

1. Introduction

- a. We are examining the characters in David's life and David himself to see what lessons we can learn about how God uses a wounded and messed up life for His purpose
- b. This was a time when Israel had no king—they had judges previously and craved a leader.
 - i. They needed guidance, hope and security in a leader
 - ii. They had judges and now they have a priest—The priestly line was established by God to guide them in the wilderness
 - iii. The priest, therefore, signified the personal, corporate and spiritual direction of the people—without him they were lost
 - iv. Moreover, the priest was the intermediary between God and his people for their sins. When they messed up, it was the priest who went in and tried to absolve them (The high priest was the only one who could enter into the presence of the tabernacle and only once per year)
- c. This story tells of how God works to establish his priestly line in order to help guide his people—and it's quite radical!!

2. The Lost Priest

- a. Eli had served for many years as high priest—he was old, venerated, respected
- b. But God condemns Eli and removes him from the priest's role. Why condemn Eli?
 - i. His sons were corrupt (sons of Belial in the KJV—sons of the devil)
 - ii. They were taking the best meat for themselves (v. 15-16) by defying the Leviticus orders—probably to sell in the marketplace to make money for themselves
 - iii. They were also taking advantage of the women who came to worship (v. 22)
- c. V. 23-25—he rebukes his sons with a tongue lashing of sorts—what's interesting is 3:13 when God says he did not restrain them
 - i. Eli had tolerated their wickedness for a long time. He chastises them but lets them continue in the family business
 - ii. Indeed, even Eli continued his priestly duties as his sons were corrupting the system
 - iii. By all accounts, he should have removed them from their duties (they might have even been stoned for their offenses)
 - iv. He was, at best, morally ambiguous and vague—in the interest of self-preservation or perhaps he had just gotten too old (1 Samuel 3:2)
 - v. He was a lazy man who wanted to retain his role as High Priest.
 - vi. His success as a minister was more important than the family he was supposed to raise.
 - vii. His duties as a minister were more important than making a moral stand against injustice and corruption

3. The Chosen Priest

- a. God offers an interesting promise: 1 Samuel 2:35—"I will raise me up a faithful priest"
 - i. At first, we see this played out through Samuel
 - ii. He doesn't yet have the word of God though he has been serving him
 - iii. He has only a linen ephod
 1. Ephods were meant to be ornate priestly garments—made of linen but dressed in gold and other fineries
 2. Worn to show their position in the community and Samuel had a lowly one
 3. And only one little coat brought once per year by his mother
 - iv. Nothing about him necessarily earned him the right to be high priest (young, poor, no family really)
 1. And this is the pattern God is setting up—He chooses the weak, not the strong—the humble, not the well-accomplished. He chooses the powerless, not the powerful.
 2. In God's story line he constantly reversing the cultural norm of who should be a leader
- b. But, it's Samuel who's chosen in the end—even that "none of his words fall to the ground"
 - i. Everyone knew he was a prophet because of this
 - ii. What does this mean? The words never rotted. They never fall apart.

- iii. God's words have weight as in deeds. He speaks and creates. He doesn't speak and then make it.
 - iv. His words are enough. They matter. They have weight.
- c. Samuel got to know God through listening to his word.
 - i. Eli was cut off because his priestly duties were more important and it rotted his family life and ultimately his career.
 - ii. He lost the promise because he was so "religious" and committed to the ministry but at the expense of justice
 - iii. Eli had a god he could use. A God he could control and gain advantage from. But he lost out
 - iv. Samuel's words didn't fall because the Lord was with him (3:19). This means he was constantly listening to God's Word

4. The True Priest

- a. But, the plot thickens even more: Aaron was the great high priest of Israel originally. He had two remaining sons—Eleazar and Ithamar. Eleazar occupied the role of high priest for 20 years or so in the wilderness when it was mysteriously given over to Ithamar's lineage—eventually down to Eli
 - i. In this story, God is restoring the priesthood not just to Samuel, the least likeliest of candidates, but to the line of Eleazar—Historically Zadok, his descendent, was given the office of High Priest during the reign of David.
 - ii. Abiathar, the offspring of Ithamar was put out later by Solomon. God's curse to Eli was finally realized as the priestly office was now through the house of Eleazar.
- b. So it appears that all is set back right—the house of Aaron is now back as the high priests and all is good, right? But we get told something else in Hebrews:
 - i. Hebrews 7 says that we now have a different type of priest all together
 - ii. Finally, Jesus Christ is the promised priest whom God sends. "He shall walk before mine anointed forever" (verse 35). The Lord would build the everlasting priesthood.
 - iii. God would show the impossibility of man keeping covenant- God alone would preserve His covenant in and through men. Even Samuel could not maintain the priesthood in Israel.
 - iv. Samuel admonished and disciplined his sons, but God's blessing was not upon them. Israel later used this as an excuse to seek a king.
 - v. They were searching for a priest who failed them—then they get a king who will fail them and ultimately God is telling them to find their rest, comfort and security as a people in the Priest to end all priests!
- c. Another person had words which didn't "fall to the ground"—it says from the corrected line of priests
 - i. Jesus, when tempted, quoted Scripture
 - ii. Jesus was called the Word (that came to tabernacle with us)
 - 1. Samuel was sleeping near the ark/tabernacle when God spoke to him
 - 2. But we have Jesus who was the very presence of God come down to tabernacle with us
 - iii. Even as he died for us, he quoted scripture (Psalm 22)—my God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
 - iv. He was the priest who entered the presence of God and felt the pain of death for us!!

5. Conclusion

- a. God knows something about our hearts—that we're always looking for meaning, purpose, hope and direction to go forward.
 - i. We are hurt and lost beings
 - ii. We need a "priest" to absolve us, guide us, restore us in our relationship with God
 - iii. But he goes even further and chooses a priest to end all priests—a priest with a different lineage all together—supernatural and perfect
 - iv. It's this priest who will enter the holy of holies and take death for us so we know we don't have to accomplish it on our own
- b. We have to meditate on God's pattern—choosing the weak, powerless and marginalized to work through them and Jesus was the ultimate example of this
 - i. His words truly never "fell"—because he was in constant contact with the Word
 - ii. Even as he died for us, he brought out the Word