) kingship as practiced by Saul failed to correspond to the covenantal ideal; and (4) kingship as practiced by David was an imperfect but true representation of the ideal of the covenantal king. The third proposition, discussed in 1 Samuel 13 and 15, details how Saul's actions and disobedience demonstrated a failure to live up to the standards expected of a king within the covenantal framework.
2. In 1 Samuel 13, Saul disobeyed the command to wait for Samuel to arrive at Gilgal to offer sacrifices and give further instructions. Samuel rebuked Saul for this foolishness and told him that his dynasty would not endure because he had not kept the Lord's command.
3. The Philistines assembled a large army with superior numbers and technology, causing the Israelites to be frightened and intimidated. They hid in caves and thickets, and some deserted. The irony is that the people had asked for a king to provide safety and security, but they were just as fearful under Saul's leadership as they were before kingship was established.
4. Saul offered sacrifices because Samuel was late, his men were deserting, and a Philistine attack seemed imminent, leading him to feel "compelled" to act. Samuel responded by severely rebuking Saul, stating that he had acted foolishly by disobeying God's command and that his kingdom would not endure as a result.

5. The central issue was whether Saul would be a king under God, operating in complete submission and trust in the Lord's commands, or a king in place of God, viewing himself as above God's word. Saul's actions indicated the latter, prioritizing his own judgment of the circumstances over obedience to God's explicit instructions.
6. In 1 Samuel 15, God commanded Saul to attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belonged to them, sparing no one or anything. The historical context was the Amalekites' unprovoked attack on the Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt to Mount Sinai, which was seen as an opposition to God's redemptive purposes.
7. Saul defeated the Amalekites but spared their king, Agag, and kept the best of the sheep and cattle, destroying only what was worthless. This constituted disobedience because he did not completely destroy everything as God had commanded through Samuel.
8. The two main reasons were that Saul "turned aside from following the Lord" and "did not carry out the Lord's command." "Following after the Lord" signifies a recognition of Yahweh's sovereignty over the nation and its king, a fundamental requirement of their covenantal relationship.
9. After the victory, Saul set up a monument in his own honor at Carmel. This action suggested that Saul viewed the victory as his own accomplishment deserving of personal recognition, rather than as an act of God in which he was merely an instrument.
10. Samuel refused to accept Saul's confession and reiterated that the Lord had rejected him as king. The deficiencies in Saul's confession included a "yes but" response where he blamed his fear of the people for his disobedience, and an inverted use of terms where he claimed to "obey" the people's voice instead of God's, and his fear of the people replaced the fear of God. Additionally, his concern for public image undermined the authenticity of his repentance.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the covenantal framework in understanding the failures of Saul's kingship as presented in 1 Samuel 13 and 15. How did Saul's actions deviate from the ideal of a covenantal king?
2. Compare and contrast the nature of Saul's disobedience in 1 Samuel 13 and 1 Samuel 15. What do these two instances reveal about Saul's character and his understanding of his role as king?
3. Discuss the theme of "obedience is better than sacrifice" as it emerges in 1 Samuel 15. How does Samuel's rebuke of Saul highlight the importance of heeding God's commands over performing religious rituals?
4. Examine the ways in which Saul attempted to justify his disobedient actions in both 1 Samuel 13 and 1 Samuel 15. Why were these justifications ultimately rejected by Samuel and by God?
5. Evaluate the significance of the contrast between Saul and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 13 and 14 in understanding Saul's failure as king. How does Jonathan's behavior highlight Saul's shortcomings?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant:** A solemn agreement between two parties, in this context, between God and Israel, outlining responsibilities and blessings.
- **Kingship:** The system of governance by a king, which in Israel was expected to operate within the framework of the covenant with God.
- **Covenantal Ideal:** The standard of leadership expected of the king of Israel, characterized by obedience to God and faithfulness to the covenant.
- **Reignal Formula:** A standard introductory statement found in the books of Kings that typically includes the king's age at ascension and the length of his reign.
- **Theocracy:** A system of government in which God is recognized as the supreme ruler, and religious authorities govern on God's behalf.
- **Anointing:** A ritual act of pouring oil on someone's head, signifying their appointment to a special office, such as king or priest.
- **Sacrifice:** A religious offering made to God, often involving the killing of an animal.
- **Obedience:** The act of complying with a command or instruction, particularly in the context of heeding God's word.
- **Disobedience:** The refusal or failure to comply with a command or instruction, specifically God's commands in this context.
- **Ritualism:** The excessive adherence to religious rituals or ceremonies, sometimes without genuine faith or obedience.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, 1 & 2 Samuel, Lecture 3 of 4, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Kingship and Covenant in 1 Samuel

1. According to the lecture, what were the four main propositions regarding kingship and covenant in 1 and 2 Samuel? The four propositions are: first, kingship was requested by the people as a denial of the covenant; second, kingship as instituted by Samuel was consistent with the covenant; third, kingship as practiced by Saul failed to correspond to the covenantal ideal; and lastly, kingship as practiced by David was an imperfect but true representation of the ideal of the covenantal king.

2. What were the key instances in 1 Samuel 13 and 15 that demonstrated Saul's failure to uphold the covenantal ideal of kingship? In 1 Samuel 13, Saul disobeyed the Lord's command to wait for Samuel at Gilgal before offering sacrifices, acting out of fear and taking matters into his own hands when the military situation became precarious. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul was commanded to completely destroy the Amalekites but spared King Agag and the best of the livestock, again prioritizing his own judgment over the explicit word of the Lord.

3. How did Saul's actions in 1 Samuel 13 reveal a fundamental flaw in his understanding of kingship under the covenant? Saul's decision to offer sacrifices before Samuel arrived demonstrated a lack of trust in the Lord and an unwillingness to wait on His timing and instructions. He acted as if he were a king in place of God, rather than a king under God, letting circumstances dictate his actions instead of adhering to the Lord's command. This revealed a failure to grasp the central issue of covenantal kingship: complete submission and trust in God's word regardless of the situation.

4. In what ways did Saul attempt to justify his disobedience in both 1 Samuel 13 and 15? Why were these justifications deemed unacceptable by Samuel and the Lord? In 1 Samuel 13, Saul claimed he felt "compelled" to offer sacrifices due to the desertion of his men and the imminent Philistine attack. In 1 Samuel 15, he argued that the best animals were spared to be offered as sacrifices to the Lord. These justifications were unacceptable because they prioritized Saul's reasoning and perceived necessity over direct obedience to God's explicit commands. Samuel emphasized that obedience is better than sacrifice and that religious acts without a corresponding heart of submission are meaningless and even an abomination.

5. How did the comparison between Saul and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 13 and 14 highlight Saul's shortcomings as a covenantal king?

In contrast to Saul's fear and inaction, Jonathan displayed initiative and faith by attacking the Philistine garrison. Even within Saul's own actions in chapter 14, his self-serving behavior was often masked by pious language and religious acts, revealing a tendency to use religion to serve his own ambitions rather than genuinely serving the Lord. Jonathan, on the other hand, recognized his father's detrimental impact on Israel's success.

6. What was the significance of Saul erecting a monument to himself after the victory over the Amalekites in the context of covenantal kingship? Saul erecting a monument to himself indicated that he viewed the victory as his own accomplishment, rather than the Lord's. This demonstrated a shift from being an instrument of God's judgment to seeking personal glory, effectively positioning himself as an autonomous monarch rather than one subordinate to Yahweh. This act underscored his rejection of the theocratic principles of the covenant.

7. Why was Samuel so critical of Saul's confession of sin in 1 Samuel 15? What did Saul's confession reveal about his understanding of his transgression? Samuel deemed Saul's confession unacceptable because it was qualified by excuses ("I was afraid of the people") and focused on avoiding public shame rather than genuine repentance. Saul's confession revealed that he feared the people more than God, prioritizing their approval over obedience to the Lord's commands. He inverted the principles of the theocracy by "obeying" the voice of the people instead of God's.

8. What were the long-term consequences of Saul's failure to embody the ideal of a covenantal king, as described in the lecture? Saul's disobedience ultimately led to his rejection by the Lord as king and the end of his dynasty. His life became a downward spiral, marked by isolation and ending in suicide. Conversely, his failure paved the way for the rise of David, who, despite his own imperfections, demonstrated a greater commitment to the principles of covenantal kingship, even in his interactions with the flawed but still anointed Saul.