

Classical Subjects Creatively Taught™

A Bible Course for Children

1 Samuel to Malachi

Claire A. Larsen

אלה תולדות השמים ו
עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ
טרם יהיה בארץ וכל
כי לא המטיר יהוה א
לעבד את האדמה ו
את כל פני האדמה
עפר מן האדמה ו
האדם לנפש חיה
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*God's Great Covenant, Old Testament 2:
Teacher's Edition*

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| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 9 |
| Books of the Old Testament | 11 |
| Unit I: The Early Kingdom...The God Who Anoints | 13 |
| <i>Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom anoints those who lead His people.</i> | |
| Chapter 1: The Call of Samuel (1 Samuel 1–3). | 15 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God calls His people to be holy.</i> | |
| Chapter 2: Samuel—The Last Judge (1 Samuel 4–7). | 20 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God shows His power over idols.</i> | |
| Chapter 3: Saul—The First King (1 Samuel 8–15). | 25 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God anoints and removes the rulers of His people.</i> | |
| Chapter 4: David Anointed as King (1 Samuel 16, Psalms) | 30 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God looks at man's heart, not his outside appearance.</i> | |
| Chapter 5: David in Saul's Court (1 Samuel 17–20) | 36 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God is faithful to those who trust in Him.</i> | |
| Chapter 6: David—The Fugitive (1 Samuel 21–31, 1 Chronicles 10) | 41 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God's plan for His kingdom is right, just, and good.</i> | |
| Chapter 7: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review) | 46 |
| Unit II: The Glorious Kingdom...The God Who Blesses | 51 |
| <i>Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom brings blessing to His people.</i> | |
| Chapter 8: The Covenant with David (2 Samuel 1–7, 1 Chronicles 11–17) | 53 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God remembers His promises and renews His covenant.</i> | |
| Chapter 9: David's Kindness & David's Sin (2 Samuel 8–12, Psalm 32) | 58 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God gives grace and forgiveness to those who repent.</i> | |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Chapter 10: Troubles in the Kingdom (2 Samuel 12–24, 1 Chronicles 18–27, Psalm 3) | 63 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God is present with His people even when they suffer the consequences of their sin.</i> | |
| Chapter 11: The Wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 1–4, Proverbs 1–31, Song of Songs 1–8, Ecclesiastes 1–12) | 68 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God gives holy wisdom to those who ask.</i> | |
| Chapter 12: The Reign of Solomon (1 Kings 5–11, 1 Chronicles 28, 2 Chronicles 1–9). | 74 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God brings blessing even when His people are unfaithful.</i> | |
| Chapter 13: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review) | 79 |
| Unit III: The Divided Kingdom...The God Who Reigns | 84 |
| <i>Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom rules over the kingdoms of men.</i> | |
| Chapter 14: A Nation Divided (1 Kings 12–16, 2 Chronicles 10–16) | 86 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God rules even when kings are wicked and turn against Him.</i> | |
| Chapter 15: Elijah—God’s Voice of Judgment to a Wicked King (1 Kings 16:29–19:18) | 92 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God proves He is God over nature, kings, and foreign gods.</i> | |
| Chapter 16: Ahab & Jehoshaphat—Two Very Different Kings (1 Kings 20–22, 2 Kings 1–2, 2 Chronicles 17–21). | 97 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God controls the course of history.</i> | |
| Chapter 17: Elisha—God’s Voice to Rulers & Ordinary People (1 Kings 19:19–21, 2 Kings 1–8) | 102 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God controls the destiny of rulers and ordinary people.</i> | |
| Chapter 18: Three Prophets of Judgment (Amos 1–9, Hosea 1–14, Jonah 1–4) | 108 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: Through His prophets, the LORD God warns of judgment to come.</i> | |
| Chapter 19: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review) | 114 |

Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom brings judgment when people refuse to worship Him.

Chapter 20: Israel Falls & Judah Remains (2 Kings 17-19, 2 Chronicles 21-28)121

Lesson Theme: The LORD God's patience with idolatry does not last indefinitely.

Chapter 21: Two Prophets & a Righteous King (2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 27-32, Isaiah 1-66, Micah 1-7)126

Lesson Theme: The LORD God warns of judgment and gives hope through the promise of a Messiah.

Chapter 22: Two Memorable Kings—Manasseh & Josiah (2 Kings 21-23, 2 Chronicles 33-35)132

Lesson Theme: The LORD God calls His unfaithful people to remember the covenant.

Chapter 23: God's Voices of Judgment to the Nations

(Habakkuk 1-3, Zephaniah 1-3, Nahum 1-3, Obadiah 1, Joel 1-3)137

Lesson Theme: The LORD God warns the nations of judgment to come.

Chapter 24: Jeremiah Weeps & Judah Falls (2 Kings 23-25, 2 Chronicles 36, Jeremiah 1-52, Lamentations 1-5)143

Lesson Theme: The LORD God's patience and mercy do not last forever when hearts are rebellious and hard.

Chapter 25: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review)148

Unit V: The Exiled Nation...The God Who Restores

Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom restores His people in His own time.

Chapter 26: God's Messenger to the Exiles (Ezekiel 1-48)155

Lesson Theme: The LORD God speaks to His people in exile.

Chapter 27: Daniel & His Friends (Daniel 1-3)160

Lesson Theme: The LORD God cares for His people who fear Him and obey His commandments.

Chapter 28: Daniel's Faith (Daniel 4-12)165

Lesson Theme: The LORD God answers His people when they pray to Him in faith.

Chapter 29: The People Return—The Temple Is Rebuilt (Ezra 1-6, Haggai 1-2, Zechariah 1-14)170

Lesson Theme: The LORD God keeps His promise and restores His people to their land.

| | |
|--|------|
| Chapter 30: The Story of Esther (Esther 1–10) | .176 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God protects His people from the schemes of wicked men.</i> | |
| Chapter 31: The Story of Ezra & Nehemiah (Ezra 7–10, Nehemiah 1–13, Malachi 1–4) | .181 |
| <i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God helps His people, who trust in Him.</i> | |
| Chapter 32: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review) | .187 |

Appendices

| | |
|---|------|
| Appendix A: Memory Verse Summary. | .192 |
| Appendix B: Pictures of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament | .198 |
| Appendix C: How to Use the Psalms. | .206 |
| Appendix D: How to Understand the Proverbs | .208 |
| Appendix E: Kings and Prophets. | .210 |
| Appendix F: Reigns of the Kings of Israel & Judah | .212 |
| Appendix G: Intertestamental History. | .214 |
| Glossary | .218 |
| Chapter Quizzes | .234 |

Maps

| | |
|---|------|
| Map 1: The Kingdoms of Saul, David & Solomon | .229 |
| Map 2: Israel and Its Neighbors (The Twelve Tribes of Israel and Neighboring Nations) | .230 |
| Map 3: The Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah | .231 |
| Map 4: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. | .232 |

Introduction

“The king is coming! The king is coming!” All around you men, women, and children are shouting loudly. You are pushed and shoved, first this way and then that. Each person wants to be the first one to see the king’s procession. The city is crowded, and everyone’s excited. You are an Israelite child, and King David has come to your city!

God's people, the Israelites, didn't always have a king. Many centuries before King David ruled, God had made a covenant with a man named Abraham. "You will be the father of a great nation," the LORD promised. "I will be your God, and you will be My people." 「

The LORD kept his promise to Abraham. Abraham had a son named Isaac, who had a son named Jacob who had a very large family. Jacob's family moved to Egypt, and 400 years later there were so many descendants of Jacob living in Egypt that the pharaoh was afraid of them. He made Jacob's descendants, called Hebrews or Israelites, slaves so they wouldn't be a danger to his kingdom. The Israelites weren't a nation yet, and they certainly didn't have a king.

The LORD sent Moses to free the Israelites from Egypt. They spent forty years in the great and terrible wilderness, and then arrived at the Promised Land. The LORD appointed Joshua as Israel's commander. The people fought many battles, some mighty victories because they trusted the LORD and some terrible defeats because they disobeyed Him. Finally, they possessed the land that the LORD had promised to Abraham. Now the Israelites were a nation with their own land, but they didn't have a king.

The Israelites lived in the land and enjoyed all the good things that the LORD provided. Sometimes they obeyed the LORD and worshipped only Him. Many times, however, they disobeyed the LORD and worshipped Baal, Asherah, and the other Canaanite gods. The Israelites did what they wanted to do, not what God had commanded them to do.

Because of their idolatry, the LORD sent other nations to bring trouble to the Israelites. When the Israelites became miserable enough, they cried out to the LORD for help. Then the LORD sent men called judges to deliver them from their enemies. The judges ruled the land and saved the people from suffering and oppression. But the people continued to turn away from the LORD, and they didn't have a king.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 The LORD made a covenant in Genesis 12 to be Abraham's God and the God of Abraham's children. He promised to give Abraham a son who would become the father of many nations. He promised to give Abraham's descendents a land of their own. Finally, He promised to make Abraham a blessing to many nations. Later, in Genesis 15 and Genesis 17 God confirmed this covenant and reminded Abraham that He would keep His promise. *God's Great Covenant, Old Testament 1: A Bible Course for Children* tells the story of God's faithful keeping of the covenant as it unfolds from Genesis through Ruth. God's promise to Abraham is the same as His promise to His people today: "I will be your God, and you shall be My people" (Jeremiah 7:23).

Notes:

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God's Old Testament story would be a tragedy except for one thing: God's kingdom is greater than the nation of Israel. Israel's earthly kingdom was a picture of God's spiritual, eternal kingdom. Behind the scenes, God reigned supreme. He used even the disobedience of wicked kings to bring about His plan. He guided all of his-
 tory toward its most important event—the coming of the Messiah.

God's people had times of obedience and prosperity as well as times of disobedience and judgment. Through it all, God's kingdom remained secure because the LORD God was the Keeper of His Kingdom.

What is the Old Testament?

10

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17 Historical Books + 5 Poetry Books + 17 Prophets = 39 Books in the Old Testament

UNIT 1

The Early Kingdom...The God Who Anoints

Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom anoints those who lead His people.

Shalom. Let me introduce myself. I am Tobias, the royal chronicler, and I work in the king's palace. It's my job to record with utmost accuracy all the royal comings and goings. So with my expertise and wide experience (oh my, oh my, how humble I am!), I'm here, my friends, to retell this amazing story, *The Keeper of God's Kingdom*. **1**

When the story begins, Israel is at the brink of historic changes. In only 100 years, the scattered tribes of Israel would become a mighty kingdom with a powerful army, a magnificent palace, and a world-renowned king. God made this happen through three men: Samuel, Saul, and David. **2**

Until now, Israel's only King was God. When the Israelites demanded a king like other nations, they were rebelling against God. In the covenant, Israel had agreed that God would be their King and have authority over them. Samuel, the last judge and the first prophet, directed the people back to the LORD. It was because of Samuel that Israel's kingdom started out well. Samuel was godly and pleased the LORD. **3**

Israel's first king, Saul, was tall, handsome, and strong. The people thought that he was the perfect king. Too soon, though, Saul's heart became proud. He disregarded the LORD's words and did things his own way.

Although Saul ruled Israel for more than twenty years, the LORD rejected him early in his reign. His sons would never rule after him. He was not a godly ruler. To everyone's surprise, the LORD chose David, a simple shepherd boy, to be the next king. Even though David was young and small, he was brave and mighty, and, most of all, his heart trusted in the LORD his God.

4 Each of these men—Samuel, Saul, and David—was specially chosen and anointed by God to serve Him. (Being anointed means being chosen by God and equipped by His Spirit to serve God in a particular job.) Now that I have introduced the main characters, let's go back in time to learn exactly how the early kingdom came about.



Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 In this book, the fictional character of Tobias is used as a literary device to capture the attention of the children. However, his job of royal chronicler has an historical connection. Both King David and King Solomon had within their royal cabinets a position of recorder and a position of scribe. The specific tasks of the recorder are not certain, but scholars think that the recorder was a man of high rank similar to a secretary of state, royal record keeper, or royal herald. The scribe, also called a secretary, was responsible for writing royal correspondence and keeping the written annals of events during a king's reign. Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was the recorder for both King David and King Solomon (see 2 Samuel 8:15-18; 1 Chronicles 18:14-17; 2 Samuel 20:23-26; and 1 Kings 4:3). Both kings also had secretaries or scribes. Three men are mentioned as secretaries for David: Seraiah (see 2 Samuel 8:15-18), Shavsha (see 1 Chronicles 18:14-17), and Sheva (see 2 Samuel 20:23-26). Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha, are mentioned in 1 Kings 4:3 as secretaries of King Solomon. During King Hezekiah's reign, Joah, the son of Asaph, was the recorder, and Shebna, was the secretary. These two men represented Hezekiah on royal business (see 2 Kings 18:18, 37). These verses also mention Eliakim, who had the position of palace administrator. King Josiah's recorder, Joah, son of Joahaz, helped supervise the repairs to the temple (see 2 Chronicles 34:8). (See *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 319-329 for additional information on the structure of civil government during Israel's monarchy.)

2 First Samuel can be divided into three main sections based on the person who is primary in the narrative: a) chapters 1-8: Samuel, Israel's last judge; b) chapters 9-15: Saul, Israel's first king, and c) chapters 16-31: David, the anointed fugitive. In other words, even though Samuel is mentioned in 1 Samuel 1-15, he is only the primary character in chapters 1-8. The same applies to Saul and David. Chronologically, most biblical scholars believe that the events of 1 Samuel 1-8 occurred concurrently with Judges 10-16 so that Eli was priest at the tabernacle in Shiloh at approximately the same time that Jephthah was fighting the Ammonites, and Samson, as a one-man army, was subduing the Philistines. Throughout his life, Samuel had the roles of judge, prophet, and priest, and as the last of the judges, he ushered in the monarchy in Israel. During Samuel's lifetime, Israel went from being a nation of loosely allied individual tribes to being a united kingdom. Because of Samuel's godly character and his dependence upon the LORD, the change from a nation of tribes to a united kingdom had a God-directed emphasis. Saul was the first king anointed by the Lord, but he quickly turned away from serving the LORD to serving his own selfish interests. David, Israel's second king, was a godly man who ruled Israel as a theocratic king, recognizing the supreme Kingship of the LORD.

3 Because they had no central ruler to unite them against their enemies, the Israelites felt vulnerable to the nations around them. They had forgotten that they had the Supreme Ruler providing for them. They were rejecting God as their ultimate King. Other nations' kings did not acknowledge God's authority as ruler over all mankind, and even claimed to be gods themselves. But, Israel was supposed to be different, for God had called them to be a theocratic nation. (A theocracy is a nation that considers itself to be ruled directly by God through divinely given laws and God-ordained leaders.) As part of God's covenant with Israel, the LORD God was to be Israel's supreme King, and any person who ruled Israel reigned under His authority. The LORD knew that the time would come when Israel would want and need to be united under the central rule of a king and He did not view that desire as evil or harmful in and of itself. In fact, a centralized government for the twelve tribes could have unified them and made them a stronger force against their enemies. For this reason, God provided guidelines in the Mosaic Law regarding how Israel's king should rule (see Deuteronomy 17:14-20). At the same time, God made it clear that all Israelites, even the king, were to recognize Him as their supreme authority. Therefore, Israel's sin in requesting a king was not in the act of wanting a king, but rather that they essentially wanted to reject God's rule over them and to be like the heathen nations around them.

4 The theme of Unit I is "the God who anoints." Each of the three main characters in 1 Samuel—Samuel, Saul, and David—was chosen by God in a unique way and for a definite role in His kingdom. Not only did God choose them, but He also equipped them by His Holy Spirit to accomplish the role that He had planned for them. He also protected them as they executed their roles until He determined that their jobs were done. Samuel and David, even though they were sinners who needed the grace of God's forgiveness, were faithful in the role to which God had appointed them. By contrast, the empowering and equipping Spirit of God left Saul because of his disobedience (see 1 Samuel 16:14).

5 Psalm 23 is the suggested memory passage for Unit I. In addition, each chapter will have a memory verse that pertains directly to the story content. As the teacher or parent using this text, you may choose to have your students memorize both the unit passage and the chapter verses or you may choose to memorize only the chapter verses. The footnotes in each chapter give a brief explanation of each chapter verse.

6 In the book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Phillip Keller describes in great detail the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. Keller, who spent years tending sheep on his own sheep farm, brilliantly explains and brings deeper meaning to this psalm so beloved by God's people through the ages.

PSALM 23 A Psalm of David

1. The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
3. He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever. **5**

David, the shepherd boy, wrote Psalm 23, which is commonly called the "Shepherd's Psalm." In this psalm, the LORD is the Shepherd, and His people are the sheep.

Sheep do not naturally know what they need. They will not lie down and rest if they are tired, bothered by nasty little insects, or frightened by other animals. When they are thirsty, they do not always choose the refreshing, cool water of the meadow streams. They will drink whatever water they find, even if the water is dirty or unsafe to drink.

A good shepherd takes care of his sheep, even if he must lead them through dark and dangerous valleys to reach the lush mountain pastures where good food and clear water are plentiful. With his rod, a symbol of his strength, and his staff, a symbol of his care, the shepherd protects and comforts his sheep.

In John 10, Jesus Christ is called the Good Shepherd. As the Shepherd, the LORD loves His people, protects them from all evil, and leads them carefully through all the circumstances of life. The LORD does only good things for His people, and His mercy goes with them all the days of their lives until they go to live in His house with Him forever.¹

Chapter 1

The Call of Samuel

LESSON SCOPE: 1 Samuel 1–3**READ TO ME:** 1 Samuel 1–3 **1****THEME:** The LORD God calls His people to be holy.**MEMORY VERSE:**

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
(Judges 21:25) **2**

KEY FACTS:Samuel's Many Jobs **3**

| Judge | Priest | Prophet | Nazirite |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 Samuel 7:15 He “judged Israel all the days of his life.” | 1 Samuel 7:9 He offered sacrifices and prayed for God’s people. | 1 Samuel 3:20 Everyone in Israel knew that God had made him a prophet. | 1 Samuel 1:11 His mother set him apart for the LORD before he was born. |
| Judge | = Person chosen by God to be a deliverer, peacemaker, and civil leader. | | |
| Priest | = Man in charge of offering sacrifices and offerings in the tabernacle. | | |
| Prophet | = Person called to speak for God. | | |
| Nazirite | = Person set apart for God; he could not drink wine, cut his hair, or touch a dead body. | | |

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Anoint **4** = Chosen by God and equipped by God’s Spirit to serve the LORD in a particular job.
- Covenant **5** = God’s promise to be the God of His people forever.
- Holy **6** = “Set apart by God” or “living in a way that pleases God.”

MESSAGE FROM THE KING: The King wants *you* to be holy.

Even as a child, Samuel was holy. The LORD set him apart, and Samuel pleased God. What does it mean to be holy? Why is being holy so hard? **7**

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 On the memory page of each chapter of *God’s Great Covenant, Old Testament 2*, you will find a Lesson Scope and a Read to Me passage. The Lesson Scope passage identifies the entire portion of Scripture that is encompassed in the lesson, even though every event in this passage may not be mentioned in the chapter narrative. The Read to Me passage is the portion of Scripture that applies most directly to the chapter narrative and is best suited to reading aloud to the students. Reading the Scripture narrative out loud helps to emphasize to the students that the Bible stories are true events that occurred in history and that God communicates His truth to us through stories.

2 When the Old Testament story continues in 1 Samuel, there is no king in Israel. Eli was priest in Shiloh, serving in the tabernacle during the days of the judges (Jephthah and Samson), and Israel was a loosely knit nation of twelve individual tribes. Most of the Israelites had forgotten the LORD God who had miraculously delivered them from Egypt and had made a covenant with them at Mt. Sinai. They had forgotten the Law given to Moses on the mountain, and every person was a law unto himself. The Lord’s command in Leviticus 11:44, “Be holy; for I am holy,” had no meaning for them. The people’s actions and the intentions of their hearts were not to please God, but to please themselves.

3 Samuel was unique in that he was the only man to hold all three positions of judge, prophet, and priest. In contrast to the other judges, who each ruled locally in one of the tribes, Samuel was recognized by all Israel as judge. However, he primarily ruled in the southern tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon. As priest, Samuel offered sacrifices at the tabernacle and faithfully prayed for the people. Like Moses before him, Samuel loved the Israelites and continually called the people back to worshipping God in the proper manner. Samuel was the defining example for the prophets who succeeded him. Although the role of prophet existed before Samuel, most scholars agree that he was the first of the great Old Testament prophets. The prophet’s role was to speak for God to the people, and particularly, to bring God’s word to the kings. Since the kings were to be theocratic kings and rule under the authority of God, they needed to know God’s will. Most of the Old Testament prophets appeared after the kingdom was divided in two (Unit III–V) and were closely associated with a king. If the king recognized God’s right to rule over Israel, the prophet was able to be a counselor and guide to the king. If not, the prophet became the king’s adversary. Samuel was also a Nazirite, dedicated to God before his birth by his mother, Hannah. In comparison to Samson, who did not take his position of Nazirite seriously, Samuel lived a godly life and kept the rules required of a Nazirite.

The Call of Samuel

4 Being anointed by God included three things: a) being chosen by God for a specific role (priest, prophet, or king); b) being equipped by God's Spirit to fulfill the responsibilities associated with that job; and c) being protected by God while in that role. Thus, being anointed by God was something to be taken seriously. For example, after David was anointed king, he refused to kill Saul or do anything to depose him prematurely from the throne. David respected Saul's anointing, and refused to harm the LORD's anointed king, even though Saul was purposefully trying to kill David. David chose to wait for the LORD's timing to assume his kingly role. (See chapters 3-5 for the stories of Saul and David.)

5 What is God's covenant? It is the arrangement whereby God promises His people, "I will be your God, and you will be My people." (see Exodus 6:7). God made a covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:15) to send the Savior (the Seed that would crush the head of the serpent) so sinful people could be reconciled once again to a holy God. God reaffirmed the covenant with Noah after the Flood, promising never to destroy the whole earth again with a flood and giving the rainbow as a sign of that promise (see Genesis 8-9). It was with Abraham, however, that the LORD renewed the covenant in a more personal way. He promised that Abraham would have a son, inherit the land of Canaan, and bless many nations (see Genesis 12, 15, and 17). God chose Abraham's descendants to be the recipients of His special blessing. Abraham's family increased, and centuries later left Egypt as a nation under the leadership of Moses. In the wilderness, the LORD once again renewed His covenant with His people, and His people agreed to obey Him and worship Him as their God. Despite Israel's repeated idolatry, the LORD kept His promise to be their God, because the covenant does not depend upon the faithfulness of God's people, but upon the faithfulness of God. Once in the Promised Land, God's people forgot Him and each did "what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Israel's demand for a human king, thereby rejecting God as their supreme Ruler, was one indication that the people did not respect and honor God's covenant with them. At the same time, the LORD had not forgotten His covenant with His people. Each of the three main characters in 1 Samuel was chosen and anointed by God to the role of leading Israel. In Unit I, the narrative focuses on how Israel became a kingdom. Then in Unit II, the LORD renews His covenant with His people through King David. As we follow the progress of God's covenant with His people, we are constantly reminded that though His people forget Him, the LORD is always faithful. The covenant rests on the unchanging nature and faithfulness of God.

6 The word "holy" has two meanings. First, holy means being set apart by God for use in His kingdom. God's people are holy because

8 Every year it was the same. The whole family walked through the hill country of Ephraim to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship the LORD.¹ Hannah dreaded these pilgrimages. Hannah loved the LORD, and she loved her husband, Elkanah. He was a good man, and she knew he loved her. But these trips always made her sad because Hannah had no children.

Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, had many children. With gleeful pleasure, Peninnah would tease Hannah mercilessly about having no children until Hannah would weep in agony and could not enjoy the ceremonial meal.¹

9

This year Hannah stood before the LORD with a bitter soul and prayed in tears, "O LORD Almighty, see my misery and remember me. If you give me a son, I will give him back to you, and he will serve You his whole life. He will be a Nazirite, and he will never cut his hair."¹

10

Eli, the priest, saw Hannah's lips moving, but couldn't hear her words. He thought she was drunk, and rebuked her harshly. Quickly Hannah responded, "Oh, I am not drunk, my LORD, but I am deeply troubled. I was pouring out my heart to the LORD, hoping He would hear my plea." Eli comforted her, saying, "Go in peace. May God grant you your request."

11

The LORD did answer Hannah's prayer and gave her a son. "I will name him Samuel," she said, "because I asked the LORD for him."¹

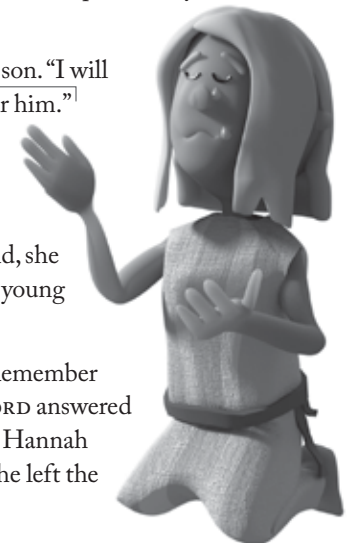
For the next three years, Hannah stayed home when the family went to Shiloh to worship, and she nursed Samuel. Then came that special day when Hannah would dedicate her son to the LORD. Holding Samuel's small hand, she walked to the tabernacle with him. She took offerings of a young bull, a basket of flour, and a flask of wine along with her.¹

12

After the sacrifice, Hannah brought Samuel to Eli. "Remember me?" she asked. "In tears I prayed for this child, and the LORD answered my prayer. Now I give him to the LORD for his whole life." Hannah then sang a song of thanksgiving to the LORD, and when she left the tabernacle, Samuel stayed with Eli.

Jesus in the OT

A prophet is a person called to speak God's words. How is Samuel, the prophet, like Jesus Christ, the Prophet?



Although Eli was a godly man, his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked. The LORD was very angry with them because they treated His offerings with contempt. Samuel, on the other hand, grew up in the LORD's presence and served the LORD well. Every year, his mother would bring him a little robe; The LORD blessed Hannah with other children. **13**

One day a man of God brought bad news to Eli, saying, "The LORD is angry because you honor your sons more than you honor Him. You didn't stop them when they sinned against Him. Both your sons will die on the same day, and the LORD will choose a faithful priest from a different family." **14**

Years went by. Eli became old and blind. Samuel served the LORD under Eli's care. Unlike in the days of Moses and Joshua, the LORD did not often speak directly to people, but things were about to change.

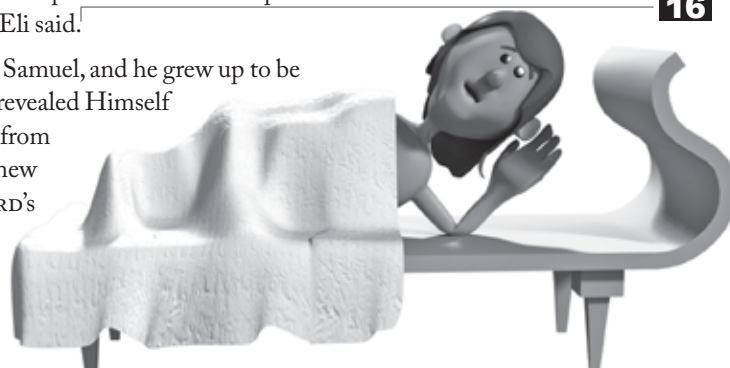
One night, when Samuel was in bed, the LORD called him. Thinking it was Eli who had called, Samuel immediately ran to him. "You called me, Eli? Here I am," Samuel said. Eli was puzzled, and said, "Go back to bed, Samuel. I didn't call you." Samuel obeyed.

The LORD called Samuel a second time, and a second time Eli told Samuel to go back to bed. Samuel didn't know it was God who was calling him. When Samuel heard the voice a third time, Eli realized the LORD was calling Samuel. He told Samuel, "It's the LORD who is calling you. If He calls again say, 'Speak, for Your servant hears.'" The LORD did call again, and Samuel replied as Eli had instructed him.

15 The LORD's message to Samuel was frightening. The LORD said that He was going to judge Eli's family for their great sin against Him. No sacrifice would ever atone for their sin.

In the morning, Eli asked Samuel to tell him what the LORD had said. Samuel was afraid. How could he speak of God's judgment to Eli? After much urging, Samuel told Eli the sad news, and Eli accepted what God had spoken. "He is the LORD. Let Him do what He thinks is best," Eli said. **16**

17 The LORD was with Samuel, and he grew up to be a godly man. The LORD revealed Himself to Samuel, and all Israel from the north to the south knew that Samuel was the LORD's prophet.



God sets them apart from those who do not trust and worship Him. He loves His people in a special way, and they have a special place of ministry in His kingdom. Objects can also be holy. The furniture in the tabernacle was holy because the pieces were set apart for the sole purpose of being used in the worship of God. Second, holy means morally perfect. Only God is absolutely holy because only God never sins. God's people are to reflect God's holiness and by God's grace to live in ways that are morally good. They are to please God from the heart.

7 Holiness is fundamentally an attitude of the heart, not simply a way to behave. Being holy means that worshipping and pleasing God is the primary motivation for anything we do. A holy person reflects the nature and character of God, and even though we will never be perfectly holy until we are with the LORD, by His grace we can make good moral choices for good reasons. Being holy is difficult because even as Christians we have stubborn hearts that resist God's transforming work of grace in us. And, even when, by His grace, we exhibit holy motives and actions, our holiness is not always welcomed by those around us.

8 When the events of 1 Samuel occurred, the tabernacle was located in the city of Shiloh. In 1 Samuel 3:3, the word "temple" (NIV) is translated "tabernacle" in the New King James version. The temple was not built until Solomon's time, so during Eli's priesthood the Israelites were still worshipping at the tabernacle. It was at the tabernacle that Samuel served the LORD as a child and later as a priest. At this time, the tabernacle was a more permanent, tent-like structure than the easily movable tent of the days of the wilderness journey, but it was still the same type of building that the Israelites had erected during the time of the book of Exodus.

9 The theme of barrenness is common in Scripture. There were many other women in Scripture who were grieved because they could not have children. A story similar to Hannah's is that of Jacob's two wives, Leah and Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah, but Leah had children and Rachel was barren. There was jealousy and strife between these two sisters, and Rachel suffered greatly because of her inability to have a child. Finally, Rachel gave birth to Joseph, the most loved son of Jacob, and to Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son.

10 A Nazirite was a man or woman who was set apart for service to the Lord as a result of a vow made to God. This voluntary vow was usually made for a specific period of time. During the time of the vow, the Nazirite could not drink wine, cut his hair, or touch a dead body. In the cases of Samson and Samuel, the vow was made by the parents and extended for the entire lifetime of the child. Unlike Samson, who took the vow lightly, Samuel kept the conditions of the vow and served the LORD well. Numbers 6:1-21 describes the requirements for a Nazirite in detail.

11 The name Samuel has several meanings, including “heard of God,” “he who is from God,” or “promised of God.”

12 Although Scripture does not specify how old Samuel was when Hannah took him to the tabernacle, we can make a reasonable guess that he was about three years old based on the following: 1) At that time, women nursed their children up to about the age of three; and 2) Scripture says that Samuel was weaned. Therefore, if Hannah took Samuel to the tabernacle shortly after he was weaned, he would have been approximately three years old.

13 Eli’s sons were not following the rules set forth in the ceremonial law regarding animal sacrifices. In Leviticus 3:16-17, the law says that “all the fat is the LORD’s” and that the priest is not to eat any fat or blood from the animal sacrifices. The burning fat of the sacrifice was a pleasing aroma to the LORD, and thus it was reserved for Him. Eli’s sons were taking meat from the sacrifice to eat before the fat was burned up. By their blatant disregard of God’s requirements for the sacrifices, Eli’s sons were showing contempt for the LORD. In addition, Eli’s sons practiced sexual immorality with the women who served in the tabernacle.

14 Eli was not responsible for the sins of his adult sons. He was, however, responsible for not taking action when his sons disregarded his reproof and continued to sin against God. Eli did not discipline his sons or remove them from the office of priest when they continued to desecrate the sacrifices. The LORD interpreted this negligence as Eli honoring his sons more than he honored the LORD. Because of this, the LORD said that all Eli’s descendants would die young (“in your family line there will never be an old man” [1 Samuel 2:32, NIV]) and that the priesthood would one day be transferred to a different family.

15 There was no remedy for Hophni and Phinehas’s sins for two reasons. First, their sins were intentional and committed in defiance of the LORD’s specific commands. Their hearts were not repentant. Second, bringing a sacrifice was the way for a repentant person to atone for his sin, and Eli’s sons were doing sacrifices in a contemptuous manner. Since they were despising the only remedy that God had provided for the forgiveness of sin, there was no atonement for them.

16 Despite his shortcomings and sins, Eli was a godly man. His response to the LORD’s judgment upon him and his family was an acceptance of God’s judgment and an acknowledgment of God’s goodness.

17 The ministry of Samuel ushered in a new era in Israel’s history. Samuel united the tribes by judging all Israel from the northern city of Dan to the city of Beersheba in the south. The LORD who had seemed to be silent during the dark days of the judges was now revealing Himself to Samuel, and Samuel was drawing the people back to the Lord. Samuel was recognized by all of Israel as a prophet and a spiritual leader.

Review Worksheets

A. MEMORY VERSE:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

B. KEY FACTS: Put the answers to the questions in the boxes below.

- Judge: How long did Samuel judge Israel?
- Priest: What two things did Samuel do as a priest in the tabernacle?
- Prophet: Who made Samuel a prophet over everyone in Israel?
- Nazirite: Before Samuel was born, what did his mother do?

Samuel’s Many Jobs

| Judge | Priest | Prophet | Nazirite |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. <u>All the</u> | 2a. <u>offered</u> | 3. <u>God</u> | 4. <u>Set him</u> |
| <u>days of his</u> | <u>sacrifices</u> | | <u>apart for</u> |
| <u>life</u> | b. <u>prayed for</u> | | <u>the LORD</u> |
| | <u>God’s people</u> | | |

C. STORY FACTS: Fill in the blanks below.

- Elkanah’s family worshipped at the tabernacle at Shiloh.
- Hannah prayed that the LORD would give her a son.
- The LORD said Eli honored his sons more than he honored God.
- Hannah sang a song of thanksgiving because God gave her a son.
- Anoint means chosen by God and equipped by God’s Spirit to serve the LORD in a particular job.
- God’s promise to be the God of His people forever is His covenant.

D. WHAT'S THE RIGHT ANSWER?

Circle the word that completes the sentence correctly.

1. When Eli saw Hannah praying, he thought that she was _____.
angry drunk depressed
2. One night the LORD called Samuel _____ times.
two three four
3. Hannah named her son Samuel because she _____ God for him.
asked yelled at cursed
4. The LORD's message to Samuel was about _____ for Eli's family.
blessing prosperity judgment

E. WHAT DOES THIS PERSON DO? Match the job with the description of the job.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Judge | 1. Person called to speak for God |
| <u>3</u> Priest | 2. Person set apart to serve God |
| <u>1</u> Prophet | 3. Man who offered sacrifices |
| <u>2</u> Nazirite | 4. Deliverer, peacemaker, and civil leader |

F. HOW DID SAMUEL ANSWER THE LORD?

Circle every other letter and put the letters in the spaces below.

ASEPCETAUKIFYOKR
QYROTUFRRDSRECRBVEATNLTJHMENATRES
S P E A K , F O R Y O U R
S E R V A N T H E A R S

G. FIND OUT...

Who else did God call to serve Him? Look up the verses below to find out.

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <u>Moses</u> | Exodus 3:4,10 | <u>Jeremiah</u> | Jeremiah 1:1-5 |
| <u>Matthew</u> | Matthew 9:9 | <u>Paul</u> | Romans 1:1 |

What did the LORD call these men to do? **His work**

Notes:

Chapter 1: The Call of Samuel

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 The ark of the covenant was kept in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. It was a rectangular, gold-covered box made of acacia wood. It “contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:4). On top of the ark were two golden cherubim that guarded the mercy seat. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest, after making a sacrifice for the people, entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat. Poles were permanently attached to the sides of the ark for use in transporting it. Everyone was forbidden to look inside the ark or even touch it, and if they did, they died instantly. The ark was not supposed to be worshipped as an idol or to be looked upon as a magic box that guaranteed good fortune, but the Israelites at times used the ark in this way. The purpose of the ark was to remind Israel of the LORD’s presence with them, to remind them of the necessity of a blood sacrifice to atone for sin, and to point the people to the Savior who would someday die for the sins of His people.

2 Samuel set up the Ebenezer stone to remind Israel that the Lord had protected them by confusing and subduing the Philistines. This stone was designed to be a memorial, or reminder, not an object of worship. When we set up visible reminders of God’s goodness to us, we must never think of that object as a good luck piece or a magic stone. It is God, not any created thing that protects, cares for, and guides us. On the other hand, because we are people who forget quickly, visible reminders of God’s care can be helpful. God used many things to help His people remember His goodness. In the New Testament, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper as a way for the church to remember what He did for us on the cross. Today we have many visible reminders of God’s love and mercy, including stained glass windows and cross symbols. Prayer notebooks are another way to remember what God has done. Keeping a journal of prayer requests and God’s answers to those prayers encourages us when we have doubts that the LORD hears us.

3 This reaction of the elders of Israel indicates how far the people had wandered away from the LORD. First, they were surprised that they had lost the battle with the Philistines. They didn’t realize how much their idolatry and sinful actions as a people affected their relationship with the LORD. They had forgotten the connection between obedience and God’s blessing. Second, they were using the ark in an irreverent manner. The ark was supposed to remain in the Holy of Holies and be seen only by the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. It was not a magic box to be carted wherever they wanted victory in battle. Third, they erroneously believed that the ark had to be in their presence in order for the LORD to be present with them. Rather, the LORD would be with them anytime they were obedient and trusted in Him.

chapter 2

Samuel—The Last Judge

LESSON SCOPE: 1 Samuel 4–7

READ TO ME: 1 Samuel 4–7

THEME: The LORD God shows His power over idols.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.” (Isaiah 46:9)

KEY FACTS:

**From Shiloh
To the battlefield
To Ashdod**

To Gath and Ekron

To Israel

The Ark of the Covenant’s Journey

Where it sat in the tabernacle.

Because Israel wanted victory over the Philistines.

Where God destroyed Dagon in his temple, struck the Philistines with tumors, and sent rats to ravage the land.

Where God sent more tumors and rats to the Ekron and Gath Philistines.

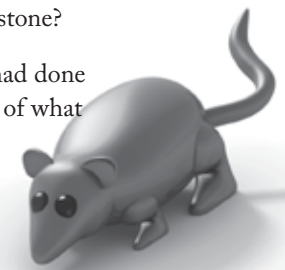
Where it stayed at Abinadab’s house for twenty years.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1 Ark of the covenant | = Box that contained the Ten Commandments and reminded Israel that God was with them. |
| Ichabod | = Means “the glory [of the LORD] has departed from Israel.” |
| Ebenezer | = Means “thus far has the LORD helped us.” |

MESSAGE FROM THE KING: Do you have an Ebenezer stone?

- 2** Samuel set up an Ebenezer stone to remember what the LORD had done for Israel. How can you set up an Ebenezer stone to remind you of what God has done for you?



Samuel—The Last Judge

The battle was over, and 4,000 Israelites were dead! How could the LORD let this happen? The elders of Israel shook their heads in disbelief, and said, “Maybe if we bring the ark from Shiloh, the LORD will protect us from the Philistines. If the ark is with us, the LORD will be with us, too.”

3

So they sent for the ark of the covenant, which was in the tabernacle at Shiloh. When the ark entered Israel’s camp, the Israelites shouted so loudly that the ground trembled. Hearing the deafening shouts, the Philistines exclaimed, “A god has come into the Israelites’ camp. We’re in trouble now. But don’t give up. We must be strong and fight!” The Philistines attacked again and won another mighty victory over Israel.

Meanwhile, old Eli was sitting along the road near Shiloh, anxiously awaiting news. A messenger with ragged clothes and dust covering his head ran into town. “I’ve come from the battlefield and have dreadful news,” he shouted. “Thirty thousand Israelites are dead, Hophni and Phinehas have been killed, and the Philistines have captured the ark!”

Jesus in the OT

What does a priest do? A priest makes sacrifices for sin. Samuel, as priest, offered a sacrifice for the people’s sin, and the LORD forgave them. What does Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross do for you?

Eli’s grief over his sons’ deaths was great, but to Eli the capture of the ark was the worst thing that could ever happen to Israel because it may have meant that the LORD’s presence was gone from Israel. Unable to bear this, Eli fell backwards from his chair and died! Phinehas’s wife was expecting a child. When she heard the news, she went into labor and had a son. In the last moments before she died, she named the baby Ichabod, meaning “the glory [of the LORD] has departed from Israel,” because her husband and father-in-law were dead and the ark was captured by the Philistines.

5

What was happening? Israel wasn’t supposed to lose battles. Wasn’t the LORD stronger than the gods of the Philistines? The problem was that the Israelites thought the ark was a magic box that would always bring them good fortune. They had forgotten that God was holy and desired holiness from His people. They thought that they could do whatever they wanted and that the



4 Although Eli had dishonored the LORD by allowing his sons to continue to defile the temple and the sacrifices, Eli still had a reverence for the LORD. In 1 Samuel 3:18, Eli expressed his belief in God’s goodness and humbly accepted God’s judgment upon him and his family. In 1 Samuel 4:12-18 Eli was waiting to hear news of the battle. He knew that taking the ark to the battlefield was not appropriate. He had a serious concern over the safety of the ark, and when he heard it was captured, he understood the spiritual significance of losing it. It was the news of the ark’s capture, not his sons’ deaths, that distressed him so greatly that he fell backwards off his chair and died.

5 This is the only mention of Phinehas’s wife, but it is a significant one. Like her father-in-law, Eli, she understood the dire spiritual consequences of losing the ark to a pagan nation. To her, the ark represented the glory of the LORD, and its absence meant that the LORD had also departed from Israel. This thought was too great for her to bear, and she died in sorrow and despair.

6 Israel’s defeat didn’t mean that the gods of the Philistines were stronger than the LORD. Instead, the LORD was using Israel’s defeat in battle as a means to get their attention and point out their sin. The Israelites had forgotten that God desired holiness from His people. Even the priests were dishonoring God through their sexual immorality and irreverence in the tabernacle. A holy God could not turn away and ignore such sin; He had to bring judgment on His disobedient people.

7 Dagon was a prominent god, not only in Philistia, but in surrounding nations. It was in the temple of Dagon that Samson had pushed down the temple pillars, causing the deaths of thousands of Philistines as well as his own. The word “Dagon” is associated with grain, and as such he was a fertility god. Putting the ark in Dagon’s temple was a way of trying to make Israel’s “god” subservient to the Philistines’ god. Even though the ark was not an idol to the Israelites, the Philistines understood the ark to be Israel’s god. The LORD showed His power over Dagon by causing the statue to fall down before the ark and eventually be destroyed.

Notes:

8 These events took place over the period of seven months (see 1 Samuel 6:1). The Philistines finally realized that the ark would bring disaster to whatever city it entered.

9 The Philistine leaders asked counsel of their own priests and men associated with witchcraft and sorcery. Even at this point, the Philistines were not totally certain that it was Israel's God who had brought the plagues upon them, but they no longer desired to have the ark with them. They sent a guilt offering back with the ark in order to pay honor to Israel's God. The five gold tumors and five gold rats represented the five primary cities in Philistia (Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, Gaza, and Ashkelon). The priests and sorcerers were wise enough to see a connection between their experience with the ark and the plagues in Egypt (see 1 Samuel 6:6). They were reluctant to harden their hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did.

10 This was a miracle from the LORD. Mother cows would not normally walk in a direction away from their calves. Also, these cows had never been yoked and would not easily subject themselves to a yoke the first time. The Philistines designed this plan so that there would be no doubt in their minds that the plagues upon them had been sent from Israel's "god." Throughout the entire journey back to Israel, the cows lowed mournfully because they wanted their calves, but the animals were driven by a power stronger than their own instincts—that of the LORD God of Israel.

11 When the Israelites saw the ark in the cart, they celebrated with a sacrifice. Some men showed irreverence to the ark and looked inside. God immediately killed them in response to their dishonor and disobedience (see 1 Samuel 6:19).

12 The ark remained at Abinadab's house. The Israelites did not immediately turn from their idolatry and worship the LORD. Twenty years passed, and the Philistines continued to be a problem for Israel. Finally, Israel called to the LORD for help. Samuel exhorted the people to turn from their idolatry and confess their sin. He assembled the people at Mizpah, and there the people fasted, confessed their sins, and sacrificed to the LORD. Now the people were sincerely repentant. The Philistines decided to take advantage of this gathering of Israelites, but when they tried to attack, the LORD brought confusion upon them and they fled. This time, the LORD delivered them from the Philistines because the people were crying out to Him with trusting, humble hearts.

13 The Ebenezer stone was a reminder to Israel of God's protection and care. For the next several years, the Israelites had few problems with the Philistines. Samuel continued to judge Israel until the time of his death many years later.

6 priests could dishonor the LORD in the tabernacle and God would still do whatever they asked Him to do. They had forgotten that the LORD blessed those who obeyed and brought judgment on those who disobeyed.

The Philistines put the ark beside the statue of Dagon inside Dagon's temple at Ashdod. (Dagon was one of the chief gods of the Philistines.) The next morning, Dagon was on the floor bowing before the ark. They put the idol back on its seat, but the next day it was on the ground again. This time its hands and head had broken off. **7**

At the same time, the LORD sent a plague of rats and tumors to the people at Ashdod. The people panicked and sent the ark to Gath and then to Ekron. Everywhere the ark went, the people got sick, and rats scurried through the fields, eating up the crops. The people cried out, "Send the ark back to Israel or it will kill all of us." **8**

The Philistines met with their own priests and sorcerers to devise a strategy to return the ark to Israel. "Put the ark on a new cart pulled by two cows who just had calves. Send a guilt offering of five gold tumors and five gold rats," their advisors said. "Then send the cart down the road toward Israel. If the cows pull the cart toward Israel, leaving their calves behind, we will know that it was the LORD that brought this disaster upon us." **9**

The Philistines did as they were advised, and the cows pulled the cart straight back to Israel, mooing in distress the whole way. The Israelites were harvesting wheat when they looked up and saw the cart with the ark beside a large rock. What a celebration they had! They chopped up the cart and killed the cows as a sacrifice to the LORD. They put the ark in Abinadab's house and asked Eleazar, his son, to guard it. **10**

For twenty years the ark remained there. All that time, the Philistines continued to harass Israel, and Israel worshipped idols. Finally the people called out to the LORD, and He called Samuel, the last judge, to deliver them. Samuel assembled the people at Mizpah to confess their sins and sacrifice to the LORD. The Philistines took this opportunity

to attack Israel again. This time was different, however. With a thunderous voice, the LORD brought confusion on the Philistines, and they fled. At that place, Samuel set up a memorial stone and called it Ebenezer, which means "thus far has the LORD helped us." Then Samuel ruled over Israel as judge for the rest of his life, and Israel had peace from their enemies. **12**



Review Worksheets

A. MEMORY VERSE: “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.” (Isaiah 46:9)

B. KEY FACTS: Use the words below to answer the questions. (Hint: One word is used twice.)

Shiloh Battlefield Dagon's temple Ashdod Gath Ekron Abinadab's house

1. Where was Dagon's temple located? Ashdod
2. Where did the ark stay for twenty years? Abinadab's house
3. Where was the tabernacle located? Shiloh
4. Where did the Philistines put the ark after they captured it? Dagon's temple
5. In what cities did the Philistines get tumors? Ashdod,
Gath, and Ekron
6. Where did the Israelites take the ark to give them good fortune? battlefield

Can you find Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, and Shiloh on Map 1?

C. STORY FACTS: Cross out the answer that is NOT correct.

1. When the Philistines heard the Israelites' loud shouts, they said, "_____".
Don't give up Be strong ~~Let's make a treaty.~~
2. Eli was sad when he heard the news of _____.
his sons' death the ark's capture ~~the plague of rats~~
3. The Israelites forgot that God was holy and _____.
judged sin desired holiness ~~changed the rules~~
4. The Philistines' plan to send the ark back to Israel included _____.
a new cart a guilt offering ~~two mother donkeys~~
5. When Samuel assembled the Israelites at Mizpah, the people _____.
~~sang songs~~ confessed sin sacrificed to the LORD

Notes:

Chapter 2: Samuel—The Last Judge

14 Other answers include:

- Made of silver and gold
- Have ears but do not hear
- Have noses but do not smell
- Have hands but “do not handle”
- Have feet but do not walk
- Do not “mutter through their throat”

Notes:

D. DO YOU KNOW THE REASON? Circle the statement that completes each sentence.

1. The Israelites moved the ark from Shiloh to the battlefield because _____.
 - a. they thought the ark would be safer there than at the tabernacle
 - b. they thought the ark would protect them from the Philistines**
 - c. God commanded them to move the ark
2. The Philistines defeated the Israelites in battle because _____.
 - a. the Philistines had a bigger and stronger army
 - b. the Philistines' god Dagon was mightier than Israel's God
 - c. the LORD was bringing judgment on Israel for their sin**
3. The Philistines sent the ark back to Israel because _____.
 - a. Israel threatened to burn up their wheat fields if they didn't
 - b. they thought the ark would kill all of them if they kept it**
 - c. they wanted to make peace with the Israelites

E. IMPORTANT NAMES TO REMEMBER...

1. I C H A B O D Means “the glory [of the LORD] has departed.”
2. E B E N E Z E R Means “thus far has the LORD helped us.”

F. FIND OUT...

Psalm 115 compares God, who is in heaven, with idols. Write down three things that Psalm 115 says about idols.

1. Made by the hands of man
 2. Have mouths but cannot speak
 3. Have eyes but cannot see

How is our God greater than idols?

God is all-powerful, and all of creation must submit to His will. Idols—manmade creations—have no power and cannot give true satisfaction or comfort.

Chapter 3

Saul—The First King

LESSON SCOPE: 1 Samuel 8–15

READ TO ME: 1 Samuel 8–12, 15

THEME: The LORD God anoints and removes the rulers of His people.

MEMORY VERSE:

- 1** “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22b)



KEY FACTS:

| Israel's Neighbors | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Nation | Founder of Nation | Famous Events | Israelite Defenders |
| Amalek | Amalek: grandson of Esau | Israel defeated Amalek at Rephidim in the wilderness. King Saul defeated King Agag. | Moses Saul |
| Ammon | Ben-Ammi: son of Lot and his second daughter | Jephthah defeated Ammon. Saul defeated Ammon and was accepted as king by Israel. | Jephthah Saul |
| Edom | Esau: son of Isaac | Israel could not pass through their land on the way to Canaan. | |
| Moab | Moab: son of Lot and his first daughter | King Balak of Moab asked Balaam to curse Israel. Ehud defeated King Eglon. | Moses Ehud |
| Philistia | Sea People from Aegean Sea | The Philistines captured Samson. They captured the ark, but returned it after they got sick. They threatened Saul with chariots. | Samson Samuel Saul |

Can you find these nations on map 1?

MESSAGE FROM THE KING: The King wants you to obey from your heart.

The LORD your King wants you to do the right thing for the right reason. What are some wrong reasons for doing the right thing? Why is obeying the LORD from the heart so important?

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 Through Samuel, the Lord was telling Saul that He preferred an inward attitude of love and obedience over outward acts of worship. Saul's sacrifice was an act of disobedience because he usurped the authority that God had given to Samuel as priest. He offered a sacrifice that he had no right to offer and thought that he was pleasing God by being religious. In a similar way, God is not pleased with us when we do religious acts (going to church, praying, reading the Bible, etc.) but have hearts that do not desire Him. The LORD wants us to heed His Word and obey Him.

2 Of the five nations described in the table on the **Memory Page**, four of them had some direct relationship to Abraham. Isaac, Abraham's son, had two sons, Jacob and Esau. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau (Edom was another name for Esau). Amalek, the founder of the Amalekites, was the grandson of Esau. The Moabites and the Ammonites were related to Abraham through Lot, Abraham's nephew. Lot had two daughters who escaped from Sodom and Gomorrah with him. The older daughter had a son named Moab, who fathered the Moabites, and the younger daughter's son, Ben-Ammi, was the founder of the Ammonites. The only nation listed on this table that did not directly descend from Abraham was the Philistines. These people were part of the Sea People who came from the island of Crete (called Caphtor in Scripture [see Amos 9:7]) in the Aegean Sea. As a result of a great disaster that devastated their homeland, the Sea People (or Philistines) traveled across the Mediterranean Sea to live in the coastal areas of Canaan prior to the time of Samuel and King Saul (approximately 1250 BC).

3 Obedience to the LORD requires doing the right thing for the right reason. If our motive is sinful, then our behavior does not glorify God, even though our action may be morally right. Godly motives come from a heart that wants to please God. Anytime we choose to act from a heart of self-centeredness or fear, we are not glorifying God (examples: sharing a toy to avoid a parent's displeasure, giving a gift so the person will like you, saying "I'm sorry" simply to avoid a more severe punishment). Obeying God from the heart is important because obeying God for any other reason is not God-honoring.

Notes:

Saul—The First King

- 4** Samuel was old, tired, and discouraged. He had judged Israel well over the years, but his sons were wicked men, and the elders of Israel were now demanding that a king rule over them.¹

Samuel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD answered, “It’s not you that the people are rejecting. They’re rejecting Me as their King. They are again forsaking Me and the covenant. Let them have a king, but warn them what a king will do when he rules over them.”¹

- 5**

Samuel spoke frankly to the people, “A king will take your sons and make them go to war in chariots. Some will be commanders over thousands, and others will harvest the king’s fields. A king will take your daughters to be bakers and cooks in his palace. He’ll take the best of your fields and olive groves, your faithful servants, and your flocks and livestock. You will have to pay high taxes, and you will be his slaves. Is this what you want?”² No matter what Samuel said, the people kept demanding, “We want a king like other nations to lead us and fight our battles.”

- 6**

One day a tall, handsome young Benjamite named Saul and his servant were out looking for his father’s lost donkeys. After many unsuccessful days, Saul was ready to give up and go home. “No, don’t stop now,” said his servant. “A prophet named Samuel lives in this town. He’s highly respected and what he says comes true. Let’s ask him.”

- 7**

The day before, the LORD had spoken to Samuel, “Tomorrow a man will come to visit you. Anoint him to be king in Israel.” Samuel met Saul, told him where the donkeys were, but more importantly, anointed Saul to be Israel’s first king. Saul said he was from the smallest tribe, Benjamin, and the smallest family in the tribe. He thought he was not important enough to be the king. But Samuel assured him, “The LORD has

- 8** chosen you to be king, and God will go with you.”³

Actually, Saul was anointed king three times. The first anointing happened privately at Samuel’s house. Sometime later, Samuel gathered the people

Jesus in the OT

Saul thought that because he was king he could do whatever he wanted. He forgot that God is the great King above all kings. In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is the King of kings.

4 Samuel’s sons were dishonest and they perverted justice. The elders of Israel used the wickedness of Samuel’s sons as a legitimate reason to demand a king. Also, the elders were weary of not having a central ruler over Israel to protect them from their enemies and to lead the nation. Having a king was not wrong, because the LORD had made provision for a king in the Mosaic law, but the elders wanted a king “like other nations.” They did not want to be a theocracy in which God was their supreme Ruler and the king ruled under His authority.

5 The LORD was making it very clear to Samuel that the people were rejecting Him, not Samuel and his leadership over the past twenty years. Israel’s problem was a spiritual one because the elders were refusing to accept God’s authority over them.

6 Samuel’s warning came true. David had armies and fought against Israel’s enemies (see 2 Samuel 8). Solomon amassed an army of chariots (see 1 Kings 4:26; 1 Kings 10:26-29). The number of people required to manage the royal household increased as Israel’s kings became wealthier and more prominent.

7 Even though Saul quickly turned away from the LORD, he was God’s choice for Israel’s first king. The LORD directly led Samuel to Saul so that there was no doubt as to whom the LORD had chosen.

8 If God chooses a person and equips him with His Spirit, the person is able to fulfill his role no matter what weaknesses or limitations the person might have. Saul came from the smallest clan in the smallest tribe, yet he was the one who the LORD had chosen. Samuel assured Saul that the Lord God would go with him.

9 After Saul was confirmed as king, Samuel gave his farewell speech to the people. He reminded them that he had not oppressed or cheated them in any way, and the people agreed with him. He summarized Israel’s history of disobedience and fickleness, and called them to commit themselves to serving the LORD. Finally, he rebuked them for their sinful motives in demanding a king and rejecting God as their King. When God responded to Samuel’s speech with thunder and lightning, the people stood in awe of God and of Samuel, His prophet. The people begged Samuel to pray that they remain faithful to the LORD, and Samuel responded with the well-known words, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23, NIV).

10 We don’t know why Samuel was late in arriving at the battlefield, but his delay caused Saul anxiety. Saul decided to presumptuously take the situation into his own hands instead of trusting the LORD. Saul allowed circumstances, not trust in the LORD, to dictate his actions. If Saul had been ruling as a theocratic king under God’s authority, he



together at Mizpah to anoint Saul publicly, but Saul was shy. He was hiding behind some baggage. The people found him, and Samuel anointed him in front of everyone. Then they shouted, “Long live the king!”

Some Israelites doubted that Saul was the right man to be king, but soon all doubts were gone. The Ammonites besieged Jabesh Gilead in Israel. When Saul heard the cruel terms of the Ammonites’ treaty, he was furious. God’s Spirit came upon him, and he led Israel in an attack upon the Ammonites, killing most of them and scattering the few who had survived. Now all the Israelites gladly accepted Saul as their king, and he was anointed the third time.

After Saul’s third anointing, Samuel made a farewell speech to the people, begging them to follow the LORD as their supreme King. The people repented of their sin in asking for a king and worshipping idols. They asked Samuel to pray for them.

9

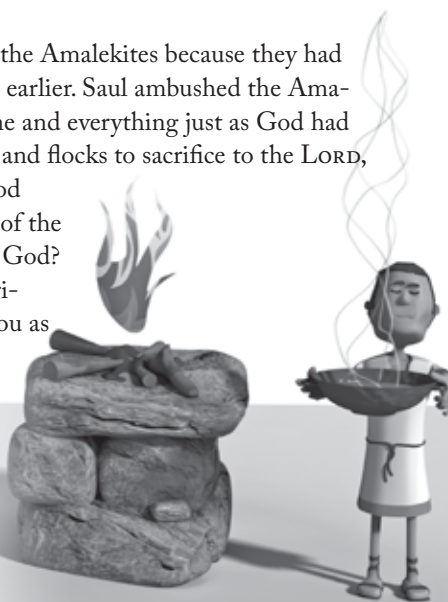
Saul was king about two years when he committed his first big sin against the LORD. The Philistines were threatening Israel with thousands of chariots and soldiers. Saul’s soldiers were hiding in caves and among the rocks, and Samuel had not arrived to offer the sacrifice asking for God’s help in battle. Instead of waiting for Samuel, Saul offered the sacrifice himself. Out of fear, Saul had acted foolishly. He was not a priest and had no right to offer sacrifices to the LORD. The consequence for Saul’s disobedience was severe: God decided to take the kingdom away from Saul and give it to a man with a godly heart!

10

Sometime later the LORD told Saul to attack the Amalekites because they had attacked Israel in the Sinai wilderness many years earlier. Saul ambushed the Amalekites and crushed their army, destroying everyone and everything just as God had commanded, except he took the best of the cattle and flocks to sacrifice to the LORD, and he didn’t kill Agag, the Amalekite king, as God had instructed! When Samuel heard the bleating of the sheep, he confronted Saul, “Why did you disobey God? Don’t you know that obedience is better than sacrifice? Because of your sin, the LORD has rejected you as king.”

11

Saul was not repentant of his disobedience. By his actions, Saul had shown that he didn’t want God to be the supreme King of Israel. The LORD was grieved that He had made Saul king, but there was no going back. Sadly, Samuel left Saul and that’s the last time Samuel ever saw Saul.

12
13

would have obeyed God and waited, even when his army appeared to be scattering and the situation seemed out of control. When we trust God, the situation is never really out of control, even though it may appear so to us. Saul’s sin in 1 Samuel 13 ended any hope that Saul would be the first of a dynasty of kings. The consequence of Saul’s sin was that the kingship would leave his family. Saul’s son, Jonathan, a man who pleased the LORD, would never be king because of his father’s sin. In 1 Samuel 16, God chose another man, David, to be the next king. From David would come a long line of kings, and eventually the Messiah would be born from his lineage.

11 Once again, Saul did not carry out God’s instructions. God had told Saul to destroy everything and everyone. Saul said he spared the animals to offer them as a sacrifice to the Lord. Saul did not give a reason why he spared Agag’s life. Clearly, Samuel was not fooled by Saul’s excuses and responded, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22b.) After being confronted by Samuel, Saul did admit to disobeying God, but he blamed the people for his sin. In disobeying God in this situation, Saul showed once again that he did not want to be a theocratic king who submitted himself to the supreme authority of God. Not only did he disobey God, but he also made excuses for his sin when found out, and evidenced no sign of a repentant heart. God’s consequence to Saul was severe, but just. By Saul’s disobedience in 1 Samuel 15, he lost the right to personally be king. Though he would sit on the throne for many more years until his untimely death, he had been rejected as king. In 1 Samuel 16, God anoints David to be the next king, even though he would not actually rule until nearly twenty years later.

12 Twice Saul said, “I have sinned,” but the genuineness of his repentance is questionable. In 1 Samuel 15:24 Saul admitted his sin, but immediately blamed the people for his actions. In 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul said he was sorry, but he seemed more interested in having the good opinion of the elders than in having God’s forgiveness.

13 God is omniscient and was not surprised by Saul’s disobedience. Saul was God’s choice to be Israel’s first king, and his disobedience did not thwart God’s plan. Rather, the disobedience that led to God’s rejection of Saul as king was part of God’s plan. Yet, at the same time, the Lord was sincerely grieved by Saul’s disobedience.

Notes:

Notes:

Review Worksheets

A. MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22b)

B. KEY FACTS: Use the table on the Memory Page to answer the questions. The words can be used more than once.

Amalekites Ammonites Moabites Philistines

1. The nation that Israel defeated in the wilderness: Amalekites
2. The nation that captured Samson and took away his strength: Philistines
3. The nation that Jephthah fought and defeated: Ammonites
4. The nation that captured the ark in battle: Philistines
5. The nation ruled by King Eglon: Moabites
6. The nation that came to Canaan from across the sea: Philistines

C. STORY FACTS: Fill in the blanks.

1. The elders of Israel were demanding that God give them a king.
2. Saul was looking for his father's donkeys when Samuel anointed him to be Israel's king.
3. Saul was anointed as king three times by Samuel.
4. After the battle with the Amalekites, Saul refused to destroy two things:
King Agag and best of cattle and flocks.
5. Saul was not allowed to make sacrifices because he was not a priest.
6. Agag was the king of the Amalekites.

D. WHAT'S TRUE AND WHAT'S NOT?

Circle "T" if the sentence is true. Circle "F" if the sentence is false.

- | | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| 1. The people were rejecting Samuel when they demanded a king. | T | F |
| 2. Saul disobeyed God when he offered a sacrifice. | T | F |
| 3. The LORD was grieved that He made Saul the king. | T | F |
| 4. Saul thought he was not important enough to be a king. | T | F |

E. WHAT WOULD A KING BE LIKE? Write three things that God said a king would do if he ruled over Israel.

1. Take sons to go to war
2. Take daughters to cook and bake in his palace
3. Take the best of their fields, servants, and flocks

F. DO YOU KNOW THE ANSWER? Put the answers in the spaces on the left. Then use the boxed letters to find the answer to the question below.

M O A B Eglon was king of _____.

E D O M Esau was founder of _____.

K I N G The people demanded to have a _____.

W I C K E D Eli's sons were _____.

D O N K E Y S Saul was looking for _____.

C H A R I O T S The Philistines had thousands of ____.

T H R E E Saul was anointed _____ times.

What does the LORD say is better than sacrifice?

O B E D I E N C E

G. FIND OUT...

You can obey God with good motives or with selfish ones. In John 14:15, Jesus gives you a good motive for obeying him. What does He say?

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Notes:

[illegible]