

General Church Education



The Lord Rejects Saul as King

1 Samuel 15

Lesson 9

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 5: The Lord Is King of Kings

For ages 10-11

The Lord Rejects Saul as King

1 Samuel 15

Teacher Background

The Lord commanded Saul to attack and destroy the Amalekites. While Saul did much of what the Lord asked him to, he took their king, Agag, captive and saved the best livestock. Saul knew this was wrong. When Samuel heard about it he went to Gilgal to see Saul. Saul lied and said he had done as he was commanded, but Samuel could hear the noises of the animals. Saul made excuses for what he had done but Samuel would not listen. Saul begged him to stay and sacrifice, but in trying to force him to stay, he tore Samuel's robe. It was a sign that the kingdom would be taken from him.

Saul's order to destroy the Amalekites pictures our need to completely root out evil. Saul, the beginning understanding of truth, could not recognize and remove the roots of deeper evils represented by Agag and the best livestock. Like Saul, we are prone to see evil as good when it serves our self-interest. Saul's selfish and dishonest acts show ways in which we excuse evils when we feel the end justifies the means. Saul's tearing of Samuel's robe is like "tearing" the truth to suit our purposes.

Focus Points

- Saul was commanded to completely destroy the Amalekites.
- Saul defeated the Amalekites but spared the king and the best animals.
- Samuel chastised Saul, who made excuses, therefore the kingdom would be taken from him.

Readings from the Writings

Jehovah said that war was to be waged forever against Amalek for a deeply hidden reason which is embodied in Samuel's words to Agag the king of the Amalekites, "As your sword has bereaved women, so shall your mother become the most bereaved of women. And Samuel cut him in pieces before Jehovah." 'Your sword has bereaved women' means that their falsity does violence to good affections; 'your mother shall become the most bereaved of women' means that evil affection which originates in the will, will hold sway among them; 'and Samuel cut him in pieces before Jehovah' means that they were separated from those ruled by falsity arising from evil that originated in the understanding. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8593.4

From childhood to early youth communication is opened up with the interior natural, by learning about what is decent, public-spirited, and honorable, both through what parents and teachers tell him and through his own efforts to find out about such matters. During early youth to later youth however communication is opened up between the natural and the rational, by learning about what is true and what is good so far as his public life and private life are concerned, and above all about what is good and what is true so far as spiritual life is concerned, all of which is learned by listening to and reading the Word. See *Arcana Coelestia* 5126.3

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the Lord’s Word by heart.

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22)

Projects and Activities (see back for answers)

Multiple Choice Questions

Choose the best answer for the question.

Samuel and Saul Mindsets

Samuel, the Lord’s prophet, spoke to Saul after Saul had chosen to disobey the Lord. Like Samuel, our conscience reminds us when we are not making good choices. Answer the questions about Saul and Samuel. Then use the answers of your questions to come up with a mindsets that describe how Samuel and Saul were thinking.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Saul Spares Agag Reader’s Theater Play

Use a book-in-hand script to act out the story of King Saul sparing Agag. At <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/play-saul-spar-es-agag-and-loses-the-kingdom-1-samuel15.pdf>.

Sequence the Ten Commandments

King Saul disobeyed the Lord’s commandments. Use this as an opportunity to review the Ten Commandments. Download cards and see if you can sequence the Commandments at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-ten-commandments-sequencing-cards-exodus-10.pdf>.

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Vocabulary

spoils—things taken from an enemy during a battle

swoop down on—grab or take eagerly

ignore—to pay no attention to someone or something

Saul Is Commanded to Attack the Amalekites

The Lord sent His prophet Samuel to king Saul to give him a command.

“Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them.” (1 Samuel 15:3)

The Amalekites were an aggressive tribe who lived in the southern part of the land of Canaan. The Israelites had fought battles against them before. Let’s look at some examples.

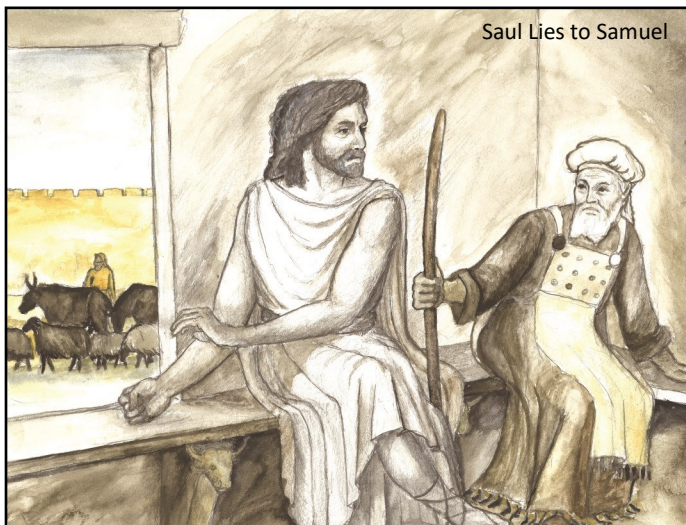
The Lord led the children of Israel to freedom after many years of slavery in Egypt. Not long after they left Egypt the Amalekites attacked the people. So Moses climbed to the top of a hill and held up the rod of the Lord while Joshua and his men fought in the valley below. The Israelites fought off the Amalekites as long as Moses held up his hands. But Moses’ arms got tired so Aaron and Hur supported his arms so he could keep his hands lifted until the sun set.

Many years later Gideon led the Israelites against the Amalekites and Midianites. His men carried pitchers with torches hidden inside. When they broke the pitchers and shouted loudly, they caused so much confusion that the Amalekites ran away.

Moses and Gideon were able to lead the Israelites to victory because they obeyed the Lord. Pay attention to how Saul acted in our story for today.

Saul Attacks the Amalekites

Saul attacked the Amalekites, just as the Lord had commanded. He followed them far into the wilderness, down towards Egypt. The Lord had commanded him to completely destroy all the people



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and everything they owned. But Saul disobeyed. While he killed most of the people he took their king, Agag, as a captive. He also destroyed most of their animals but could not bear to kill the best sheep, oxen and lambs and brought them home alive.

This was not the first time that someone in Israel had kept some of the spoils when the Lord had forbidden it. When Joshua was the leader of Israel Achan had taken some beautiful things he saw in battle and buried them in the ground under his tent. This was such a wicked thing that Israel lost their next battle, and when Achan's sin was discovered he was put to death.

Saul knew that he had done a terrible thing. The Lord told Samuel what had happened. Samuel was very sad when he heard the Lord's words.

“I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.” (1 Samuel 15:11)

When Saul returned home to Gilgal, Samuel came to meet him. Saul told Samuel,

“I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” (1 Samuel 15:13)

But Samuel could tell that Saul was not being truthful. He asked Saul,

“What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” (1 Samuel 15:14)

If Saul had destroyed everything the Amalekites owned, where had the sheep and oxen that he could hear come from?



Saul Tears the Hem of Samuel's Garment

Samuel was angry with Saul. He asked,

“Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil and do evil in the sight of the Lord?” (1 Samuel 15:19)

Saul Makes Excuses

Saul made up an excuse to explain what he had done. It was not the first time that Saul had made excuses. Earlier he had offered a sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel to come and offer it. When Samuel had challenged him he argued that he was afraid that the Philistines would attack before he could ask the Lord for help.

This time Saul refused to listen to Samuel and insisted that he *had* obeyed the Lord. His excuse for taking the animals was that he was going to sacrifice them to the Lord!

Samuel was very angry. He said,

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Samuel 15:22)

Saul Will Lose the Kingdom

Saul heard what the Lord commanded but he had only obeyed part of it. Saul ignored the part that he did not like. And so the kingdom would be taken from him and given to someone else.

Saul desperately wanted Samuel to stay and worship the Lord with him. But as Samuel turned to leave Saul grabbed the edge of his robe. It tore in his hand. This was a sign that the kingdom would be torn from him. Samuel said,

“The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today.” (1 Samuel 15:28)

Samuel Kills Agag

And what about Agag, the king Saul had captured? In the end, Samuel killed him. You may wonder why Samuel would do something so harsh. Samuel killed Agag because he knew that if Agag lived, he would continue to do terrible things to the people of Israel.

In the Word, the stories about Israel destroying its enemies describe ways we are to destroy our selfish thoughts and motives. We are to fight against pride and selfish feelings which harm us. It is easy to fight something that is obviously harmful. But it is not so easy to give up things that we enjoy and that seem harmless, even though we know that the Word teaches they are wrong. Obedience is an important part of an orderly and successful life.



Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22)

Projects and Activities (answers at back)

Choose one or two.

Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the best answer for each question.

Samuel and Saul Mindsets

Samuel, the Lord’s prophet, spoke to Saul after Saul had chosen to disobey the Lord. Like Samuel, our conscience reminds us when we are not making good choices. Answer the questions about Saul and Samuel. Then use the answers of your questions to come up with a mindsets that describe how Samuel and Saul were thinking.

Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the best answer for each of the following questions.

1. Who did the Lord command Saul to destroy?
 - a. The Philistines
 - b. The Amalekites
 - c. The Jebusites

2. What did Saul and the people spare?
 - a. The women and children
 - b. The horses and chariots
 - c. The king and sheep and oxen

3. Why did the Lord regret that he had chosen Saul as king?
 - a. Because he did not follow His commandments
 - b. Because he didn't kill Agag
 - c. Because he argued with Samuel

4. How did Samuel know that Saul had disobeyed the Lord?
 - a. He heard the noises of the sheep and oxen
 - b. The word of the Lord told him
 - c. Jonathan came and told him

5. What reason did Saul give for disobeying what the Lord had commanded him to do?
 - a. The people were hungry and needed to eat
 - b. They couldn't find all of the sheep and oxen
 - c. He wanted to sacrifice them to the Lord

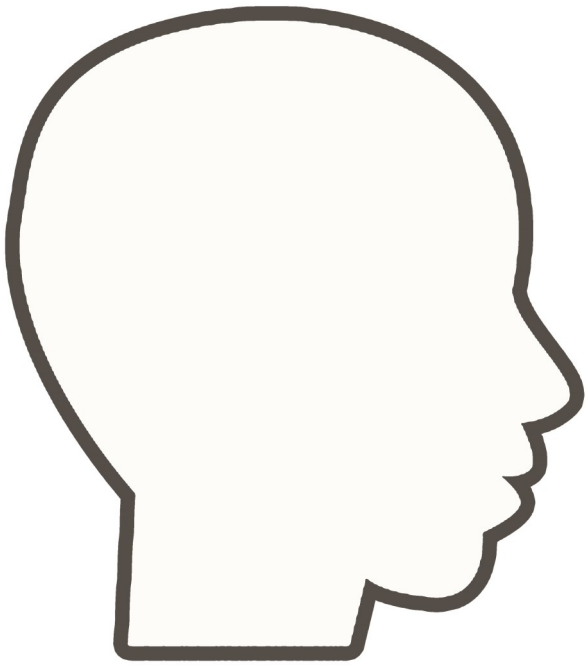
6. What was the sign that the kingdom would be torn from Saul?
 - a. Samuel's robe was torn
 - b. A sheep was torn in pieces by wild beasts
 - c. Saul's sandals were torn from his feet

7. What happened to Agag?
 - a. He was released
 - b. He was killed by Samuel
 - c. He became very sick and died

8. How often did Samuel go to see Saul after this happened?
 - a. Once a year
 - b. Never again
 - c. Only when the Lord told him to go

Samuel and Saul Mindsets

Samuel, the Lord's prophet, spoke to Saul after Saul had chosen to disobey the Lord. Like Samuel, our conscience reminds us when we are not making good choices. Answer the questions about Saul and Samuel. Then use the answers of your questions to come up with a mindsets that describe how Samuel and Saul were thinking. For example, Samuel may have been sad, while Saul may have been angry.

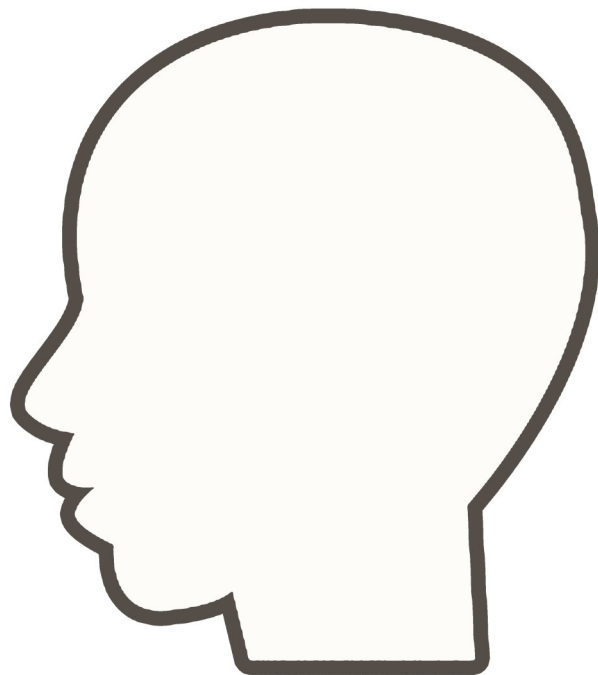


Samuel

1. Did Samuel want to hear Saul argue or did he want him to obey the Lord?
2. Did Samuel feel threatened by Saul?
3. Did Samuel achieve his goal?
4. Think of three words that show how Samuel felt about the poor choice Saul had made.
5. If you were Samuel, what would you have told Saul?

Saul

1. Did Saul want to hear Samuel's feedback, or did he want Samuel to accept his reasons for saving Agag and his animals?
2. Did Saul feel threatened by Samuel?
3. Did Saul achieve his goal?
4. Think of three words that show how Saul felt about what Samuel told him.
5. What should Saul improve his actions next time?



Answers

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Multiple Choice Questions

1. b, 2. c, 3. a, 4. a or b, 5. c, 6. a, 7. b, 8. b.