

## Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

### I Samuel: the Apologetic for the Davidic Dynasty

**II Tim. 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup> All scripture is *inspired* by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

**Theopneustos.** Most church fathers, early commentators, Greek lexicons and modern translations render it as “inspired by God.” The etymology of the word: *theo* meaning “god” and *pneustos*, referring to “breath” has fueled adherents of inerrancy to demand the Bible is “God-breathed.” We can refute the logic of such arguments without questioning whether *theopneustos* really means “God-breathed” or “divinely inspired,” but our interpretation of the word remains significant. We can’t always determine the meaning – as popularly used – of a word based on its etymology. The word “hippopotamus,” for example, is derived from two Latin words meaning “horse” and “river.” We can see the philological (study of words) connection, but we know that a hippopotamus is not a horse.

*Theopneustos* appears just once in the entire Bible, so we have no other scriptural uses to compare it with. In John C. Poirier’s work, [\*The Invention of the Inspired Text: Philological Windows on the Theopneustia of Scripture\*](#), he concludes that prior to the third century, *theopneustos* was understood to mean “life-giving,” and only with the writings of Origen did it begin to take on the more “inspirationist” interpretation (Poirier argues that *theopneustos* was consistently understood to mean “life-giving” when used in the fifth Sibylline Oracle, the Testament of Abraham, Vettius Valens, Pseudo-Plutarch, and Pseudo-Phocylides). This research challenges ongoing arguments for “inerrancy,” a doctrine that wasn’t fully developed until the emergence of fundamentalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The words we consider to be scripture were written by many different human persons over nearly 1,000 years, being constantly adapted and edited along the way. If God had inspired every word, we would expect the scripture to be fully consistent from the beginning. Instead, what we find is an ongoing human attempt to understand the ways of God and humanity. We find differing theologies and understandings of God that developed over time and often conflicted.

**James W. Fowler’s** (Theology and Human Development at Emory University) **Stages of Faith** describes how a person’s faith (not just religious belief, but meaning-making and trust structures) tends to evolve over a lifetime:

**Stage 0 – Primal Faith (infancy)** - Basic trust vs. mistrust, shaped by caregivers.

**Stage 1 – Intuitive-Projective Faith (early childhood)** - Imagination-driven; images of God and faith are formed through stories and emotions.

**Stage 2 – Mythic-Literal Faith (childhood)** - Beliefs are taken literally; moral rules are clear and concrete.

**Stage 3 – Synthetic-Conventional Faith (adolescence)** - Faith is shaped by community and authority; little critical reflection.

**Stage 4 – Individuative-Reflective Faith (young adulthood)** - Critical examination of beliefs; personal ownership of faith.

**Stage 5 – Conjunctive Faith (midlife and beyond)** - Openness to paradox and mystery; appreciation of other perspectives.

**Stage 6 – Universalizing Faith (rare)** - Radical commitment to compassion and justice (often

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associated with figures like Martin Luther King Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi).

### Subject: “I Samuel: the Apologetic for the Davidic Dynasty”

#### I. Fun Facts

- A. The Book is anonymous (named after the prophet Samuel “the king maker”), written in a transitional time between the judges and the beginning of the Monarchic Period.
- B. Samuel is one book / scroll. Why the 2 books? Hebrews has no vowels. When Samuel was translated into Greek (written w/vowels) it required more pages.
- C. Part of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings)– advocates theologies promoted in the book of Deuteronomy (it is not an accurate historical record).
- D. Reflects a POV from the Babylonian exile and the return – so the author is relying on older stories and court “annals” or the “Annals of the Kings.”
- E. The author (writing centuries after the events) has an ax to grind: explaining how the exile happened and providing hope for the future. **Samuel is an apology or political propaganda for the Davidic dynasty.**
- F. The Hebrew text is “corrupt,” which means (e.g., in the Masoretic Text / MT) things are left out due to copying errors. The Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) fills in quite a few gaps.

#### I Samuel 1:11

##### Masoretic Text (MT – oldest “complete” Hebrew Bible)

“O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”

##### Septuagint (LXX)

“O Lord Almighty, if you will indeed look upon the humiliation of your servant and remember me, and give to your servant seed of men, then I will give him before you as a gift all the days of his life, and wine and strong drink he shall not drink, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

##### Key Differences:

- Nazirite elements expanded in LXX. The MT mentions only “no razor”, but the LXX **adds** abstinence from wine and strong drink, making the vow explicitly resemble a fuller Nazirite commitment.
- Tone of offering. The LXX adds language like “I will give him before you as a gift,” emphasizing dedication in a slightly more liturgical way than the MT.

**I Sam. 13:1 MT** – “Saul was ... years old when he began to reign, and he reigned **two years** over Israel.”

- The number for Saul’s age is missing.
- “two years” is widely considered too short for his reign.

**I Sam. 13:1 NRSVue** – “Saul was . . .<sup>[a]</sup> years old when he began to reign, and he reigned . . . and two<sup>[b]</sup> years over Israel.”

- a. [13.1](#) **The number is lacking in the Heb text** ([13.1](#) is lacking in Gk mss).
- b. [13.1](#) **Two** is not the entire number; **something has dropped out.**

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**I Sam. 13:1 (NASB1995)** Saul was *thirty years old* when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty two* years over Israel.

**II. Outline** (Big picture: from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul and Jonathan).

### A. Part I, Chs. 1-8: Samuel in the pre-Saul years

1. Miraculous birth to Hannah (a theme the Bible carries throughout).
2. Miraculous births alert us something is about to go down (in Samuel – it is the coming of the monarchy).
3. Hannah's Song: (I Sam. 2) and Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1)
  - a. Same theological vision (reversal of fortune): a God who overturns human power by lifting the lowly, feeding the hungry, and bringing down the proud and the powerful. Luke deliberately echoes Hannah to present Mary as a "new Hannah," locating Jesus within Israel's long tradition of divine reversal, covenant faithfulness, and liberation rather than as a break from it.
  - b. Luke is casting Mary as the new Hannah.
4. Hannah offers Samuel to the high priest Eli – be raised as a Nazarite (like Samson, set apart, no wine).

### 5. Biblical Counter-testimony regarding God's opinion of kings.

- a. **Deut. 17:14-15a** - "When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' <sup>15</sup> **you may indeed set over you a king whom the Lord your God will choose.**
- b. **Judges 21:25** In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.
- c. **I Samuel 8:10-18** (comparing the Israelites to Egyptians)

<sup>10</sup> So Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. <sup>11</sup> He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you:  
-force your sons into military service - daughters into servitude - take your lands / vineyards  
-take you as slaves.  
<sup>18</sup> And on that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you on that day."
- d. Samuel feels Israel's request for a king is a rejection of God as their king.
- e. Walter Brueggemann – "The Prophetic Imagination" – positions monarchy as a bad idea – that it made the Israelites like the Egyptians – like the oppressor.

### B. Part 2, Chs. 9-15: The Rise of Saul to Power

1. Saul's appearance: "not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people" (**I Sam. 9:2**).
  - a. Physical qualification for kingship becomes overrated.
2. "Rags to riches" – Saul looking for his father's donkeys and winds up as king.
  - a. **I Sam. 9:21** - Saul from the "least" and "humblest" of the tribes.
3. **I Sam. 12** - Samuel's farewell speech (1 Sam 12) serves to vindicate his leadership and distance himself from the failure of Saul's kingship
4. **I Sam. 13:13-14** Samuel tells Saul that his kingship will not endure because he did not wait for the LORD's command.

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### 5. More Divinely Commanded Genocide (1 Sam. 15:2-3)

- a. The LORD commands Saul to attack Amalek and “**utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.**”
- b. Saul violates this command by sparing King Agag and keeping the best of the spoil—which Samuel explicitly rejects (15:22 “to obey is better than sacrifice”).

### C. Part 3, Chs. 16-31: Saul’s Downfall and the rise of David to Power.

1. **I Sam. 16:22** – David and Saul seem to coexist.
2. **I Sam. 16:12** – David described as “ruddy” and handsome (have we not learned God doesn’t choose people according to their appearance?).
3. **I Sam. 16:13-14** – Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.
  - a. The “evil spirit from the Lord” sent to Saul comes in waves – ancient understanding of mental illness
  - b. David plays the lyre to soothe Saul (**I Sam. 16:14–23**). David becomes Saul’s armor-bearer (**I Sam. 16:21**). David rises to become Saul’s trusted warrior and commander in battle (**I Sam. 18:5**).

### III. Theologically Interesting (or Troubling?)

- A. **David is introduced twice?** The presence of two incompatible introductions of David to Saul—one as Saul’s known lyre-player and armor-bearer in chapter 16, and another as an unknown shepherd who meets Saul for the first time after killing Goliath in chapter 17—strongly suggests that the narrative preserves two earlier traditions woven together by different editors, a common feature of twice-told stories in the Hebrew Bible.
  1. David is absent from the battlefield despite already serving Saul as armor-bearer (**I Sam. 16:21**). He appears to be living at home and sent only as a messenger. David asks about Goliath and the reward, signaling ambition. Saul permits David to fight Goliath (**I Sam. 17:55–58**). After the battle, Saul does not recognize David and asks, “Whose son is this?” This contradiction points to two different source traditions edited together.
- B. **David and Jonathan homoerotic imagery.**
  - a. David and Jonathan’s bond is unusually intense by ancient Near Eastern standards: Jonathan “loved him as his own soul” (**1 Sam 18:1; 20:17**), covenant-making accompanied by the symbolic stripping and gift of clothing and weapons (**18:3–4**), public weeping and kissing (**20:41**), and David’s later lament that Jonathan’s love “surpassed the love of women” (**2 Sam. 1:26**). The biblical text itself never settles the question, leaving the relationship deliberately ambiguous, yet undeniably elevated beyond ordinary male friendship.
- C. **David’s Immoral Ambition.**
  1. Marries Michal (King Saul’s daughter **18:27**) and Abigail (the wealthy wife of Nabal “fool”) and Ahinoam (possibly Saul’s wife, **25:43**) as power grabs.
  2. David befriends people in Gath / Philistine territory (**I Sam. 21:10**).
- D. **David is the youngest of his brothers** (consider the biblical pattern of resisting preference for elder sons: Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, “Prodigal,” etc).
  1. If biblical scribes are resisting this cultural privilege – are there other important cultural patterns that should be resisted?

