**Survey Old Testament**

**1 Samuel 4–7** These chapters relate three great events in the history of Israel.

1. God’s Glory Is Departed (4) **A great sin** (vv. 1–5).  Israel lost 4,000 men in the first battle, and this should have been evidence to them that God was displeased. Did they repent and turn to God in prayer and confession? No! Instead they resorted to superstition and took the ark of the covenant to the battlefield. They could not take the ark out in faith because God had not commanded them by His Word. **A great slaughter** (vv. 6–10). The Philistines were first afraid, then determined; even if the God of Israel were in the camp, they were going to behave like brave soldiers! Since God had forsaken His people, the Philistines had an easy victory. **A great sorrow** (vv. 11–22). Eli was sitting by the wayside when the messenger arrived at Shiloh with the sad news. Note how the messenger gives the four pieces of bad news in order of their importance: Israel is fled; many have been slaughtered; Eli’s two sons are dead; and the ark has been captured by the enemy. Eli falls down, breaks his neck, and dies; and his daughter-in-law likewise loses her life as she delivers a son. The name “Ichabod” means “no glory” or “Where is the glory?” The word “departed” may be translated “gone into exile.” Israel’s history is a story of receiving and then losing the glory of God.
2. God’s Name Is Defended (5–6) God will not reveal His power on behalf of His sinning people, but He will not allow His glory to be mocked or His Name to be defiled by the enemy. The lords of the Philistines added the ark to their other religious symbols in their heathen temple and put Jehovah on the same level as their fish-god Dagon. Of course, God stands high above all other gods! No wonder the heathen idol fell on its face before the ark! The men put Dagon back on his feet because he was powerless to help himself; but the next day they found their beloved idol without hands and head! Dagon lost his hands, but the hand of the Lord was heavy in judgment upon Ashdod (v. 6). The ark was then moved from Ashdod to Ekron, but the citizens there begged to have it removed! Once again, God defended His name. The Philistines decided to return the ark to Israel, but nobody had the courage to undertake the task. They finally decided to put the ark on a new cart and allow the cows to walk down the road unassisted. It would be natural for the cows to seek out their calves (v. 10); but if they headed instead for Bethshemesh, it would be evidence that God was directing them and therefore that He had sent the plagues. The Philistines added a trespass offering too. God directed the cows and they brought the cart to the field of Joshua, an inhabitant of Bethshemesh. The Israelites in the harvest field rejoiced to see the ark returned. However, they became curious and looked into the ark (vv. 19–20), and God had to judge them. Seventy men were judged instantly, certainly a “great slaughter” for such a small village.
3. God’s People Are Delivered (7) The ark was not returned to Shiloh; it remained at the house of Abinadab for twenty years. Samuel summoned the nation to Mizpeh for a prayer meeting! Samuel stepped on the scene when the priesthood was decayed, when the nation was defeated, and when God’s glory had departed. The events at Mizpeh were these: (1) Samuel poured out water before the Lord as a symbol of the nation’s repentance, their hearts poured out in sorrow for their sins; (2) He offered a burnt offering to indicate Israel’s complete dedication to God; (3) He prayed for the nation while they were fearing the arrival of the Philistines; God gave the army of Israel a great victory. What a day that was! Samuel accomplished with one prayer a victory that Samson could not win during the entire twenty years of his leadership! From that day on (until David’s great victory over the Philistines), the enemy kept their distance. Such is the power of a dedicated life, the power of prayer (James 5:16).

**1 Samuel 8–15**

These chapters cover the early life of Saul and record the sins that led up to his rejection by the Lord.

1. The Request for a King (8–10) Jehovah God had been King of Israel and had cared for the nation since its beginning; but now the elders of the nation wanted a king to lead them. Their request was motivated by several factors. Samuel’s reaction to their request shows that he fully understood their unbelief and rebellion: they were rejecting Jehovah. He granted them their request, but He warned them of the cost. See Deut. 17:14–20 for Moses’ prophecy of this event. They wanted to be like the other nations, even though God had called them to be separate from the nations. Chapter 9 explains how Saul was brought to Samuel and privately anointed for the kingship. Note his humility in 9:21, and also in 10:22 when he hesitated to stand before the people. God gave Saul three special signs to assure him (10:1–7). Samuel also instructed Saul to tarry at Gilgal and wait for him to come (10:8). Saul had everything in his favor: (1) a strong body, 10:23; (2) a humble mind, 9:21; (3) a new heart, 10:9; (4) spiritual power, 10:10; (5) loyal friends, 10:26; and most of all, (6) the guidance and prayers of Samuel. Yet in spite of these advantages, he failed miserably. Why? Because he would not allow God to be the Lord of his life.
2. The Renewal of the Kingdom (11–12) Saul returned home and was actually hesitant to talk about his great experience. Samuel was still the spiritual ruler of the land, and he and Saul were waiting for God’s leading concerning the future of the nation. Saul’s first opportunity came when Nahash threatened the nation. Certainly this national victory put Saul before the people and established his authority. Some of his associates wanted Saul to kill those Israelites who had opposed his reign (10:27), but Saul showed humility and restraint by giving the glory to the Lord and refusing to take vengeance on others. This victory was the occasion for a renewal of the kingdom and a rededication of the nation. Samuel reviewed his own ministry and reminded the people that he had been faithful to them and to the Lord. He then reviewed the history of the nation and led the people to see that they had greatly sinned against the Lord by asking for a king. He called for rain to show the people his own faith and the power of God, and the sudden storm in harvest (an unusual event at that time of the year) brought fear to the people. They admitted their sin but still wanted a king.
3. The Rejection of the King (13–15) These three chapters record three sins of King Saul, sins that ultimately cost him the kingdom. (**1**) **Impatience** (chap. 13). The time had now come for Israel to gather at Gilgal as Samuel and Saul had agreed months before (10:8). Note how Saul took the credit for his son’s victory at Gibeah in order to impress the people and get them to follow him. The vast host of the Philistines began to assemble, and the longer Saul waited, the more dangerous his position became. If he were to strike immediately, he could defeat the enemy, but his delay only gave them opportunity to become stronger. Saul’s impatience (and unbelief) led him to go ahead without Samuel, and while Saul was completing the offering, the prophet appeared. Verses 11–12 record Saul’s excuses as he tried to put the blame on Samuel and the people. “I forced myself!” he told Samuel, but the prophet knew the truth. This was the beginning of the end: if God could not trust him in this little matter, how could He trust him with the kingdom? Saul’s impatience cost him the kingdom. (**2**) **Pride** (chap. 14). Jonathan, Saul’s son, was evidently a godly man; for the Lord gave him and his armor bearer a victory over the Philistines. Saul was only a spectator (vv. 16–18), but he then mustered his troops and shared in the victory. Unfortunately, however, Saul had uttered a foolish vow that day forbidding his soldiers to eat any food. How foolish to think that a sacrificial vow would give him victory when his heart was not right with God! Jonathan knew nothing about this curse, so he went ahead and ate some honey and was strengthened (v. 27), and his example of practical wisdom encouraged the army to go ahead and eat after their victory (vv. 31–32). The Jews were so hungry they ate the meat with the blood (Lev. 17:10–14), which was far worse than breaking the vow. Saul tried to amend this by offering the spoils as a sacrifice to God. When the army went to their next engagement, they sought the guidance of God but failed to get an answer. This led to Saul’s discovery of Jonathan’s disobedience, and the foolish king was going to kill his own son! How easy it is to be convicted about somebody else’s sins! The people rescued Jonathan, but Saul’s actions revealed the darkness of his heart. Trouble was soon to come. His pride would bring him low. (**3) Disobedience** (chap. 15). God would give Saul one more chance to prove himself, this time by utterly destroying Israel’s old enemies, the Amalekites (Deut. 25:17–19; Ex. 17:16). But Saul did not obey the Lord: he kept the best of the spoils for himself and failed to kill Agag, the king. God told Samuel what Saul had done, and the burdened prophet prayed all night. When Samuel approached Saul, the king lied to him and told him he had obeyed God’s Word. Just about that time Saul’s sins found him out, for the animals began to make noise. Once more, Saul resorted to excuses: then Samuel delivered God’s message to the rejected king. When Samuel was about to leave Saul, the king confessed his sins, but his confession did not impress the prophet (vv. 24–27). True confession involves more than saying “I have sinned”; it means repentance and true sorrow for sin. As Samuel turned away, Saul held to his robe and ripped it, and Samuel took this as a prophecy that the kingdom would be torn from Saul and given to another (David). Verse 30 reveals that Saul was more concerned about what the people thought than what God thought; he wanted a good reputation, but he did not want true character. Samuel worshiped with Saul, and then killed Agag as the Lord had commanded, but this was the last time Samuel walked with Saul.

**1 Samuel 16–17**

We enter now into a study of the life of David, “the man after God’s own heart.”

1. The Obedient Son (16:1–13). What a solemn statement: “I have rejected Saul!” So dangerous was Saul that Samuel had to devise a plan to escape his wrath when visiting Bethlehem. When, at God’s direction, Samuel arrived at the house of Jesse to invite them to the feast, David was not even there! He was in the fields caring for the sheep. We cannot help but be impressed with David’s obedience and humility. As the “baby of the family” he had very little status, but he was faithful to his father and to the Lord. When David appeared, summoned from the field, God told Samuel, “This is he!” His anointing with oil brought him a special unction from the Spirit of God, and from that hour he was God’s man.
2. The Humble Servant (16:14–23) What a tragic contrast: the Spirit came upon David, but departed from Saul!  An evil spirit was permitted by God to afflict Saul. His strange behavior prompted his servants to suggest that he call a skilled musician to soothe him. The servants should have prayed for Saul to get right with God! David was just the man Saul needed, and one of the servants suggested him. Already we can see David’s abilities being recognized, yet David was not promoting himself: God was doing it.
3. The Victorious Soldier (17). The story of David and Goliath is familiar and carries with it many practical lessons for the Christian life. David arrived with provisions for his brothers, and immediately he was interested in the challenge of the giant. Note that his own brethren accused him and tried to discourage him; Satan always has somebody to tell us “it can’t be done.” Even Saul tried to dissuade him: “You are not able”. Well, in himself, David was not able, but in the power of the Lord he could overcome any enemy.

**1 Samuel 18–21 David is Exiled**

1. These chapters form the transition between David’s service in Saul’s court and his exile as a fugitive. They explain how David was moved from being Saul’s favorite to being Saul’s foe.
2. We also see in these chapters the hand of the Lord delivering David. God is with David every step of the way as he goes through each of these trials.
3. Jonathan and David had a great godly friendship. These two great warriors really had a godly love for each other. This reveals the need for true godly friends.

**1 Samuel 22–24 David is Protected**

1. David is now completely separated from Saul’s court and is considered an outlaw and a rebel. Psalm 34 grew out of his narrow escape from Achish (1 Sam. 21:10–15) and perhaps best expresses David’s trials and triumphs during his exile period. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all”. God was with David and helped him.
2. Saul caught up with David in 1 Samuel 24.  Saul’s life was in David’s hands as the king went to relieve himself in the same cave where David was hiding. So close was David that he cut off a piece of the king’s robe as evidence of his opportunity to kill him. But even this act convicted David, who would not think of harming Saul bodily. David would not hurt the king, for he regarded Saul as the Lord‘s anointed. Yet, as David said, the king had no just cause for hunting him down. In repentance, Saul acknowledged David’s righteousness, that David was a better man than he and the fact that David would indeed be king.