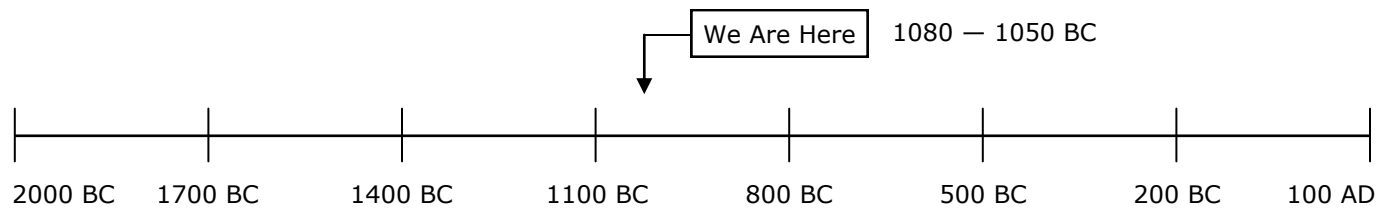


# Finish Strong

BiAY.org | Weekly Reviews

Week 15: April 9-15 — *1 Samuel 1-21; Various Psalms*

28.8% Complete — 260 Days to Go



## Helpful Resources

Map of the United Kingdom of Israel (p.107), Overview of Bible History (p.37)

## Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Because of its immorality and neglect, Israel suffered through the period of judges for more than 300 years. God had been patient long enough; He finally displayed His disappointment. More shocking than anything He could have done, He allowed the unthinkable to happen. The Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of His presence) was captured by Israel's enemy (Philistines, *1 Sam. 4:1-11*). Here was a pointed expression of His disgust with Israel's negligence. It did not take long for the people to realize that God's protection left with His presence.

Furthermore, government by God (theocracy) had failed, not because of anything the Lord had or had not done but because the people of Israel lacked the ability to govern themselves. Although the answer to their problems was simple obedience to the words of God, the people blamed their problems on the fact that they didn't have a king. They insisted that God establish a monarchy for them. Their desire for a king was in sharp contrast to God's desire that they be different than other nations (*1 Sam. 8:5, 20*). However, He told Samuel to choose a king and he selected Saul.

With the appointment of King Saul, Israel transitioned into the next phase of its history, what is oftentimes referred to as the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom will last just over a century and will feature Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. It is referred to as "united" because there will be a day in its near future when Israel will be divided. Let's take a look at the first two kings (*1 Samuel 18:1-16; 19:1-10*).

We can learn many lessons from Saul and David; however, it seemed that much of this week was dominated by the conflict between them. Let's focus on that relationship. The bottom line is that Saul *coveted* David's fame, which caused him to become *jealous* of David, and to *envy* him. What does it mean to covet? To desire another's possessions, privileges, advantages, etc. It is to say, "I want what you have." What is jealousy? It's a fear of losing superiority to someone else. It is to say, "What you have makes you better than me." Satan loves for us to fall prey to jealousy, because of what it causes us to do next. Jealousy leads to envy. To envy someone is to become so jealous that you would actually hurt that person. It is to say, "Because you're better than me, I'm going to mistreat you." We must stay clear of the envy trap! How? By avoiding jealousy, which is to avoid covetousness. It is so important not to covet that God included it in the Ten Commandments. Look what coveting David's popularity and achievements did to Saul. Satan would like to do the same to destroy you.

- Prophetic Passages
  1. **Concerning Eli's Sons** (1 Sam. 2:30-36): God foretold of the fate of Eli, his sons, and his extended family, all of which was fulfilled (1 Sam. 4:1-18; 22:16-19).
  2. **Prophecy of Kings** (8:10-18): God warned Israel through Samuel what kings would do to the people; they would abuse and enslave them in various ways.
  3. **Man After God's Heart** (13:11-14): The selection of David was foretold to Saul.
  4. **Kingdom Torn Away** (15:27,28): Saul's reign would be stripped from his family.
  5. **The Cross** (Psalm 34:20): None of Jesus' bones would be broken (John 19:32-37).
  
- Pictures of Christ
  1. **Hannah's Prayer** (1 Samuel 2:10): In this prayer, there is a mention of the Lord's mighty anointed King! The word "anointed" is later translated "Messiah," Jesus Christ, who "judges throughout the earth."
  2. **Life of David**: What a picture of Christ! The gentle shepherd, the valiant warrior who constantly battles the enemy, and who ultimately is anointed as the mighty King!
  
- Personal Application
  1. **External Force vs. Self-Government**: Although it is not an excuse for Israel's disobedience to God, it's important to note that no nation, at this point in history, was able to govern themselves without external force, that is, without a cruel king with cruel laws. It will be 2000 years later that a nation is built upon the principles of self-government, which is only possible by the governing presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life, after his sin nature is overcome by the blood of Christ. Therefore, salvation is the first step to self-government; this truth was not exercised in a nation until the English Separatists (Pilgrims) came to the New World in 1620 and planted the seed of what becomes America. Salvation is still the key to the survival of our country. The answer is not bigger government, stricter laws, or more police, but the power of Christ in individual lives.
  2. **Finish Strong**: A consistent theme in our reading this week was this — how one starts something is not as important as how one finishes. Several times, godly characters seemed to take off with great steam and momentum and, then, sputter and fizzle into an inglorious finish. For example, there was Eli, the good priest, who was a lousy parent and allowed his sons to shame the Tabernacle. There was Samuel who was a great judge himself but who forgot to train his sons as well, and their incompetence and cruelty caused Israel's rejection of them in the end. Finally, there was King Saul, who also started well but who made some major blunders. While a good beginning is important, we must reconsider and determine that how we end is even more esteemed. Thus, we must finish strong, no matter what we've done or how we've failed. We must press on towards the prize of the upward call of God. It is never too late to honor the Lord.

### **The Bottom Line**

Satan fills our lives with *distractions* in order to *derail* us from following God.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. If coveting is the cause of jealousy, what is the cause of coveting? How can one avoid it?
2. What are ways that you can gain momentum throughout life and finish well in the end?