

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

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A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON ONE:
Israel Demands
a King

LESSON TEXTS:
1 Samuel 8-10

LIKE THE NATIONS

The human animal is basically a herd animal. We spend a lot of time governing our behavior by what others do around us. Everything from the clothes we wear to the movies we watch is influenced by what others say to us through words and actions.

However, even though following the herd can be innocuous or even useful at times, in our dealings with the things of the spirit, it is often deadly.

We see a sad example of this in the story of Israel's search for a king. Their motivation is both simple and clear: they wanted a king because the nations around them had a king. It didn't matter to them that God had set up a different system. They wanted to be like everybody else.

Today, we can fall prey to me-tooism just as easily. The sects and denominations around us do many things that appear attractive. Since the beginning, Christians have been led astray by these evil examples. We must guard our conduct instead, so that we conform ourselves not to the pattern of the world, but to the pattern of the word. We won't be like others, but we'll be pleasing to God.

1 SAMUEL 8

1. What happens to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8:1? According to 8:1-2, what solution does Samuel come up with for this? In 8:3, what problem does this create? What can Christian parents learn from this today?

2. According to 8:4-5, how does Israel feel about Samuel's sons? What solution do they propose? What does this tell us about the harm that failing to carry out God's will in the church can cause?

3. How does Samuel react to this in 8:6? Why would their words have had this effect? What does he do about it? What can we learn from his example?

4. What does God tell Samuel to do in 8:7? According to His words in 8:7-8, what's really going on here? How is Samuel to address the people in 8:9? What does this tell us about changing any part of His plan today?

5. What does Samuel do in 8:10? Summarize the warning he gives in 8:11-18? Did all of this happen? Were the kings who did these things even necessarily the bad kings? What should we take from this?

6. How do the people respond to Samuel's warning in 8:19? What reasons do they give in 8:20? Are there times today when we are tempted to be like the nations around us? When? How should we handle those times?

7. What does Samuel do in 8:21? What result does this have in 8:22? Will God keep us from evil or destructive desires today? What does this teach us?

1 SAMUEL 9-10

8. Whom do we meet in 9:1? In 9:1-2, how is he described? What is he doing in 9:3-4? Is he succeeding in this? What likely reason is there for this? Can we have similar experiences today?
9. According to 9:5, what concern does Saul develop? What does his servant suggest in 9:6? What result does this have in 9:9-10?
10. Meanwhile, what does God say to Samuel in 9:15-17? In 9:19-20, what does Samuel do about it? According to 9:21, how does Saul react? What does this tell us about Saul's frame of mind?

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REVIEW TWO

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11. What does Samuel ask of Saul in 9:27? In 10:1, what does he use this opportunity to do? What does he say will happen in 10:2-6? According to 10:7, what will this prove? Why would such an elaborate reassurance have been necessary?

12. According to 10:9, what is the result of this prophecy? What happens to Saul in 10:10? Judging from 10:11-12, was this a usual occurrence? What importance does this event have?

13. What does Samuel do in 10:17-19? Why? In 10:20-21, how does the process work? According to 10:21, who is selected? In 10:21-22, what difficulty raises its head at this point? What does this show us about Saul?

14. According to 10:23, how does Saul appear once he is finally brought forth? What does Samuel say about him in 10:24? How do the people react to all this? What can we learn from this about the value of appearances?

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LESSON TWO: Saul's Failure and David's Anointing

LESSON TEXTS:
1 Samuel 13, 15
1 Samuel 16

OBEDIENCE

One of the great tragedies of our society is its commonly held conception of God. According to this way of thinking, God is much more concerned about why we do rather than what we do. We can worship at the church of our choice, adhere to whatever moral code we please, but as long as we are sincere in our behavior, God is going to be happy.

It is certainly true that the heart matters to God. We can't hope to please Him just by going to the motions. However, God requires not only a sincere heart, but also obedience. Saul proves this point, much to his own sorrow, in 1 Samuel 15. God told him to kill all the Amalekites' livestock. Saul spared the best of it, and when Samuel pressed him on the point, he claimed it was so that he could sacrifice the best to God. Surely God couldn't be displeased with such a sincere desire to worship, could he?

As Samuel says, though, in the eyes of God, obedience is better than sacrifices. We can be as sincere as possible. We can devote our lives to things that we think will please Him. However, unless our works are works of obedience, they are a stench in His nostrils.

1 SAMUEL 13, 15

1. What political change is described in 1 Samuel 13:4? In 13:5, how is the Philistine army described? In 13:6-7, how does Israel react to this problem? What should we take from this?

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2.

3.

4.

5.

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LESSON THIRTEEN: Review

THREE KINGS

If the history of Israel can be said to have a high point, the united kingdom is probably it. During that time, the nation reached unprecedented levels of power and wealth, levels it would never see again.

However, even during this period of splendor, Israel was constantly put in danger by the sins of its kings, even the good ones. Saul was never willing to trust in the Lord when times

were at their worst, and his faithlessness cost him his kingdom and his life. David dealt too gently with his own family, and he was too ready to follow the desires of his eyes, and his foolishness filled the latter part of his reign with bloodshed. Solomon was seduced by his wives into adultery, which cost his son the northern ten tribes.

Even if we are living according to God's will today, even if we are at a spiritual high point, we need to recognize that sin can have the same effect on us. Just like Saul, David, and Solomon did, we all have our weaknesses, and Satan can manipulate them to our destruction too. We can only guard against him by knowing our weaknesses too, and by doing what we must to protect them from him.

For each lesson number below, summarize the events it covers, and give the main spiritual lessons we can learn from it.

REVIEW ONE

1.

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2. What do we find Saul doing in 13:8? What result does this have? What does he decide to do in 13:9? Can we also find ourselves in situations where obedience is difficult? What should we do then?
3. According to 13:10, what happens just as soon as Saul offers the sacrifice? How does Saul explain himself in 13:11-12? What is Samuel's reply to this in 13:13? According to 13:14, what final result does this have? What does this tell us about God's opinion of situational ethics?
4. What command does God give to Saul in 15:1-3? What part of this does Saul do in 13:4-8? According to 13:9, what part does Saul not do? Are we ever tempted to pick and choose among God's commandments? When?
5. What results from Saul's decision, according to 15:10-12? What does Saul claim in 15:13? What is Samuel's reply in 15:14? What can we learn from this about false claims of righteousness today?
6. What other two excuses does Saul offer in 15:15-21? What does Samuel think of these excuses? What does this tell us about God's opinion of our excuses?

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7. What judgment does Samuel pronounce in 15:22-23? What response does Saul make in 15:24-25? How does Samuel answer him in 15:26? What results from this in 15:27? What final judgment is pronounced in 15:28-29? Why didn't God accept Saul's repentance? What does this teach us?

1 SAMUEL 9-10

8. What happens in 15:34? What two results are ascribed to this in 15:35? How do we reconcile this description of God with 15:29?
9. What does God say to Samuel in 16:1? What does this mean for Saul? What does it tell us about God?
10. What problem does Samuel bring up in 16:2? How does God answer him in 16:2-3? According to 16:4-5, how does this work out? How does God's answer here differ from the deceit that the Bible tells us He hates?

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11. Who appears in 1 Kings 10:1? What does she want to do? What happens in the testing process in 10:2-3? How does she react to Solomon and his wealth, according to 10:4-10?
12. What do we see Solomon doing in 11:1? In 11:2, what problem does this cause? What is the result of this in 11:3-8? What warning is there in this for us?
13. How does God react to Solomon's disobedience in 11:9-10? Why? According to 11:11-13, what does He say is going to happen? What does this teach us about our priorities?
14. Who starts appearing in 11:14-40? Who are they? What promise does Jeroboam receive in 11:29-31? What does Solomon do about this in 11:40? How does it work out? What does this tell us about God?

7. According to 7:1, what is the result of Solomon's prayer? In 7:2-3, what effect does this have on the people? How do they celebrate in 7:4-9? What happens in 7:10? Why is this a bittersweet moment in the history of Israel?

1 KINGS 9-11

8. In 1 Kings 9:1-2, what happens after Solomon's building projects are completed? What does God say He has done in 9:3? What does He ask of Solomon in 9:4? What does He promise in 9:5? What does this reveal about God?
9. What warning does God give in 9:6? In 9:7, what does He say will happen if this warning is ignored? According to 9:8-9, what lesson will this teach? What should we learn today from what did happen?
10. Summarize the greatness of Solomon as it is presented in 9:10-26, 10:14-29. Where in this description do we see trouble beginning? Deuteronomy 17:14-17 may help. What warning does this give us about prosperity?

11. When Samuel meets Jesse's firstborn son in 16:6, how does he react to him? What does God tell Samuel about him in 16:7? What should we learn from this?
12. What happens to sons 2-7 in 16:8-10? What does Samuel find out in 16:11? Who is this son? According to 16:12-13, what happens when he appears? Why is this important?
13. What happens to Saul in 16:14? What solution is proposed in 16:15-16? According to 16:17, how does Saul react to this? What are we to make of the source of Saul's affliction?
14. Who is suggested in 16:18? What happens in 16:19-20? What results from this in 16:21-23? How do we reconcile this with Saul's apparent unfamiliarity with David in 17:58?

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LESSON THREE:

David and Goliath
Saul's Hatred

LESSON TEXTS:

1 Samuel 17-19

ENVY

There are few sins that are both as emotionally enticing and as logically absurd as envy. We all know what envy is like. We all have experienced that stab of anger and resentment when we encounter someone who is prettier or smarter or more successful than we are.

This bitterness is no less intense for its groundlessness. The subject of our envy has done nothing wrong.

It's not their fault they've been gifted. They haven't actually lessened us in any way. They just make us feel lessened. We have boasted in ourselves, and they prove our boasting is misplaced.

Envy in all its wretchedness and ugliness is clearly displayed in the life of Saul. Saul was king of Israel, the chosen leader of God's people, and David was just a jumped-up shepherd boy. Not only that, but David was also fiercely loyal and a deadly foe to Saul's enemies. Nonetheless, Saul envied, and it eventually ruined him. Envy can be just as disastrous for us today, and the only way we can guard against it is by checking our pride at the door. It will plague us whenever we trust in ourselves, but it will flee when we trust in God.

1 SAMUEL 17

1. Describe the situation in 1 Samuel 17:1-3. Who appears here in 17:4-7? What is he like? According to 17:8-10, what does he want? What effect does he have in 17:11? How is he like many of Satan's tools today?

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2. Briefly describe the temple and its furnishings as they are depicted in 2 Chronicles 3-4. What overall impression does this depiction make on us? Why did God want things done this way? What should it teach us today?
3. What is Solomon doing in 5:2? Describe the preparations and participation in 5:3-12. What is the result of this, according to 5:13-14? How can we learn from this example today?
4. What contrast does Solomon bring up in 6:1-2? How does he explain this in 6:4-9? In 6:10-11, what actions of God does he focus on? Why are these significant to him and to us?
5. What does Solomon do in 6:12-13? How does he describe God in 6:14-15? What does he ask of God in 6:16-17? What conditions for this does he mention? Why is this important to understand?
6. What irony does Solomon point out in 6:18? According to 6:19-21, what does God's dwelling in the temple actually mean? Why is this doctrinally relevant today?

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LESSON TWELVE: Solomon's Glory and Failure

LESSON TEXTS: 2 Chronicles 2-7 1 Kings 10-11

WHERE SIN LEADS

When we consider the situation of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, wholly dedicated to the Lord, blessed with every physical blessing, and gifted with supernatural wisdom, it seems incredible that such a man could fall. However, that's exactly what Solomon did. He married foreign wife after foreign wife, and they turned his heart away from God. The same man who oversaw the building of the temple finished his life

constructing shrines to Ashtoreth and Molech. The consequences of his sin tore apart his kingdom and doomed Israel to spiritual failure.

Solomon never had that end in mind. He never thought when he married Pharaoh's daughter that he would endanger his soul because of it. However, bit by bit, that's where his sin took him. Our sin can take us to the same place today, regardless of where we start out. I know of elders whose adultery led them to leave the church entirely. Satan can destroy the most righteous Christian the same way he destroyed Solomon: bit by bit, little by little, until what used to be unthinkable is now desirable. The only way for us to keep from the devastating conclusion of sin is by never beginning it.

2 CHRONICLES 2-7

1. How does 2 Chronicles 2:1 describe Solomon's purpose? Summarize the preparations he makes to fulfill this purpose in 2:2-18. What's the scale of all this? What do we learn from this about Solomon's attitude toward God?

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2. What do we see David doing in 17:20-22? What does David see in 17:23-24? What does he ask in 17:26? What appears to be David's biggest concern? How can we learn to share his priorities?
3. What happens in 17:31? What does David say in 17:32? According to 17:33, how does Saul reply to this? What response does David give in 17:34-37? How does David's statement seem very naïve? How is it actually very wise?
4. What does Saul do for David in 17:38? According to 17:39, what result does this have? In 17:40, what does David do instead? What can we learn from this about using man's wisdom to do God's work?
5. According to 17:42, what is Goliath's first impression of David? What does he say to him in 17:43-44? What response does David make in 17:45-47? What does David understand that Goliath doesn't? What difference does this make to us today?
6. What happens in 17:48? How does David react to it? What does David do in 17:49? What happens? What does this teach us?

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7. What does David do in 17:50-51? How do the Philistines react to this? In 17:52-53, how do the Israelites react? What does this teach us about the potential effects of one man's stand for righteousness?

1 SAMUEL 18-19

8. What happens in 1 Samuel 18:6-7? How does Saul react to this in 18:8-9? What results from this in 18:10-11? What does this teach us about the poisonousness of envy?
9. According to 18:12, what other emotion does Saul feel? Why? What solution does he come up with in 18:13? What result does this have in 18:14? According to 18:15-16, what effect does this have on the minds of others? What does this tell us about the likely result of attempts to undermine the excellent?
10. What happens in 18:20? According to 18:21, how does Saul see this? What does he propose in 18:21-25? What result does this have in 18:26-27? In 18:28-29, what is the ultimate outcome? What here does Saul continue to fail to understand?

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11. In 3:15, what does Solomon do about his dream? Who appears in 3:16? What situation do they describe in 3:17-22? How obvious is the solution to this problem? Why?
12. What does Solomon propose in 3:24-25? In 3:26, what reactions does this generate? What does Solomon say about it in 3:27? How does Israel take this in 3:28? Is their reaction justified? If so, why?
13. How is the situation summarized in 4:20-21? How is Solomon's situation described in 4:22-24? What is Israel's situation in 4:25-28? Why has all this happened? What does it teach us?
14. How is Solomon described in 4:29-31? According to 4:32-33, what different things does he understand? In 4:34, what reaction does his wisdom generate? What does Solomon's example teach us about the greatness and limitations of human wisdom?

7. What three enemies of Solomon and David appear in 2:26-46? What happens to each one? What is the ultimate result of this? What does this tell us about Israel at this time?

1 KINGS 3-4

8. What does Solomon do in 1 Kings 3:1? What do we see his people doing in 3:2? Why? What seeds of trouble is this sowing for the future?
9. What do we see Solomon doing in 3:3-4? What happens in 3:5? What does Solomon say in 3:6-9? What does this reveal about Solomon? What can we learn from his example today?
10. According to 3:10, what is God's attitude toward Solomon's request? How does He respond to it in 3:11-12? Why? What does He additionally give in 3:13? What promise does He make in 3:14? What can we learn from this about God today?

11. What attitudes toward David do we learn about in 19:1? What does Jonathan propose to David in 19:2-3? What does Jonathan say in 19:4-5? According to 19:6-7, what result does this have? What can we learn from Jonathan about standing up for what's right, even when it's unpopular?
12. What happens in 19:8? According to 19:9-10, how does Saul react? What does David do about it? What does this tell us about Saul? How culpable is he for his own actions here?
13. What does Saul do in 19:11? Who protects David from him in 19:11-14? How? What's the ultimate result in 19:16-17? What does this tell us about what we must do if we are ever torn between God and family?
14. Where does David go in 19:18? What does Saul do about it in 19:19-21? What result does this have? How does Saul respond in 19:22-23? In 19:23-24, in what does this result? What does this tell us about what God thinks of Saul's vendetta against David?

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LESSON FOUR:

David and the
Holy Bread
David Spares Saul

LESSON TEXTS:

1 Samuel 21-22
1 Samuel 24

VENGEANCE

Few indeed are the political leaders who have ever had as sparkling an opportunity to destroy their adversaries as David did when Saul entered the cave where he was hiding. David could have ended the biggest threat to his life with a single swipe of his sword. However, David, in a unique display of mercy, allowed Saul to emerge from the cave unharmed.

David didn't do this because he had read Romans 12 a thousand years before Paul wrote it. Instead, his inaction was based on his assessment of God's power and willingness to judge. He believed that Saul was pursuing him unjustly, and he trusted sooner or later, God would vindicate him. On the other hand, if he struck down the Lord's anointed, then God's anger would burn against him instead of Saul.

As we deal with our enemies today, we need to take the same kind of long view. God will inevitably strike down the wicked. That includes those who persecute us, but if we do evil to defend ourselves, it includes us as well. Our enemies, no matter who they are, cannot truly harm us, but God can. We protect ourselves by obeying Him.

1 SAMUEL 21-22

1. Whom does David see in 1 Samuel 21:1? What is his attitude? What does he ask David? In 21:2, what reply does David make? Is this true? What does it tell us about David?

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2. Whom do we meet in 1 Kings 1:5? What does he do? According to 1:7, what allies does he accumulate? According to 1:8, whom has he not won over? What does he do in 1:9-10? What does this teach us about the political situation in the time of David?
3. What does Nathan say to Bathsheba about Adonijah in 1:11-14? What result does this have in 1:28-31? What plan is developed and carried out in 1:32-37? Why is this significant?
4. What happens in 1:41-48? According to 1:49, how do Adonijah's guests take the news? What does Adonijah do about it in 1:50-51? What results from this in 1:52-53? In spiritual terms, what's really going on here? Why is this understanding important?
5. What expected final instruction does David give Solomon in 2:1-4? What unexpected final instructions does he give in 2:5-9? What do both of these things tell us about David?
6. What does Adonijah ask Bathsheba for in 2:13-18? According to 2:22-24, how does Solomon handle Bathsheba's request? What happens to Adonijah in 2:25? Why does Solomon react in this way?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON ELEVEN: Solomon as King

LESSON TEXTS: 1 Kings 1-4

WHAT WE ASK FOR

Most people who have been Christians for a while are familiar with the story of Solomon's request of God. God comes to him in a dream and asks him what he wants. Instead of asking for riches or long life, Solomon asks for wisdom. God is so pleased with Solomon's reply that He grants him not just wisdom, but all the blessings he didn't ask for too.

We applaud Solomon for his wisdom and spiritual-mindedness, but we rarely consider the application to ourselves. God is most likely not going to come to us in a dream and offer us whatever we want, but our prayer lives right now show our priorities. What are the things we pray for? Do we primarily focus on physical blessings for ourselves and our families? Or are our prayers requests for spiritual blessings, like Solomon's was?

If we're mostly concerned with the physical, we're wasting what our prayers can be. Just like Solomon's prayer for wisdom brought him riches and long life, our prayers for spiritual blessing will benefit our material lives as well. Godliness is useful both in this life and in the life to come. Like Solomon, let's seek first for God's greatest gifts.

1 KINGS 1-2

1. What is David's situation in 1 Kings 1:1? What suggestion do his servants make about this, according to 1:2? How is the problem eventually addressed in 1:3-4?

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2. What does David ask for in 21:3? What reply does Ahimelech make in 21:4? Was this a correct response? Consider Leviticus 24:8-9 in your answer. How does David reply in 1 Samuel 21:5? What result does this have in 21:6? How should we take this?
3. What does David do in 21:10? What reaction does this cause, according to 21:11? How does David react in 21:12-13? In 21:14-15, what is the outcome? What does this teach us about the precariousness of David's existence at this time?
4. What does David do in 22:1? Who joins with him, according to 21:1-2? What does this tell us about David's current social status?
5. What is Saul doing in 22:6 when he hears about David? What does he sarcastically ask in 22:7-8? What attitude does he attribute to his servants? What response does this generate in 22:9-10? Will others today attempt to manipulate us into evil? How can we recognize it? How should we react?
6. How does Saul react to this news in 22:11? What does he ask in 22:12-13? How does Ahimelech answer him in 22:14-15? What does Saul decree anyway in 22:16? What does this teach us about what kind of a man Saul is at this point?

7. What does Saul ask in 22:17? What results from this? What does he ask in 22:18-19? What results from it this time? According to 22:20, who escapes? In 22:22-23, how does David receive him? Why? How does this illustrate the difference between Saul and David?

1 SAMUEL 24

8. What does Saul learn in 1 Samuel 24:1? In 24:2, what does he do about it? What situation arises in 24:3? What does this teach us about the futility of plotting against God?
9. What do David's men say to him in 24:4? What does David do about it? According to 24:5, what eventual impact does this have on him? What can we learn from this about the problem with associating with evil companions?
10. What does David say in 24:6? What is the outcome of this in 24:7? What can we learn from David here about being righteous even in disadvantageous circumstances?

11. What does David ask in 29:5? What results from this in 29:6-8? How do the people react to this in 29:9? What can we learn from this about our giving today?
12. What does David do in response in 29:10? How does he describe God in 29:10-13? How should this shape our understanding of God today?
13. How does David describe himself and the people in 29:14-15? Where does he say that all the wealth they have given to the temple came from in 29:16? What does this teach us about our prosperity today?
14. How does David describe God in 29:17? What does he pray for in 29:18-19? What does this teach us about the importance of maintaining our purpose today? What can we do to hold fast to our commitment?

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7. What does David ask in 20:4? According to 20:5, how well does this work? What does Joab do to Amasa in 20:8-10? What does this teach us about politics in David's royal court?

1 CHRONICLES 28-29

8. What does David do in 1 Chronicles 28:1? How does he describe his intentions in 28:2? What problem presents itself in 28:3? What does this tell us about our desires to serve God in some particular way?
9. How does David describe God's decision in 28:5-6? What promise does God make in 28:7? What does David ask of the people in 28:8? What can we learn from this about the influence of our righteousness on others?
10. What does David command Solomon to do in 28:9? Why? What two alternatives does he lay out? What final injunction does he give in 28:10? What can we learn from this about our relationship with God?

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11. What does David do in 24:8? What does he ask in 24:9? How does he establish his goodwill in 24:10-11? What can we learn from this about the difference between taking righteous and unrighteous advantage of an opportunity?
12. What does David say in 24:12? How does he explain this position in 24:13? According to 24:15, what does he hope will happen? What do we learn from this about David's heart and the righteousness of taking our own revenge today?
13. How does Saul react to David's words in 24:16? How does he describe David's actions in 24:17-18? What does he do in 24:19? At this point, do we believe that Saul has had a permanent change of heart? What can we learn from him about both the potential benefits and limits of returning good for evil?
14. What does Saul say in 24:20? What does he ask David to do in 24:21? What result does this have in 24:22? How does this give us insight into what's going on in Saul's mind?

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LESSON FIVE:

David and Abigail
The Death of Saul

LESSON TEXTS:

1 Samuel 25

1 Samuel 28

1 Chronicles 10

WHY SAUL FAILED

Saul is certainly one of the most tragic figures of the Old Testament. He had no intention of becoming king until Samuel sought him out, he never worshiped idols, and he spent his reign fighting, usually successfully, against the enemies of Israel. Despite this, God struck him down, and his life is recorded as a failure.

Despite all of Saul's virtues, from beginning to end, he was undone by one fatal flaw: when the chips were down, he lacked faith. He didn't believe that God could help him be a successful king in the first place. He didn't believe that if he waited for Samuel to offer the sacrifice, God would protect him. He didn't believe that God meant what He said when He told him to kill all the Amalekites' livestock. Finally, he didn't believe that God would shelter him if he fought without consulting the witch of En-dor first.

We can be basically "good" people, but suffer from the same fatal flaw. We can serve God when it's easy and convenient, yet be enticed into sin when times are hard. The sad truth is that if we desert God in those times, in His eyes, we never served Him at all.

1 SAMUEL 25

1. Where does David go in 1 Samuel 25:1? What married couple do we meet in 25:2-3? What are they like? Do we still see married couples like this today? What does this teach us about the limits of our influence?

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2. What happens to Absalom in 18:9? What dialogue ensues in 18:10-13? In 18:14-15, what eventually happens? How does this further illuminate the character of Joab?
3. Who shows up in 18:31? What does he reveal? What does David ask in 18:32? What answer does he get? How does David react in 18:33? What are we to make of this?
4. What does Joab learn in 19:1-4? What does he do in 19:5-7? What does David do in consequence in 19:8? Was Joab right to do what he did? When should we act like Joab today?
5. What is the situation of Israel in 19:9-10? How does David handle things in 19:11-12? What new appointment does he make in 19:13? Who was the old commander of the army? Based on previous experience, what is the life expectancy of the new commander? In 19:14-15, what is the immediate result of all this?
6. Who shows up in 19:16? What does he do in 19:18-20? What counsel does David receive about him in 19:21? What does David actually do in 19:22-23? What can we learn from David about forgiveness?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON TEN:

Absalom's Fall
Preparing for the
Temple

LESSON TEXTS:

2 Samuel 18-20
1 Chronicles 28-29

A WHOLE HEART

Even after the blood and horror of Absalom's rebellion and its fallout, the reign of David ends on a high note, with the preparations for Solomon's construction of the temple. David himself donates a mindboggling amount of wealth to the project, but his contribution is matched by that of the people. Instead of being forced to give by David, they freely give an immense amount.

This massive offering is all the more impressive when we consider the situation of the people. Israel at this time had a subsistence economy. Most of its people were herders and farmers whose financial situation was so precarious that it could be ruined by a single bad harvest. Even the rich were no better off than the average American today. Yet these people gave in overwhelming measure.

By comparison, we are a blessed people. We live in unimaginable luxury, yet too often we choose to use our riches on ourselves rather than giving them back to God. Instead of devoting our whole hearts to God, we devote part to God and part to a new car or a new TV. We can do better. Let's give as freely as David and his people did.

2 SAMUEL 18-20

1. What does Absalom's delay allow David to do in 2 Samuel 18:1? What orders does he give in 18:5? What is the result of the battle, according to 18:6-8? What do we learn from this about David?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON FIVE

2. In 25:4-8, what does David send men to ask? What justification does he offer? What reply does Nabal give him in 25:9-11? According to 25:13, how does David take this? What can we learn from Nabal's conduct?
3. How does Nabal's servant describe the situation in 25:14-16? According to him, who is in the right? What does he urge Abigail to do in 25:17? What does this teach us about our dealings with unrighteous family members?
4. What does Abigail do in 25:18-20? What does David say in 25:21-22 that shows the necessity of her action? What do Abigail's actions tell us about the way that we should make peace when necessary today?
5. To whom does Abigail attribute guilt in 25:24-25? Why? What does she say she wants in 25:26-28? How does she explain her attitude toward David in 25:28-29? In 25:30-31, how does she say David will benefit by listening? What can we learn from her about the art of persuasion?
6. According to 25:32, what does David think of Abigail? What results from her words in 25:33-34? What does David decide to do in 25:35? What can we learn from his actions here?

7. In 25:36, how does Abigail initially treat Nabal? What happens to him when she does tell him in 25:37-38? How does David react to the news in 25:39? What eventually comes of this in 25:40-41? What can we learn from the wisdom of David here?

1 SAMUEL 28; 1 CHRONICLES 10

8. In 1 Samuel 28:1, 4, what do the Philistines do? In the meantime what has happened in Israel, according to 28:3? How does Saul react to the Philistines in 28:5? How does the situation look for Israel?
9. In response, what does Saul do in 28:6? What result? What next step does he take in 28:7? What does he learn? How is Saul's conduct here similar to his previous mistakes?
10. In 28:8, what does Saul do? How does the woman react in 28:9? What does Saul promise in 28:10? What does he ask? What happens in 28:11-15? What does this tell us about both Saul and the medium?

11. What does David learn in 15:31? What does he pray? How is his prayer answered in 15:32-34? What can we take from this about God's providence?
12. Whom do we meet in 16:1? According to 16:3, what does he claim has occurred? Who else shows up in 16:5? In 16:6-8, what does he do? What does this tell us about the political climate of the time?
13. What does Absalom do in 16:20? What does Ahithophel counsel him to do in 16:21? Why? What results from this in 16:22? How is this a fulfillment of prophecy?
14. What does Ahithophel counsel in 17:1-4? What opposing counsel does Hushai offer in 17:5-13? According to 17:14, to whom does Absalom listen? What does Ahithophel do about this in 17:23? Why? What can we learn from this episode?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON NINE

7. What is Absalom's situation in 14:28? Whom does he want to help him, according to 14:29? What initially comes of this? What does Absalom do about this in 14:30-32? What finally happens in 14:33? What does this teach us about Absalom?

2 SAMUEL 15-17

8. What does Absalom do in 2 Samuel 15:1? According to 15:2-3, how does he interact with the people? How does 15:4-6 explain his purpose? What more does this reveal about Absalom?
9. What does Absalom ask David for in 15:7-8? According to 15:9, does David give him what he wants? What does he use this to do in 15:10-12? How is this a fulfillment of prophecy?
10. What does David learn in 15:13? What does he decide to do in 15:14? In 15:15-17, what comes of this? What does his situation teach us about earthly power and prosperity?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON FIVE

11. What does Samuel ask in 28:15? What reply does Saul give? How does Samuel answer Saul in 28:16-19? In 28:20, how does Saul take the news? What can we learn from this about the consequences of sin?
12. What happens in 1 Chronicles 10:1? According to 10:2-3, what are the results of this for Saul and his family? What does Saul do in 10:4? According to 10:6-7, what is the outcome for Saul, his family, and for all of Israel?
13. What do the Philistines do to Saul and his sons in 10:8-10? How do the men of Jabesh handle this in 10:11-12? How do the fortunes of Israel look here? In reality, though, is Israel better off or worse off without Saul? What does this teach us?
14. How does 10:13-14 explain Saul's death? What was Saul's basic problem? How can we avoid it today?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON SIX: David Becomes King

LESSON TEXTS: 2 Samuel 2-5

SONS OF ZERUIAH

David was a good king, perhaps the greatest that Israel ever had, but he was not a perfect king. Throughout his reign, he was dogged by some persistent problems, and one of them was the problem of Joab and Abishai, the bloodthirsty sons of Zeruiah.

Zeruiah was David's sister, so Joab and Abishai were his nephews. Throughout his life, they acted with heartless expediency to preserve

both his power and their own. They never found a problem they couldn't solve with a sword. When Abner and then Amasa were set over the army of Israel instead of Joab, Joab killed them both. When David had Saul at his mercy, Abishai urged him to kill his king. When Shimei cursed David, Abishai asked to kill Shimei. Twice. And so on. They were murderers and scoundrels, but because of their family relationship with him, David kept them near him.

It's easy for us to make a similar mistake today. Just because someone is our blood doesn't mean that we should listen to them, and many Christians have been led astray by their families. We must take care, lest our families become sons of Zeruiah to us.

2 SAMUEL 2-3

1. What does David ask of God in 2 Samuel 2:1? What answer does he get? What does he do in 2:2-3? In 2:4, what results from this? How do we reconcile this anointing with Samuel's much earlier anointing of David?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON NINE

2. What other character do we meet in 13:3? What does he learn in 13:4? What does he advise Amnon to do in 13:5? According to 13:6, what does Amnon do about it? Are there people like Jonadab today? How can we watch out for them?
3. How does Jonadab's plan progress in 13:7-10? What does Amnon do in 13:11? According to 13:12-13, how does Tamar take this? What results from this in 13:14?
4. What change occurs in Amnon in 13:15? What results from this in 13:16-19? What does Absalom say about it in 13:20? How does David feel about it, according to 13:21? How does 13:22 depict Absalom's attitude? What mistakes do we see being made here?
5. What does Absalom do in 13:23-27? According to 13:28-29, what does he use this opportunity to do? Following this, what does Absalom do, according to 13:37-38? What do we like about this outcome? What continues to present a problem?
6. Whom do we see plotting Absalom's return in 14:1? What plan does he hatch in 14:2-3? How does the plan unfold in 14:4-20? What result does this have in 14:23-24? How does this episode give us more insight into the characters of David and Joab?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON NINE:
Amnon, Tamar,
and Absalom

LESSON TEXTS:
2 Samuel 13-17

THE WAGES OF SIN

The Bible makes no bones about the spiritual consequences of sin. It separates us from God, and if we do not repent, it will cost us our souls. However, the physical consequences of sin are almost as painful.

This is quite apparent from the story of the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba. Nathan prophesies to him that because he killed an innocent man, his house will be filled with bloodshed. Because he secretly committed adultery, another man will go into his women publicly. Both of these prophecies are fulfilled in the conspiracy of Absalom, David's favorite son, against his father. It's hard to say, though, how much nudging God had to do to bring these results about, and how much came from Absalom following the example of his father, who took what he wanted when he wanted it. Regardless, the results read like a Greek tragedy.

Even if a prophet does not warn us of the consequences, our sins often play out in the same way. The impact can wreck our lives, and it can teach our children to walk in the footsteps of our failure. We are certain to be happier if we walk in Jesus' footsteps instead.

2 SAMUEL 13-14

1. What people do we meet in 2 Samuel 13:1? According to 13:1-2, what is the attitude of Amnon toward Tamar? What does this tell us about what David was neglecting? What are the lessons here for us?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON SIX

2. What does David learn in 2:4? What does he say about it in 2:5-7? What is surprising about his actions here? What does this tell us about dealing with honorable men with whom we disagree?
3. What happens in 2:8-9? What results from this in 2:10-11? According to 2:12-17, how do these two kingdoms interact with each other? What significant figure dies in 2:18-23?
4. How is the progress of the war described in 3:1? What contention arises in Israel in 3:6-11? In 3:12, what does Abner do about it? What can we learn from Ish-bosheth here?
5. What does David ask in 3:13-14? What happens as a result of this in 3:15-16? How does Abner react to this in 3:17-19? According to 3:20-21, how does David treat Abner's embassy? What can we learn from David about dealing with enemies who may wish to reconcile with us?
6. What does Joab do in 3:26-27? Why? How does David handle the news of Abner's death in 3:28-29? Why doesn't David just kill Joab?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON SIX

7. What does David command in 3:31? What happens in 3:32-35? What results from this in 3:36-37? According to David in 3:38-39, what has happened here? What can we learn from David about dealing with friends or allies who sin?

2 SAMUEL 4-5

8. According to 2 Samuel 4:1, what results from Abner's death? Whom do we meet in 4:2? What do they do in 4:5-7? What does this teach us about opposing God's will, even sincerely?
9. What do Rechab and Baanah do in 4:8? According to 4:9-11, how does David answer them? What results from this in 4:12? What do we learn from David here?
10. What does Israel then say to David in 5:1-2? How is this relationship solemnized in 5:3? What does this tell us about God's plans?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON EIGHT

11. How does David react to God's judgment in 12:13? What does he not do? What does Nathan say about this in 12:13-14? What can we learn from this about what God will and will not do when we repent?
12. What happens in 12:15? What does David do about this in 12:16-17? What results from this in 12:18? What else can we take from this about sin?
13. How does David react to his child's death in 12:20? What do his servants ask him in 12:21? How does he explain himself in 12:22-23? What do we learn here about David's understanding of the afterlife?
14. What happens in 12:24? How does God deal with this in 12:24-25? How does this illustrate God's capacity for forgiveness?

7. What effect do David's actions have on Bathsheba in 11:26? What effect do they have on David in 11:27? What effect do they have on God? What final lesson does this teach us about sin?

2 SAMUEL 12

8. What does God do about it in 2 Samuel 12:1? What story does Nathan tell in 12:1-4? How does David react to this story in 12:5-6? What does this tell us about our ability to perceive sin in ourselves?
9. What does Nathan reveal in 12:7? How does God describe His conduct and attitude toward David in 12:7-8? What does He ask David in 12:9? What does this teach us about God's reaction to our sin?
10. How does God depict David's conduct in 12:9? What judgments does He pronounce against him in 12:10-12? How do the punishments fit the crime? Do we often see consequences related to our sin today? If so, provide examples.

11. What does David do in 5:6? How do the Jebusites react? What actually happens in 5:7-8? According to 5:9, what does David do with the city? How is this explained in 5:10? What does this teach us about what we can accomplish when God is with us?
12. Whom do we see in 5:11? What does he do? According to 5:12, what does this show David? What can we similarly learn from our blessings today?
13. What enemy appears in 5:17-18? What does David do about it in 5:19? What answer does he receive? What result does this have in 5:20-21? What is the main difference between David's success in war and Saul's success in war?
14. According to 5:22, how do the Philistines handle their defeat? According to 5:23-24, what happens this time? What comes from this in 5:25? What does this tell us about success in all of our endeavors?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON SEVEN:

Moving the Ark
God's Promise to
David

LESSON TEXTS:

1 Chronicles 13
1 Chronicles 15-16
2 Samuel 7

UZZA AND THE CART

For now, at least, most people are much happier not knowing what's in the Bible, because if they did know, it would force them to re-examine their religious beliefs. Most people are quite happy believing in a come-as-you-are God who will be pleased with whatever they offer to Him, as long as they're sincere in their offering.

That would certainly make Christianity much easier if it were true. Sadly,

it is not. God cares not just about our hearts, but about our actions too. The tragic fate of Uzza could not illustrate this point more clearly. Uzza was a "good" man who wanted to serve God. He was happy to drive the cart that would take the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. God, however, required that the ark be carried rather than carted, and He struck Uzza down for his presumption.

When we assume that God will be happy with our actions without basing them on His word, we practice the same kind of presumptuous sin. With the best of intentions, we put ourselves in the place of God and decree that our works are righteous. God will never stand for that. He demands not just good intentions, but obedience.

1 CHRONICLES 13, 15-16

1. What plan does David present to the people in 1 Chronicles 13:1-3? How do the people react to this in 13:4? Was this a goal that God favored? Why is this important to understand?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON EIGHT

2. What problem for David appears in 11:5? Why is this a problem? What does David do in 11:6-8 to solve the problem? What do we learn from this about another attribute of sin?
3. What does Uriah do in 11:9? How does David address this in 11:10? What reply does Uriah give him in 11:11? What kind of character do we see in Uriah? Would this ordinarily have pleased David? How does this show the way sin distorts our vision?
4. What does David say in 11:12? What does he do in 11:13? What result does this have? What can we learn from this about the plans we devise to escape the consequences of sin?
5. What does David do in 11:14-15? What results does this have in 11:16-17? Would David even have considered such treachery before? What else does this teach us about sin?
6. What do we see Joab doing in 11:18-21? How does David respond to him in 11:25? How does this reveal more to us about the character of Joab?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM

LESSON EIGHT:

David and
Bathsheba

LESSON TEXTS:

2 Samuel 11-12

FAILURE

If men had written the Bible, it would read like a heroic fantasy novel, filled with stories about two-dimensional paragons who marched triumphantly from victory to victory, never struggling and never failing. Of course, the Bible isn't like that. With the exception of Jesus, even its greatest heroes are clearly human. They mess up. Sometimes, they even mess up disastrously.

So it is with David, the ancestor of Christ, the man after God's own heart. This heroic warrior king allows himself a campaigning season off, he is enticed by the wife of one of his soldiers, and he ends up committing adultery and murder to satisfy his lust. His actions doom his kingdom to years of internal warfare. And yet, this is one of the Bible's good guys! What makes David a Bible hero, though, is not his sin. It is his repentance, so wrenchingly expressed in Psalm 51. It's his returning to God, even after messing up.

If we want to be one of God's heroes, this has to be our story too. Righteousness is not about perfection. It's about struggling with sin, failing, and repenting. Like David, God's mercy is our only hope too.

2 SAMUEL 11

1. What do we see David not doing in 2 Samuel 11:1? What happens in 11:2? What does he do about it in 11:3-4? What does this teach us about the progression of sin?

A KING TO JUDGE THEM: LESSON SEVEN

2. According to 13:7, how did David and the Israelites decide to transport the ark? From where did they get this idea? 1 Samuel 6:7-8 may help. What were the problems with this plan? Deuteronomy 10:8 may provide insight. Where do we encounter similar situations today?
3. What do we see David and the Israelites doing in 1 Chronicles 13:8? Do they seem sincere? Do they appear devoted to pleasing God? Why is it important for us to recognize this?
4. What happens in 13:9? What results from this in 13:10? How does David handle this in 13:11-12? Is David right to blame God? What's the real problem?
5. Whom does David summon in 15:11? What does he instruct them to do in 15:12? In 15:13, how does he explain his command? Does the law of Moses ever say, "Don't carry the ark on a cart?" If not, then what is David talking about?
6. What do the Levites do in 15:14? In 15:15, how do they follow this action? What can we learn from this about our obedience today?

7. Judging from 15:1, 16:1, where does the ark arrive safely? Does David succeed in accomplishing his intent this time? What can we learn from his example?

2 SAMUEL 7

8. What does David do in 2 Samuel 7:1-2? Is this a worthy thought? How does Nathan respond? What haven't they done yet? What does this teach us?
9. In 7:4-6, how does God react to this? What question does He ask in 7:7? What does God mean for David to understand from His silence? Why is this important for us?
10. What does God say He has done for David in 7:8-9? What promises does God make to him in 7:10-11? Why could David have confidence in these promises? Why can we have confidence in God's promises today?

11. What does God promise David in 7:12? According to 7:13, what is this descendant going to do? What will God do for him, according to 7:14-17? In whom is this promise fulfilled? How does this add to our understanding of Scripture?
12. How does David react to God's promise in 7:18? According to 7:19, what makes God's actions all the more amazing to David? How does David explain God's conduct in 7:20-21? How should this shape our understanding of God?
13. How does David describe God in 7:22? Whom else does David describe as unique in 7:23-24? What made them unique? What does this teach us about ourselves today?
14. What does David ask in 7:25? According to 7:26, what result does he anticipate this having? What does David say in 7:27 that explains why he had the courage to ask such a thing? What can David's attitude teach us about our own prayer lives?