

Promised Land 2 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson One: Saul's Disobedience and Rejection – 1 Samuel 13 – 15

Unless otherwise noted, all questions refer to the underlined Scripture references listed at the beginning of each of the five sections within the lesson (often given as readings).

Read 1 Samuel 13.

- 1) From 1 Samuel 10:8, review the instruction that Samuel gave Saul prior to his coronation. What was Saul's sin (1 Samuel 13:8-14)? **Before Saul's coronation, Samuel taught him that as king, he needed to submit to God and to His prophets. Additionally, once Saul gathered the Israelite army at Gilgal, he was to wait seven days for Samuel's arrival and sacrifice before taking any action. Saul failed to obey this instruction. He was understandably concerned about the scattering of his men when Samuel did not arrive within the seven-day period, but he still shouldn't have taken matters into his own hands. 1 Samuel 13-15 portrays Saul as a king who was willing to acknowledge God but was unwilling to wholeheartedly trust and obey Him. (The words "Saul offered" do not necessarily imply that Saul offered the sacrifice independent of a priest. David and Solomon also offered sacrifices: 2 Samuel 24:25; 1 Kings 3:4; 8:63. In both cases, the use of a priest may be implied.)**
- 2) According to 1 Samuel 13:19-22, what particular disadvantage did the Israelite army suffer? **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 seeks the Lord, is obedient, trusting, and dependent on Him, is characterized by purity, steadfastness, love, gratitude, and integrity, is undivided in their loyalty and priorities, and is quick to offer the Lord 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 to survey the Philistine outpost at Micmash unaccompanied. Jonathan expressed faith (14:6) that the Lord could use them to give Israel victory over the Philistines, suggesting a courageous plan in which he and his armor-bearer would allow the Philistines to see them. He decided that if the Philistines called them up to their elevated position, he would consider it a sign that the Lord would give the two of them victory. As it turned out, the Philistines did challenge them to climb up to their position, and Jonathan and his armor-bearer slew about twenty of them in a small area. This threw the Philistine camp into "a panic sent by God" (14:15). Saul's lookouts saw their confusion and, correctly assuming it was brought on by Israelite aggression, took a head-count to see who from among them was missing. Discovering that Jonathan was absent, Saul assembled his troops and routed the Philistines. Certain Israelites had shifted their loyalty to the Philistine camp previously, but when they saw the Philistines confusion, they rejoined Saul.**
- 5) From 1 Samuel 14:1-23, what impresses you about Jonathan? **The account of Jonathan's faith and courage is sandwiched between two chapters in which Saul is portrayed as a spiritually insensitive and unworthy leader. By contrast, Jonathan believed that nothing could hinder the Lord from saving and he single-handedly took on the Philistines. The hand of God and the faith of one man 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 (14:27, 43-45), the Israelites' victory was not as great as it could have been (14:30), 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 us. Sometimes God also directs us through circumstances and the advice of godly people, but these can also be misleading and should never be used as the sole basis for determining God's will.**
- 9) Which decisions do you currently need to bring before the Lord, in order to ensure you do not act rashly or out of your own wisdom? **Personal sharing**

Read 1 Samuel 15.

- 10) Recall Achan's sin (Joshua 6:18, 7:1, 4, 11-12, and 24-25) and 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 after the Lord had instructed that the city of Ai be totally destroyed. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul ignored the Lord's direct command to completely destroy the Amalekites, an instruction given also by Moses (Deuteronomy 25:17-19.) 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 might have actually kept the valuables as trophies of his victory. Regardless, by sparing a portion of what God condemned, Saul failed to grasp the significance of being God's agent of judgment. His sin was so serious that God grieved He had made Saul king and Samuel cried 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. If you have completed the *Promised Land 1* study or have had other Bible study experience, attempt to estimate the amount of time that passed between God's decree against the Amalekites in Exodus 17 and Saul's partial execution of His order in 1 Samuel 15. **After the Israelites left Egypt and encountered the Amalekites, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Depending on the date one assigns to the Exodus, their settlement period lasted 150 to 350 years. At the end of this period, Saul became king. Therefore, roughly 200-400 years passed between Lord's judgment was passed on the Amalekites and Saul's partial execution of it.**
- 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? Whose eyes will you ask God to open to their need for repentance? **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 judgment will never come). God is longsuffering and offers ample opportunity for repentance, not wanting any to perish; nevertheless, His judgment will eventually come (2 Peter 3). Personal sharing**

1 Samuel 15

13) In 1 Samuel 15:12, 30-33, what indicators are given about the condition of Saul's heart? **1 Samuel 15:12 indicates that Saul continued to act independently of Samuel and set up a monument in his own honor. 15:30 shows Saul's concern about being honored by Samuel before the people. These verses indicate that Saul's ego was more important to him than obedience to the Lord. In verse 30, Saul called the Lord *your* God (when speaking to Samuel), probably because he was unwilling to risk having his guilty conscience exposed before the Lord. Finally, in verse 33, even after Saul claimed to have repented, he left the task the Lord had assigned him (the execution of the Amalekite king, Agag) to be completed by Samuel. It seems that Saul's professed repentance was merely remorse over the consequences of his sin, rather than a true return 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)** What 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 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 about God's desire for you from this passage? **Samuel's admonition, "To obey is better than sacrifice," teaches us that God values complete submission to His revealed will over outward displays of worship.**
- b)** Exactly how do you think the Lord wants you to apply this timeless truth? **Personal sharing**