

Old Testament Literature

1 Samuel: The Demise of Saul and the Early Stories of King David

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Saul, David, Jonathan, Samuel, Witch of Endor, Amalekites, Philistines, Gilgal, Obedience, Divine Grief

Abstract

This lecture examines the tragic spiritual decline of King Saul contrasted with the rise of David in 1 Samuel. Through key narrative events—including Saul's unauthorized sacrifice at Gilgal, his foolish oath, and his blatant disobedience regarding the Amalekites—Dr. Hildebrandt illustrates Saul's forfeiture of his kingdom. In contrast, Jonathan and David demonstrate genuine faith, courage, and divine reliance, highlighting David as a leader after God's own heart. The lecture also explores theological themes of divine grief, open future possibilities, shrewdness versus deception, and spiritual awareness beyond death demonstrated in Saul's consultation with the Witch of Endor.

Outline

I. Introduction and Course Logistics

- A. Class preview and post-Thanksgiving welcome
- B. Overview of upcoming reading assignments, memory verse, and final exam details
- C. Opening prayer connecting David as a archetype pointing to Jesus Christ

II. Saul's Downfall: Unauthorized Sacrifice at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13)

- A. Geopolitical tension and Philistine encampment in the Rift Valley
- B. Saul's mounting fear and scattering troops at Gilgal
- C. Overstepping boundaries: Saul assumes priestly sacrifice duties
- D. Samuel's confrontation and proclamation of Saul's rejected dynasty
- E. Theological reflections: Conditional promises, divine responsiveness, and open future possibilities

III. Jonathan's Faith and Courage (1 Samuel 14)

- A. Jonathan emerges as a righteous hero in contrast to Saul's failure
- B. Vulnerable position in the Michmash valley cliffs (Wadi Suwenit)
- C. Jonathan's declaration of faith: God saves by many or by few
- D. Heroic assault on the Philistine outpost and divinely sent panic

- E. Turning point: Mercenaries within the Philistine ranks switching allegiance to Israel

IV. Saul's Foolish Vow and Jonathan's Rescue (1 Samuel 14)

- A. Saul imposes a rash oath prohibiting food consumption before evening
- B. Unaware Jonathan consumes forest honey and regains strength
- C. Sacred lots identify Jonathan as the technical violator of the vow
- D. Saul's willingness to execute Jonathan thwarted by the army's intervention
- E. Narrative irony: Saul spares foreign hostile kings but condemns his own heroic son

V. Saul's Disobedience Regarding the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15)

- A. Divine command to destroy Amalek due to historically oppressing stragglers
- B. Saul spares King Agag and the best livestock under a pious cover-up
- C. Divine grief: God's sorrow over establishing Saul as king
- D. Samuel's rebuke: To obey is better than sacrifice (Memory Verse)
- E. Immutability of God's character versus divine interaction in history

VI. The Anointing of David (1 Samuel 16)

- A. Samuel sent to Bethlehem to anoint Jesse's son
- B. Strategic wisdom: Taking a heifer to conceal purpose from lethal Saul
- C. God's evaluation standard: Outward appearance versus heart condition
- D. Anointing of David the shepherd boy and arrival of the Holy Spirit
- E. Departure of the Spirit from Saul and the onset of severe depression/tormenting spirit

VII. David's Triumph Over Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

- A. Standoff in the Valley of Elah against Philistine forces
- B. Goliath's taunts and David's arrival delivering provisions
- C. Sibling conflict: Eliab falsely accuses David of conceit and bad heart motives
- D. David's testimony: Faith forged through divine rescue from lion and bear
- E. Victory via sling and stone; David decapitates Goliath with the giant's own sword
- F. Victory song of the women triggers Saul's lethal jealousy ('thousands vs. tens of thousands')

VIII. Saul's Hostility and Attacks on David (1 Samuel 18–20)

- A. Fatal dowry requirement: 100 Philistine foreskins (David brings 200)
- B. Direct assassination attempts: Spear throwing and Michal's idol deception
- C. Covenant friendship: Jonathan's arrow signal warning David of Saul's intent
- D. Tearful parting and David's enduring vow to protect Jonathan's line (Mephibosheth)

IX. David's Flight and Wilderness Hiding Places (1 Samuel 21–27)

- A. Nob: Receiving holy bread and Goliath's sword; Doeg the Edomite slaughters 85 priests
- B. Gath: Feigning madness before Achish to survive Philistine recognition
- C. Keilah: Delivering the town; divine inquiry reveals contingent futures if David stayed
- D. Carmel: Intercession of beautiful and wise Abigail; divine death of foolish Nabal

E. Ziklag: Refuge among Philistines and textual evidence of post-solomonic composition

X. David Spares Saul and the Encounter at Endor (1 Samuel 24, 26, 28)

- A. David's refusal to harm 'the Lord's anointed' in the cave and night camp
- B. Saul's desperation when divine answers cease by dreams or Urim and Thummim
- C. The Witch of Endor and the genuine God-sent apparition of Samuel
- D. Samuel's doom prophecy and theological implications regarding afterlife awareness