

Lesson for December- 21, 2008

## Old Testament Survey

### The Books of I Samuel and II Samuel

There are four prominent characters in the books of I Samuel and II Samuel: Eli, Samuel, Saul and David. All of these men played important roles in the history of Israel. Eli was the high priest and judge of Israel and people looked to him for guidance and leadership in spiritual matters and often even civil matters. Eli was a good man who truly loved serving God, but had two sons who were evil and did not know Jehovah. They are called sons of Belial (Satan) and Eli failed in his responsibility to properly discipline his sons and instead allowed them to practice as priests. For their rebellion, Eli's sons were killed in battle, and the Ark of the Covenant was taken by Israel's enemies.

The importance of the life of Eli was that it was to him that Samuel was brought as a young child to learn the service of the Lord. Samuel was chosen by God to be a prophet, a priest and a judge in Israel and played a significant role in the life of both Saul (the first king of Israel) and David.

Israel wanted a king like the other pagan nations around them had and rejected the authority of God that He had set up through the judges. Samuel warned the people of Israel of the consequences of having a king. He told them that they would be required to give the king most of their fields, their children as servants to him and to tithe to him from all that they had. Even after this warning from Samuel the nation of Israel demanded a king, therefore, God allowed them to have one.

Saul was the one who God chose to be king of Israel. Saul was a believer who started his life as king of Israel very well. He was a very handsome man and a good person. As king in the early years, Saul ruled the nation well and was an obedient servant to Jehovah. However, he allowed his pride and jealousy to cloud his judgment in the later years. He also tolerated paganism and was influenced by the witch of En-dor, which cost him his kingdom.

The new king of Israel would be David, and Saul was jealous of David to the point of trying to kill him. Saul's jealousy of David began when David killed the Philistine Goliath in battle, which was something no other Israelite was able to accomplish. With nothing more than a slingshot and a few rocks, David was able to defeat Israel's greatest and most powerful enemy. Of course, David was a person of great faith in God even as a young man. Saul's ego could not handle the praise and honor that was bestowed upon David as a result of his accomplishments in war. David's greatest ally and friend was Saul's son Jonathan who continually warned David of Saul's plots to kill him.

The book of I Samuel ends with the suicide of Saul as the Philistine army has defeated him and they are about to kill him. Rather than be taken, Saul chooses to fall on his sword and kill himself. What a sad ending to a life that began so well. It is a warning to all of us that rebellion against the Lord and His commandments leads to destruction. In the case of Saul, spiritual destruction led to physical destruction. Saul became reversionistic as he slowly moved farther and farther from his faith in Jehovah.

### Biblical Phrases for the Reversionist

There are many phrases throughout Scripture that describe the reversionistic believer. We will consider a few in order to give us an insight as to how God views these believers.

They are said to have *fallen short of the grace of God*. God's standard for all believers is based on His grace. Therefore, anyone that fails to execute His plan for them has fallen short of His grace. Failure to acknowledge and adjust to God's grace policies results in mental attitude sin. In Hebrews 12:15 we see a result of coming short of God's grace - mental attitude sinning. Bitterness in this passage is the mental attitude sin that results in self-induced misery and defilement of those around you. The Greek word for "defile" is very graphic; it is a reference to a chamber pot being thrown from the roof of a house onto a passerby!

They are said to be *enemies of God and the Cross*. Don't forget that we are talking about believers. In Philippians 3:18-19 we are given a description of these reversionists. They have made emotion their god, they glorify their human works and they set their minds on earthly things. For these reasons they are enemies of God and the Cross of Christ. They even may die "the sin unto death" (the premature death of a reversionistic believer). Some of these reversionists are kept alive as a test for advancing believers.

They are said to be *tortured souls*. In II Peter 2:7-8 we have a reference to those who follow after the apostate teachers into reversionism. The King James says this person's soul (which is righteous - a believer) is "vexed" or tormented. The story is of Lot, Abraham's nephew, who chose to live in Sodom and Gomorrah in order to enjoy the lifestyle. Verse 7 tells us that the corruption and debauchery in these cities overpowered him. He should have separated himself, but God, in His grace, had to do it for him. Lot was out of God's will from the moment he chose to live in these evil cities. A believer who is outside of God's will and plan is a reversionist.

The reversionist is also said to have *left his first love*. He started well as a believer but ended poorly. Revelation 2:4, gives us the insight into this phrase. It is a reference to the church at Ephesus that had grown to spiritual maturity. After years of growth, however, they abandoned their love for Christ and His Word and drifted into reversionism. They grieved and quenched the Holy Spirit and became distracted as a result. (Ephesians 4:17-32)

God hates reversionism but, of course, loves the reversionist. Reversionists are losers in life. Not only do they reject God's Word, but they reject all of His divine blessings, as well. As a loser, the reversionist still has eternal life, but never has the victory in life that God intended for him. The potential is there, as it always has been, and always will be. Therefore, it is God's desire that all believers be winners by executing His plan. But God is a gentleman and will never force His will on anyone.

Most people want to be happy, but by what means will they seek it? If a person is a believer in Christ, the only source of happiness is God. It only makes good sense, therefore, to follow God's system for happiness and not your own. We have seen the results for a believer who frantically searches for happiness apart from God and His Word. This can even be applied to a believer who faithfully attends Bible class.

Simply exposing one's self to accurate Bible teaching is not a magical fix. When Bible doctrine is not being *applied* to your behavior, it is obvious that your mind is not renewed. You have denied and rejected Bible doctrine while claiming to be positive toward it. Positive volition toward God and His Word means more than passing interest in it. If you say that you love Bible doctrine and you are not exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit, then **YOU DON'T REALLY LOVE BIBLE DOCTRINE AND YOU ARE DECEIVING YOURSELF**. If a person truly loves the Word of God then they will study it, believe it and make the proper application of it, which will change their thinking and their behavior to be like that of Christ's.

(II Timothy 2:15)

God, in His magnificent grace, has provided everything that we need as Christians to be successful and happy. Even when we fail, God has designed a recovery system to get us back on the track to success and happiness. We have no excuse for not becoming winners and fulfilling our spiritual destiny. But we must *chose* to become winners, which glorifies God and gives our lives purpose and meaning.

We all have equal opportunity to succeed or fail in the Christian Way of Life. Success depends on positive volition towards Bible doctrine. A believer can only learn *accurate* Bible doctrine from a man with the gift of pastor-teacher. Accurate teaching of God's Word takes many hours of study and preparation by the pastor-teacher. It also requires the proper method of Biblical interpretation, which is accomplished through the principle of I.C.E. *The I.C.E. principle stands for Isagogics, Categories and Exegesis.* Isagogics means that the Word of God must be interpreted in the time it was written from a historical point of view. Categories of doctrine must be studied and taught in a logical, systematic way, letting the Bible interpret itself, so the hearer can understand and store this information. Exegesis is the verse-by-verse study and teaching of the Word of God, in order to understand it within its context. Accuracy comes by examination of the original languages, the etymology of words, their tenses and grammatical use. *Learning, believing and applying Bible doctrine should be the number one priority for every believer. This is the only means in this age to grow spiritually, which results in pleasing God, being in His will and glorifying Jesus Christ.*