



What happened before?

The Israelites wanted to be like other nations and insisted that they have a king over them instead of the judges. God chose Saul, a man from the tribe of Benjamin to be the first king of Israel.

When Saul first became king, he was a very fine man, but soon after he became ruler of the nation, he became vain and proud. Because of his disobedience, Saul failed as king. Samuel was saddened about Saul and the condition of Israel. God was sorry that He ever allowed Saul to be king over Israel.

BIBLE STORY:

One day God appeared to Samuel and told him he must go and find another man to be king in Saul's place. God told him to go to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem.

As Samuel entered Bethlehem, the leaders knew he was a prophet and asked, "Have you come peaceably?" "Yes, peaceably. I have come to offer a sacrifice and to have a feast. You may come." He also told Jesse to come and bring his sons. God had told Samuel one of Jesse's sons would be selected to be the next king. He asked Jesse to bring each of his sons before him. When the oldest one, Eliab, passed before Samuel, he thought, "surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." God did not choose Eliab. The Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, for the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Seven sons of Jesse came before Samuel. When God did not give Samuel a sign that any of these were His choice, he was puzzled and asked Jesse if all his sons were there. Jesse said that he had another son, the youngest, who was caring for the sheep. Samuel ordered that he be sent for quickly. The youngest son of Jesse stood before Samuel. His name was David. He was a handsome young man, with bright eyes and a ruddy complexion. God told Samuel to arise and anoint him, for this was the one who was to become king. Samuel did this and from that day forward, the Spirit of God was with David and he was ready and willing to do whatever the man of God told him to do. Although David was anointed as king, he would not take over the kingdom for several years.

Meanwhile, the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul. David was brought to Saul to play his harp for him. (Saul did not know that David had been anointed as king.) Saul was comforted by his music. In fact, he was so pleased with David that he asked him to be his armor

bearer. Saul and David were good friends, but this friendship would not last. They were soon to become enemies.

The Philistines had gathered their army to fight the Israelites again. Both armies were standing ready for battle with a valley between them. A great giant named Goliath stepped out of the ranks of the Philistines and came down the slope. He was a huge and fierce man. He shouted at the Israelites and challenged them to send a man to fight him. He said if the Israelite killed him, the Philistines would be their servants, but if he killed the Israelite, then they would be servants to the Philistines. Saul and the Israelites were afraid because they knew they did not have a man who could fight such a giant. Goliath continued to do this for 40 days.

Three of David's oldest brothers were in Saul's army. One day Jesse, David's father, sent him to see how his brothers were doing and also to take them some food. David arrived with the supplies and as he was talking to his brothers, Goliath came out shouting as usual. David asked what was going on and was told about the giant's challenge. David asked what would be the reward for the man who would kill the giant. He was told that he would be given great riches and the king's daughter for his wife.

Someone told Saul about the boy who was talking with the soldiers. Saul sent for him and David went before the king. David told Saul that no one should be afraid of the giant; he would go fight him. Saul objected because David was just a youngster and the giant was a soldier who had been a warrior since his youth. But David told how he had killed a lion and a bear that attacked his sheep and he would kill the Philistine. David knew that the Israelites were God's people, and God would give them victory over the enemy.

Saul said that David could go and fight Goliath and offered to let David wear his armor. David had not tested the armor and chose to fight with the weapons he was skilled in. David chose five smooth stones from a brook and put them in his shepherd's bag. The giant made fun of David and told him to come on, and he would give his body to the birds to eat. David took one of his stones and put it in his slingshot. Then he answered the Philistine giant, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." Then David said he would give the body of the Philistine to the birds and wild beasts to eat "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

The Israelites watched anxiously as David fitted his stone in the sling then sent it flying toward its mark. It struck the giant in the forehead. Goliath fell to the ground. David ran up to him and cut off Goliath's head with the giant's own sword. The Israelites took courage from the example of the shepherd boy and shouted as they ran toward the Philistines. The Philistines were so scared that they ran away as quickly as they could. The Israelites chased them and defeated them.

Saul asked his chief soldier, Abner, who this young hero was, but

Abner did not know. Just about that time, David returned carrying the bloody head of the giant. Abner brought him into Saul's tent and the king asked him who he was. David told him he was Jesse's son. Standing nearby, was Saul's son, Jonathan. When Jonathan heard David speak and saw his great faith, he loved David. From that day forward David and Jonathan were close friends.

Saul took David into his household and would not let him return to his father's house. Saul made him an officer in his army and David behaved himself wisely before the people and the king.

But, there was trouble ahead. Soon, all Israel knew of the brave deeds of David, as he continued to defeat Israel's enemies. One day, when David and Saul were returning from a victorious battle, the women sang songs praising David. They sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." When Saul heard that, it made him jealous and very angry, for all Israel believed David was a greater soldier than Saul. Saul could not bear the thought; he worried about it until he nearly lost his mind.

Normally, King Saul enjoyed listening to David play the harp and it helped him to relax. However, the next day, when David was playing his harp, Saul listened, but was not soothed by the music. He grew more and more jealous as he thought of the song the women had sung. Finally he threw his spear at David, but David was watching him and dodged the spear and ran out.

Saul was beginning to worry. He knew God had rejected him as king. He saw that God blessed David. Saul removed David from his place as a high-ranking officer and gave him a less important place. But David behaved himself wisely all the time so that the people came to love him even more.

When Saul heard that his daughter, Michal, loved David, it pleased him. Saul had a plan to get rid of David. Saul sent word to David that he could marry Michal if he would kill 100 Philistines. Saul felt sure David would get killed while trying to do this, but he was mistaken. David not only killed 100 Philistines, he killed 200, and Saul had to give his daughter to David as a wife.

When Saul's trick failed, he told his son Jonathan and some of his servants that they should kill David. But, Jonathan loved David and went to him and told him to hide while he talked to his father. The next day Jonathan told his father that David was not a wicked person, but that he was a faithful servant of the king. Jonathan reminded his father how David had killed Goliath, and had brought a great victory to Israel. Saul listened to Jonathan and promised that he would not kill David. Then Jonathan called to David. He came out of hiding, and he and Saul became friends again. The king took him back into his service as before.

Saul was too jealous and too vain to be a true friend to anyone for very long. Another battle with the Philistines was fought and David won a victory. This brought back all of Saul's jealousy, and he tried again to kill

David with his spear. He even sent soldiers to David's house, but David's wife, Michal, helped him escape by letting him down through a window.

Things went from bad to worse. Jonathan thought he might talk to his father and get him to take David back again, but Saul became so angry at Jonathan for trying to help David that he threw his spear at his own son. Jonathan escaped and found David. He told David that there was no hope that Saul would take David back into his favor. Before Jonathan and David bid each other farewell, they agreed that each one would always be kind to the children of the other. Whoever remained alive longer would do what he could for the other's children. These two good friends parted with great sorrow.

When David left Jonathan the last time, he went by the village of Nob where the priest Ahimelech lived. The good priest gave David food and the sword of Goliath, which had been kept there. David continued to flee from the presence of Saul.

When Saul first became king, he would not even punish those who objected to his ruling them. But in later years, because of jealousy, he made several attempts to kill David and even tried to kill his own son, Jonathan. God was with young David and protected him. God had a plan to bring David to the throne and even the mighty Saul could not stop him.