

The Histories: Part II—Saul, David & Solomon

Warm-up Exercise:

A friend of mine e-mailed me this quiz.... It's time to elect a President of the World. The three leading candidates are as follows:

- Candidate A: associates with political bosses who try to buy power, tried to rig his country's highest court, and consults with astrologists. He's had two mistresses. He chain smokes and drinks 8 to 10 martinis a day.
- Candidate B: was kicked out of office twice, sleeps until noon, used opium in college and drinks a quart of brandy every evening.
- Candidate C: is a decorated war hero. He's a vegetarian, doesn't smoke, drinks an occasional beer and has a long-term, faithful relationship with one woman.

Which of these candidates is your choice?

No one is perfect all the time. We are all complex people—even our leaders—capable of good and evil, of great things and petty weaknesses—or vice-versa. This fact is an important part of the story of the three major figures that dominate this portion of the Old Testament: Saul, David, and Solomon were attractive leaders—but each had flaws.

David's "Pre-History": Ruth

Questions from Homework (pp. 282-287)

- The story of Ruth happened over 2500 years ago. What things seem strange to you, a citizen of the 21st century?
- What "people" are Ruth and Orpah from? What people is Naomi from?
- Why does Ruth go with Naomi?
- How do we know that God looks with favor on Ruth?
- In the midst of tales of armies, conquest, kings, queens, high priests, prophets, large-scale sinning, and murder, why would this "little" story be included?
- What relationship does Ruth have to David?

Saul: Israel's first real king

Saul accomplished great things for Israel:

- Won a lot of major battles, consolidating the work that began under Joshua.
- Beat back the Philistines enough to secure Israel's borders.
- Ushered in a period of relative prosperity for the people.
- Increased Israel's status in the region—Israel was a force to be reckoned with!

But where did he get his "power"? (1 Samuel 9: 27-10:1; 10: 9-24 [pp. 298-299]—background—Saul was sent to Samuel to see if Samuel could help Saul find some donkeys that had wandered off—out of that humble beginning....) Samuel warns Saul and the people of Israel to be good: (1 Samuel 12: 14-15, 20-25 [p. 302])

And indeed, Saul messes up and faces dire consequences: (1 Samuel 13: 13-14 [p. 302]; 1 Samuel 15:10-11, 17-31 [pp. 305-307]). Saul remains the king, but God sends Samuel to anoint David as the next King.

David: The First Rock Star

David is anointed as the next king: (1 Samuel 16:11-13 [pp. 308])

David slays Goliath: (1 Samuel 17: 19-24, 28-50, 57-58 [pp. 308-310])

- How do these stories “foreshadow” the story of Jesus and what people were expecting the Messiah to be like?

Saul becomes jealous of David, David ends up hiding and living on the run; years later, he ends up welcomed as the guest by the Philistines—under the theory “the enemy of my enemy must be my friend”! But even Saul knows that David is the “future,” a man filled with righteousness: (1 Samuel 24: 16-22 [p. 317])

David DEFEATS the Philistines, cements Israel’s place as a regional super-power, is an amazing poet and musician, ends up, arguably, as the 2nd most important person in the Old Testament (after Moses). But he also falls into sin—for example, he falls in love with a married woman he spies in the bath, then sends her husband to his death so he can marry her. The prophet Nathan chews David out—but David admits his sin, accepts his punishment, and returns to God’s favor—for the most part. (Nathan’s rebuke of David: 2 Samuel 12:7-10 [p. 338])

Read the 2nd paragraph on p. 325 of your student Bible.

Read the box on p. 339 that compares David with Richard Nixon. Does he remind you of anyone else from our recent history?

Solomon: A Wise King Falls Hard

Under David’s son Solomon, politically, the promises to Moses were fulfilled: the first part of Solomon’s reign was the golden age of Israel. The people occupied almost all of the promised land—securely; food was plentiful; Solomon built a magnificent temple to God in Jerusalem; trade began with far-flung countries; Israel was wealthy. However, as he aged, Solomon became blinded by the trappings of his success, and, the author of 1 Kings concludes.... (1 Kings 11: 6 [p. 373]—Check out the whole passage beginning at 1 Kings 10:14 – 11:6 to see how much Solomon had fallen in love with his lifestyle.)

The end result? Israel fractured into 2 kingdoms, Israel to the North and Judah to the South. The descendants of David remain in Judah; some of Judah’s rulers are faithful to God—for the next 300+ years, none of the rulers of Israel were faithful to God.

Homework:

Next time, we start looking at some of the Prophets in the Old Testament. Read 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18 [pp. 382-386]. You’ll meet Elijah, and see him in action. Of whom does he remind you?