

OT II: United Kingdom

BIBLE BASICS

The United Kingdom: The Rejection of God

In the midst of a shifting political landscape, the Israelites, witnessing the stability and centralized governance of neighboring nations, yearned for a similar system. They approached Samuel, a prophet and judge, with a profound request: to appoint a king who would lead them and provide the stability and judicial oversight they perceived as lacking. This demand for a monarchy marked a pivotal juncture in Israel's history, signaling a transition from a theocratic system governed by judges to a centralized monarchy rooted in secular leadership.

As Samuel pondered this request, he found himself in a quandary. While he recognized the potential benefits of a monarchy in terms of stability and efficiency, he also foresaw the risks associated with concentrating power in the hands of a single ruler. Samuel's own sons, appointed as judges to succeed him, had fallen short in upholding the principles of justice and righteousness expected of their roles. Their corruption had further fueled the Israelites' discontent and uncertainty about their future governance.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Samuel sought guidance from the Lord. Through prayer and meditation, he received divine instruction to honor the Israelites' request for a king but to make clear the potential consequences of such a choice. Samuel warned the Israelites about the inherent dangers of monarchy, highlighting the potential for abuse of power, increased taxation, and military conscription. Despite these warnings, the Israelites remained steadfast in their desire for a king, believing that a centralized monarchy would bring strength and stability to their nation. God further revealed a profound truth to Samuel—the Israelites' rejection was not directed at him personally, but rather at God Himself.

God explained that the Israelites had turned away from His teachings and commandments, choosing to follow their own desires and idols. This rejection was not a reflection on Samuel's worthiness or faithfulness, but rather a manifestation of the people's spiritual rebellion.

God's message provided Samuel with a crucial perspective shift. It allowed him to understand that the rejection he faced was not a personal affront, but rather a symptom of a deeper spiritual issue within the Israelite community. This revelation helped Samuel to process his emotions and to continue serving God with unwavering dedication.

Furthermore, God's words held a broader significance beyond Samuel's personal experience. They served as a reminder that in times of rejection or opposition, it is essential to recognize that such challenges are often rooted in factors beyond one's control. While rejection can be painful and disheartening, it is crucial to maintain a sense of perspective and to avoid internalizing the negative emotions it may evoke.

By understanding that rejection is not always a personal indictment, servants can navigate difficult situations with greater resilience and grace. They can focus on their purpose and calling, knowing that their worth is not determined by external circumstances or the opinions of others.

Saul: The Downfall of a Noble Servant

God guided Samuel to Saul, a Benjaminite who was anointed first king of the Israelites. King Saul was renowned for his remarkable strength, heroism, and impressive stature. Standing head and shoulders above the rest of his people, Saul possessed a handsome appearance, earning him the comparison "the beauty of Israel." (2 Samuel 1:19).

Saul's rule as king began with limited authority, but in his second year, he embarked on a mission to break free from the oppressive Philistine yoke. He organized an army and led several successful military campaigns; "wherever he turned, he was victorious." (1 Samuel 14:47)

However, Saul's impatience and impetuosity led him to commit a grave error that would have far-reaching consequences for himself and the nation of Israel. Despite receiving explicit instructions from Samuel, the prophet of God, to wait for his arrival before offering a sacrifice at Gilgal, Saul's arrogance and desire for immediate action prompted him to disobey.

This act of disobedience drew the first curse upon Saul. Samuel, upon learning of Saul's actions, pronounced judgment on him, uttering words that would forever be etched in Saul's memory. Samuel declared that because Saul had not kept the commandment of the Lord, his kingdom would not be established and would eventually be torn from him. (1 Samuel 13:8-14)

The curse pronounced by Samuel was more than just a mere warning; it was a divine decree that set in motion a chain of events that would ultimately lead to Saul's downfall. From that moment forward, Saul's reign was marked by uncertainty, fear, and a growing sense of isolation as he struggled to maintain his position as king.

The consequences of Saul's disobedience reverberated throughout his life, affecting not only his personal well-being but also the stability and unity of the nation. His inability to trust in God's timing and his desire to take matters into his own hands set a dangerous precedent and weakened the foundation of his rule.

Despite the curse pronounced upon him, Saul had opportunities to repent and seek reconciliation with God. However, his pride and stubbornness prevented him from taking the necessary steps, and he continued to make decisions that further alienated him from God's favor.

In the war with the Amalekites, Saul once again disobeyed Samuel's prophetic command. Despite explicit instructions from God to annihilate the Amalekites and their king, Agag, Saul succumbed to a lapse in judgment. He spared the life of Agag, disregarding the divine directives. This act of disobedience had far-reaching consequences, leading to the second curse pronounced upon Saul. It also served as the first clear indication that the kingdom of Israel would be transferred to a rival, foreshadowing a significant shift in the nation's leadership. (1 Samuel 14:48 -15:1-9)

The repercussions of Saul's transgressions were profound. He fell into a state of depression and experienced a profound spiritual decline, losing the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit. In this time of crisis, when Saul's emotional well-being was faltering, a young man named David emerged as a beacon of hope. David, known for his musical talents, was recommended to serve Saul as a musician. His melodious harp-playing had a soothing effect on the troubled king, uplifting his spirits and alleviating his distress.

David's presence in Saul's court was not merely coincidental. It was part of God's plan to provide Saul with comfort and companionship during a challenging period. Through David's music, Saul found solace and momentary respite from the darkness that enveloped him. The relationship between Saul and David, though complex and often fraught with tension, would play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Israel.

The story of Saul's impatience and disobedience serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the importance of humility, obedience, and trust in God's timing. It illustrates the devastating effects that can result from acting rashly and disregarding divine instructions, leaving a lasting legacy of regret and missed opportunities.

David: The Greatness of a lowly man

David provided a glimmer of hope for the people of Israel. When the annual sacrificial feast was in full swing Samuel, the prophet of God, arrived. He had been sent by the Lord to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king of Israel. As each son passed before him (1 Samuel 16:6-10), Samuel looked for the one chosen by God. But none of them seemed to fit the bill. Then, Samuel inquired about Jesse's youngest son, David, who was out in the fields tending the sheep. Jesse sent for David, and when he arrived, Samuel was struck by his handsome appearance and intelligent eyes. He knew in his heart that this was the one.

Samuel anointed David with oil, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. From that day forward, David was a changed man. He became more courageous and confident, and his musical ability soared to new heights. The same music that helped King Saul in his depression mentioned earlier. After this, David returned to his humble life as a shepherd. But his life was far from ordinary. On one occasion, he faced off against a lion and a bear that were threatening his father's flocks. With nothing but his shepherd's sling and a few stones, David bravely fought and defeated both animals.

Years later, David's life took a dramatic turn when he appeared before his brothers in the camp of the Israelite army. He learned about the defiant challenge of the Philistine giant, Goliath. No one in the army dared to face Goliath, but David stepped forward. With unwavering faith in God, David went out to meet Goliath armed with only his sling and five smooth stones. In a stunning turn of events, David struck Goliath with a stone from his sling, knocking him to the ground. With Goliath's own sword, David delivered the final blow, securing a victory that changed the course of history. (1 Samuel 17:40-51)

Chosen as the future king, David's presence brought a sense of optimism and excitement. His reputation blossomed with each passing day, as his exceptional talents and charisma captivated the

hearts of many. However, Saul's envy and insatiable thirst for power cast a dark shadow over his appreciation for David's abilities. (1 Samuel 18, 19)

Saul's jealousy and fear of losing his throne consumed him. Driven by insecurity and paranoia, he orchestrated several attempts to eliminate his perceived rival. Despite having two golden opportunities to end Saul's life, David displayed remarkable mercy and spared him, showing restraint and respect for the divine anointing upon Saul. (1 Samuel 24, 26)

Saul's downfall was ultimately sealed by his own disobedience and inability to trust in God's plan. His actions were driven by pride, manipulation, and a desire for control. He sought counsel from mediums and sorcerers, defying the clear instructions of God. Consequently, the Lord turned away from him, and Saul's reign unraveled, leading to his tragic demise. (1 Samuel 28, 31)

David's journey contrasted sharply with Saul's. His path was marked by humility, trust in God, and a willingness to submit to His plan. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks, David's faith and obedience enabled him to overcome adversity and eventually ascend to the throne. His reign brought peace, prosperity, and justice to the nation of Israel, fulfilling the promise that God had made to his ancestor Abraham. (2 Samuel 5, 7)

After the death of King Saul, David was finally crowned king of Israel. He reigned for forty years, during which time he conquered Jerusalem and moved the Ark of Covenant there. He also defeated the Philistines and became a King that influenced small kingdoms such as Edom, Moab and Ammon.

David's reign was not without its challenges. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, who became pregnant, and then orchestrated the death of her husband, Uriah, to cover up his sin (2 Samuel 11:15). The prophet Nathan confronted David with his wrongdoing, and David repented and asked for forgiveness. Despite his mistakes, David was a man of great faith and devotion to God. He wrote many of the Psalms, which are still cherished and recited by believers worldwide.

At the end of his life, David established the kingdom for his son, Solomon, and passed away peacefully. He left behind a legacy of leadership, courage, and unwavering trust in the Lord.

Solomon: The use and misuse of a talent

King Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, ascended to the throne of Israel following the tumultuous period marked by Absalom's rebellion. Absalom, son and favorite of king David, was destined to be David's successor. Absalom rebelled against David. Eventually went into battle with David and Absalom died in battle at a young age. Solomon was the child of David's old age, the last born of all his sons.

Despite the tragic circumstances of his accession, Solomon's reign is often seen as one of the most glorious periods in Israel's history. He was known for his wisdom, his wealth, and his building projects, including the construction of the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem.

Solomon's wisdom was legendary. In a vision, God offered him the choice of any good thing he desired, and Solomon chose wisdom over riches, honor, or long life. This prayer was granted, and

Solomon became known for his deep understanding of the world around him. He was skilled in many areas, including science, literature, and philosophy (1 Kings 3:5-14).

Solomon's wealth was also immense. He imported large quantities of precious metals from far-off lands, and he received tribute from all the kings and princes of the subject provinces (1 Kings 10:25). He also established monopolies on trade, which contributed to his treasury (1 Kings 10:28,29). The total amount of gold that Solomon brought into the treasury in a single year was 666 talents (1 Kings 10:14), an incredible sum for the time.

One of Solomon's most notable achievements was the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was built with lavish resources and meticulous attention to detail, symbolizing the zenith of Israel's religious and political stature. Solomon's dedication to the Temple was evident in the grandeur and expense involved, reflecting his commitment to establishing a lasting place of worship for God.

However, Solomon's reign was not without its challenges. He became involved with "strange women" and found himself drawn into the worship of foreign gods. This led to a decline in his spiritual life, and he eventually came to the conclusion that all the wealth and wisdom in the world were meaningless without God. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, which reflects on the vanity of human life apart from God. His story is a reminder that even the wisest and most powerful people can be tempted by sin and that true fulfillment can only be found in God.



Review Questions

1. Who were the Kings of Israel before the kingdom was divided? [Saul, David, Solomon]
2. What was the downfall of King Saul? [First he was so impatient waiting for Samuel that he offered an unlawful burnt sacrifice. Second he took spoils from the city of Amalek against God's command.]
3. Who was the king of the Amalek's that Saul spared his life and took him prisoner? [Agag, which was against God's command. Eventually Samuel killed him.]
4. What was David's sin which God punished him for? [He committed adultery with Bathsheba, she became pregnant then David killed her husband Uriah.]
5. What was God's punishment after David repented? [The son of sin from Bathsheba would die.]
6. Who was to be the successor of King David before Solomon? [Absalom. He rebelled and died in battle against David.]
7. What did King Solomon ask God to give him? [Wisdom in order to be able to judge God's people.]
8. What was Solomon's downfall? [He married strange women, who led him to worship idols.]

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9. What book did Solomon write which led to the belief that he repented? [Ecclesiastes]
 10. Why did King Saul hire David to do and why? [David was hired to cheer Saul after he fell into depression after he went against God at the battle with Amalek.]