

## SAMUEL AND SAUL: The first Prophet and first King of Israel 1 Samuel Chapters 4 to 16

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Israel battles against God's enemies.</li><li>• The Ark of God stolen and quickly returned.</li><li>• Samuel prays to save Israel from the Philistines.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God permits Israel to have their own king.</li><li>• King Saul wins a battle but loses God's blessing.</li><li>• God tells Samuel to anoint David as king.</li></ul> |
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**THIS BOOK** covers the period in Israel from the death of Eli the Priest up to the anointing of David as king in place of King Saul. It describes the events of the people of Israel over 3000 years ago during the constant attacks by surrounding heathen tribes. It shows how God blesses and protects and guides those who obey Him and put their trust in Him. He also allows punishment and persecution to happen to those who do not obey. Samuel was Israel's first prophet and Saul was their first king. The Bible still teaches us today to be obedient and to wait on God for His salvation. This was promised to Abraham's family and to the rest of the world though Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. We learn about the importance of Ruth, Hannah and the town of Bethlehem in the life of Samuel, Saul, David and their coming Messiah.

**MANNA PUBLICATIONS** supply Bible teaching commentaries written by Fred Morris. For many years Fred, and his wife Lorna, travelled round the world teaching and preaching. When they returned home they wrote these notes for printing locally wherever there was a need for basic Christian teaching.

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**WE PRAY** that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. As you read, think about what Jesus said and did 2000 years ago and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return.

### Manna Publications

FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE TEACHING COMMENTARIES

"The secret of God's Kingdom has been given to you" (Mark 4:11)



# SAMUEL AND SAUL

## The first Prophet and first King of Israel

A Bible Teaching Commentary  
for personal or group study  
by Fred Morris



## 1 Samuel

## Chapters 4 to 16



### To the Reader or Leader

These commentaries help to explain the Bible in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



**Bible reading:** Where you see this, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading this book.



**Learn about this:** Where you see this, the words tell you the main things to know or do and to share with others to help everyone to grow in Bible understanding.



**Talk about this:** Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.



**Think about this:** Where you see this, the question requires more time for personal meditation.



**Ruled teaching boxes:** Where you see this, the information gives extra teaching about life at the time the Bible was written and for today's believers.

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*Revised Worldwide English edition first published in the UK in 2021*

<b>Published by:</b>	<b>Printed by:</b>
	<b>Typeset by:</b> MissionAssist (UK)
<b>God has enabled Manna Bible teaching commentaries to be published in:</b>  Angola, Armenia, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Congo Dem. Rep. (Kinshasa and Katanga), Congo Rep. (Brazzaville), Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar (Burma), Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe  <b>and in 42 languages plus 2 in Braille</b>	
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**Talk about this:**

1. Why was Samuel sorry for Saul? What did he agree to do for God? Why did Samuel not want to go (16:1-2)?
2. The people of Bethlehem were afraid of Samuel. What did they agree to do (16:5)?
3. Explain: "The Lord looks at what is in the heart" (16:7).
4. After God's anointing on David, what happened to Saul (16:14)?
5. Explain how God prepared David the shepherd to become a servant and a king (16:20-22).



**Think about this:** How does the town where David lived remind us of Jesus? Why is it important to know what God wants you to do, or where to go, or who to meet? Is it always important for you to understand the reason? Ask God to show you the way and then listen for His voice. Then you can begin to understand what God is doing in your life. Learn to wait patiently for God's perfect timing when His purposes will be fully understood and fulfilled. Pray for faith to walk forward when you experience God's peace.

**CONCLUSION**

These chapters from the first book of Samuel take us nearly to the end of Samuel's ministry in Israel over 3000 years ago. He was encouraged by God to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. He also prepared the way for David, the next king. David became the greatest king of Israel before the birth of Jesus Christ.

We see clearly the purposes of God in the lives of these Old Testament people. We also see the punishment He allows when a nation and its leaders disobey Him.

God used great leaders like Samuel, Saul and David to prepare the way for Israel's Messiah, Jesus the Christ. We also see how He used humble women like Ruth, Hannah and Mary to fulfil His purposes.

The worldwide Kingdom of believers in Christ worship the same one true God of Israel today. May we be ever grateful for our salvation through God's Son, Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. Pray daily for God's people, Jews and Gentiles, and also for others to be saved, as we all await Christ's return to Jerusalem. "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20.)

[1 Samuel, Chapters 4 to 16, 2021]

**SAMUEL AND SAUL: 1 Samuel Chapters 4 to 16**

**INTRODUCTION**

There are two books of Samuel in the Old Testament part of the Bible. They describe what happened to the land of Israel and the people of Israel over 3000 years ago. The first book of Samuel tells us about the prophet Samuel and the first king of Israel who was called Saul. The first three chapters cover the time of Samuel when he was a boy, before he became a priest and prophet. You can learn about this in the Manna Bible teaching commentary "Ruth and Hannah".

The story of Samuel is important to Jews and Christians today because of the fulfilment of some of the promises made by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is also important to read about Israel because of its impact on the world. Samuel and Saul were chosen by God to prepare the way for the second king of Israel, David, and the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Before the time of Samuel, the family of Jacob, later know as the children of Israel, were led out from slavery in Egypt to the land promised by God. One meaning of the name 'Israel' is 'Triumphant with God'. God promised the land



**Old Testament people and God's Good News of Jesus the Christ**

The baby Jesus was born in Israel to the virgin Mary by God's Holy Spirit. He is the Son of God who lived on earth for 33 years as a human being before returning to Heaven. He was born as Israel's Messiah and Saviour of the world. Christians believe He died on a cross as punishment for our sins so that we may be forgiven and live with Him and God our Father for ever. Angels told His followers that we must be ready for Him to return to Earth one day soon (Acts 1:11).

Mary married Joseph as planned, who was in the family line of King David. David followed King Saul, who was the first King of Israel. David was the great-grandson of Ruth. Samuel was the son of Hannah. These two women of faith are described in the Manna Bible teaching commentary 'Ruth and Hannah'. They lived in Israel before God called Samuel and Saul to lead His people Israel as their first prophet and king. They were all part of God's salvation plan, over 1000 years later, for Jesus Christ the Jewish Messiah, to be born as the greatest Prophet and King of all. His Hebrew name is Yeshua which means Saviour. He died on a cross to fulfil God's plan for Him to take the punishment for the sins of all who believe He is the Son of God, the one true God Almighty, whose Hebrew name is Yahweh.

The Old Testament believers at the time of Samuel and Saul, were part of God's plan for eternal salvation of all who follow Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah.

of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for ever. This land became known as Israel. God led the children of Israel safely through the wilderness away from the Egyptians and the Philistines. He fed them with manna from Heaven and quail meat and miraculously supplied fresh water in desert places. You can read about this in the Manna Publications Bible teaching commentary 'Moses part 1'.

God chose Moses and Joshua to lead them to the Promised Land of Canaan. Later, the Israelites were led by judges and priests. Some were good judges and priests, some were bad. God called Samuel to be a priest and the last judge of Israel. He is usually called the first prophet in the land of Israel although Deborah was a prophetess 140 years earlier (Judges 4). Samuel was cared for as a boy by Eli the High Priest of Israel.

The Old Testament proves how God blesses and protects and guides those who obey Him and put their trust in Him. People like Samuel trusted and obeyed God. Saul also trusted and obeyed God at first.

In this Bible commentary, we see how God taught the Israelites to trust Him and trust His leaders who knew what He wanted them to do. God wanted them to remain holy and victorious in battles. They all suffered much when their leader disobeyed their loving God.

The tribes around Israel also suffered much when they tried to destroy the Israelites, whom God loves.

This commentary teaches us about the dangers of sinning against God. If we fail to learn the truth from God in the Old Testament, we will repeat the same mistakes today. This will hinder our New Testament faith and salvation offered through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Saviour. It is therefore always important to know and understand both the Old and New Testament teachings of the Bible.



## **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 4**



**Learn about this:** *The Philistines attack Israel (verses 1-2); the people of Israel take the Ark of the Lord into battle with them (v.3-9); Israel is attacked again and the sons of Eli are killed and the Ark stolen (v.10-12); hearing the news, Eli the priest dies and his daughter-in-law dies in childbirth, claiming that the glory of the LORD God Almighty had left Israel (v.13-22).*

## **SAMUEL THE FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD**

Eli the priest served for 40 years as Israel's High Priest at God's Tent of Meeting in Shiloh. The city of Jerusalem was still occupied by the Canaanite tribes at that time. Eli knew the right things to do but he often failed to take action and the Lord God Almighty was not glorified.

God began to speak to the Israelites through the young prophet Samuel. In the previous three verses, the writer tells us: 'As Samuel grew up, the Lord was

When we have faith in God we must always look to see the purpose of God Himself. We do not rush ahead with our own ideas but seek His understanding first. Our own ideas can quickly turn into unholy thoughts, or actions which are not in God's will or purpose. Samuel did not know what God was doing in advance, but he had sufficient faith to obey God and do His will, even though he was old and weary.

This is a lesson for us all. It was important for Samuel to obey God and anoint David.

The shepherd boy who became King David was born in the town of Bethlehem and was from the tribe of Judah. One of his descendants would be Joseph, whose wife Mary gave birth in Bethlehem to Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah, their King of Kings (Matthew 1:6-16). That is why Jesus is sometimes called the Son of David in the Bible. Jesus was born to Mary by the Holy Spirit as the Son of God, not the son of Joseph.

## **DAVID SERVES KING SAUL**

Samuel anointed David as king, but only David's family knew this. Saul still reigned as king over Israel for several more years.

From that time, 'the Spirit of the Lord left Saul. And an evil spirit was sent by the Lord. It terrified him' (16:14).

Servants in Saul's court were quick to see he was troubled. They said to him, "Give us an order to look for someone who can play the harp. He will play it when the evil spirit sent by God comes upon you. Then you will feel better" (16:15-16).

One of the servants said that a son of Jesse of Bethlehem played the harp. "He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well ... and the Lord God Almighty is with him" (16:18).

Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse. He said, "Send me your son David, the one who takes care of your sheep" (16:19).

So, Jesse gave David a gift for the king and sent him to Saul. At the palace, David played the harp and Saul felt quiet in his spirit. The evil spirit left Saul when David did this (16:23). David praised the Lord in music and song. No evil spirit can stand in the presence of God, or in the presence of those who praise Him.

David served God. He served Saul as a servant but also as a future king. He had to serve King Saul who became mad. This almost cost him his life. He hid from Saul in the desert. He also saw Israel defeated in battle and his close friend Jonathan, Saul's son, killed. These things happened before David became king.

Samuel died three years after obeying God and anointing David.

Then he told Jesse and his sons to prepare themselves also. They washed and put on clean garments before Samuel blessed them. He invited them to the sacrifice.

So Jesse's sons came, one by one, to Samuel. Samuel first saw Eliab. He thought that Eliab was the one the Lord had chosen (16:6). But God said to Samuel, "Man looks at how someone appears on the outside. But the Lord looks at what is in the heart" (16:7).

Seven of Jesse's sons walked in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The Lord has not chosen any of them" (16:10). "Are these the only sons you have?" Samuel asked Jesse.

"No," Jesse answered, "My youngest son is taking care of the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him. We will not sit down to eat until he arrives" (16:11).

David came in. 'His skin was tanned. He had a fine appearance and handsome features.' Then the Lord said to Samuel, "Get up and anoint him. He is the one" (16:12).

So Samuel took the horn of olive oil. 'He anointed David in front of his brothers. From that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came upon David with power. Samuel went back to Ramah' (16:13).



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**David the brave shepherd boy and future king of Israel  
from the town of Bethlehem**

with him. He made everything Samuel said come true. So all the people of Israel recognized that Samuel really was a prophet of the Lord... The Lord God Almighty continued to appear at His Tent of Meeting in Shiloh. There he made himself known to Samuel through the messages He gave him' (3:19-21).

Samuel travelled to every part of the land, setting up courts in many towns to manage and give wise and fair judgments. He judged the people from Dan, in the north, to Beersheba, in the south (3:20). He was the last of the judges of Israel. He prepared the way for the 1000 years of leadership through the future prophets and kings of Israel. This led up to the birth of Jesus Christ their promised Messiah who was known as the King of Kings.

### **ISRAEL LOSES IN BATTLE AGAINST THE PHILISTINES**

Samuel loved the people and mixed freely with them. He knew the laws of God and he worked all his life to help the people know and serve Yahweh, the name of the one true Almighty God of Israel. He taught all the People of Israel (4:1).

However, despite the prophet Samuel's faithful preaching of the word of God (3:19 to 4:1), Israel suffered because Eli the priest did not obey God. Many bad things happened in Israel while Eli was High Priest. The sins of the people separated them from God. They did not seek guidance from God.

The sins of Eli and his sons brought punishment on the people. All the people suffered because of the sin of others. This can happen through one person or many, through church leaders or rulers or the people. Both the sinners and the righteous suffer. God does not always intervene, but in His mercy He offers forgiveness through obeying His word.



#### **The Philistines**

The Philistines were an ancient people who lived along the Mediterranean Sea coast. They came from west of Canaan, from the island of Crete or Caphtor (Amos 9:7). They entered the land of Canaan before the people of Israel, 3200 years ago. Five cities of the Philistines are named in 1 Samuel: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Gath. These cities were along the coast of the Great Sea, now called Mediterranean Sea.

The Philistines knew how to make tools and weapons from iron. The Israelites did not know how to do this. The Philistines also made war chariots. They worshipped the god Dagon. They made idols which were half-man and half-fish.

Later, during the time of the prophet Jeremiah, God said He would destroy totally the Philistines from the north and the south, using Babylon and Egypt to do it (Jeremiah 47:1,4).

It was at this time, 'the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines... The Philistines killed about 4,000 of them... The rest of the Israelite soldiers returned to camp' (4:1-3).

When Israel lost the battle, the elders asked, "Why did the Lord God Almighty let the Philistines win the battle over us today?" (4:3) It was right to ask this question. But they were not right to blame God for everything that went wrong that day.

The elders decided to go to Shiloh for the Ark of the Lord and to take it into battle with them. They said, "The Lord God Almighty will save us from the power of our enemies" (4:3). The presence of God dwelt between the angelic cherubim of the Ark (4:4). But they did not understand that God can be everywhere. Their faith was in the Ark. They wanted it with them in battle. They trusted in the Ark more than in God.



**The Ark of the Lord**

Every person needs to understand who God is. He is the Lord God Almighty who rules over all (4:4). He is Yahweh, Creator of Heaven and Earth. 'All who believe in the Lord must turn away from evil' (2 Timothy 2:19). God was not pleased with Israel. He was their God but they did not fully trust in Him.

### **THE PHILISTINES TAKE THE ARK OF THE LORD**

After the Philistines defeated Israel, the elders disobeyed God and took the Ark of the LORD God Almighty from Shiloh. It held tablets of stone on which were written the covenant of God including the Ten Commandments. They carried it with them into the battle camp. 'Then all the Israelites shouted so loudly that the ground shook' (4:5).

 **Think about this:** God wants us to seek Him and obey Him so that we can worship Him. Why is this an important Bible teaching? What has God done through Jesus Christ so that we can truly worship Him? How do we know when to ignore our feelings and when to act on our feelings?

 **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 16**

 **Learn about this:** *God sends His prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to seek and anoint a new king for Israel; he finds God's choice is a young shepherd boy called David (verses 1-13). God sends an evil spirit to trouble King Saul whose servants sent for the same David to play a harp to calm him down (v.14-23).*

### **SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID AS THE FUTURE KING OF ISRAEL**

The Lord God Almighty said to Samuel, "How long will you be filled with sorrow because of Saul? ...Fill your animal horn with olive oil and go on your way. I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king" (16:1). Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz. (See Manna Bible teaching commentary "Ruth and Hannah: Two Women of Faith in God".)

God needed Samuel to pour oil on the new king's head. This was a sign he would be set apart to serve God. God does not want us to feel sorry for ourselves, to be sad or fearful about the results of sin or worry about the future. We must move on in faith. God always has more for us to do. Samuel was old, but God chose him to anoint a new king who would bring a new beginning for Israel that Samuel would not live to see in this world.

Samuel felt weary and his courage began to fail. "How can I go?" he asked God. "Saul will hear about it. He will kill me" (16:2). God is very gracious. He knew about Samuel's fear and He told Samuel a part of His purpose. When God calls us, He also gives us what we need to work for Him.

God said, "Take a young cow with you. Tell the elders of Bethlehem, 'I have come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord God Almighty.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice. Then I will show you what to do. You must anoint for Me the one I point out to you" (16:2-3).

Samuel did what God said (16:4). He went to Bethlehem where Jesse lived. There was an altar in Bethlehem. Samuel took a young cow to sacrifice on it.

When the elders of the town recognised Samuel coming on his donkey, they were afraid. "Do you come in peace?" they asked.

Samuel replied, "Yes, I come in peace. I have come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord." He told them to prepare themselves. "Set yourselves apart to Him and come to the sacrifice with me" (16:5).

But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you." He repeated these words: "You have refused to do what the Lord God Almighty told you to do. So He has refused to have you as king over Israel" (15:26).

Samuel turned to leave. Saul pulled Samuel's robe and tore it.

Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today. He has given it to one of your neighbours. He has given it to someone who is better than you" (15:27-28)

Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honour me in front of the elders of my people and in front of Israel. Come back with me so I can worship the Lord your God." So, Samuel went back with Saul. And Saul worshipped the Lord (15:30-31.)



### **Too late to be forgiven?**

Many years before, Esau, the grandson of Abraham, wept bitter tears. He gave his birthright to his twin brother Jacob (later called Israel). Afterwards, it was too late to change what he did (Genesis 25:29-34; Hebrews 12:16). The leadership of Israel was given to Jacob and his 12 sons. It was also too late for Saul to change what he did wrong. The leadership of Israel was given to the future King David.

Through the love and mercy of God, Jesus Christ took the punishment that we deserve for our sins. We are saved from our past sins when we repent and accept Jesus as our Saviour (Acts 3:19). So it is never too late to be forgiven. We must acknowledge the harm our sins have done, make amends where possible and rejoice in the new life God gives us in Christ, to be a blessing to others and to God Almighty.

After worshipping God, Samuel killed the king of the Amalekites which Saul had failed to do (15:32-33).

Samuel did not go to Saul again. Samuel was filled with sorrow because of Saul. And the Lord God was very sorry He had made Saul king over Israel' (15:35). God did not allow Saul's family to rule over Israel and later God chose David to become king. The Apostle Paul grieved over those who failed to obey God and unbelievers who persecuted him (Romans 15:31), but God used the sufferings of Paul to extend His Kingdom.



### **Talk about this:**

1. Why did God punish the Amalekites but not the Kenites (15:1-3,6)?
2. What did God tell Samuel about Saul (15:11)? Did Saul ignore his feelings when he knew something was wrong? What did Saul say to Samuel (15:13)?
3. How do we please God (15:22)?
4. Did Samuel share the same feelings of God about Saul (15:35)?

Israel wanted to carry God with them, as the Philistines carried their little Dagon god statues. But God was not with Israel on that day. He left them to their own ways. They believed they had God Almighty with them on their side. Their faith was in the Ark of the Lord which He did not want them to remove from Shiloh.

Samuel did not want the Ark to be moved from the Tabernacle. Eli's two sons went with the Ark and stayed with it in the camp of Israel (4:4). Samuel knew that God would punish the sins of Eli and his family. The Bible says that He would do it in a way that will 'fill everyone who hears about it with horror' (3:11). Their punishment also caused much suffering for the people of Israel who also sinned while Eli was priest.

When all the people of Israel shouted loudly, the Philistines were afraid (4:7). "We are in trouble", they said. They knew that the God of Israel had struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues and had done other mighty acts to bring His people out of Egypt (4:7-8).

"Philistines, be strong! Fight like men!" they shouted to each other. They fought and defeated the men of Israel (4:9-10). 30,000 men of Israel died that day. Those who were not killed ran away.



### **The promises of God are always fulfilled**

God promised Joshua 300 years earlier, "No-one will be able to oppose you as long as you live" (Joshua 1:5). The Ark was the symbol of God's presence. It held His covenant or promise with Israel. Now the people had broken the covenant of Almighty God with Israel by sinning (4:3). They used the Ark of God for protection instead of obeying Him and seeking His guidance. But the purpose of God for the salvation of Israel had not failed. He also planned for 1000 years of prophets, priests and kings to prepare the way for a New Covenant through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the greatest Prophet, Priest and King of all time. He is also Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world. The Old and New Testament prophecies agree that all tribes and nations will be given the opportunity to see the salvation of Yahweh, God Almighty (Isaiah 40:5; Luke 3:6).

## **THE DEATH OF ELI AND HIS SONS**

The Ark of God was captured by the Philistines. Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died in the battle (4:11,17). Earlier, God warned Eli that his evil sons would die because they had sinned against God (2:34).

That same day a man ran from the battle and came to Shiloh and gave his report: Israel had been defeated and the Ark of the Lord God Almighty was in the hands of the Philistines. When they heard this bad news, the whole town

cried out. Eli the priest heard the noise. "What is the meaning of all this noise?" he asked (4:14).

Those people standing near told Eli what had happened: "Israel fled before the enemy and your two sons are dead." When Eli also heard that the Ark of God had been captured, he fell off his seat and broke his neck. He was 98 years old. Eli died there, beside the gate of the Tabernacle. He had ruled Israel for 40 years (4:18).

Soon, news reached the pregnant wife of Phinehas that the Ark of the Lord had been captured and her husband was dead. Suddenly she started to give birth to their son. She was overcome by grief and she lay there dying. She named her new-born boy Ichabod. It described Israel. Ichabod means, "Where is the glory?" or "No glory" (4:21). She repeated the baby's name, saying "The God of glory has left Israel". This was because the Ark of the Lord was in the hands of their enemies (4:22).

Everyone was afraid. They feared that Israel was now a people without God. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord God Almighty was no longer at Shiloh. It was with their enemies. They believed that the glory of the Lord had left the Tabernacle. Israel's enemies had defeated them and Israel mourned the loss of many men in battle.

They believed that God had deserted them. They did not know that God would help Samuel to lead the country back into good ways. Because of what he did, the purpose of God to save the world would continue through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus later visited the apostle John to warn the New Testament churches that the glory of God had also left some of their meetings (Revelation Chapters 2 to 3).

#### **Talk about this:**

1. Why did Israel lose the first battle with the Philistines?
2. Why did Israel lose the second battle with the Philistines?
3. Why did the sons of Eli die?
4. Why were the people afraid?
5. What is the meaning of the name 'Ichabod' (4:21)?

 **Think about this:** Why did God punish Eli, his sons, and many Israelites? What happened when the people put their trust in the Ark instead of God? Does this name 'Ichabod' apply to you or your church? How can we restore God's glory?

#### **1 Samuel 15:22: Obedience to God from the heart.**

The words of God quoted by Samuel to Saul are re-quoted in both the Old and New Testaments:

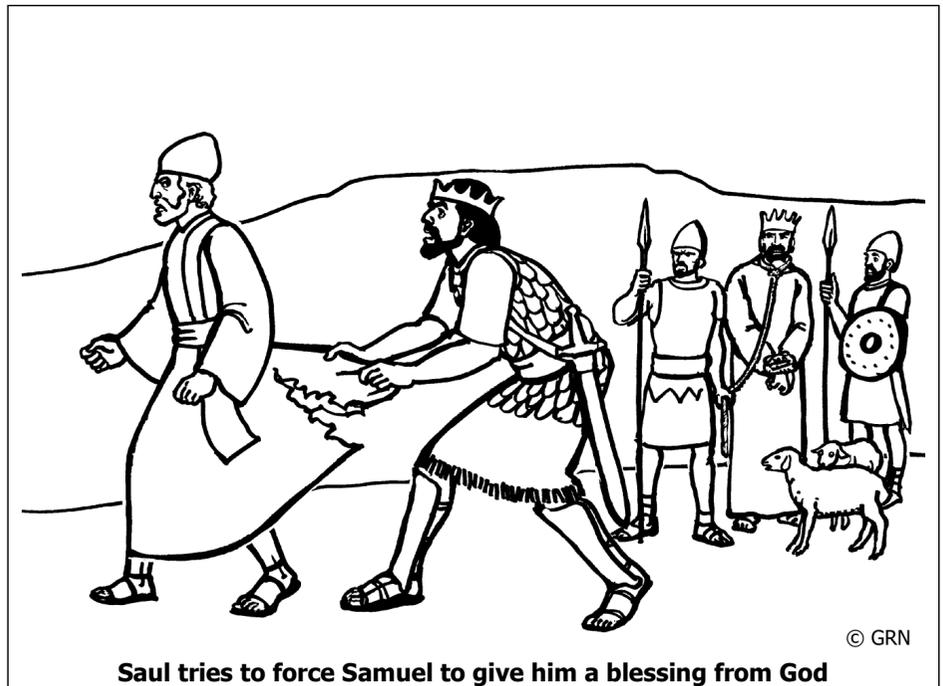
- by King David in Psalm 40:6 and 51:16-17.
- by King Solomon in Proverbs 21:3; Ecclesiastes 5:1.
- by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 7:22-23.
- by Hosea in Hosea 6:6.
- by Micah in Micah 6:6-8.
- by Jesus in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7; Mark 12:33.
- by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 10:5-7.

The way we sacrifice our time, talents and resources must be in line with the purpose and calling of God.

### **SAUL CONFESSES HIS SIN**

Saul knew that he had disobeyed the Lord. He confessed, "I have sinned. I have broken the Lord's command... I was afraid of the people. So I did what they said I should do." (15:24).

"Forgive my sin and come back with me," Saul begged Samuel, "so that I may worship the Lord" (15:25).



**Saul tries to force Samuel to give him a blessing from God**

men and women to death. Put the children and babies to death. Also kill the cattle, sheep, camels and donkeys" (15:1-3).

'So Saul brought ... 200,000 soldiers on foot from Israel and 10,000 men from Judah. He went to the city of Amalek' (15:4-5).

The Amalekites lived to the south of Israel. They were enemies of Israel and often fought against them. The Kenites lived among them. The Kenites were descended from the brother-in-law of Moses. God warned them that Saul would attack the Amalekites, 'so the Kenites moved away' (15:6).

In the battle, Saul captured Agag, the Amalekite king. 'He and his men totally destroyed all of Agag's people... but they spared the best of the sheep and cattle... and everything that was valuable' (15:9). The Lord was grieved about Saul for disobeying Him.

Then the Lord gave Samuel a message. "I am very sorry I made Saul king. He has turned away from Me. He has not done what I directed him to do." Samuel was troubled and prayed all night (15:11). He knew that sin brought punishment. Saul aimed to please others, not God, and closed the door on the blessing of God.

### **SAMUEL GOES TO MEET SAUL**

Early the next morning Samuel got up and went to find Saul (15:12). But Saul went to Carmel to 'set up a monument in his own honour'.

When Samuel found him, Saul spoke confidently to Samuel. "May the Lord God Almighty bless you. I have done what He directed me to do" (15:13.)

Samuel already knew this was not true. He said to Saul, "Then why do I hear the noise of sheep... and cattle?" (15:14)?

Saul blamed his men. He said that they had kept "the best of the sheep and cattle... to sacrifice them to the Lord your God. But we totally destroyed everything else" (1 Samuel 15:15). That was not true, for Saul had kept alive King Agag.

"Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night... He sent you to ... go and fight against them until you wipe them out." (15:16-18.) Samuel asked Saul, "Why did you not obey the Lord?" (15:19).

Saul argued and made more excuses (15:20-21). Saul had disobeyed God and wanted glory for himself (15:12) and then sought to please his soldiers (15:21).

Samuel replied, "What pleases the Lord more? Burnt offerings and sacrifices, or obeying Him? It is better to obey than to offer a sacrifice" (15:22).

Samuel then confirmed what God had decided. "You have refused to do what the Lord God Almighty told you to do. So He has refused to have you as king" (15:23).



### **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 5 and 6**



**Learn about this:** *What happened when the Philistines kept the Ark of the Lord; what happened when they tried to return it to Israel.*

### **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE PHILISTINES KEPT THE ARK OF THE LORD**

After the Philistines captured the Ark, they took it to the city of Ashdod on the Mediterranean Sea coast. They put it in Dagon's temple beside the large statue of their god Dagon (5:1-2). The next day, the idol-statue had fallen on its face on the ground in front of the Ark of the Lord God Almighty! (5:3). They put it back in its place. The following morning the statue was lying broken on the ground. 'Its head and hands were lying in the doorway of the temple' (5:4).

Dagon had no power to protect himself or the Philistines against the God of Israel. 'The powerful hand of God Almighty punished the people of Ashdod' (5:6). They became ill and many died. God punished them because they had taken the Ark. They and the people nearby suffered a plague of boils on their bodies.

The men of Ashdod said, "The Ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us... His powerful hand is punishing us and our god Dagon. What shall we do with the Ark?" (5:7-8).

The rulers sent the Ark to Gath. There, too, the power of God Almighty was against the city. The people panicked. He caused the people of the city to suffer painful swellings in their bodies, so they sent the Ark to Ekron (5:9-10). When the Ark came to Ekron, the people cried out, "They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel to kill us. Send the Ark away; let it go back to its own place" (5:11).

### **WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE ARK WENT BACK TO ISRAEL**

The people of Ekron called out to Heaven for help (5:12). After seven months of trouble, the Philistines called for their priests and magicians. The people asked, "What shall we do with the Ark of the Lord?" (6:1-2).

They knew about the plagues God had sent on Egypt (Exodus 7-11). Their priests believed they had to return the Ark and send a guilt offering to Israel's God. "Then you will be healed. You will find out why His hand has not stopped punishing you" (1 Samuel 6:3). "Give honour to Israel's God... Why are you stubborn, as Pharaoh and the people of Egypt were?" (6:5-6).

The Philistines set the Ark on a new cart, with gifts of gold. Two cows pulled the cart. The cows took the Ark along the road to Beth Shemesh, a small town where the tribe of Judah lived.

This is the amazing story of how God taught the enemies of Israel to respect the Ark of the Lord and return it to its right owners. Despite their evil

ways, the Philistines knew enough about the Almighty God of Israel to do the right thing with reverence and fear. It is also the story of how God taught the people of Israel to fear and respect Him and the Ark of the Lord God Almighty.

When the people in the fields saw the Ark, they rejoiced. 'They chopped up the wood of the cart and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord' (6:14). None of them had seen the wonderful Ark before. It was always hidden from their eyes. It was a beautiful symbol of God Himself. But some wanted to see what was inside, so they opened it. They disobeyed the holy God of Israel, and He struck down the men who looked inside the Ark because they had sinned (6:19).

The people of Beth Shemesh learned that the Lord God Almighty is holy. They were shocked and asked, "Who can stand in His presence?"

They sent a message to the town of Kiriath-Jearim. "The Philistines have returned the Ark of God. Come down and take it up to your place" (6:21).

### **Talk about this:**

1. Why did the Philistines return the Ark of God to Israel (5:6, 6:1-2)?
2. Who were punished and how were they saved from plagues (5:6; 6:3-6)? Why does God allow plagues today?
3. What happened when some Israelites did not fear the presence of God in His Ark (6:19)? How should we value the symbols of bread and wine or the symbol of the cross of Christ?
4. Why did God punish the men who tried to look inside the Ark? How can we get close to God today?

 **Think about this:** Try to understand the purpose of God in leaving His commandments inside the Ark for the descendants of Noah through Shem, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Why were the contents of the Ark so important to keep safe? Do you truly value the first covenant of God and how it was fulfilled in Christ?

### **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 7 and 8**

 **Learn about this:** *How the people of Israel worshipped God but kept statues of foreign gods at home (Chapter 7 verses 1-2). Samuel prays for them and they repent (v.3-6). The Philistines then attack Israel but God intervenes after Samuel prayed again and offered a burnt offering to God (v.7-12). During the remaining years of Samuel there was peace from their enemies (v.13-17). However, the people rise up and demand that Samuel find them a king for Israel (Chapter 8).*

'Then Saul stopped chasing the Philistines. They went back to their own land' (14:46).

After this, Saul successfully 'fought against their enemies who were all around them' (14:47-48).

'As long as Saul was king, he had to fight hard against the Philistines' (14:52). It was 30 years before Saul died in battle against the Philistines (31:3-5).

### **Talk about this:**

1. What unwise action did Saul take which upset Israel's enemy (13:3)?
2. What did the people do? What did Saul do (13:7-9)?
3. Whom did Jonathan trust to deliver Israel (14:6)?
4. How did Israel win the battle against the Philistines (14:14-15)?
5. What did Saul do without talking to God first (14:24,36)?
6. What did the priest say to stop Saul from doing wrong (14:36)?
7. When did God keep quiet (14:37)? How and when did He reveal the truth (14:41-42)?
8. When did Saul's men keep quiet (14:39)? When did they speak up (14:45)?
9. When did Saul pray to God for guidance (14:41)? How did God save Saul and his son (14:44-45)?
10. What happened after Saul prayed to God and God answered his prayer (14:46-48)?
11. Was life easy for Saul after he finally trusted in God (14:52)?

 **Think about this:** How different was Jonathan's faith to his father's faith? Do you make decisions without talking to God first? Is your trust in the will of God or in your own will? Do you respect the advice of your spiritual leaders? Do you listen to the views of other believers in God? How did disobedience put his family, friends and nation at risk?

### **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 15**

 **Learn about this:** *Samuel is sent by God to tell Saul to destroy the Amalekites but Saul disobeyed by sparing the king and taking away the flocks of sheep and oxen (verses 1-9). God told Samuel that He would remove Saul as king because of his disobedience (v.10-33). Samuel never visited Saul again but mourned for him (v.34-35).*

## **THE LORD REGRETS MAKING SAUL KING**

One day, Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people Israel. So, listen now to a message from Him. The Lord who rules over all says He will punish the Amalekites because of what they did to Israel. As the people of Israel came up from Egypt, the Amalekites attacked them [on the way to the Promised Land of Canaan]. Now go. Attack the Amalekites... Put the

Jonathan knew this was foolish. He said, "My father has made trouble for the country. See how I gained strength after I tasted a little of this honey" (14:29).

By the end of the day, Saul's men were hungry and weak (14:31). They killed some of the Philistines' sheep and cattle and ate the meat. They ate the meat with the blood still in it (14:33). This was against the holy Law of God (Leviticus 3:17).

"You have sinned," Saul told them. "Roll a large stone over here." They killed the animals on the stone and drained the blood onto the ground. "Do not sin against the Lord by eating meat that still has blood in it." Then they ate the meat (14:34).

### SAUL DECIDES WHAT TO DO

Later that night, Saul used the large stone to build an altar to the Lord God Almighty. He built an altar for a burnt offering to honour God. 'It was the first time he had done this' (14:35).

Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines tonight. Let us not leave even one of them alive. Let us take everything they have before it gets light" (14:36).

The men said, "Do what you think is best." But Ahijah, a grandson of Eli the priest, said, "Let us ask God for advice first."

'Saul asked God, "Should I go down after the Philistines? Will you hand them over to Israel?" But God did not answer him that day' (14:37).

Saul told the leaders of the army that someone had sinned, because God was not answering. "He must die even if he is my son Jonathan." No-one said anything to him (14:39).

Saul and Jonathan stood to one side. "Do what you think is best," the men replied (14:40).

Then finally Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel. He said, "Give me an answer." Then Saul and Jonathan were chosen by lots. Then Jonathan was chosen (14:42).

Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me, what have you done?" Jonathan answered that he only tasted a little honey. "And now do I have to die?" (14:43).

Because of his foolish oath, Saul said, "Jonathan, I must certainly put you to death" (14:44).

But his men stopped him. They said to Saul, "Should Jonathan die? Never! He has saved Israel in a wonderful way. He did it today with the help of Almighty God!" (14:45). So the men saved Jonathan. Sometimes God uses the will of the people to establish His righteousness when the foolishness and pride of leaders get in the way.

### THE PHILISTINES CONTINUE TO TROUBLE ISRAEL

The men of Kiriath-Jearim acted quickly. 'They brought the Ark of the Lord to Abinadab's house on the hill' (7:1). Abinadab was a Levite from the tribe of priests. They gave his son, Eleazar the holy work of guarding the Ark. The Ark stayed at Abinadab's house for twenty years. During this time, 'all the Israelites turned back to the Lord God Almighty' (7:2). However, they kept their small Canaanite statues of foreign gods in their homes. During this time, the Philistines continued to trouble them.

After twenty years, the people of Israel cried to God to rescue them from their enemies.

Samuel called them together and said, "Do you really want to return to the Lord with all your hearts? If you do, get rid of your false gods. Commit yourselves [fully] to the Lord God Almighty. Serve Him only. Then He will deliver you from the power of the Philistines" (7:3).

The Israelites stopped using their idols of Baal and served only the Lord God Almighty (7:4).

Then Samuel said, "Gather all the Israelites together at Mizpah. I will pray to the Lord for you" (7:5).



They fasted. They confessed their sins. They said, "We have sinned against the Lord" (7:6). Samuel was still the leader of Israel at that time.

'The Philistines heard that Israel had gathered together at Mizpah. So, the Philistine rulers came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard about it, they were afraid' (7:7). They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the Lord God Almighty to help us. Keep praying that he will save us from the power of the Philistines" (7:8).

'Then Samuel took a very young lamb and he sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to God. He cried out to the Lord God Almighty to help Israel. And the Lord answered his prayer' (7:9).

## **SAMUEL BRINGS THE PHILISTINES UNDER ISRAEL'S CONTROL**

The Philistines came near to attack Israel as Samuel sacrificed the burnt offering. That day, God thundered loudly against the Philistines. They panicked and the Israelites were able to chase them away. 'The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah. They chased the Philistines all the way to a point below Beth Car. They killed them all along the way' (7:11).

Then Samuel took a big stone and raised it up as a memorial. He named it Ebenezer, which means Stone of Help, and said: "The Lord has helped us every step of the way" (7:12). He did this so that no-one should forget the help and safe-keeping of God.

Our faith and trust in God are strengthened by past experiences. When we remember these things, they can be a powerful encouragement for our present and future faith and to expect great things from God.

'So, the Philistines were brought under Israel's control. The Philistines did not attack their territory again. The Lord God Almighty used His power against the Philistines as long as Samuel lived. The Philistines had captured many towns between Ekron and Gath. But they returned all of them. Israel also took back the land near those towns from the control of the Philistines' (7:13-14).

Samuel prayed for Israel. His wisdom and care helped Israel return to the Lord and saved them from their enemies.

Samuel was Israel's last judge as well as their first prophet. From year to year, Samuel travelled the whole length of Israel from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah. He always went back to Ramah, where his home was. 'And he built an altar there to the Lord' (7:17).

For nearly 40 years, Israel was at peace with the Philistines and the surrounding Canaanites.

Almighty will help us. If he does, it will not matter how many or how few of us there are. That won't keep the Lord from saving us" (14:6).

The young man said, "I am with you all the way" (14:7).

God gave Jonathan a plan. "We will go across... towards the Philistines and let them see us (14:8). If they say, 'Come up to us', then we will climb up. That will show us that the Lord has given them over to us" (14:10).

"Look!" said the Philistines. "Some of the Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in." They shouted, "Come up here. We will teach you a thing or two."

God gave Jonathan the sign he asked for. He said to the young man, "Climb up after me. The Lord has given them over to Israel" (14:12).

Jonathan was not afraid. He climbed up and killed the watchmen. 'In that first attack, Jonathan and the young man killed about twenty men' (14:14).

'Then panic struck the whole Philistine army... The ground shook. It was a panic that God had sent' (14:15).

Saul's watchmen saw the Philistines running away (14:16). Saul realised someone from Israel had attacked their camp. He called his men together to 'see who had left the camp. When they did, they discovered that Jonathan and the young man, who was carrying his armour, were not there' (14:17).

Saul did not know what to do, so he called for Ahijah the priest (14:18).

While Saul was talking to the priest, the noise in the Philistine camp increased (14:19). The Philistines were running away. Saul did not want them to escape. Saul's men went to the battle. They saw that the Philistines were striking each other with their own swords! (14:20). Many years before, some of the Hebrew-speaking family of Jacob had deserted the Israelites. But now they changed sides again (14:21). 'Some of the people who had hidden in the hills heard that the Philistines were running away. They quickly joined the battle and chased after them' (14:22).

'So the Lord saved Israel that day' (14:23).

## **JONATHAN EATS HONEY AND RISKS DEATH**

This victory over the Philistines was not Saul's victory nor Jonathan's victory. The panic was sent by God. It was a glorious day for Israel.

However, before the battle began, Saul ordered his men to fast [eat no food that day]. He said, "None of you must eat any food before evening. You must not eat until I have punished my enemies for what they did." Then Saul foolishly put a curse on any man who ate food that day. So, Saul's men did not eat any food all day because they were afraid of Saul's oath (14:24).

Jonathan did not hear his father put a curse on his men. That same day, Jonathan saw a honeycomb and ate some of its honey. A soldier told him that his father had made the army promise to fast (14:27-28).

Philistines without seeking God, then proudly broadcast the news to everyone. They said, "He has made Israel smell very bad to the Philistines" (13:4).

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel. They had 3,000 chariots (13:5). Israel had no chariots. Many of the men hid in caves and bushes and behind rocks and in wells (13:6). 'Some of them even went across the Jordan River' (13:7).

### **SAUL MAKES SACRIFICES TO GOD WITHOUT SAMUEL**

Saul waited for the prophet Samuel to meet him at Gilgal. He waited seven days but Samuel did not come. The men were afraid and began to leave Saul so he offered burnt sacrifices to Almighty God without waiting for Samuel (13:8-9).

Just as Saul finished the offering, Samuel arrived (13:10-11). Saul knew he had done wrong. Saul did not wait for God to speak through His prophet Samuel. He did not respect the word of God given to him through Samuel. He was impatient and worried and did not wait for God's instructions. Saul was king. He was appointed by God. But he failed to show the power of God in his life. His trust was in offering burnt sacrifices to God instead of waiting for the word of God. He also trusted in himself.

Saul made excuses. "You did not come when you said you would... I thought the Philistines will come to attack me at Gilgal and I have not asked the Lord to show us His favour. So I felt I had to sacrifice the burnt offering" (13:12). Saul did not trust in God. Instead, his fears and feelings guided him and he wanted his own way.

"You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not obeyed the command the Lord your God gave you... Now your kingdom will not last. The Lord has already looked for a man after His own heart. He has appointed him [future] leader of His people." (13:13-14.)

### **JONATHAN TRUSTS GOD AND ATTACKS THE PHILISTINES**

Now Saul had only 600 brave men with him (13:15). They had no iron weapons. Only Saul and his son Jonathan had swords (13:22). Then a group of Philistine soldiers came near them at Michmash (13:23).

When the Philistines appeared, Jonathan spoke to the young man who was carrying his armour. "Come on," he said. "Let us go over to the Philistine army camp on the other side of the pass." He didn't tell his father about it (14:1).

Saul rested at Gibeah with his 600 men. Samuel the prophet was not there but Saul trusted in Ahijah. He was the great-grandson of Eli, the former high priest of Israel. Ahijah wore Eli's special priest's apron called an ephod (14:3).

Jonathan trusted God for victory and hoped that He would save them. He knew that God had promised to drive the Philistines out of Israel (9:16). He had a strong faith in God and said to the young man, "Perhaps the Lord God



### **How and when God intervenes for His people**

Through the prayers of Samuel and the repentance and obedience of Israel, God intervened and brought peace with their enemies.

140 years after Samuel, when King Solomon dedicated the new temple in Jerusalem, God told him, "Suppose I close up the sky and there isn't any rain? Suppose I command locusts to eat up the crops? Suppose I send a plague among the people? If my people humble themselves and pray to Me and they turn from their evil ways, then I will listen to them from Heaven. I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land, for they are My people. My eyes will see them and My ears will pay attention to their prayers" (2 Chronicles 7:13-15).

540 years after Samuel, Jeremiah chapters 46-50 recorded how God intervenes and deals severely in a variety of ways with the countries surrounding Israel including Babylon. This shows the mercy of God for believers and His punishment of evil. God acted at that time to save Israel from its enemies. He told the prophet Jeremiah to say to the people of Israel, "A new day is coming, announces the Lord God Almighty. At that time the people... will come in tears to Me. I am the Lord their God... They will enter into the [new] covenant I make with them. It will last forever. It will never be forgotten" (Jeremiah 50:4-5).

1170 years after Samuel, God intervened when His covenant was fulfilled in Jesus Christ on the cross. This was the new covenant for all who believe Jesus is the Son of God and Israel's promised Messiah, who became Saviour of the world through His sacrifice and resurrection.

### **ISRAEL ASKS FOR A KING**

Samuel was a God-fearing judge, priest and prophet to Israel. Yet his two sons turned away from God. God turned this rebellion into a plan for Israel and the world. This resulted 1000 years later in the birth of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Israel's Messiah.

It happened this way. When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges. However, they were like Eli's two sons. They did not live holy lives. They asked for money and took bribes. They were neither fair nor holy. They did bad things and said they were good (8:5).

The elders of Israel did not approve. They came to Samuel at Ramah and said, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to lead us" (8:5). They wanted Samuel to find a man who would be their king and lead them into battle. All the surrounding nations had kings. Israel had the Lord God Almighty to lead them. However, they wanted a king and to be like the other nations.

'Samuel was not pleased... so he prayed to the Lord' (8:6). Many times, Israel copied the other nations instead of trusting in God and being a witness to the world.

God comforted Samuel. When we see and hear wrong things, we should pray to understand how God feels. Learn to do things in love and show others the ways of God to save and bless the lost and the needy.

The Lord God Almighty told Samuel, "Listen to everything the people are saying to you. You are not the one they have turned their backs on. I am the one they do not want as their king. They are doing just as they have always done. They have deserted Me and served other gods. They have done that from the time I brought them up out of Egypt until this day. Now they are deserting you too. Let them have what they want. But give them a strong warning. Let them know what the king who rules over them will do" (8:7-9).



#### **1 Samuel 8:11-17. Samuel warns Israel what a king will require**

- their sons must serve and fight in the army and make weapons;
- their daughters must serve in his palace;
- their best fields and vineyards and olive groves will belong to the king;
- a tenth of their harvest and a tenth of their animals will belong to the king;
- their own servants will work as slaves in the fields and the palace.

Israel had to obey the form of government they chose. Samuel warned them, "You will cry out for help because of the king you have chosen. But the Lord God Almighty will not answer you at that time" (8:18).

The people refused to listen to him. "We want a king to rule over us. Then we will be like all the other nations. We will have a king to lead us. He will go out at the head of our armies and fight our battles" (8:19-20).

'Samuel heard everything the people said. He told the Lord about it' (8:21).

God answered, "Listen to them. Give them a king." He knew that the people would put their faith in a king and not in God. But it was always the purpose of God to choose the right king for them at the right time (Deuteronomy 17:15). However, no king of Israel was perfect until Messiah came as King of Kings.

Samuel said to the Israelites, "Each of you go back to your own town." Now they had to wait for God to act.

for you. Do not be stubborn. Do not continue to do what is evil. If you do, both you and your king will be swept away" (12:24-25).

When we read these Old Testament warnings, we know that the purpose of God was to save the people of Israel and through them save the other nations of the world. This was revealed by the prophets following Samuel. It was fulfilled over 1000 years later through the birth, death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Salvation is for all who repent and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He was sacrificed on a cross as punishment for our sins so that we could be forgiven through the mercy of God and through His death in our place. This amazing work of the grace of God enables us to have the faith and righteousness to draw closer to Him. This then enables us to share with others His love for the people who are willing to repent and believe.



#### **Talk about this**

1. What place did Samuel choose to speak to the people (12:1)? Why?
2. What sign of His power did God give from Heaven (12:17-18)? Why?
3. How did Samuel encourage the people to obey the teaching of God (12:12-15; 20-23)?
4. What did Samuel promise to do for the people of Israel (12:23)?
5. What warning did Samuel give to the people (12:24-25)?



**Think about this:** How did God use Samuel to prepare His people for obedience, repentance and forgiveness? Why was this important in the purpose of God for the future salvation of the world?



#### **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 13 and 14**



**Learn about this:** *How King Saul attacked the Philistines (Chapter 13 verses 1-4). The Philistines prepared to fight back, causing much fear (v.5-7). Saul, instead of waiting for Samuel to arrive, offered sacrifices to the LORD God Almighty without him (v.8-16). The Philistines began to send out men to fight Israel (v.17-23). Jonathan trusted in God to attack the Philistines (Chapter 14 verses 1-16). How Saul endangered the life of Jonathan (v.17-46) but repented and was successful in battle (v.47-52).*

### **THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL FEAR THE PHILISTINES**

'Saul was 30 years old when he became king. He ruled Israel for 42 years' (13:1). The battles with the Philistines did not stop.

Jonathan, Saul's son, took charge of 1000 fighting men (13:2). He attacked some Philistines at Geba. This pleased Saul. 'He had trumpets blown all through the land. So, all the people of Israel heard the news' (13:3). However, this did not encourage the people. They regretted asking God for a king (12:19). They were afraid because King Saul and his son Jonathan foolishly attacked the

While the people of Israel were still at Gilgal, Samuel spoke to them (12:1). The memorial stones were there which their forefathers had placed when they walked into the Promised Land of Canaan over 400 years earlier (Joshua 4:2-7).

Samuel was their last judge and their first prophet in the land of Israel. He also became the High Priest after Eli died. It was now time for him to allow King Saul to lead the people (1 Samuel 12:2).

The people agreed that Samuel had ruled Israel well (12:4-5). Samuel always put the honour of God first. Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Before leaving, Samuel reminded them of "all the good things the Lord God Almighty has done for you and your people" since Moses and Aaron brought them out of Egypt (1 Samuel 12:6-7). He reminded them how the family of Jacob (later called Israel) went to Egypt and how, after 400 years, Moses and Aaron brought them out of Egypt to the land now called Israel (12:8). This land was promised by God to Jacob's grandfather Abraham and to Jacob's father Isaac.

Samuel also reminded the people how their ancestors failed to obey their God. God allowed the Philistines and Moabites to fight against Israel at that time (12:9). Samuel also told them that when the people of Israel repented, they lived in safety (12:10-11).

Samuel then reminded the people once more that they had asked for a king as leader, "though the Lord your God was your King" (12:12). Samuel warned them to remain faithful in serving God. He urged them and their king to follow Yahweh, our Lord God Almighty. "You must not say no to His commands. If you do, His powerful hand will punish you. That is what happened to your people who lived before you" (12:14-15). "If both you and your king will follow the Lord your God, it will be good."

Then Samuel made it very clear to them the risk they took to ask for a king. He asked God to send thunder and rain as a powerful sign from Heaven that same day. This made the people afraid and admit they were wrong (12:17-19). Samuel told them not to be afraid. He then warned them not to turn away from God to worship useless idols (12:20-21).

Samuel knew that the people had done wrong but he comforted them. He knew that for the sake of His great name, God will not reject His people (12:22).

Samuel promised to keep praying for them. "I will teach you to live in a way that is good and right" (12:23). He did this until the day he died.

Samuel taught the people, "Respect the Lord God Almighty. Serve Him faithfully. Do it with all your heart. Think about the great things He has done



### Talk about this:

1. When Israel turned back to God, what two things were they told to do to be saved from their enemies (7:3)? What other things did they do (7:6)? What else did they do when they were afraid (7:8)?
2. Why did Samuel sacrifice a lamb (7:9)? What else did he do to thank God (7:12,17)?
3. What did God do when the Philistines started to attack Israel (7:10)?
4. After many years of peace and blessings from God, why did the people complain to Samuel? What did they ask him for (8:1-5)?
5. How did God comfort and advise Samuel (8:7-9)? What advice did Samuel give to the people (8:10-18)? How was God in control (Deuteronomy 17:15)?
6. What should we do when the people around us ask for change (8:21)?



**Think about this:** What did the Israelites need to do to repent of their old life in order to commit themselves fully to the Lord (7:3)? In what ways do you put God first in your life for His glory? Why should we remember what God has done in the past (7:12)? What do we do when people are given the freedom to choose their own form of government?



### Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapters 9 and 10



**Learn about this:** *How God arranged for Samuel to meet Saul and anoint him in secret as the future king of Israel (chapter 9 verse 1 to chapter 10 verse 16). Samuel calls the people together to choose their first king of Israel (v.17-26); how some refused to serve him (v.27).*

## SAMUEL MEETS SAUL

This is the story of how God, in His mercy, heard the cries of His people. He saved them from the Philistines and arranged for the prophet Samuel to meet Saul. 'He was a handsome young man... taller than any of them' (9:2).

God chose Saul to be Israel's king. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel. He was not known to most of the people.

When his father's donkeys ran off, Saul took a servant with him and went to look for them, but they did not find them.

They came near to Samuel's town. Saul wanted to go back home. "My father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us" (9:5).

His servant replied, "There is a man of God here in Ramah. Everything he says comes true... Perhaps he will tell us what way to go" (9:6).

Samuel was High Priest in Israel, but Saul did not know him. Saul agreed to go. On the way, they asked some girls about Samuel. "He is ahead of you. Hurry! He has just come to our town today to offer a sacrifice at the high place" (9:12).

Before Saul and his servant reached the top of the hill, Samuel met them. They did not know him so they asked, "Please tell us where the house of the seer [prophet] is" (9:18).

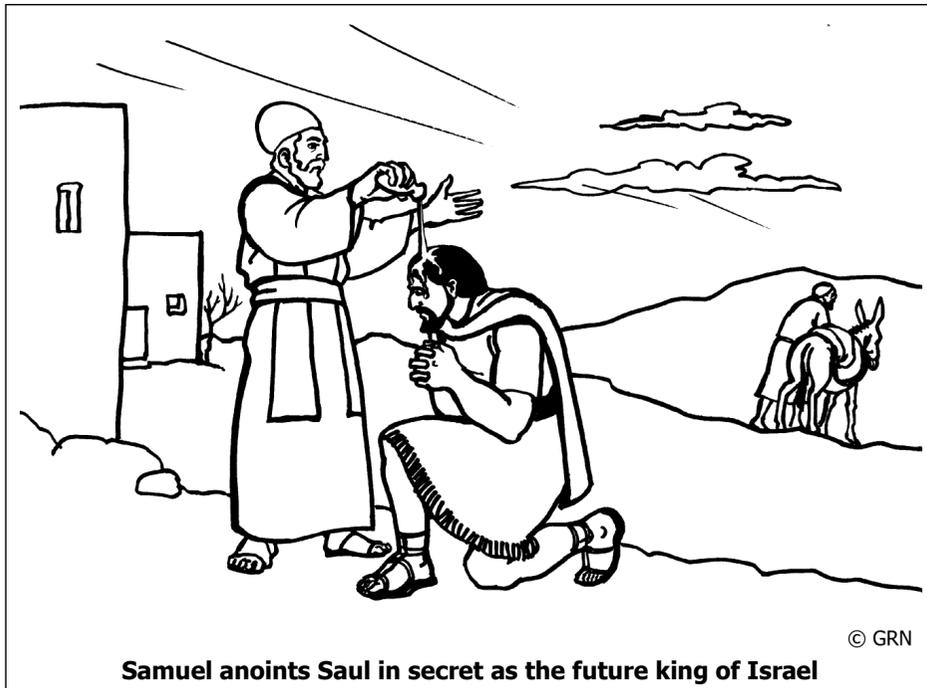
The day before, God had told Samuel: "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man. He is from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him to be the king of My people Israel. He will save them from the power of the Philistines. I have seen how much my people are suffering. Their cry for help has reached Me" (9:16).

When Samuel saw a man coming towards him, God spoke to Samuel again. He said, "He is the man I told you about. His name is Saul. He will govern My people" (9:17).

Saul approached Samuel at the gate of the town. He asked Samuel, "Can you please show me the seer's house?" (9:18).

"I am the seer," Samuel replied. "Go on up to the high place ahead of me. I want you and your servant to eat with me today. Tomorrow morning I will tell you what is on your mind. Then I will send you on your way. Do not worry about the donkeys you lost three days ago. They have already been found" (9:19-20).

Then Samuel told Saul his father's family will meet the needs of all Israel (9:20). Saul replied, "I am from the smallest tribe of Israel. My family is the least important in the whole tribe of Benjamin. Why do you say such a thing to



Samuel anoints Saul in secret as the future king of Israel

him, Saul sent a message to Jabesh-Gilead: "By the hottest time of the day tomorrow, you will be saved" (11:9). This was Saul's first battle and the Ammonite army was destroyed (11:13).

### ALL THE PEOPLE ACCEPT SAUL AS THEIR KING

The people of Israel crossed back over the river to Gilgal. The men who had not supported Saul as king were with them. Saul refused to allow them to be put to death (11:13). Samuel sent everyone to Gilgal. 'There, with the Lord God as witness, they agreed to have Saul as their king. There they sacrificed friendship offerings to the Lord. Saul and all the people of Israel celebrated with great joy' (11:15).

This is an example of a righteous and united kingdom where:

- the leader was appointed and anointed by God;
- the leader showed compassion and righteous anger for all the people;
- the leader listened and obeyed God;
- the power of God was with their leader;
- God gave them victory over evil;
- all the people finally supported their leader;
- forgiveness was given to those who had rebelled against their leader;
- the leader and the people worshipped God together in unity;
- the leader and the people rejoiced together.

#### Talk about this:

1. What two things did the men of Israel say to the king of Ammon (11:1)? What was his reply and why (11:2)?
2. How did God use Saul to destroy the Ammonites (11:3-5)?
3. Why was Saul certain of victory and how did he act to save Israel (11:6)?
4. What was the result (11:14)? How was God glorified (11:15)?

 **Think about this:** Do you pray for your leaders and your nation? What can you do to support them? How can you bring glory and honour to God? How can you avoid compromising His will and purpose?

#### Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 12

 **Learn about this:** *Samuel's final speech to Israel (verses 1-9). The people confess their sins; Samuel tells them to fear the LORD God Almighty (v.10-15). He asks God to prove His power through sending thunder and rain (v.16-19). He warns them again to serve only the LORD (v.20-25).*

### SAMUEL'S FINAL SPEECH TO ISRAEL

Samuel knew that the people would soon forget what God had done for them. He wanted the Lord God Almighty to have all the glory and honour for the victories won.



**Think about this:** Why is it important to keep the secrets God reveals to you until the right time to share with others? How did God change Saul to prepare him for leadership to serve the people of Israel well? What guidelines does your church have for choosing leaders?



## **Bible reading: 1 Samuel Chapter 11**



**Learn about this:** *The future King Saul saves part of Israel from the Ammonites (verses 1-11). This led some to suggest they also kill the Israelites who refused to serve under Saul (v.12). Saul refused to do this and instead honoured God; Samuel then brings the people of Israel together in unity to accept Saul as king (v.13-15).*

### **SAUL RESCUES THE PEOPLE OF JABESH-GILEAD**

At this time Israel had enemies on two sides. The Philistines lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the west. They extended their camps closer and closer to Israel. Then a new threat came from the Ammonites in the east.

Nahash king of the Ammonites and his men went up against the town of Jabesh-Gilead, east of the River Jordan (11:1). Jabesh-Gilead was occupied by the tribe of Manasseh, one of the grandsons of Jacob.

The men of Jabesh-Gilead asked Nahash for a peace treaty. "Then we will be under your control" (11:1). They were ready to compromise the will of God. The name Nahash means serpent or snake. Nahash was a cruel man. He offered a peace treaty if they let him blind their right eyes.

In the garden of Eden, Satan came disguised as a snake to tempt Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1). Jesus said Satan was "a murderer from the beginning..." (John 8:44). Nahash followed Satan. He wanted to bring shame on the nation of Israel and their God and Creator (11:2).

The elders of Jabesh asked for seven days to send messengers to all Israel (1 Samuel 11:3). "If no-one comes to rescue us," they told Nahash, "we will surrender to you." Nahash agreed to this.

This news reached Saul in Gibeah, 75 km away. He heard the people weeping. He asked, "What is wrong? Why are they crying?"

When Saul learned of Nahash's cruel plan, 'the Spirit of God came on him with power. He burned with anger' (11:6). Quickly he sent out a call for all Israel west of the River Jordan to help the Israelites in Jabesh. He warned them they will be punished if they did not help.

The next few verses tell how the Spirit of God came upon Saul to direct the people to defeat their enemies the very next day. This led to mercy for those who doubted God's provision of Saul as king.

'The fear of the Lord God Almighty fell on them' and 330,000 men volunteered to fight (11:7-8). Then with great assurance that God was with

me?" (9:21). God often raises up people who are not important. He sees what is possible by looking into people's hearts.

'Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the [eating] room. He seated them at the head table. About 30 people were invited' (9:22).

Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the piece of meat I gave you." The cook set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, "Here is what has been kept for you. Eat it. It was put to one side for you for this special occasion." And Saul ate with Samuel (9:24). After that, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of Samuel's house (9:25).

### **SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL AS FUTURE KING OF ISRAEL**

The next day as they were on their way out of town, Samuel spoke to Saul. He said, "Tell the servant to go ahead of us... I will give you a message from God." The prophet Samuel shared with Saul the secret message from God when they were alone. It was not shared even with other believers or with household members.

Then Samuel took some olive oil. He poured it on Saul's head and kissed him. He said, "God has anointed you to be the king of His people. When you leave me today, you will meet two men... They will say to you, 'The donkeys you have been looking for have been found... Your father is worried about you'" (10:1-2).

"You will go on from Zelzah until you come to the large tree at Tabor. Three men will meet you there... The men will greet you. They will offer you two loaves of bread. You will accept the loaves from them. After that, you will go to Gibeah of God. Some Philistine soldiers are stationed there. As you approach the town, you will meet a group of prophets. They will be coming down from the high place where they worship. People will be playing lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps at the head of the group. The prophets will be prophesying. The Spirit of the Almighty God will come powerfully on you. Then you will prophesy along with them. You will become a different person. Then do what you want to do. God is with you" (10:3-7).

God changed Saul's heart before he was appointed as the first king of Israel, just as Samuel prophesied. God also blessed him with divine wisdom so that he would be able to choose to do what was right because God was with him.

Then Samuel said to Saul, "Go down ahead of me to Gilgal... I will come and sacrifice burnt offerings, but you must wait until I come... Then I will tell you what to do" (10:8).

'As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart.' This also happens today to people who repent. The Holy Spirit comes into their lives as they trust in Jesus as God's salvation plan.

All the things Samuel told Saul happened just as God said (10:9). At Gibeah he met a procession of prophets. They were singing and playing music. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul in power. He prophesied along with them. People asked, "Has Saul become a prophet? What has happened to the son of Kish?" (10:10-11).

Later, Saul's uncle spoke to him, "Where have you been?" Saul said, "We couldn't find the donkeys. So we went to Samuel" (10:14). "He told us the donkeys had been found." But Saul didn't tell his uncle that Samuel said he would become king (10:16). It was important for the purpose of God to be revealed to Israel in His time and in His way.

## **ALL ISRAEL MEETS WITH GOD TO CHOOSE THEIR KING**

Samuel called all Israel to come before God at Mizpah (10:17). When they gathered, Samuel spoke to them of their history and how well God had cared for them (10:18):

- He said, "The Almighty God, Yahweh, is the God of Israel."
- He says, "I brought you up out of Egypt."
- "I saved you from their power."
- "I saved you from the power of all the kingdoms that had treated you badly."

Then Samuel said, "But now you have turned your backs on your God. He saves you out of all your trouble and suffering. In spite of that, you have said, 'We refuse to listen. Place a king over us.' So now gather together to meet with Almighty God. Do it tribe by tribe and family group by family group" (10:19).

The people of Israel were ready to choose their first king. They wanted to be like the nations around them. No-one knew that God had already chosen Saul and Samuel had anointed Saul as King. Israel had to see for themselves that God had chosen Saul.

Then Samuel told the people to select a tribe, then a clan, then a family and then a son by casting lots. The first choice went to the twelfth Israelite tribe of Benjamin. The next choice went to the Benjamin clan of Matri, then to the family of Kish, then to their son Saul. In this way, the people chose the king previously appointed by God and anointed by Samuel (10:19-21). God encouraged the people to act in faith to choose the person He had already approved.

However, Saul hid from the people among the baggage when he was chosen by the people. When they looked for Saul, no-one could find him (10:21). So, the people 'enquired further of the Lord'. God revealed where he was hiding (10:22) and the people saw that he was taller than everyone else (10:23). The people readily agreed Saul should be their king (10:24). If we ask God to show us the person He has chosen for a special task, He will make it

clear. Everything that happened that day confirmed Saul was God's choice for the king of Israel.

Samuel brought Saul out to the people. He said, "Look at the man God has chosen! There isn't anyone like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!" (10:24).

Then Samuel wrote down these rules given by God on a scroll for the king. 'He wrote these down in a book. He placed it before God in the holy tent' (10:25).

Saul knew that some people did not want him to be king. They refused to bring him a gift or to honour him as their king. 'But Saul kept quiet about it' (10:27).



### **The instructions of God for a king: Deuteronomy 17:14-20**

At the time of the journey of the Israelites to the Promised Land of Canaan, God gave certain conditions to the people if they wanted to choose a king:

- He had to be someone whom God could approve.
- He had to be someone from the tribes of Israel.
- The king should not turn to Egypt to supply him with horses.
- He should not seek many wives nor much wealth.
- He should make a copy for himself of the book of the Law of God and read it daily and do the things it says there.
- He should not have big ideas about his own people.
- He should not turn aside from the commandments of God.

This applied also to his sons.



### **Talk about this:**

1. How did Samuel and Saul know that Saul was the choice of God for the king of Israel (10:6)?
2. Why did Saul not tell his family that God had called him to be king (10:8)? What did Saul do at Gilgal (10:9-11)?
3. What did Saul say to his uncle (10:14)? What did he NOT say (10:16)? Why?
4. How did the people of Israel know that Saul was the choice of God for the king of Israel (10:21)?
5. What made the people shout for joy (10:24)?
6. What did Samuel write down for Saul to read to the people of Israel (10:25)?
7. What was the first wise thing that Saul did after he was chosen as king (10:27)?