

I. Introduction and review. A tragic end to the life of a tragic man. 26:21 28:18-19 2:4-10

II. Saul and Israel are annihilated in battle by the Philistines. 31:1-13

A. The Philistines overwhelm Saul's forces. v. 1-2

1. The defeat and destruction of Saul and his men is in sharp contrast to David, the rightful king, who had just won a great victory with no loss of life. 30:17,19
2. This is in fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy. 28:19 15:28
3. This calamity resembles what happened to Eli and his sons. 2:31ff 3:11ff 4:10ff
4. Most, but not all, of Saul's sons die. II Sam. 2:8
5. Saul is mortally wounded. v. 3

B. Saul attempts suicide. v. 4-6

1. Why does Saul want his armor bearer to kill him? v. 4a, 8,10 Jdg. 9:54 16:23-25
2. Why does the armor bearer refuse? v. 4b 24:6-7 26:9 II Sam. 1:16
3. Why does the armor bearer kill himself? v. 5
4. How and when does Saul actually die? v. 6 II Sam. 1:1-16

C. Israel is in total disarray. v. 6c,7,1b 12:14,25

D. The Philistines declare their pagan gospel (good news). v. 8-10 4:2

1. They desecrate Saul's body. v. 9a,10b Deut. 21:23
2. They suppose that their gods have given them victory over the LORD. v. 9b,10

E. The men of Jabesh-gilead honor Saul and his sons in death. v. 11-13

1. Why would these people especially appreciate Saul? 11:1ff
2. They went much risk and trouble to recover the bodies. v. 12a
3. Why did they burn the bodies? v. 12b Amos 2:1
4. They bury Saul's bones and hold a fast in his honor. v. 13 14:2 22:6 II Sa. 1:12 Ge. 50:20,25 Ex. 13:19 Josh 24:32
5. David also honors Saul and later moves his remains. II Sam. 1:17ff 2:4ff 21:12-14
6. How people treat their dead is important and reflects their worldview. Ecc. 6:3 Gen. 15:15 23:4,19 25:9f 27:30 35:8,29 49:31 50:5,13f John 19:39ff Acts 2:29 8:2 II Ki. 9:10,35-36 Jer. 22:19 8:2

F. This is not the end of the story, but only the intermission before the second act!

III. Application.

A. God is sovereign over life and death (and victory and defeat). 2:6 Dt. 32:39 Job 1:21

1. Though God is not explicitly mentioned in this final chapter, God is working out His purpose. 28:18-19 I Chron. 10:13-14
2. God judges the wicked. 15:28 25:29 Acts 12:23 Re. 20:11ff II Pe. 3:3ff
3. God is also sovereign over the death of the righteous. 28:19 Ps. 116:15 Pr. 12:28
4. God is in control of your life and your death. Ps. 90:12 39:4

B. It is not our place to play God by taking death into our own hands.

1. Euthanasia - Saul's armor bearer refuses to take Saul's life. Judges 9:54-57
2. Suicide - Saul tries to take his own life. v. 4b-5 II Sam. 17:23 I Ki. 16:18 Mt. 27:5
3. Why do people attempt suicide? Escape from pain and hopelessness.

4. Why is suicide wrong (and foolish)? Ps. 139:7-8 Ex. 20:13 I Co. 6:19-20 Job 2:9f
5. Is suicide the unpardonable sin?
6. How can we help those who are contemplating suicide?
 - a. Read the Psalms. Others have felt the same way and have found help.
 - b. Remember the LORD's character.
 - c. Remember His past faithfulness.
 - d. Remember God's promises. II Co. 4:17
 - e. Remember your calling.
 - f. Remember God's grace. It is not too late to turn to Him. I Jo. 1:9 Ps. 32 51
 - g. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. I Co. 10:13
 - h. God will give you grace to endure your pain. II Co. 4:7ff 12:7-10
 - i. Jesus sympathizes with and helps you in your struggle. He. 2:18 4:14ff
7. How can you counsel a person who claims to be suicidal?

C. Even in the darkest of times we can hope in God.

IV. Conclusion: Where do we see Christ in this text?

- A. King Jesus' death can be compared and contrasted to that of king Saul.
 1. Saul dies badly in defeat. Jesus dies well and triumphantly. Luke 23:46
 2. Saul's death was disobedient and self-serving. Jesus' death was in obedience to the Father to sacrificially serve others. Mt. 26:39 John 6:38
 3. Saul's death was a cursed one because of his own sin. Jesus also endured an accursed death for our sin. 31:10 Gal. 3:13
 4. Saul tried to kill himself to avoid pain. Jesus chose to endure the full pain we deserve as the punishment for our sin. Is. 53:4ff II Co. 5:21 He. 2:17ff Mt. 27:34
 5. Saul's body was shamefully hung up by his enemies. Jesus' body was also hung up as an object of horror and disgust. 31:10 Ga. 3:13 Lu. 23:33
 6. Saul's body was taken and buried by his friends who risked much to do so, as was the body of Jesus. 31:11ff Mt. 27:27ff Luke 23:50ff John 19:38ff
 7. Saul's death appeared to be the end of all national hope for Israel. Jesus' death also appeared to be the end of hope. 31:9 II Sam. 1:20 Luke 24:18ff
 8. Saul is conquered by death. Jesus has conquered death. I Co. 15:3-11,55ff
 9. Saul's death ended an era of failure paving the way for a better kingdom. Jesus' death ended an era of failure (law) and inaugurated a new kingdom of grace.
 10. Saul's followers share in his deadly defeat. Jesus' followers are united with Him in His triumphant death and resurrection. 31:1,6 Rom. 6:3ff
 11. Saul lost territory in defeat. Jesus gained the world through His victory. 31:7
- B. Will your death be like that of Saul or in union with Christ? Heb. 9:27

Discussion questions

1. What is the theme of I Samuel?
2. How does Hannah's song in 2:1-10 foreshadow the events of the rest of the book?
3. What is God doing in this final chapter?
4. Why and how did the men of Jabesh-gilead honor Saul?
5. Do good people live longer than evil people? Why or why not?
6. Why is euthanasia wrong?
7. Why is it wrong to commit suicide?
8. Why do people attempt suicide?
9. What would you say to someone who is suicidal?
10. Compare and contrast the death of king Saul with the death of King Jesus.