

General Church Education



The Death of Saul

1 Samuel 31; 2 Samuel 1:19

Lesson 21

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 5: The Lord Is King of Kings

For ages 10-11

The Death of Saul

1 Samuel 31; 2 Samuel 1:1-17

Teacher Background

The Philistines engaged in battle against Israel and sought out Saul and his heirs. They killed his sons and dealt Saul a critical blow. Saul asked his armor bearer to kill him and when he refused Saul fell on his own sword. The following day the Philistines stripped him, cut off his head and displayed his body and those of his sons on the wall of Beth Shan. When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard this they took them down, buried them and fasted. A young man went to tell David of Saul's death but said he had killed Saul himself, whereupon David's men struck him down for harming the Lord's anointed. David mourned for Saul.

Saul's death was a turning point in Israel's history. Saul's poor leadership and lack of faith in the Lord caused many hardships. Saul's death removed David's greatest obstacle to becoming king, but more would happen before he could be recognized as king. Since David recognized Saul as the Lord's anointed he mourned Saul's passing, and the loss of his son Jonathan. Spiritually, David mourned the loss of the Lord's truth, of Saul's potential greatness, which had happened much earlier, when he turned away from the Lord.

Focus Points

- During a battle the Philistines killed Saul's sons and Saul, who was wounded, took his life.
- Their bodies were hung on the walls of Beth Shan. The men of Jabesh Gilead buried them.
- A warrior told David what had happened but said he had killed Saul, so David killed him.

Readings from the Writings

“By ‘the Philistines’, by whom Saul and Jonathan were slain, are signified those who are in the doctrine of faith separated from the doctrine of love and charity.” *Arcana Coelestia* 9468

“After Saul had been slain in battle...a man came from the camp...and when David heard of the death of Saul, David took hold of his garments and rent them...by this also was represented mourning on account of Divine truth lost and thrown away by those who were in faith separate; for Divine truth was signified by royalty, and they who were in faith separate were represented by the Philistines, by whom Saul was slain....” *Arcana Coelestia* 4763

“That the lamentation of David over Saul treats of the doctrine of truth fighting against the falsity of evil, which doctrine is signified by a ‘bow,’ was because by a king, or by the royalty which belonged to Saul, is signified Divine truth in respect to protection and judgment.” *Arcana Coelestia* 10540.7

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the Lord's Word by heart.

“The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!” (2 Samuel 1:19)

Projects and Activities (see back for answers)

Choose one or two.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

Calligraphy

Decorate a verse from the song David wrote in memory of Saul and Jonathan, the Song of the Bow, 2 Samuel 1:23.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Discussion: Respect for the Dead

When the Philistines found King Saul's body they treated it disrespectfully. The brave men of Jabesh Gilead gave Saul a proper burial and mourned for him. While an earthly body is not important to a person who has died, it is good to treat the body with respect. In what ways do we show respect when someone dies? What burial customs do people observe? Does your family observe customs for relatives who have died? What about pets that have died?

Discuss a Person or Pet that Has Died

Ask children to think of someone who has died. It could be a relative, or someone they have heard about. Think about that person and the contributions they made while living on earth. In what ways does thinking about this person motivate you to make good choices or avoid bad choices? Alternatively, talk about a pet that has died. What characteristics made the pet loveable? In what ways do you miss your pet?

The Death of Saul

1 Samuel 31, 2 Samuel 1:19

Vocabulary

vast—very large

strip—take off

reign—the period during which someone is a ruler

The Philistine army gathered in Aphek towards the north of the country. As the lords of the Philistines staged a review of their troops, David's men marched at the end of the parade. But the Philistine commanders did not trust David, and would not let his men fight with their army. So king Achish sent David back to the town of Ziklag. When he reached Ziklag three days later he discovered that his people had been captured and carried away by the Amalekites.



Saul's Armorbearer Would Not Hurt Him

Philistines March to Battle

While David was in the south rescuing his people and possessions from the Amalekites, the Philistine army left Aphek and marched northwards to attack Saul's army. The armies met at Mount Gilboa.

It was a sad and terrible day for Israel. Saul's troops were no match for the huge Philistine army and they fled in defeat. The Philistines pursued Saul, the leader, and three sons who were fighting with him. They killed Saul's sons, one of whom was Jonathan, David's great friend.

In the fierce battle, an arrow hit Saul and wounded him so badly that he knew he could not escape.

Saul's Request

In those days, it was a great disgrace to be captured by an enemy. Saul did not want to suffer this shame and dishonor, so he asked his armorbearer to kill him with his

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sword. His armorbearer refused! Saul was the anointed king of Israel. It was a great sin to kill him!

Saul Dies

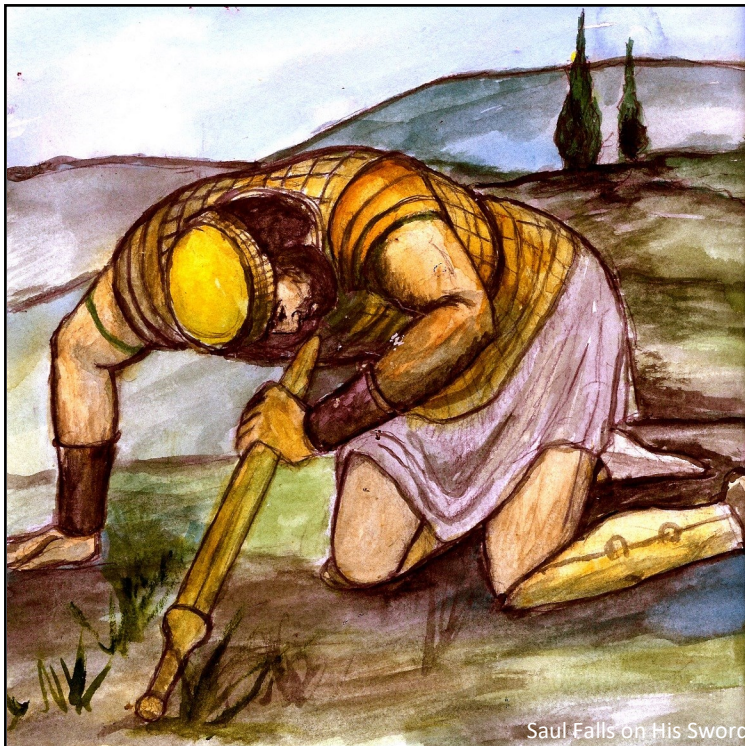
Since Saul's armorbearer was too afraid to kill him, Saul took his own sword and fell on it. And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell on his sword and died too.

“So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day.” (2 Samuel 31:6)

The next day the Philistines returned to the battlefield to gather up the armor and weapons they found. When they found Saul's body they stripped off his armor and cut off his head. They put his armor in the temple of their idols and fastened Saul's body to the wall of the city of Beth Shan. This reminded people who saw it that the Philistines had won a great victory over the children of Israel.

When the Israelites saw that their soldiers had run off and that Saul and his sons were dead they were afraid. They left their cities and ran away. So the Philistines took over their cities and lived in them. Samuel's words had finally come true:

“Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines.... The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”(1 Samuel 28:19)



The Kingdom Passes From Saul

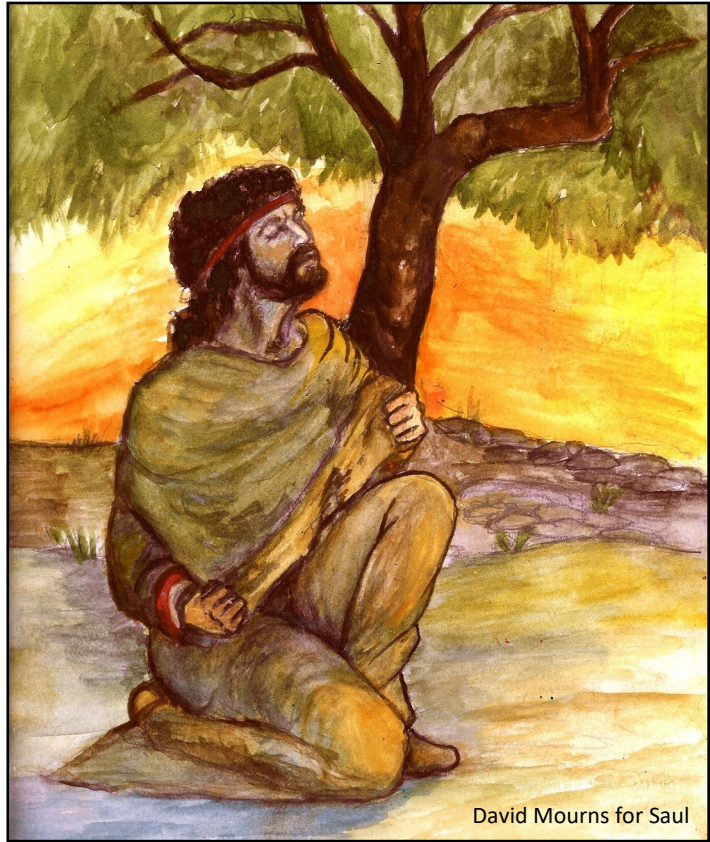
The life of Saul, Israel's first king, had ended. The Israelites had demanded a king to lead them in battle against their enemies. They had been very pleased when they saw Saul because he was tall and strong and handsome. But the way he behaved as king showed that he was not humble or wise. He did not put his trust in the Lord. He trusted in his own strength and disobeyed the Lord again and again. So he failed to fulfil their hopes that he would go before them and fight their battles. It was not Saul who was able to fight against Goliath, but David. It was not Saul who won the battle

against the Philistines, but Jonathan. Saul was never a match for the power of the Philistines. They were his enemy throughout his reign, and he died at their hands. His kingdom would pass to David. As Samuel had said:

“The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.” (1 Samuel 15:28)

Jabesh Gilead Remembers Saul

When Saul first became king he rescued the people of Jabesh Gilead from a cruel attack by the Ammonites. When the brave men of Jabesh Gilead heard about Saul’s death, they traveled all night until they had crossed the Jordan River and arrived in Beth Shan. They lowered down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the city wall and took them to Jabesh Gilead. They buried them there under a tamarisk tree. Then they fasted for seven days to honor Saul, the Lord’s anointed, who had saved them from their enemy.



David Learns That Saul Is dead

On the third day after David had returned to Ziklag after his victory over the Amalekites, an Amalekite came to tell David that Saul and Jonathan had died. When David asked the young man how he knew that they were dead the man bragged that he had seen Saul leaning on his sword. The Amalekite told David that he had helped Saul die. Then he showed David a crown and bracelet he had taken from Saul’s body.

David was very upset. He was so upset that he tore his clothes, mourned and wept. So did the men who were with David. We can understand why David was so upset to learn of Jonathan’s death because they were close friends. However, David was also upset to learn about Saul’s death. David had many opportunities to kill Saul, but he did not do it because he was committed to protecting the Lord’s chosen king.

Instead of rewarding the Amalekite for killing Saul, David executed him and mourned for Saul and Jonathan. He wrote a song, the Song of the Bow, that told about their lives and their deaths. He did not mention Saul’s attempts to kill him or his turning from the Lord. Instead he praised Saul and Jonathan, and made it sound as if Saul was a good and courageous king. He commanded that the song be taught to the children of Judah.

Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!” (2 Samuel 1:19)

Projects and Activities (answers at back)

Choose one or two.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

Calligraphy

Decorate a verse from the song David wrote in memory of Saul and Jonathan, the Song of the Bow, 2 Samuel 23.

Multiple choice

Circle the best answer.

1. Where did the Philistines attack Saul's army?
 - a. Gath
 - b. Mount Gilboa
 - c. Ziklag

2. How was Saul wounded?
 - a. he was stabbed in the shoulder
 - b. a broken leg
 - c. an arrow hit him

3. Who was with Saul when he died?
 - a. his armorbearer
 - b. his son, Abinadab
 - c. Abner, his commander

4. Who killed Saul's three sons?
 - a. the men of Jabesh Gilead
 - b. the armorbearer
 - c. the Philistines

5. What did the men of Jabesh Gilead do?
 - a. recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons
 - b. fled from their city
 - c. attacked the Philistines in Beth Shan

6. How did they mourn for Saul?
 - a. held a great feast in his honor
 - b. fasted seven days
 - c. tore their clothes and put ashes on their heads

7. How did David honor Saul and Jonathan?
 - a. made a special day of remembrance
 - b. created a statue of them
 - c. taught the people a song

8. Why did Saul fail as the king of Israel?
 - a. he wasn't willing to follow the Lord
 - b. the Philistines were too strong for him
 - c. David challenged his leadership

Calligraphy

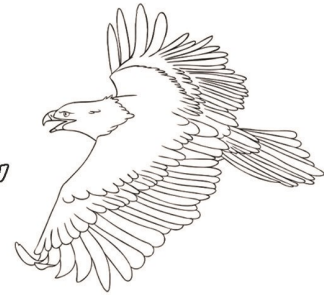
Decorate a verse from the song David wrote in memory of Saul and Jonathan, the Song of the Bow, 2 Samuel 23.

Saul and Jonathan were

beloved and pleasant in their lives,

And in their death they were not divided;

They were swifter than eagles,



They were stronger than lions

2 Samuel 23.

Answers

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Multiple Choice

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