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Not for the faint-hearted!

SEC president, Pastor Sam Davis, introduces Samuel and Kings

'The early Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament combined the books of Samuel and Kings under the title of "kingdoms" or "reigns" (*Basileiai*, BASILEIWN). Therefore 1 and 2 Samuel = 1 and 2 Kingdoms; and 1 and 2 Kings = 3 and 4 Kingdoms.'¹

The books of Samuel and Kings cover Israel's period as a nation under a king: 1. Samuel – Saul; 2. Samuel – David; 3. Kings – Solomon and the divided kingdom; 4. Kings – The fall of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah.²

One of the most popular biblical names down through the ages that parents have been proud to give to their sons again and again is the name Samuel! Without doubt, the books of Samuel are some of the most exciting in the Old Testament. We are brought up on the story of Hannah, Samuel's mother, praying for a child. We sympathise and empathise with her as she pleads with God for a son of her own.

We are amazed at the strength of

character that is formed in the young Samuel who is able to remain firm and resolute when, effectively, his two older 'brothers', Eli's sons, were out-and-out evil men.

The books of Samuel give us David and Goliath, David and Jonathan, David and Bathsheba. They introduce us to the first monarchy in Israel and Saul's long fight for the line of succession against David.

Although the books bear the name of Samuel, he is not the author. Nevertheless, the books of Samuel do describe his work for Israel. Samuel was a nation builder. 'It was thus from its deepest fall that Samuel raised the nation to a new life, and from its shattered ruins built it up into an orderly and progressive kingdom.'³

'The Old Testament was the fruit of Samuel's schools, and so also was the New. The noble tree which he had planted was still vigorous when our Lord traversed the land of Israel; for none but an educated people could have understood his teaching, and

retained it in their memories, and taught it to mankind.'⁴

Samuel's other contribution in the building of the nation was the establishment of the monarchy, albeit reluctantly.

The books of Samuel give us an insight into the theocratic rule of God as manifested through an earthly monarch, Saul. Saul very quickly became despotic and was rejected by God.

Samuel's warning to the children of Israel when they demanded a king immediately became reality. (1 Samuel 8:11-18.) However, it was Samuel who shaped the monarchy and helped to build the nation.

Reading the books of Samuel and Kings is not for the faint-hearted. There is rape, murder, incest, war, adultery, fratricide, genocide, patricide, matricide, brutality, indeed all the sins of the human family are to be found in these books. Some have even questioned why are they in the Bible. What we see in these books is far from holy.

We are given a ringside view into the degradation of the human family, warts and all. Yet through it all we see the guiding hand of God over his people. The fortunes of the children of Israel to a large extent ebbed and flowed, up and down, depending on

the kind of leader they had.

Through all of this is the pleading voice of God through his prophets, calling his people back to himself. The story could have ended more gloriously, more spectacularly. The heathen nations should have been beating a path to Israel, asking them about the secret of their success. (See Isaiah 55:5.)

Instead, what began with so many exciting possibilities, the conquering of a land of promise under the leadership of God, ends generations later with the nation broken, divided, the ten northern tribes lost, and Nebuchadnezzar laying siege to Jerusalem and leading away into captivity the noblest and best of her sons and daughters. Right back where they started – under bondage.

In spite of all this God's love continues to shine through as it still does today. I hear him saying, 'They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them. . . . Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.' (Jeremiah 27:22, NKJV.) The best was still to come in Jesus.

¹Bible.org/page David Malik, *The canonical shape of Kings*. ²Ibid. ³The Pulpit Commentary Vol IV, Books of Samuel p.iii. ⁴Ibid Vol IV p.vi.

Enhancing Health

by Sharon Platt-McDonald RGN, RM, RHV, MSc
 Health Ministries director, BUC

Brain Health Part 13

The spiritual impact

At the recent BUC Nutrition conference, Angelette Muller, nutrition consultant and university lecturer in Nutritional Therapy, discussed the link between diet, appetite, mind and spirituality. She highlighted the brain's pre-frontal cortex responsible for 'higher cognitive functions' which allows us to exercise self-control and decision-making, and factors that affect it.

A recent article by Robin Nixon carried the title 'Spirituality spot found in the brain'. It was found that individuals who were more spiritual had physiological differences in the parietal lobe of their brains. Researcher Brick Johnstone of Missouri University also concluded that a positive spiritual outlook has been associated with better mental and physical health. Previous research on neuro-spirituality using brain scans of actively practising 'believers' had

resulted in broad and inconclusive findings, as it was not clear whether subjects were responding to their life experience or specific religious practice. However, in recent studies, researchers looked for correlations between brain region performance and the subjects' self-reported spirituality, which demonstrated a significant link.

Inspired writings have much to say on the link between brain health and spiritual capacities. Ellen White pointed to habits that impair spiritual sensitivity. 'The Lord would have our minds clear and sharp, able to see points in His word and service, doing His will. . . . Vital energy is imparted to the mind through the brain; therefore the brain should never be dulled by the use of narcotics or excited by the use of stimulants. . . .' *Mind and Spiritual Health, Mind, Character and Personality*, Vol. 2, p 407.

In the same book, under the caption 'The Mind

and Spiritual Warfare', she states, 'Evil thoughts destroy the soul. The converting power of God changes the heart, refining and purifying the thoughts. Unless a determined effort is made to keep the thoughts centred on Christ, grace cannot reveal itself in the life. The mind must engage in the spiritual warfare. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. . . .'

E. G. White, under the heading 'Knowledge Strengthens Mind and Soul', states: 'What we need is knowledge that will strengthen mind and soul, that will make us better men and women. . . . It is well, even essential, to have a knowledge of the world in which we live; but if we leave eternity out of our reckoning, we shall make a failure from which we can never recover.' *Mind, Character and Personality*, Vol. 1, Religion and the Mind, p. 69.

Be vigilant!

