

The Jewish Kingdom - Lesson 2

Israel before the Kingdom

Last week we looked over the history of Israel leading up to the establishment of the kingdom and discussed the method for our study of the kingdom period. Before we begin our look at Samuel, we need to look at the overall state of affairs that would lead to the demands for a king.

I. The Political State

A. Judges

1. The Judges weren't "judges" like in the modern judicial sense, but were leaders specially chosen by God to lead his people.
2. Eli and Samuel can be considered Judges also (I Samuel 4:18, 7:15-17)
3. As we begin our study in I Samuel, we must remember that the opening events take place in the time of the Judges
 - a) It's a little difficult to pin down exactly, but Eli and Samuel would have been contemporaries of Samson.

B. Canaanites

1. The 12 tribes had failed in one of God's commands in not driving the Canaanite people completely from the Promised Land (Judges 2:1-5)
2. One interesting point is that the Israelites had little success in battle against the peoples that dwelt in the plains of Canaan.
3. A quick look at a couple of these:
 - a) The Philistines
 - (1) lived in the area along the coast to the southwest of Canaan
 - (2) some historians believe they may have been related to the Greeks
 - (3) A constant source of aggression against Israel
 - (4) At one time held a monopoly on iron trade and work in the area (I Samuel 13:19-22)
 - b) Jebusites
 - (1) A Canaanite people that held a strong position at Jerusalem

II. The Religious State

- A. The Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh
- B. One thing to consider is that the people often didn't wholesale reject God and embrace paganism, but would adopt certain practices/beliefs and in a sense become polytheists
- C. Most significant of the pagan deities was Baal (literally "lord" or "master") who was associated with harvest and fertility
- D. Eli, with his issues, was probably illustrative of the high priests of the time.

III. The Moral State

- A. Confused - Judges 17:6, 21:25
- B. The closing chapters of Judges (17-21) give examples of Israel's moral decline
 1. Self-centered worship/idolatry of Micah - Judges 17-18
 2. Vengeance of the cowardly Levite - Judges 19

IV. Glimpses of Hope

- A. Ruth - the Moabitess who converted
 - B. Hannah - the weeping wife whose prayer was heard
 - C. Samuel - the child of promise who served
- V. The First Attempt at Monarchy
- A. In our study of the Kings of Israel, we must consider that one attempt was made by an ambitious, unrighteous man in the days of the Judges
 - B. Abimelech, son of Gideon (Judges 8:30-31), attempted to set himself up as king in Judges chapter 9
 - C. He met an ignominious fate (Judges 9:50-57)