

Books of The Bible

The Flesh and The Spirit in 1 Samuel - Introduction

Introduction

The book of First Samuel, as with any Biblical book, can be studied along several avenues such as:

- a) Theologically
 - i) The supremacy of God over all other gods (1 Sam. 5:2-7)
 - ii) His Holiness, knowledge, evaluation in things being weighed, has power over life and death; can make poor or rich; can bring the haughty down and exalt the lowly; preserve His own (1 Sam. 2:2-10).
 - iii) The seriousness of living after the flesh, judicial physical death (1 Chron. 10:13-14; 1 Sam. 31:3-40) or spiritual response to God (Rom. 8:13).
- b) Prophetically
 - i) When the rule of God is rejected as Israel was by their rejection of God as King (1 Sam. 8:7); the rejection of Christ as Messiah (Lk. 19:14); and doing despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29); they are despised in the world. However, by the end of Second Samuel David is king by God's appointment, and shadows the reign of the Lord in preparing for millennial glory.
- c) Devotionally
 - i) Through the various contrasts, these individuals display the flesh and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer (Gal. 5:17).
 - ii) The Ark is taken as the result of using the things of God as a good luck token (1 Sam. 4:3-11).
 - iii) The seriousness of sin in the life of the people of God (Hophni and Phinehas) (1 Sam. 2:14-17).
- d) Biographically
 - i) The ten different people, Elkanah and his two wives, Peninnah and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:2); Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. 1:1, 2, 3); two priests, Eli and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:9; 1 Sam. 9:2); (Samuel was never an official priest but functioned as one, 1 Sam. 2:18; 13:13); two responsible men, Saul and David (1 Sam. 18:6; 1 Sam. 16:13).
- e) Judiciously
 - i) Those of whom it says the Lord slew them:
 1. Er (Gen. 38:10)
 2. Firstborn in the land (Ex. 13:15)
 3. Saul (1 Chron. 10:13-14)
 - ii) Those who died under the judgment of God:
 1. Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. 2:34; 4:11)
 2. Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:2)
 3. Nabal (1 Sam. 25:37)
 4. Boys who mocked (2 Kgs. 2:23-24)
 5. Uzziah when he touched the Ark (2 Sam. 6:6-7)
 6. Herod (Acts 12:23)

There are several difficulties arising from this observation such as:

- a) Hannah prayed. How to know when to keep praying for a matter and when to stop (Lk. 18:3-5)? Zacharias and Elizabeth stopped praying for they accepted the passing of time, yet the Lord had heard their prayers and did answer them (Lk. 1:13).
- b) How do I know what to pray for? There are times when the Spirit of God brings matters to one's attention which need prayer, with them there is no difficulty. However, there are also times when we do not know how to pray, or what to pray for. Instances when there is a burden to pray for a person or thing

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but not know why. In ideal situations as illustrated in the Old Testament, prayers were made concerning what should be done and therefore what the will of God was (Jud. 1:1). Then knowing His will, one can pray in confidence. There must be a seeking of His will which at times the Spirit of God reveals and at other times the Spirit groans for we know not what to pray for, then the response is believing God will do that which is most glorifying to Himself. We say, "Thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42).

- c) How can I pray in believing faith, nothing doubting? The secret of receiving prayer is to know by the Holy Spirit that a certain matter is His will. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 Jn. 5:13-14). If one prays with a wrong motive or regards iniquity, "the Lord will not hear" (Psa. 66:18). There must be the unyielding confidence of His presence (Heb. 11:6); a universal reality and omnipotent power (Gen. 18:14); His readiness to hear and answer prayer (Psa. 50:15; 91:15; Jer. 29:12).

Observations: These will be gradually developed

- 1) Two men and their families Elkanah and Eli (1 Sam. 1:2; 3)
 - a) Two wives but were set in contrast:
 - i) Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none (1 Sam. 1:4, 5).
 - ii) Peninnah was fruitful but Hannah was barren by God (1 Sam. 1:6).
 - b) Two families are set in contrast (1 Sam. 2:16-18).
- 2) Two responsible men:
 - a) Eli and Samuel are set in contrast.
 - b) Samuel was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, a change of communication from God (Acts 3:24).
- 3) Two opposites:
 - a) Gilgal and the Philistines.
 - i) Gilgal the place of circumcision (Josh. 5:9); the Passover (Josh. 5:1); where Ehud slew Eglon King of Moab (Jud. 3:21-25). Moab symbolized pride and wrath (Isa. 16:6); earthly glory (Isa. 16:14); being at ease (Jer. 48:11).
 - b) Philistines.
 - i) The uncircumcised (not until 2 Sam. 1:10).
 - ii) They kept taking that which was of value to Israel.
 1. Their freedom (The captivity in Samson's time) (Jud. 10:7; 13:1).
 2. Their comprehension of God (Their god Dagon was superior).
- 4) Two governmental systems.
 - a) Judgeship and Kingship
 - b) Theocracy to monarchy
- 5) Situations of change
 - a) From the old priest to the young
 - b) From the Theocracy to Monarchy
 - c) From Judges to Prophets

The religious/political background

1 Samuel begins with the temple / Tabernacle at Shiloh. The word "Shiloh" refers to a person (Gen. 49:10) and a place (Josh. 18:1). Because God was their king, Shiloh was the centre of the political and religious life therefore it was there that:

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- a) The children of Israel set up the Tabernacle of the congregation (Josh. 18:1)
- b) The division of the land to the tribes was made (Josh. 18:8-10)
- c) The heads of the Levites came to Eleazar and Joshua for the cities God had promised them (Josh. 21:4)
- d) Elkanah and his family came to worship (1 Sam. 1:3)
- e) Hannah prayed for a son (1 Sam. 1:9-11)
- f) The Ark was at Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:4)
- g) It was where Jeroboam sent his wife in disguise (1 Kgs. 14:2)

This was during the final times of change when Israel would reject God as King and become a monarchy (1 Sam. 8:7). They were still the children of Abraham, still a people redeemed and delivered, but the fellowship which had been breaking for years came to its conclusion. Through the Judges there had been a series of departures from God religiously which led to being taken by various nations. In their servitude, they cried to the Lord and He graciously delivered them, but the time of their rejection of God's principles etc was soon to develop into the rejection of His position as King.

In the early chapters of 1 Samuel, Israel is seen as a nation whose god is not the Lord. The authority of God was rejected, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6). They did not learn from history, idolatry will not be tolerated by God. Centuries later God said, "But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished and is cut off from their mouth" (Jer. 7:28). This was a people who had been brought into a covenant relationship with God, had received His teachings for continued fellowship with Him and remedies when they failed; His prophetic statement of good for them; His presence guiding them through the wilderness; in giving them an inheritance they never worked for; and yet, they turned from God to idols.

Lessons for consideration

- 1) The New Testament assembly is also ideally, a people of God, where at times unsaved persons do get to be part of (Acts 20:28; Rev. 2:1:20-23; 3 Jn. 1:9). It is the Biblical teaching that there can be departures because of pseudo elders (Acts 20:28); by false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1) and false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13); undisciplined sin (1 Cor. 5:1-2); and the departures in the churches of Asia, Ephesus (Rev. 2:5). In every case people had been redeemed and delivered but were being swayed away from the principles of God. Consequently, in Laodicea, the Lord is outside the assembly (Rev. 3:20), and is calling the individual to His fellowship. The ultimate result is, just as Israel went into captivity so there is the removal of the lampstand or the saints being more conversant with the things of the earth than the things of God.
- 2) The ways of God are set aside so that people are not offended, sin is tolerated because of who the individual or individuals are, and teachers often have become Sunday school teachers as people desire speakers appealing to itching ears. Slowly over time, the sacredness of the presence of God is no longer, the qualifications for Him to be in the midst are ignored and the rule of the Lord is insidiously set aside as fleshy rationale is given leadership. Since the truths concerning Israel were written for our learning, ought we not pay close attention to them? Had Israel known their history, behaviours and attitudes toward God would be recorded in a book for generations to read, I wonder if they would have behaved differently? (Rom. 15:4)

The fundamental problem

The foundational problem was, they had lost their reverence and awe of God and lowered Him to be as a man, one whose statements were debatable and optional, and consequently the glory of the Lord was being set aside. There develops a satanic casualness relative to the things of God and then wonders why God does not bless. The sacred gatherings of the people of God, the holy institution, particularly of the Lord's supper, become optional, a self-centred "we are right" even though dead formality reigns.

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia