



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

God's Leader Series: King Saul

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*The Book of Judges in the Holy Bible spans about 350 years of Hebrew history. This covers the era from their arrival in the Promised Land until Saul was chosen King in 1052BC. They had been given the opportunity to live under the direct protection of the Lord, Yahweh, rather than a human ruler. The Lord raised up "judges" from military, civil, or spiritual champions to serve as leaders. Contemporary readers are amazed at the number of times that Israel turned from God and failed. They neglected the Word of God and did what seemed right in their own eyes. **"They knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel"** (Judges 2:10). The people clamored for a king like other nations had. God directed His priest, Samuel to anoint a king but to first warn them of the consequences.*

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish people had been living under a "theocracy" but complained to Samuel that they wanted to live like other nations and have a king (1Samuel 8:5, 12:12). Samuel warned them that a king would: 1) draft their young for military and domestic service (8:11-13); 2) tax their crops and herds (8:14, 15, 17); 3) appropriate the best of their animals and servants (8:16); and 4) limit their personal freedom (8:17). The Lord revealed Saul, son of Kish to Samuel. This choice was clarified during a national ceremony when the tribe of Benjamin was identified by the casting of lots. Samuel pointed out Saul, the tallest man standing, as the LORD's choice. Nearly all present shouted "long live the king!"

A KING IS CHOSEN

1 Samuel 10:25a Samuel explained the rights and duties of the king and then wrote them in a book and put it before the LORD.¹

Priest Samuel reminded the king and the people of the regulations governing a leader's conduct (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The people were not to place a foreigner in a position to rule over them. The king was not to multiply wives, horses, or riches for himself. The king was to fear the Lord his God and to read in this book of the law each day. These certainly are reasonable leadership qualifications even today!

THE KING IS CONFIRMED

1 Samuel 11 About a month later King Nahash of Ammon led his army against the town of Jabesh in the territory of Gilead and besieged it. The men of Jabesh said to King Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will accept you as our ruler."

A condition of surrender was that the evil Ammonite king would gouge out the right eye of each of the men of Gilead. The city was surrounded and without hope. Israel's twelve tribes were loosely united and poorly armed during the years that they relied on God to protect them. Saul rallied 330,000 men from across Israel, surprised the larger Ammon army before dawn, struck them down, and scattered those remaining. This is the third in a series of four tests to confirm God's calling to service: 1) the call was given by Samuel, one of God's trusted; 2) God's Holy Spirit confirmed this when Saul showed a true change of heart; 3) Saul responded to a direct threat with bold leadership; 4) peers confirmed his call by their acceptance. Saul was again confirmed as king during the victory celebration in Gilead.²

SAUL IN CONSTANT WARFARE

1 Samuel 14:47 When Saul had taken over the kingdom of Israel, he fought against his enemies on every side.... Wherever he turned, he was victorious.³

In the early years, Saul was obedient to God and dependent upon Him. Readers may not understand how Israel could endure in such hostility. Their enemies were more educated, had larger armies that were skilled in battle, and were better armed. Israel did not have ready access to iron until God enabled them to drive the Philistines back away from Jerusalem itself.⁴

JONATHAN WINS THE BATTLE

1 Samuel 13:5 The Philistines assembled to fight against Israel. They had 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and as many soldiers as the sand on the seashore. They camped at Michmash, east of Beth Aven.⁵

BIBLE STUDIES

LEADERSHIP STUDY WEDNESDAYS: 7 TO 7:50AM, CAPITOL ROOM 142 SOUTH

STAFF/GUESTS: WEDNESDAYS: 12:05 TO 12:55 PM, GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM – CAPITOL 264WEST

Kansas

God's Leader Series: King Saul

King Saul faced the Philistines with his army of 3,000 men. He was anxiously waiting for the Priest Samuel to come and make sacrifices to enquire of the Lord concerning the battle. Meanwhile, his men were deserting the ranks, hiding in caves, and crossing into other countries. Saul was down to only 600 men and became desperate. He sinned by taking over the priest's duties. God could not bless the king in this battle. Saul's oldest son, Jonathan, left camp with his armor bearer to scout out the enemy's garrison, their forward post. Jonathan prayed for the LORD's help and found a narrow pass in the rocky terrain. They goaded the Philistine soldiers to come after them, picking them off as each came through the pass. The main force became frightened when dozens of their troops seemed to be vanishing. Suddenly, an earthquake shook the entire area, causing all of the enemy troops to flee.

Nearly 3,000 years later, a Bible reading general found himself camped at Michmash, during WWI. General Allenby sent an infantry company to slip through Jonathan's pass. They surprised the sleeping Turk soldiers, killing or capturing all.⁶ God's Word is reliable!

SAUL REJECTS GOD

*1 Samuel 15:22-23 But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."*⁷

Samuel grieved over the string of failures of King Saul. God sent Samuel to Bethlehem, directing him to anoint a teen-age shepherd boy as the next king of Israel. Young David served in the royal court of King Saul, being trained in service while God gave Saul additional time to repent and finish well. A dozen years later, Saul was wounded in battle and ended his own life.

CONCLUSION

Following are highlights of Saul's failures and the relevance of these lessons to our lives today.

1. In disobedience, Saul failed to let God use him to administer justice to the evil and immoral King Agag and the Amalekites (15:3). Saul defeated them but kept some spoils for himself. Partial obedience sets a poor example for others and threatens those who profit by it.
2. After rebuke, Saul struck back in violence. He restrained Samuel from leaving (15:27) and killed 85 priests, suspecting they were not loyal to him (22:18). When corrected, even punished, we should be thankful for the opportunity to repent and gain stature.
3. In pridefulness, Saul took credit for Jonathan's rout of the Philistine army at Michmash (13:3-4). Leaders are exalted when team members are praised. We all win!
4. Envy is poison to those it infects. Saul lamented David's victory over Goliath (18:6-8). He saw young David as a threat rather than an asset. Effective leaders surround themselves with those with greater talent.
5. In rejection, Saul multiplied his sin. God removed His blessing and favor from the king. Rather than repent and seek God, Saul resorted to violence to force his own will on others in Israel (20:31-33) (22:14-19). Repentance must be our response to loss of favor from our Lord. Why offer vain and perilous resistance to a Sovereign God (Acts 9:5-6)?

¹ The Holy Bible, New Century Version. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005.

² John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005 p386.

³ The Holy Bible, God's Word Translation. (Baker Publishing Group). 1995.

⁴ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible. (Thomas Nelson Inc.). 2005 p389.

⁵ The Holy Bible, God's Word Translation. (Baker Publishing Group). 1995.

⁶ Major Vivian Gilbert, Romance of the Last Crusade. (D. Appleton & Co.). 1923.

⁷ The Holy Bible, New Living Translation. (Tyndale House Publishers). 2007.