

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**The Story: Chapter 10—Standing Tall, Falling Hard**  
**1 Samuel 1-4, 8-13, 15**  
**Pastor Mike Brown - November 13, 2011**

Introduction

We are continuing in the book, *The Story*, which, as we have said, is a chronological, abridged version of the Bible. I, for one, have found reading it a delight. For me, it is often easy to get quite focused on the trees and forget about the forest. In fact, sometimes I think we are so intent on looking at the Bible verse-by-verse—getting so focused that we end up examining the nuances of the bark on an individual tree—that we lose the context of the entire Story.

Every two weeks a number of us on the staff sit down and look at the coming six weeks of Sunday mornings to try and stay ahead. As we did so two weeks ago, something jumped out at us regarding these next four chapters, 10 – 13. By stepping back and looking at the bigger picture, we saw a story within *The Story*. So, in addition to looking together at chapter 10 today, the story of Samuel and King Saul—not to be confused with the man, Saul, aka the Apostle Paul in the New Testament who will be born some 1000 years in the future from this chapter—I want to lay some groundwork for this story within *The Story*.

So, I think I want to begin by simply going through the events of this chapter and then stepping back with you to look at these few trees of these four chapters in relation to the larger forest. To use language we have been using for some weeks now, we will look at the lower story view—the iWorld, or, our point of view—and we will step back and try to see it from the upper story—the GWorld, God's point of view.

Timeline Review

- 2100 B.C.—Abraham
- Isaac and Jacob
- 1800 B.C.—Jacob's son Joseph becomes Prime Minister of Egypt, family moves to Egypt
- 1526 B.C.—Moses born
- 1446 B.C.—Hebrew exodus from Egypt...forty years of wandering
- 1406 B.C.—Israel enters the promised land
- 1375-1055 B.C.—Age of the Judges begins with cycles of disobedience, repentance, and restoration
- 1105 B.C.—Samuel born
- 1050 B.C.—Saul appointed king

We pick up this story, chapter 10, during the time of the last Judges of Israel. And while we do not read of Judges in the account of the life of Samuel here in chapter 10, it seems apparent from this timeline that Samuel was alive during the time of the last five or six of the Judges. And in fact we will see that Samuel was the last human Judge of Israel.

Samuel and Saul

We first meet Samuel at his birth. His mom, Hannah, has been crying out to God for a child for some years. Finally, the Lord gives her a son. She is so thankful that she dedicates Samuel to God and leaves him at the Temple with the Priest and Judge Eli to raise, visiting him only once each year.

*The song we just sang is taken from Hannah's prayer, partially presented on pg 131 (1 Samuel 2:1-10)*

Early in Samuel's life, we see that God speaks to him. "Samuel," God calls three times. "Here I am," Samuel replies to Eli each time believing it was Eli who had called him. Eli helped Samuel understand it was God calling. Thus was the beginning of Samuel's life as a prophet of God; Scripture tells us that (133; 3:19-20):

***Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail. All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.*** (1Samuel 3:19–20, NASB95)

In the meantime, the Israeli's were again at war with the Philistines. They go to battle and the Israeli army is trounced, losing about 4,000 men on the battlefield. Instead of seeking God regarding the unexpected loss, the Israeli's assume God is at their beck and call, and they attempt to invoke His power and favor by taking the Ark of the Covenant into battle—you remember the Ark, it has the tablets with the Ten Commandments, a little jar of manna, and Aaron's staff that had budded—taking the Ark into battle had helped them win before...never mind that they did it at God's command.

So, they carry the Ark into battle and are defeated again, this time losing the Ark to the Philistines. Scripture tells us it was a very bad defeat; it is a very hard lesson for Israel on the sovereignty of God (133; 4:10-11):

***So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.*** (1Samuel 4:10–11, NASB95)

For the priest, Eli, now ninety-eight years old, the death of his two sons and, more tragically, loss of the Ark was too much for him, he fell off his seat backwards and broke his neck.

Of course even in giving a lesson to Israel God is not to be trifled with. The Philistines, who God used to teach Israel the lesson, had the Ark for seven months. There is a great scene showing both God's power and His sense of humor (5:1-4):

***Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of [the god] Dagon and set it by Dagon. When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.*** (1Samuel 5:1–4, NASB95)

And then God gets serious. For seven months God inflicted the men, both young and old, with tumors. Some men even dared to look into the Ark...God killed 50,070 of them for that (remember the scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*). After finally realizing what was happening, the Philistines sent the Ark back to Israel. Good move.

At this point, the Israeli army finally turns to Samuel to ask for God's help. Samuel asks and God responds; the Philistines are routed and Samuel becomes the final Judge of Israel (7:5-15).

All settles down for some time until Samuel gets old. He appoints his sons as the next Judges of Israel. Sadly, they are corrupt, "taking bribes and corrupting justice." By this time it seems the nation of Israel becomes fed up with the system of Judges. For some reason unknown to us they decide what they want is a king; surely that will make things better for them! "We want to be like other nations," they cry.

#### An Aside...

Are you kidding me! Perhaps you, like me, think these people are nuts. They already have a King, the perfect King. At this point in history Israel is a Theocracy: God is their King! He has given them a great piece of real estate, provided all they have needed, and they are undefeated in battle when they go out under God's command. What else could they possibly want? Perhaps they, like Adam and Eve, hear the hiss of the snake telling them that God is withholding something better. I simply do not understand their actions...until I pause and look at my own life. There are many places in which I want to be my own king ruling over my own kingdom. But more on that later.

## Back to the Story

Moses had foreseen this call for a king nearly 350 years before and had told that first generation of Israeli's who occupied the Promised Land that this would happen:

*When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, "I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves...* (Deuteronomy 17:14–15, NASB95)

This is exactly what happens, and Samuel is mad. He takes it as a rejection of him, but God sets him straight on exactly who Israel is rejecting (135, 8:7-8):

*The Lord said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also."* (1 Samuel 8:7–8, NASB95)

God tells Samuel to warn the Israeli's of what will become of them under their kings; it is a long passage, but one worth reading:

*So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."*

*Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."*

*Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD's hearing. The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and appoint them a king."* (1 Samuel 8:10–22, NASB95)

And they still want a king, so God gives them what they want. God directs Samuel to Saul, a good looking, but somewhat shy fellow who is a full head taller than those around him.

Saul leads Israel into numerous battles against their enemies and with God on their side, they are victorious, but it is not enough for Saul. After a battle with the Amalekites, God tells Saul to destroy everything, the people and their possessions. But Saul disobeys, destroying only what he deems worthless and keeping the rest. This was the last straw in a growing pile of arrogant, disobedient acts by Saul; in his repeated disobedience Saul's true heart for God is revealed. He should have paid attention to Moses who had also foretold of the requirements of a successful king of Israel; back to Deuteronomy:

*Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, [the king] shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.* (Deuteronomy 17:18–20, NASB95)

Saul had failed in these things. In his arrogance, he must have felt he was above God's law. In another bit of foretelling, Samuel had said to Saul after an earlier disobedience (142, 13:13-14):

*[Saul, you] have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.*  
(1 Samuel 13:13–14, NASB95)

Saul failed because his heart was not for God. He was consumed with his own kingdom, not God's. Although Saul remains in power for some years to come, God has now rejected him as king over Israel. Next week, in chapter 11, we will watch as God selects His new king and puts this new king through a rigorous training program before handing him the throne of Israel.

## The Old Testament Read in Christ

So, there you have, in a nutshell, the story of Israel's last judge and first king. As always, there are many sermons and lessons for us in this chapter.

But just now I want to pull back and look at the forest, the upper story view; an upper story view even beyond this chapter. I want to look at this story in light of Christ. Now, you may say that it's not fair for us to do that, after all, these people did not yet know of Christ; however, that is exactly what the writers of the New Testament did. In fact, Jesus opened the mind of His disciples regarding the Old Testament references to Him (Luke 24:27, 45). Subsequently, the early Christians reinterpreted the Old Testament in light of the revelation of Christ. This is how historian Wilken puts it when describing these early Christians:

The Old Testament as read by Christians was a different book from the Hebrew and Aramaic writings that have come down to us from the ancient near East. Having the New Testament in hand, Christians saw terms take on different hues, certain images spring to life, persons and events privileged, and everything woven together in a tapestry imprinted with the face of Christ. In one of his sermons, Augustine calls the Scriptures, "God's face for now."<sup>1</sup>

So, as important as it is that we learn from this specific story something about what God expects of us, something about ourselves, and something about the character of God, let's go back to the beginning, back to chapter one, and see how these ten chapters are weaving for us "a tapestry imprinted with the face of Christ."

We are first introduced to Christ in Genesis 3:15. God tells us in general terms from where He will come and what He will do (pg 6):

***And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*** (Genesis 3:15, NASB95)

As we move through Genesis we find out that Christ will come through the Semitic line (Afro-Asiatic line of languages) of humanity (Noah's son, Shem; Genesis 9:26), then more specifically through the line of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), and then through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). These are important pieces of information about the lineage of Christ. However, there is much more about Jesus in the Old Testament. From classical Christology (the study of Christ) we learn that Christ holds three offices: those of Prophet, Priest, and King, and this comes directly from the Old Testament.

### Prophet

In Deuteronomy we first begin to get a picture of who Christ is. Moses, in his farewell address to the nation of Israel, says this:

***The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.*** (Deuteronomy 18:15, NASB95)

You would be right in saying, "Now Mike, certainly that prophecy applies to the series of prophets that come after Moses, prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah." True. But even the Jews of Jesus' time

<sup>1</sup> Wilkin, Robert Louis. (2003). *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. Yale University Press. 76.

realized that Moses was referring to someone greater than these. When confronted in Jesus' time with John the Baptist, whom we will read about when we get to chapter 23, the Jews wonder whether he is this promised Prophet:

*They asked [John the Baptist], "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."* (John 1:21, NASB95)

The Old Testament understanding of a prophet is one who speaks for God. Jesus is the Word of God; we see that in several places in the New Testament book of John (John 1:1; 14:24). Jesus is God and speaks for God. Jesus is *The Prophet* of God.

#### Priest

In chapter 2 of this book of the Bible, 1 Samuel, but not mentioned in *The Story*, God loses patience with Eli. In His anger with the old priest who fails to rebuke his sons for their arrogance and disobedience as priests, God says this to Eli (not in *The Story*):

*I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always.* (1 Samuel 2:35, NASB95)

Again, this surely applies to future priests, such as Zadok, who is the High Priest during the time of King David, the king who follows King Saul whom we just heard about. But, it also applies to Jesus. The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews says:

*So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but [the Father] who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"; just as [the Father] says also in another passage, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK".* (Hebrews 5:5–6, NASB95)

What is the role of the High Priest? In the Old Testament, he was one who mediated between man and God. The High Priest was the only one allowed in the innermost room of the Temple where God dwelled. Now, Jesus mediates between us and God the Father. In fact, because we who follow Christ are one with Christ, we are invited directly into the throne room of God with Jesus. Jesus is indeed our *High Priest*.

#### King

Jesus is also a king. We will see over the next months that there is great emphasis placed on the kingship of the Messiah in the Old Testament—we will see it in chapter 12 when we get to God's great promise to King David—and this was the primary office that the Jews at the time of Christ expected Him to hold; He would be the One who would rule Israel, returning her to her rightful place of power. When Jesus failed to live up to their expectation of this coming king, they killed Him. Scripture tells us that Jesus is *King* over all creation (e.g., Psalm 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:24), He is our King.

So, as I said at the beginning today and now with this in mind, let's see how these four chapters, 10 – 13, comprise a story within *The Story*. Let's go back to a timeline to see this.

### Kingdom of God

For the past six chapters we have been reading about the nation of Israel's cycle of disobedience, repentance, and restoration through stories of their formation as a nation, deliverance from Egyptian bondage, wandering in the desert, conquering the Promised Land, rebellion under the Judges, to now asking for a king. And, starting in chapter fourteen, we will return to reading for another eight chapters about the nation of Israel continuing in the cycle of disobedience, repentance, and restoration. But something is different about these middle four chapters. We stop focusing on the nation of Israel and look intently at three kings: Saul, the most kingly in outward stature, David, the most kingly in heart for God, and Solomon, the most kingly in wisdom. And we will watch each fail. It is as though by focusing on these three men God is saying, "No human king, regardless of their qualifications, can save you. Only I can save you. All other kings and kingdoms are flawed."

To make some sense out of these four chapters, the story of three kings and a human kingdom within *The Story*, let's set the stage by talking a little about kings and kingdoms. It is hard for us

because in a representative democracy we have lost the concept of a king and a kingdom. Recall that a kingdom, of course, is an area, including the stuff and the people, under the direct rule of a king.  
My Kingdom

In reality, each of us has a kingdom. It is “at hand,” meaning that there is some area of our lives external to us under our direct reign. We each have money, material possessions, animals, maybe minor children, and perhaps we own a business or manage people in our workplace, areas all under our reign. These kinds of things comprise our individual kingdoms.

Our kingdom is “within us,” too. I have an inner life of thoughts, desires, emotions, passions, dreams, etc. These are under my direct control. God has chosen to give me rule and reign over my individual kingdom; you, too. In fact, one modern writer suggests that a way to begin a spiritual discussion is to ask another, “How’s it going in your kingdom?”

#### Jesus’ Kingdom

With the arrival of Jesus, the King of all creation, He began talking about a different kingdom, God’s kingdom. It was why He came:

***But [Jesus] said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.’*** (Luke 4:43, NASB95)

God’s kingdom is the area, including the stuff and the people, over which He has direct rule and reign. Now, you may say that God has rule and reign over all the Earth; after all, we have talked for weeks about God’s sovereignty. This is true; however, God has to some extent given over the Earth to Satan—who Paul calls the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2)—and to us, including those who are disobedient to Him.

#### Battle of Principalities

So, with Jesus’ coming, God’s kingdom began to break into the kingdom of this world in a new way. We now pray for God’s kingdom to come as Jesus taught us to pray; [God’s] “kingdom come on Earth as it is in Heaven.” You see, right now the battle on Earth is between kingdoms, the kingdom of Satan and our disobedience vs. the kingdom of God. Paul tells us so when he describes our struggle this way:

***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*** (Ephesians 6:12, NASB95)

Do you hear of the two kingdoms? It is us as citizens of God’s kingdom against the forces of evil. And this battle is exactly what we see as God turns the magnifying glass upon these three kings of Israel, Saul, David, and Solomon, we see the battle lines clearly drawn. Over the next three weeks, we will be witness to this kingdom battle through a very intimate look into the lives of these men and those immediately around them.

#### Our Kingdom vs. Jesus’ Kingdom

With the coming of Jesus, God’s kingdom entered into our world in a new and powerful way and the battle became more intense. We are each now equipped with the Holy Spirit. God’s kingdom is indeed at hand and within us...if we allow it to be so. We are well armed and armored for battle (Ephesians 6:10-20), a battle that is for the kingdom within us and the kingdom around us.

Too often we enter this kingdom battle around us without first engaging in the harder battle within us. It is no wonder that we fall away exhausted, or turn away in sin, as Saul did.

Back in the late 500s, a Christian man called Gregory the Great said this:

...we understand the words of God more truly when we “search out [ourselves] in them.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. 78.

The writer of Hebrews said the same thing hundreds of years before Gregory, and a few weeks ago when I stood before you I quoted this verse:

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.* (Hebrews 4:12–13, NASB95)

Again I say to us, the kingdom battle is first for our hearts and minds, for us to love God. In these stories, we see in the lives of Saul, David, and Solomon that the battle begins in their own kingdoms, in their own hearts and minds, in those dark places in their lives where God is not yet King. And so it is with us.

So I urge you to look again at this story, beginning with the faithfulness of Samuel's mother Hannah; to the old priest, Eli, and his family; to Samuel and his family; to the Israeli people; and to Saul. As Gregory exhorts, let us "search out ourselves in them." Let this story intersect the story of your life revealing who is your king.

Read these Old Testament stories in light of Christ. If Augustine is right, then for now we find the face of God, our King, in Scripture. And we encounter our King in prayer and in our experience of His kingdom around and within us.

#### Conclusion

"Seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness of the King," is what Jesus tells us (Matthew 6:33); living in God's kingdom is the greatest opportunity any human has ever had, and it is at hand and within us now for those who bend their knee, even imperfectly, to King Jesus.

If you find yourself longing to give up living in your own kingdom and beginning to live in Christ's kingdom and you don't know how, we would enjoy talking with you.

#### Offertory Prayer

"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"

#### Benediction

Matthew 6:33

Philippians 4:6-8

Let the love of God draw you deeper into His Kingdom where you will find true healing, true rest, and your true self.