

# SAMUEL AND SAUL

## Lesson 1 - 1 Samuel 9-15

### **What happened before?**

After Israel had been in the Promised Land for about 400 years, the people came to Samuel and said, "Give us a king like the other nations around us." The Lord warned the people that life would be hard if they had a king. He also said that one day the people would cry out to Him because of the king, but He would not answer them. The Israelites still wanted a king to lead them into battle. God said, "Make them a king."

### **BIBLE STORY:**

There was a man of the tribe of Benjamin whose name was Kish. Kish had some donkeys that wandered off and got lost. He sent his son, Saul and one of the servants to look for them. They looked for a long while and Saul finally gave up and said they should go home because his father would worry about them. The servant suggested that they visit a prophet of God who lived nearby and ask him where to look for the donkeys. Saul agreed.

The prophet Samuel was on his way to worship when they found him. When Samuel saw Saul, God told him that this was the man He had told him about the day before. God had said, "I will send you a man from the tribe of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines." Samuel assured Saul and his servant that there was no need to worry because the donkeys had already been found. He then told Saul that he would be the king Israel had asked for. Saul was a very humble man and did not understand why he was chosen to be king. He was from the smallest tribe of Israel and from the least family in the tribe.

Early the next morning, Samuel walked with Saul and his servant as they started home. While the servant walked ahead, Samuel took a vial of oil, poured it on Saul's head and kissed him. This was a way of showing that Saul had been set apart as the King of Israel.

Samuel told Saul there would be three things that would happen as he traveled home. First, Saul would meet two men who would tell him the lost donkeys had been found. After this, three men would give him two loaves of bread; and finally, the Spirit of God would come upon Saul and he would begin to prophesy when he met a group of prophets. All these things happened just as Samuel had said. Saul knew that Samuel's words were from the Lord. When he returned to his family, he did not tell them that he had been anointed as the king.

Samuel called the people together so he could tell them Saul was going to be their king. When Samuel looked for Saul, he could not find him. God told Samuel that Saul was hiding among some of the equipment. When he was brought out, Saul stood head and shoulders

taller than any of the other men. The people shouted their approval of this handsome man. "God save the king!" Some brought gifts to the new king, but some rebelled and did not want Saul to be their king.

Saul had not been king long when the wicked king of the Ammonites, Nahash, threatened the Israelites. Nahash told them if they did not become his servants he would kill all of them. Even if they did become his servants, wicked Nahash was going to put out the right eye of every person to bring shame to the Israelites. When King Saul heard this he became very angry. He sent word to all the tribes of Israel ordering them to come quickly to help save the people of Jabesh. They did come quickly and soon Saul had a great army of men. They attacked the Ammonites and utterly defeated them. With this great victory, all the people of Israel recognized mighty King Saul as the ruler over Israel.

Some of the people remembered that there had been some men who had objected to Saul being made king and wanted to put those men to death. But Saul stopped them saying, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has accomplished salvation in Israel." At the beginning of his reign, Saul was a great warrior, a good leader of the people and wanted to follow God's instructions.

Samuel called all the people together at Gilgal and reminded them that God had delivered them from their cruel enemies many times, but they had rejected Him as their king. They wanted an earthly king to rule over them and lead them into battle. God had now given them the king they asked for. Samuel warned them, "But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king." Samuel then called down thunder and rain to prove the things he said were from the Lord. The people were afraid and asked Samuel to pray for them.

At first, Saul was a good king. He organized the first regular army the Israelites had. Saul was the commander of 2,000 of these men and established their camp at Michmash. The other thousand were commanded by his son, Jonathan, and were placed at Gibeah.

Their old enemy, the Philistines, was still near them. At that time the Philistines were much stronger than the Israelites. They began attacking some of the Israelite towns. Saul called all his fighting men together to resist them, but he knew he was going to need God's help to defeat them.

Samuel told Saul to wait for him at Gilgal and that he would come in seven days to make sacrifices and pray to God for their success over the Philistines. As the days went by, the Israelites became more afraid of the huge army of the Philistines. They began to slip away and hide in the caves and in the thickets and other places in the mountains. So many of his men were leaving that Saul was afraid that if he did not go to battle soon, he would not have enough men left to fight the enemy. The seventh day came, but Samuel had not come. Then Saul himself made the sacrifices.

As soon as he had finished the sacrifices, Samuel came up and asked what he had done. Saul tried to make excuses for his disobedience. Saul disobeyed God by making the sacrifices himself and

because of this his kingdom would be taken away from him. God would give it to another who would be “a man after His own heart.” Samuel did come on the seventh day just as he had promised, but Saul had not been patient enough to wait.

Things looked really bad for the Israelites. Because Saul had sinned, Samuel left Gilgal without asking God to help the Israelites defeat the Philistines. The Philistines had many soldiers while Saul had only 600 men in his army.

Jonathan, Saul’s son, trusted in God to save the Israelites. He told his armor-bearer, “It may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.” He told his armor-bearer of his plan to go to the Philistine camp. The young man told Jonathan to do whatever he had in his heart and he would go with him.

There was an outpost of the Philistines at a pass in the mountains with a great sharp rock on each side. Jonathan told his armor-bearer that they could climb the cliff and slip up on the Philistines. If the Philistines called out, “Wait until we come to you,” they would know they should not go farther. But if the Philistines should say, “Come up unto us,” that would be a sign from God that they should attack the Philistines.

The two men climbed the rocky cliff. When they got up to the top, the Philistines saw them and called, “Come on up and we will show you a thing.” Jonathan knew this was a sign that they should attack, so they flew into them and killed twenty of them. Then there came an earthquake. The ground trembled and the whole Philistine camp was thrown into panic.

The Philistines were confused; some even began to fight among themselves and some ran away. Over in Saul’s camp a watchman saw what was happening. Saul’s army joined in the battle and the Philistines fled. Then Saul did another foolish thing. When he saw the Philistines running away, he commanded that no one should eat anything until they had taken vengeance on the Philistines.

Jonathan did not hear the command not to eat and as he walked through the woods he found honey and ate it to give him strength. All the soldiers were weak from hunger. When Saul learned that Jonathan had violated his command by eating the honey, he ordered some of the soldiers to kill Jonathan for disobeying. But the men refused to obey the king, because it was Jonathan who had brought about the victory over the Philistines.

God appeared to Samuel again and told him to tell Saul that the time had come for punishing the Amalekites. Saul was told to go into their country and destroy all that they had and not spare any of them. Once more, Saul disobeyed. He spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites. He also spared the best of the sheep and oxen.

God appeared to Samuel again and told him that Saul had failed to obey His command completely. Samuel went out to meet Saul as he

returned from the battle and when he heard the bleating of sheep, he asked Saul what that meant? Saul began to make excuses. He said the warriors wanted to bring them home to sacrifice to God. Offering sacrifices seemed like a good thing to do, but God is only pleased when we do exactly what He commands. Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice." Saul admitted his sin, but it was too late. Samuel told Saul that God was taking the kingdom away from him and giving it to a man better than Saul.

Samuel left Saul and went to Ramah. Saul went up to his house at Gibeah. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death. Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.