

# How Long Did King Saul Reign

By Dr. Jack A. Moorman

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 1 Samuel 13; 1 Samuel 15; Acts 13

**Preached on:** Wednesday, July 9, 2008

## **Dean Burgon Society**

PO Box 354

Collingswood, NJ 08108

**Website:** [www.deanburgonsociety.org](http://www.deanburgonsociety.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/deanburgonsociety](http://www.sermonaudio.com/deanburgonsociety)

I bring greetings to you again this year from London, England We are here at Bethel Baptist Church in the area of [?] as the crow flies about six and a half miles from Buckingham Palace. That's as the crow flies. If you were to drive and some have tried to drive and never made it, but it is a rather tortuous drive, but London is a very vast, great city as you would know. It is Europe's largest city. We do drive a lot, nearly every day on the streets and give out gospel literature.

Today [?] we were at the East Street Market on Walrus Road which is about three quarters of a mile from the Metropolitan Tabernacle. We go out every day trying to give out the Word of God. But it is good to, again, greet you and greet your...the Dean Burgon Society meetings again this year.

I want to speak to you at the beginning here on what I wanted to talk about, but was not able get my material together in time. I...in connection with the manuscript digest that we presented to you last year we told you that one of the big problems with it is the total understatement of the Greek efforts, the Greek manuscript efforts. We have got a lot in there on versions and on the fathers, but not so much on the Greek efforts. And in order to regress this I thought it would be good if we could present a complete list of all of the Greek manuscripts. As you know we are told by the Society there in [?] Germany, they keep a register of all of the manuscripts that there is about 120 papyri. There's about 320 uncials. There's about 2800 miniscules. And there's about 2450 lectionaries. And that is a great number of manuscripts.

However, the strange thing about it is, it is very, very difficult to get a complete list. You can for the papyri, but not quite so easily for the uncials and certainly not for the miniscules or for the lectionaries.

And I thought it would be good if we had a complete list, not a selected list. So I wanted to speak to you tonight on a roll call of the New Testament manuscripts where we have them all and you can see the enormity of the evidence that is on our side.

You might be, as you know, the [?] Greek New Testament, the basis of our modern versions has a two fold so called pillar that is Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. And then whatever else they can gather together. And certainly with respect to the Greek evidence it has been rather difficult for them because in here you will find a number of

Greek manuscripts listed as consistent witnesses of the first order and consistent witnesses of the second order. And these are a few, just a handful of manuscripts that give some support for the [?] kind that Sinaiticus, Vaticanus type of text.

But I thought it would really be a good demonstration if we could compare these constituent witnesses that they constantly quote with the entire list, with the complete roll call.

And I think this is a bit of an embarrassment for them. And, frankly, I don't know whether there is a conspiracy here or not, but it is extremely difficult to get a complete list, a list that shows every manuscript and also shows the date and especially shows the content.

For example, we would like to know how many manuscripts are available for the gospel of Luke or for 1 Timothy chapter three. And this would not be difficult for them to tell us, but if you search and if you have got access to such a list, please let me know certainly by next year's Dean Burgon Society meeting. I really would like to have it.

And I have looked and looked. I am still looking. I hope to get a complete list. And we need to have roll call of the manuscripts.

But tonight I would like to direct your attention in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 13 and verse one, 1 Samuel chapter 13 and verse one.

I want to speak on a matter that may sound a little bit strange to begin with, but I think you will see what we are all trying to get to here tonight. If you look at 1 Samuel 13 and verse one it says, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel..."<sup>1</sup> And then you are aware that the Ryrie Study Bible unites with many other study Bibles and other sources to tell us the original numbers in this verse have apparently been lost in translation.

Well, that's a great shock to you. Of course they haven't been lost. Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ said it would be easier to lose heaven and earth than it would be to lose one of his words from the Bible.

No, it is just as we read it here. And the theme of my message for this year from London is, "How Long Did Saul Reign?" Or we could entitle it, "Four Lessons Not Learned."

If you will keep your place here in 1 Samuel chapter 13 and verse one and also turn with me to Acts chapter 13 and verse 21, Acts 13 and verse 21.

How long did Saul reign? That is our question. That is our question.

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 13:1

And notice what it says in Acts 13 and verse 21, “And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.”<sup>2</sup>

Now I want to get back to my question: How long did Saul reign?

And I know that you think of this topic tonight you might say, “Well, brother Moorman, I have had many things that exercise me, but this is not the one.”

And, yes I had...we had some difficulties in our local church but how long Saul has reigned has not been at the top of the list. And even some of you that are preparing papers for the Society meeting this year, you would say, “Yes, as I prepared this meeting there lurking in the background is not this burning question of how long did Saul reign.”

I want to get back to the question: How long did Saul reign?

Does the Old Testament... Many think the Old Testament does not tell us how long he reigned. In fact, it does tell us how long he reigned.

Many people say in order to discover how long King Saul reigned you have to go to the book of Acts and there you discover that he reigned 40 years. In fact, Saul reigned two years. And in Acts chapter 13 and verse 21 the rest was just space. “God gave unto them Saul....by the space of forty years.”<sup>3</sup>

He reigned up until 1 Samuel chapter 13. From then on he was not effective against the Philistines. He was just occupying space.

And where Saul got it wrong—and the reason why he couldn’t reign—he got it wrong at the Bible.

If you will turn with me to 1 Samuel 15, just over a couple of pages, 1 Samuel 15 and verse 26 it says, “And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.”<sup>4</sup>

He got it wrong at the Bible. And if a preacher gets it wrong at the Bible he can’t [?] he can’t reign. He can’t have a spring in his step. He can’t have a sparkle in his eye. He can’t be rejoicing in the Lord. If a preacher rejects the verbal, plenary preservation of the Word of God, of the words of God, then he has, in effect, cut himself off from the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God. You cannot really have one [?] the other. And he cannot reign. He cannot be victorious.

---

<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:21

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 16:26

Now he may be a powerful speaker. He may be a great administrator. He may have a large congregation. But if he gets it wrong at the Word of God, if he rejects the fact that God has, in fact, preserved his Word down through the ages, then he cannot reign. He cannot be victorious in the Lord.

And so coming back a chapter or two earlier to 1 Samuel chapter 10 we see that right at the beginning of Saul's ministry or at the beginning of his kingship or after his anointing Samuel gave Saul four signs or he recorded four things would happen to Saul on that day after Samuel anointed him. And I think these were four great lessons. And I really think that they are four lessons for us who are involved in this battle for the text and translation, the text and translation and translation of our standard Bible.

And so you turn with me to 1 Samuel chapter 10. In verse one it says, "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head."<sup>5</sup> And then going down to verse two he said, "Now, Saul, you are going to see four things. Consider, ponder, get them into your heart because they are going to affect you for the rest of your life."

And he said, "The first thing you are going to do is you are going to go to Rachel's sepulcher." Ponder there in verse two.

And then in verse three he said, "You are going to come to the plain of Tabor and when you go to the plain of Tabor you are going to see three men going up to Bethel. And you will notice they are going to be carrying different things, different loads on those...definitely less severe than the others. It mentions three kids and another carrying three loaves of bread and another carrying a bottle of wine. You know, these were for sacrifices before the throne...the altar of sacrifice. [?] them on the road to Bethel.

"And then as you go further in verse five you are going to see some men coming down from the hill of God. And they are going to be carrying some musical instruments and psaltery and they will prophesy." But the point is the hill of God is going to be in the hand of the Philistines. So one does not [?] the [?] for the Philistines are in [?].

"And then, fourthly, Saul, don't do anything," in verse eight. "Never go to battle. Never make an important decision until you go to Gilgal." And that is the [?].

Now here are four lessons that Saul was to learn. And I am going to show you how that in many ways these are four lessons for you and I [?] involved in this textual battle.

There was Rachel's sepulcher, there was the road to Bethel, there was the hill of God in the hands of the Philistines and there was Gilgal.

Rachel's sepulcher. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, Saul's own tribe. "Saul, remember your physical, remember your spiritual heritage."

---

<sup>5</sup> 1 Samuel 10:1

Now, those of us who hold to the received text and the Authorized Version, we have got a wonderful heritage, just a marvelous heritage. And God [?] who remember it. Remember those who labored over the manuscripts. I believe God superintended as they copied the manuscripts down through those long sections. Remember them.

[?] the early editors of the received text who brought the manuscripts to publication. Remember the [?]. Remember Stephanus. Remember [?]. Remember those godly men in the early 1600s who as their preface says, “Sought him that had the key of David” and took these inspired, preserved words in Greek and Hebrew and Aramaic and translated them into our timeless Authorized Version. Remember. “Remember Rachel’s sepulcher, Saul.” But we have a godly heritage, too.

Remember those who have defended this great book, this Authorized Version. Remember John Burgon of Chichester. It is about 45 miles to the south of where we are standing here tonight. Remember how he stood alone against the Westcott and Hort juggernaut that was trundling across Europe.

Remember some of the later defenders who alerted the later generation as to what was happening. Remember Edward Hills. Remember Otis [?] and of course others. And so [?] rather than just occupy space, we can list [?] name to remember our godly heritage.

And then the second lesson that Saul was to learn was how to do what those on the road to Bethel, they were not named, going to Bethel in those days. But Saul, a man for names, saw three going up to Bethel. And there, Bethel, the house of God, there where Abraham, there where Jacob had previously met with God. “And so Saul consider those on the road to Bethel. Make friends with them.”

The Bible says, “observe them.” “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.”<sup>6</sup>  
Proverbs 13 and verse 20.

And that is, frankly, why the Dean Burgon Society is so important in providing a tried, proven fellowship for those who literally take the Scriptures and God will in fact and has in fact preserved his words down through the centuries. It is a good road that we are on. It is the road to Bethel.

And then we discovered in our reading here that from verses three and four, on the road to Bethel Saul discovered that some were capable of carrying more than others were. Now [?] carry something. Obviously three loaves of bread were easier to carrier than three kids of three goats. And so in this defense and dissemination of the Authorized Version as [?] translations in foreign languages based upon it, everyone has a part. Everyone can carry something.

So if you put your hand to this plow you will discover that you have embarked upon a very good work. You will not just be occupying space, but we are reigning. There will be a victory.

---

<sup>6</sup> Proverbs 13:20

The third lesson that Saul was to learn had to do with the hill of God. The hill of God was in the hands of the Philistines. Now it wasn't all lost because some were coming down from the hill and some did have a testimony for the Lord. But the hill of God was in the hand of the Philistines.

Now things are looking very grim today. I pay for a newspaper on a monthly basis and I asked the newspaper agent [?] need to pay for this. Could I not just pay for the good news? And the news is really bad. Oh, it is...we know the Lord is coming soon.

Jeremiah six verse four says, "The shadows of the evening are stretched out."<sup>7</sup>

But I am afraid that the hills of God are in the hands of the Philistines, the great institutions of fundamentalists and they don't [?] fight for the good thing done. We would be much poorer without the good that they have done. But I am afraid as far as their Greek departments, their textual teaching, it is pretty much in the hands of the Philistines. Perhaps in previous generations it had been, through ignorance—and I mean we were all ignorant of this—we didn't understand it. Somebody had to tell us. I remember a missionary from Australia back in 1970. His name was Randy Pike. Some of you may know him. He told me about this when I was in Johannesburg, South Africa. And I am very grateful to him for it. And it had the ring of truth.

And somebody [?] and so it is possible that an earlier generation was a little bit in ignorance. But not so much now. And in recent years living in the Greek departments of some of the great fundamental institutions, I am afraid have become much more strident in their attack upon the Authorized Version and upon the received text. And so this is [?] such a name to encourage the aforementioned and [?] Bible training institutions to encourage those who are on the right road to do all that we can in this matter.

And then the fourth lesson that Saul was to learn, and I think we are to learn, is "Saul, don't do anything until," verses seven and eight, "Do not do anything until you go to Gilgal. [?] Don't you [?] upon an vow, don't take any great work or undertake anything of importance until you first go to Gilgal. I will meet you at Gilgal."

Gilgal was the place of Israel's first encampment. It was a place where the stones, the memorials stones were set up. It was the place where, to use the Scriptural term, "the reproach of Egypt" was rolled away.<sup>8</sup> It was a place where they prepared themselves to go and to take Jericho.

"Saul, don't [?] until you go to Gilgal. I will meet you there."

Samuel was a prophet. Samuel was a prophet.

---

<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah 6:4

<sup>8</sup> See Joshua 5:9

There at Gilgal Saul learned the Scriptures. There at Gilgal they had the sacrifices. And I would say that in this textual battle we need to go to Gilgal. We need to keep our [?] hearts right. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.”<sup>9</sup> The book, the blood, the blessed hope will ever be at the center of our endeavors in this conflict.

How long did Saul reign? He only reigned two years, 38 years just occupying space. And so tonight, resting on Oh God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home. It shall not be that way for us.

The Lord bless you and be with you.

---

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:4