

# *Thru The Bible In One Year*

## *May 4- May 8*



*“Abimelech Giving The Sword Of Goliath To David” - Rembrandt*

### *Old Testament Readings 1 Samuel 26-31; 2 Samuel 1-5; 1 Chronicles 8-12*

The Old Testament readings continue to parallel the histories of the early monarchy narrating the final days of King Saul and the steady rise of David. In last week’s notes we emphasized the unique messianic significance of the monarchy in general and King David in particular as the key to understanding the importance of what might otherwise be nothing more than a dreary history of an insignificant little kingdom whose short lived glory was eclipsed by inevitable defeat and conquest. But these are the chosen people of God. Their crucial role in the plan of salvation is to serve as the custodians of the Word of God, the precious writings of the prophets which foretell and define the Messiah who will be the ultimate divine King, not merely of Israel, but of all humanity. Recall the background information provided last week that Samuel and Kings were written earlier closer to the time of the actual events, and Chronicles was written after many of the exiles returned to their homeland after the Babylonian and Persian captivities. King David is the central figure in both accounts. In Samuel and Kings he is the father of the nation. In Chronicles he is the hero around whom a crushed and defeated people are to regain their identity and hope so

that their messianic responsibility may be reestablished and completed. Sadly the Israelites yielded to a sinful nationalistic pride and self-righteousness as a distorted replacement for their calling to play a servant role in the coming a Savior who would win forgiveness for the sins of humanity.

Samuel tells the sad decline of King Saul who had failed to trust in God and chose instead to rely upon the ways of the world and act in the typical manner of worldly rulers. He had forgotten the fundamental principle that when God grants any kind of authority to anyone that authority is always the means to carry out responsibility in service to others. Sinful men typically use authority as a means of self-gratification and personal glory achieved by imposing control upon others by coercion.

The favor of God upon young David is indicated by the support demonstrated by the priest Ahimilech at the Tabernacle in the village of Nob. Not only does he provides him with the sacred show bread used in the rituals of the Holy Place but even more significantly he gives him the sword of the Philistine giant Goliath whom David had slain as the champion of God in the valley of Elah. This most precious national treasure had been kept in the tabernacle and its return to David was a most dramatic reminder of the fact that David remained God's champion in contrast to the failed King Saul who had been abandoned by the Lord.



*“King Saul And the Witch of Endor” - Martynov*

The spiritual collapse of Saul is illustrated by one of the most bizarre episodes in Scripture, the King's visit to the infamous "Witch of Endor." The King is on the eve of a crucial battle against the Philistines who had become Israel's most formidable adversary. Samuel is dead and Saul is desperate to know what the outcome of the battle will be. He is desperate because he has cut himself off from God and deprived himself of the confidence that comes from a faith relationship with God. In his desperation he resorts to the counsel of this figure whom the traditional KJV identifies as a "witch." The murky character was actually what we would call a "medium" or a "necromancer", that is someone who claims the ability to



*"Saul Before The Apparition Of Samuel" - Salvator Rosa*

communicate with the spirits of the dead for the purpose of predicting the future. When dealing with such occult activities there are two alternatives as to the nature of what is happening. In most instances, the supernatural abilities claimed are a fraud, carried out by trickery which preys on the desperation of gullible people. In some instances, however, the devil can use such superstition to accomplish his own hellish goals. That would seem to be

the case here. Satan uses this medium to drive the King of Israel to despair. The possibility that this is actually Samuel sent by God appears unlikely under these ungodly circumstances and the content of the message which is conveyed. She goes through her usual act, with all of the ordinary bells and whistles, in smoke and shadow, but then, to her consternation and surprise, something actually happens. A figure does appear dressed in the robe of a prophet. When Saul poses his question the figure responds “Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me!” Terrified by that prophecy, when things do not go well on the battlefield the king fell upon his sword and killed himself.

With the death of Saul, David becomes the King and begins to consolidate his Kingdom by moving the Ark of the Covenant to the new capital city which he has established in Jerusalem, a Canaanite town which he had captured from the Jebusites. No doubt the construction of the Temple there to house the Ark would have been the most effective way to combine religion and national identity. But David was prohibited by God from constructing the Temple because he was a man of war. Nonetheless, by choosing a site for his capital in a city he had taken from the Canaanites he affirmed his prowess as a warrior and also in this way the seat of his power is not associated with any particular tribe and is thus well suited to become the seat of the nation. This was a most clever move to replace the tribal rivalries of the past with a national identity to bind the tribes together. The subsequent the kingdom after the death of Solomon demonstrates how fragile that unity would remain for many generations still to come.



*“David Dancing Before The Ark” - Pieter van Lint*



*“The Areopagus At Corinth”*

### *New Testament Readings - Acts 18-22*

The Readings from the Book of Acts this week tell of the zenith of St. Paul’s missionary journeys among the Greek cities of Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula. His visits includes stops in what were probably the most important cities in the region, Corinth and Ephesus. By this time he is visiting places where he had previously established Christian congregations and most of his epistles are written to provide advice and counsel pertinent to the problems with which these young churches are struggling. Tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians remain prominent and those conflicts have direct implications for crucial theological issues relating to law and gospel. Judaism had degenerated into a legalistic pattern of careful observation of the rules and regulations of the Torah which denied the fundamental concept of grace which recognized that sinful man can only be restored to God and His love through that which God Himself had accomplished through the substitutionary atonement wrought by the perfect life and innocent death of Christ for us. By the end of the segment Paul returns to Jerusalem once again despite the personal danger posed by an increasingly frantic opposition from the High Priest and his cronies who fear that Christianity poses a real threat to the survival of Judaism. The provincial Roman government in Palestine has no interest in the intramural theological squabbles of the Jews. But their willingness to co-operate with their puppet government headed by the High Priest

is increasing as the political situation in the region is rapidly destabilizing. There is revolution in the air and the power and influence of the zealots is steadily increasing. At this point the revolt of the 60's is becoming evermore possible. In this context I have no doubt that the Roman authorities were painfully well aware that the crime for which they had crucified Jesus has been sedition, that is, attempting to bringing about a revolution against the Roman empire. If their memories grew dim, Caiaphas would have been quick to remind them of that fact.

It is enlightening to note the manner in which James the brother of our Lord and the elders (Greek - "presbyteroi" from which the English Presbyterian is derived) work with Paul to smooth over the tensions and maintain harmony within the congregations of Jerusalem. Paul's arrest and subsequent interactions with the Roman justice system set the stage for his journey to Rome and trial before the emperor in the imperial city the account of which will take up the remainder of the Book of Acts.