

The Prophet of the King

1. Intro

- In 1966 the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche famously said "God is dead"
- And if you were to look around our world ... you might conclude he's right
- We see a world around us that's in chaos and in desperate need of peace and salvation
 - Chaos in the Middle East
 - Unrest in global politics
 - Threat of North Korea
- But we also see it in our own country
 - Issue of ongoing racism
 - Sexual revolution which has lead to
 - Sexualisation of women
 - Proliferation and normalisation of pornography
 - Dramatic rise in domestic violence
 - Push to legalise all abortions and euthanasia
 - Rise of militant atheism
 - 30% of Australians nominated 'No religion' in the latest census
- Personally ... many of us feel our life is out of control and in chaos
 - Marriages that are struggling
 - Relationships with children or parents are strained
 - The pressure to meet expectations from parents or peers or media ... is leading to anxiety and depression
 - And then there's financial pressure due to mortgage stress or job instability
- Our world is broken and in a mess and is in desperate need of redemption
 - What can overcome it?
 - What hope is there?
 - What can we look to that will bring redemption our world so badly needs?
- Can God?
 - For many ... it doesn't look like it because it seems like Nietzsche was right when he said "God is dead"

2. Context

- These were the same questions being asked by God's people in the time of 1 Samuel

- About 1050BC > time just after the Judges
- Israel in promised land
 - Not conquered it fully
 - Since Moses and Joshua there's been no **national** leader for Israel
 - Only Judges like Samson and Gideon leading and ruling over parts of Israel
 - Result ... Israel has been spiralling further and further down into chaos, immorality, and idol worship

- And the questions Israel were asking is ...
 - What will God do about it?
 - Will he abandon Israel?
 - Will he renege on his promises to bless them and make them his chosen people?
 - Or will he fix it?

- We get a hint he **is** going to do something about this with the birth of Samuel that we read about last week in Ch 1
- Throughout the Bible ... there is a pattern of godly, barren women for whom God gives the blessing of children
- And each time ... that child plays a vital part in God's plans and purposes to bring salvation and blessing to the world
 - Sarah > Isaac
 - Rebecca > Jacob
 - Rachel > Joseph
- And in Ch 1 we meet Hannah ...
 - who's another godly woman, unable to have children
 - she petitions the Lord and God gives her Samuel
 - And as she had promised in her vow, Hannah gives Samuel back to serve the Lord in the temple in Shiloh

- So expectation is heightened that God is going to do something special though Samuel

3. Removal of God's word [SLIDE]

- Story starts to widen out from the individual family of Elkanah, Hannah and Samuel
- Now starting to see more of the bigger picture and how God is working through Samuel for the sake of his people - Israel

- Samuel is now a boy and is ministering in Shiloh at the temple under Eli the priest
 - Not a proper temple > temple is built later by David's son, Solomon
 - It's actually the tabernacle > a portable tent that was used for to offer sacrifices and worship God

- But here in v1 the author tells us what the issue is
 - *In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions*
 - God was silent
 - In this world of chaos and immorality ... it seemed as though *God was dead*

- In v2 we're told Eli's eyes were becoming weak > his sight is fading
 - That's normal for one getting old ... as anyone over age of 40 can testify

- But I think the author is using a play on words here
 - Not only was Eli unable to see the normal things of daily life
 - He was unable to 'see' the visions from the Lord
 - His physical condition was a reflection of the spiritual reality
 - Our writer is alluding to fact that
 - Even though Eli is the priest
 - He's part of the problem facing Israel ... that God was seemingly silent and there was no word of the Lord

- While Eli was lying down in his 'usual place' ... we see in v3 that Samuel lying down in the temple (i.e. the tabernacle)

- This is where the
 - Sacrifices were made
 - Priest was to represent the people before the Lord
 - Symbolic dwelling place of the Lord

- As if to underline this symbolism, the author tells us ... the tabernacle is 'where the ark of God was'
 - Now the ark was a gold covered box that contained the 10 commandments > covenant agreement between God and his people
 - This is not to be confused with the ark that Noah built and housed two of every kind of animal during the flood
 - That would be confusing!
 - Story > someone who had serious doubts about the truth of Christianity and the Bible, because he thought the ark that the

Israelites carried on their shoulders though the desert was this massive boat that Noah built ... and not in fact a gold covered box with the 10 commandments

- Same word ... different ark!
- On top of the ark of the covenant were two cherubim
 - two angelic like creatures with wings spreading out over the cover ...
 - and this was the place where God would reveal himself and his word¹
- It was like God's throne, and it was the place from which he would speak
- And while Samuel was **there** ... Eli was absent

- The removal of God's word was about to come to a dramatic end
- And we see that in the way the Lord calls out to Samuel v4-9
- And in order to emphasis the significance of it all, it happens three times
- Each time the Lord calls, Samuel understandably thinks it's Eli who's calling him
 - Each time he runs to Eli
 - Eli says "I didn't call you > go back to bed"
- And finally, on the third occasion, Eli realises it's the Lord ... and tells Samuel to go back and listen to what the Lord has to say

- And v10-14 the Lord came and stood before Samuel and told him
 - I am going to judge Eli and his sons
 - His sons had made themselves contemptible ... ESV says they were 'blaspheming God'
 - And yet Eli failed to restrain them

- What have they done that deserves such judgment?
- Back in 1 Samuel 2:12 - *Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.*
 - What they'd been doing was stuffing their faces with the sacrifices that were dedicated to God
 - A number of the sacrifices that the OT stipulated could actually be shared with God by the priests who were in charge of the tabernacle / temple
 - The fat portions were always offered to God > they were the best portions > but the sons wanted that bit as well

¹ Ex 25:22; 30:6; Lev 16:2; Num 7:89

- In fact they would often stop the Israelites from offering their sacrifices because they wanted the raw meat ... because they preferred roasted meat not boiled!
 - Because they watched Masterchef and My Kitchen Rules and they knew the best way to cook meat was medium rare
- On top of all that ... they had sex with women who served at the temple and they turned the tabernacle into a house of prostitution
- And their father Eli failed restrain them

- Here was the place of worship that was meant to capture the holiness of God ... set apart from every other God > pure > righteous and just
- And what do they do?
 - They turn it into a place of contempt ... where they trampled on and made a mockery of his holiness

- In addition, Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were meant
 - to mediate for the people in the temple
 - to offer sacrifices to God
 - to represent the people before the Lord
 - to receive revelations and speak the word of the Lord to the people ...
- And yet they were acting wickedly and with contempt towards the Lord they were meant to be serving

- Now back in 3:13 God tells Samuel he's going to "*judge Eli's family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.*"
- Now can you imagine Samuel ...
 - he's just a young boy > probably a teenager ...
 - being given the inside word how God is going to smite your boss and his two sons!
 - That's not a message you want to pass up the line to those above you!

- Tragically, the wickedness and contempt of Eli's sons ... and Eli's failure to restrain them had frightening consequences
 - *v14 - Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'*"

- You see what he's saying there?

- If the gracious provision God has made for the forgiveness of sins though sacrifice and offerings is spurned and disdained ... there's nothing left for them but the fearful prospect of judgment
 - Eli's sons wouldn't listen to the voice of their father
 - They would not repent of their sin
 - They flagrantly despised and scorned the Lord and his means of atonement

- The New Testament recognises the same reality
 - If you trample the Son of God underfoot
 - If you treat the death of Jesus for your sins with contempt
 - What hope do you think there is for you?
 - There's no sacrifice left to atone for your sins if you have discarded the death of Jesus

- If you're here this morning and you're not yet a follower of Jesus ... don't make the same mistake of those men
 - God is a gracious God
 - His deepest desire is to forgive and show mercy
 - But he will not let those
 - who despise his son and
 - the atonement for sins he offers through the cross
 - to be swept under the carpet

- Understandably, Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had said in the vision
- But Eli insisted Samuel tell him what the Lord had said
- And Eli consigns himself to the reality that is to come

- Can you sense the crisis?
 - Eli and sons are corrupt and are facing God's judgment
 - Word of the Lord rare in Israel and there are not many visions
 - God is seemingly silent
 - And the nation of Israel is in chaos ... spiralling out of control politically, morally and spiritually

- What, if anything ... will God do?
 - Is he dead?
 - Will he remain silent?
 - Or will he act?

4. Return of God's word [SLIDE]

- Well God does act ... and he does it in this most dramatic way through Samuel
- Our writer has been hinting all along that Samuel would be the one
- Throughout Ch 2 ... we get glimpses of this
 - 2:21 - *Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD*
 - 2:26 - *And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men*
- Now Ch 3 ... the Lord is appearing to and speaking to Samuel in ways that hadn't happened in Israel for generations

- Then told this v19-21
 - ¹⁹ *The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground.*
 - Meaning ... Samuel would hear the word of the Lord and ensure that word would be spoken to the people
 - None of God's word would be lost or ignored
 - ²⁰ *And all Israel from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south] recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD.*
 - ²¹ *The LORD continued to **appear** at Shiloh, and there he **revealed** himself to Samuel **through his word**. And Samuel's word came to all Israel.*

- The obvious conclusion is ...
 - God is not dead
 - He is not silent
 - He will sort out this mess and he has raised up a man who will bring the word of God to the people to show them the way

- God was clearly using Samuel to rectify the problems facing Israel
 - His response to Israel's crisis was NOT ...
 - A new political system
 - A grand five year plan
 - A charismatic leader to sell them a vision
 - No ... his response to Israel's crisis was the return of his word
 - And he started by raising up a prophet to bring the word of the Lord to them
 - Because it would be the word of God that would be the starting point of Israel's redemption and salvation

- How?
- For it would be the word of God, spoken by his prophet that would
 - remind them of God's goodness and grace
 - convict them of their sin and bring them to repentance
 - tell them of how he would rescue them from their enemies though his appointed king
 - point them to a leader who would overcome the chaos and bring peace

5. Redemption of God's word [SLIDE]

- Friends, this how God always operates
- He bring about his salvation plans and purposes **through his word**
- For its as we get to the New Testament, not only do
 - we read in **his word** how God's salvation plan his fulfilled in Jesus
 - but we also discover that Jesus Christ himself ... is **the** Word
- For John 1 says
 - *In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. ² He was with God in the beginning (v1-2); and*
 - *The **word** became flesh and made his dwelling among us (v14)*
- And it's through **THE** word – Jesus Christ that God brings redemption and salvation to all the world
- For THIS word of God is the one who
 - Not only convicts us of our sin ... but pays for our sin
 - Not only reminds us of God's goodness and grace ... but shows us grace at by dying in our place
 - Who rescues us from **our** enemies of sin and death because he is the anointed king
 - Is the one who lead us back to God and restore peace among the chaos
- In the days of Samuel, the word of God was such good news for Israel ... because
 - previously it seemed God had been silent
 - and they were in a world of that was spiralling out of control
- And when you look around our world ... it seems that we too are spiralling out of control
- And every time something tragic happens ... and people ask
 - "where is God in all this?"
 - "Why is God so silent?"

- Well the reality is ...
 - God is not silent and
 - And he's spoken through his word ... THE word, the Lord Jesus Christ
- And just as God's word was good news for Israel ...
 - THE word Jesus Christ is good news for us
 - Because it's the gospel of Jesus Christ that will bring about the redemption and salvation that we know we so desperately need
- For its not just the eternal salvation from death, and judgment and hell that God's word brings ... although that's vital
- It's the transforming word of God in the gospel to our broken world ... here and now ... that also makes it such good news

- Because the gospel affects everything!
- It's the only the gospel that will bring peace to the Middle East
- Son of Hamas - Mosab Yousef
 - Son of Muslim cleric > father was a leader of Hamas > terror organisation in Palestine fighting against Israel
 - Son - Mosab was being groomed to be a future leader of Hamas
 - Given key operations and missions to fulfil
 - Was captured by Israeli forces and imprisoned several times
- But one day he had a chance encounter with a British tourist who was a Christian led him to start reading the Bible
 - Reading Matthew 5:44-45 ⁴⁴ *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵ *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*
 - He was thunder struck!
 - Never heard anything like this before
 - But knew it was the message he had been searching for all his life
 - In time became a Christian
- Came to realise there would never be peace in the Middle East between Palestine and Israel while they hated each other
 - Answer came from the gospel ... and knowing Jesus who calls on us to love your enemy and pray for them
- Because its only in knowing Jesus can you be set free to love your enemy
 - Because at the cross Jesus loved and forgave us who were his enemies

- It's only the gospel that will deal with racism in our country
 - Because the gospel teaches us we're all made in the image of God
 - Therefore we are all equal in his eyes

- The gospel also tells us we're all sinners ...
 - and so there's nothing inherently good about us or our culture that we can boast in or laud over others ...
 - because we're all sinners in need of forgiveness
- It's only the gospel that will transform our broken marriages
 - Because it's the gospel that gives us a model of sacrificial love
 - Where a husband lays down his life for his wife ... like Jesus lay down his life for this church
- You see friends ... it's the word of God that will bring about the redemption and salvation that this world and our lives so desperately need
- That's what God sent in the time of Israel
- He raised up a man to bring his word to the people
- And God has sent the Son Man, to bring his word to us
 - But Jesus doesn't just speak God's word
 - He is THE Word
 - For he is the one who saves and gives hope
 - For all God's plans and purposes to bring redemption to this world are found in him
 - For it was this Word of God who went to the cross to assure us
 - That unlike Eli and his sons
 - Our sins **will** be atoned for
 - Not by the offering and sacrifices of bulls and goats
 - But by the offering and sacrifice of Jesus himself
- God has spoken
- He's given us his word
- The question is ... will you hear his voice?
 - *John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*
- And will not just hear his word for your eternal salvation
- Will you not also hear his words ... for the life you live while you wait out your salvation
- For the gospel ought to affect everything
- It shapes
 - Our goals in life

- Our morality
- Our parenting
- Our marriage
- Our use of money
- The way we view and use our homes
- The way we work
- Everything!
- And if you're convinced that God's word is the answer for this world and for your life ...
 - then are you listening to it?
 - or is the word of the Lord rare in our household?
- God has spoken
 - Through his Son and
 - In his word
- Listen to his word ... for it is through God's word we have peace, and hope and life

PRAY