

## *Promised Land 1 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Ten: Saul's Rejection, Jonathan's Character – 1 Samuel 13 – 15*

#### Read 1 Samuel 13.

- 1) Review the instruction from 1 Samuel 10:8 that Samuel gave Saul prior to his coronation. What was Saul's sin in 1 Samuel 13:8-14? **Samuel taught Saul before his coronation that the king was under the authority of God and His prophets. After Saul gathered the army at Gilgal, he was to wait seven days for Samuel before he took any action. Saul was understandably confused and concerned when Samuel did not show up by the seventh day and when his men began to scatter. However, his fear and confusion did not justify taking matters into his own hands. In so doing, Saul positioned himself above Samuel's authority rather than submitting to it. The emphasis of 1 Samuel 13-15 seems to be that Saul was willing to acknowledge God but did not wholeheartedly trust in Him or obey Him. Saul did not recognize that he was fully under God's authority. (The words "Saul offered" do not imply that he did this on his own, independent of a priest. David also offered sacrifices: 2 Samuel 24:25; 1 Kings 3:4; 8:63. That they used a priest to do so is assumed.)**
- 2) What particular disadvantage did the Israelite army suffer, according to 1 Samuel 13:19-22? **The Israelites were dependent on their enemy, the Philistines, for iron tools and weapons. In times of war, the Philistines withheld this service from them.**
- 3) Samuel told Saul that God would raise up another leader for Israel, a man "after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). What qualities characterize a person whose heart is right in God's eyes? See Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Samuel 13:13-14; Psalm 24:4, 28:7, 37:31, 51:10, 57:7, 78:72, 86:11, 119:2; Proverbs 3:5; Acts 13:22. Which of these qualities will you ask the Lord to develop more fully in your own heart? **The person whose heart is right in God's eyes is a person who is characterized by obedience to God, trust in and dependence on Him, seeking Him, purity, steadfastness, integrity (undivided in loyalty and priorities), love, thanksgiving, and praise. Personal sharing**

#### Read 1 Samuel 14:1-23.

- 4) Summarize the story in 1 Samuel 14:1-23. **Saul's son Jonathan and his armor-bearer went alone to survey the Philistine outpost at Micmash. Jonathan expressed faith (14:6) that the Lord could use just the two of them militarily and he courageously suggested a plan: He and his armor-bearer would allow themselves to be seen by the Philistines. If the Philistines called them up to their elevated position it was a sign that the Lord would give the two of them victory. The Philistines did call them up and Jonathan and his armor-bearer slew about twenty of the Philistines in a small area, throwing the rest of their camp into a panic (14:15, "a panic sent by God"). Saul's outlook saw the confusion among the Philistines and, assuming it was brought on by Israelite aggression, took a head-count to see who was missing among the Israelite troops. After discovering it was Jonathan, Saul assembled his troops and routed the Philistines. Even those Israelites who had previously gone over to the Philistines turned back and fought against them.**
- 5) What impresses you about Jonathan in 14:1-23? **The account of Jonathan's faith and courage is sandwiched between chapters 13 and 15, in which we discover Saul to be both spiritually insensitive and an unworthy leader. Because Jonathan believed "nothing can hinder the Lord from saving", he single-handedly took on the Philistines. Heaven responded to his faith and courageous slaughter of twenty with "a panic sent by God" throughout the Philistine camp. Saul and his men then entered the battle and, finally, even the Israelites who had shifted their loyalty to the Philistines rejoined Israel's cause. The faith of one man and the hand of God resulted in an otherwise unlikely (13:19-22) victory.**
- 6) Re-read 1 Samuel 14:6b and 15b with Ephesians 3:20. For what will you trust God to do "more than you ask or imagine", "whether by many or by few"? **Personal sharing**

## 1 Samuel 14:24-52

- 7) Saul took a rash oath according to 1 Samuel 14:24. What were the outcomes? **Because Saul's oath was made rashly, Jonathan did not hear of it and was almost put to death for breaking the oath (14:27, 43-45), the Israelites' victory was not as great as it could have been (14:29), and the Israelite soldiers sinned against the Lord by eating meat without draining the blood (14:33).**
- 8) 1 Samuel 14:41-42 talks about a process of casting lots to get guidance from God. Why is such a process unnecessary today? See Psalm 119:105 with 2 Peter 1:19, Luke 6:12 with 1 Thessalonians 5:17, and John 14:26, 16:13, with Acts 16:7. **New Testament believers have the complete body of the Scriptures, direct access to God through prayer, and the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide and teach them. (Sometimes God also directs us through circumstances, but taking circumstances *alone* to determine God's will can lead us in the wrong direction.)**
- 9) Which decisions do you need to bring before the Lord at present to ensure you do not act rashly or out of your own wisdom? **Personal sharing**

## Read 1 Samuel 15.

- 10) After recalling Achan's sin from Joshua 6:18, 7:1, 4, 11-12, and 24-25, re-read 1 Samuel 15:7-9. What did Saul do wrong in 1 Samuel 15 and how serious was this? **In Joshua 7, Achan was put to death for retaining plunder when the Lord instructed that a city be totally destroyed. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul ignored the Lord's direct command through Samuel (also through Moses, Deuteronomy 25:17-19) to completely destroy the Amalekites. He destroyed everything that was weak and worthless but spared all that was valuable, claiming he intended to offer it to the Lord as a sacrifice. Perhaps Saul genuinely intended to do so, but the fact that he set up a monument in his own honor indicates that he may have actually kept the valuables as trophies of his victory. Regardless of his intent, Saul disobeyed. Saul's sin was so serious that God was grieved He had made Saul king. Saul's sin left Samuel crying to the Lord all through the night.**
- 11) Read Exodus 17:8-16 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19 to understand the history regarding the Amalekites' sin. Based on what you have learned so far in *Promised Land 1*, approximately how much time passed between God's decree against the Amalekites in Exodus 17 and Saul's execution of His order in 1 Samuel 15? **Forty years after Israel had Egypt plus roughly another three hundred and fifty years of rule under their Judges passed between the decree and the execution.**
- 12) What do you learn about God's judgment from the following passages: 1 Samuel 15:3, 6; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7; 2 Peter 3:3-9; Revelation 20:12-13? For whom will you pray that God will open their eyes to their need to repent? **God's judgment against the wicked may not be immediate, but it is thorough (1 Samuel 15:3), and it is certain (2 Peter and Revelation). God is careful not to destroy the innocent with the wicked (1 Samuel 15:6). His judgments are always just and right (2 Thessalonians 1). The wicked mistake God's patience in delaying judgment for impotence; they think it will never come. God is longsuffering, not wanting any to perish, offering ample opportunity for repentance. Nevertheless, we can be absolutely certain that judgment will eventually come (2 Peter 3).**

## 1 Samuel 15

- 13) What indicators are given about the condition of Saul's heart in 1 Samuel 15:12, 30-33? **1 Samuel 15:12 indicates that Saul continued to act independently of Samuel, setting up a monument in his own honor. His ego was more important to him than obedience to the Lord. 15:30 also shows Saul's desire for acclaim (he was concerned about being honored by Samuel before the people). In verse 30, Saul called the Lord "your God", when speaking to Samuel, indicating a guilty conscience that could not risk being personally exposed before the Lord. And finally, in verse 33, it was Samuel who completed the task the Lord had assigned to Saul by killing the Amalekite king Agag (even after Saul claimed to have repented). It seems**

that Saul's repentance was only remorse over the consequences of his sin, rather than a true turning back to the path of obedience.

14) Read Jeremiah 17:9.

- a) Who did Saul blame for his sin? (Include the verse numbers.) **Saul blamed his soldiers (15:15, 21.)**
- b) With other excuse did Saul give for not obeying God fully? (Include the verse numbers.) **Saul said he spared what God told him to destroy in order to offer it to Him as a sacrifice (verses 15, 21).**
- c) What does 1 Samuel 15 teach us about partial obedience? See verses 11, 19, and 26. **Partial obedience is no better than disobedience in the Lord's eyes. Any disobedience is evil in His eyes and a rejection of His word.**

15) Carefully read 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

- a) What do you learn from this passage about God's desire for you? **Samuel's admonition, "To obey is better than sacrifice," teaches us that complete submission to the revealed will of God is far more important to Him than any outward display of worship.**
- b) Exactly how do you think the Lord wants you to apply this timeless truth to your own life? **Personal sharing**