



LESSON SEVEN

Saul's Conquest of the Philistines and His Disobedience in His Conquest of the Amalekites

Scripture Reading:

1 Samuel 13:5-15 – Section 1

- 13:5** And the Philistines assembled themselves for battle with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and people like the sand that is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven.
- 13:6** When the men of Israel saw that they were in distress (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in thickets and among rocks and in cellars and in pits.
- 13:7** And some Hebrews crossed over the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead; but Saul was still in Gilgal, and all the people trembled behind him.
- 13:8** And he waited for seven days, until the time appointed by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal. And the people scattered from him.
- 13:9** Then Saul said, Bring the burnt offering and the peace offerings to me. And he offered up the burnt offering.
- 13:10** And just as he finished offering up the burnt offering, there came Samuel; and Saul went out to meet him and greet him.
- 13:11** And Samuel said, What have you done? And Saul said, When I saw that the people were scattered from me and that you had not come at the appointed time and that the Philistines assembled themselves at Michmash,
- 13:12** I said, Now the Philistines will come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of Jehovah. Therefore I forced myself to offer up the burnt offering.
- 13:13** Then Samuel said to Saul, You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of Jehovah your God, which He commanded you. For now Jehovah would have established your kingdom over Israel forever;
- 13:14** But now your kingdom will not continue. Jehovah has sought a man according to His heart for Himself, and Jehovah has appointed him ruler over His people; for you have not kept that which Jehovah commanded you.
- 13:15** Then Samuel rose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul mustered the people who were with him, about six hundred men.

1 Samuel 14:6-10, 24-37 – Section 2

- 14:6** And Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. Perhaps Jehovah will act on our behalf, for there is no constraint on Jehovah to save by many or by few.
- 14:7** And his armor bearer said to him, Do all that is in your heart. Go to it; I am here with you according to your heart.
- 14:8** And Jonathan said, Now we will cross over to the men and disclose ourselves to them.
- 14:9** If they say this to us, Wait until we come to you; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them.
- 14:10** But if they say this, Come up to us; then we will go up, for Jehovah will have delivered them into our hand, and this will be the sign of it to us.
- 14:24** And the men of Israel were distressed that day; for Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, Cursed be the man who eats any food before the evening, when I am avenged of my enemies. So none of the people even tasted food.
- 14:25** And all those from the land came upon a honeycomb, and there was honey on the surface of the ground.

- 14:26** And when the people came to the honeycomb, there was honey flowing; but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people were afraid of the oath.
- 14:27** But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; and he put forth the end of his staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and he put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened.
- 14:28** Then someone from among the people responded and said, Your father sternly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man who eats any food today; and so the people are faint.
- 14:29** Then Jonathan said, My father has troubled the land. Look how my eyes lit up because I tasted a bit of this honey.
- 14:30** How much more if today the people had eaten up the spoil from their enemies, which they found, for now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great.
- 14:31** Now they had struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon, and the people were very faint.
- 14:32** And the people flew upon the spoil; and they took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood.
- 14:33** And it was reported to Saul, saying, The people are now sinning against Jehovah by eating the spoil with the blood. And he said, You have dealt treacherously. Roll a large stone to me today.
- 14:34** And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, Let each man bring his ox here to me, and each his sheep; and slay them here and eat; and do not sin against Jehovah by eating these things with the blood. And all the people brought their oxen with them there that night and slew them there.
- 14:35** And Saul built an altar to Jehovah; it was the first altar that he built to Jehovah.
- 14:36** And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night and take spoil among them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man among them. And they said, Do all that is good in your sight. But the priest said, Let us draw near to God here.
- 14:37** And Saul inquired of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel? But He did not answer him that day.

1 Samuel 15:4-9 – Section 3 & 4

- 15:4** And Saul summoned the people and mustered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand men of Judah.
- 15:5** And Saul came to the city of the Amalekites and set an ambush in the river valley.
- 15:6** And Saul said to the Kenites, Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites; otherwise, I will destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. And the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.
- 15:7** Then Saul struck the Amalekites from Havilah as you go toward Shur, which is opposite Egypt.
- 15:8** And he captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.
- 15:9** But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings, and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was despised and worthless, this they utterly destroyed.

1 Samuel 15:12-31

- 15:12** Then Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, saying, Saul went to Carmel and has now set up a monument for himself, and he has returned and passed on down to Gilgal.
- 15:13** And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of Jehovah! I have fulfilled the word of Jehovah.
- 15:14** And Samuel said, What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen that I hear?
- 15:15** And Saul said, They have been brought from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to Jehovah your God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.
- 15:16** Then Samuel said to Saul, Stop, and I will tell you what Jehovah spoke to me last night. And he said to him, Speak.
- 15:17** And Samuel said, Though you are small in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah has anointed you king over Israel.
- 15:18** And Jehovah sent you on a journey and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.

15:19 Why then did you not obey the voice of Jehovah, but flew upon the spoil and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?

15:20 And Saul said to Samuel, I surely did obey the voice of Jehovah, and I went on the journey that Jehovah sent me on. And I have brought Agag the king of the Amalekites and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

15:21 But of the spoil the people took sheep and oxen, the chief of those things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to Jehovah your God in Gilgal.

15:22 And Samuel said, / Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices / As much as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? / Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, / And to heed, than the fat of rams.

15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, / And insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim. / Because you have rejected the word of Jehovah, / He has also rejected you from being king.

15:24 And Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

15:25 Now therefore pardon my sin, I beg you, and return with me so that I may worship Jehovah.

15:26 But Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah has rejected you from being king over Israel.

15:27 And when Samuel turned around to go, Saul seized the corner of his cloak, and it tore.

15:28 And Samuel said to him, Jehovah has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today and has given it to an associate of yours, who is better than you.

15:29 Moreover the Eminence of Israel does not lie nor repent, for He is not a man that He should repent.

15:30 Then Saul said, I have sinned. Honor me now, I beg you, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me so that I may worship Jehovah your God.

15:31 So Samuel returned after Saul, and Saul worshipped Jehovah.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What is Samuel's intention according to God's heart? How is it different from Saul's intention?
2. How was Saul's disobedience exposed in his second conquest?
3. What are we for today in the practice of the church life?

Section 2:

1. How do we see Jonathan trusted in Jehovah for his victory?
2. What happened to the people of Israel after Saul made a rash oath? What can we learn from this?

Section 3:

1. What does the Amalekites signify? What is the hardest thing for God to deal with?
2. How was the Amalekites defeated in Exodus 17:8-16?
3. What was Jehovah's command to Saul and what was Saul's response?

Section 4:

1. What does "to obey is better than sacrifice" mean?
2. What should we learn from Saul's disobedience?

----- [SECTION 1] -----

Saul first conquered the Ammonites, and then he conquered the Philistines, Israel's most difficult enemy. Both of these conquests gave Saul the opportunity to make a name for himself. In the first conquest he behaved in a kind, humble manner, but in the second conquest he behaved in a way that caused him to lose his kingship. As we will see, Samuel's intention, which was according to God's heart, was to build the kingdom of God on earth. Saul's intention was altogether in another realm. Saul intended to build a monarchy for himself within the kingdom of God. Saul thought that it was possible to have his own monarchy; actually, it was not possible. God had no intention to build anything for Saul.

Let us now consider the details regarding Saul's conquest of the Philistines.

I. HIS PREPARATION FOR WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

In 13:1-4, 6-7 we read of Saul's preparation for war against the Philistines.

A. With the Assistance of His Son Jonathan

In his preparation for war, Saul was assisted by his son Jonathan, who was quite good.

B. By Blowing a Trumpet to Gather the People

Saul had learned that he needed people and he blew a trumpet to gather the people. Today's politicians also realize that they need to gain the people.

C. Some of the People Hiding and Some Escaping

Because some of the people were afraid of the Philistines, they hid themselves in caves and in pits, and some escaped into the land of Gad, east of Jordan.

II. THE PHILISTINES' PREPARATION FOR WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

In their preparation for war against Israel, the Philistines assembled 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and "people like the sand that is on the seashore in multitude" (v. 5).

III. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

In 13:8-15a we have a word concerning Saul's disobedience. In this war Saul's intention to act on his own for the building up of his monarchy was exposed. Saul's disobedience, which was observed by Samuel, meant that he had given up God. In his first conquest Saul behaved very well in the sight of the people and before the Lord, but in his second conquest he was disobedient and actually gave up God.

A. In His Sinful Offering

Saul's disobedience was exposed in the matter of his sinful offering (vv. 8-12). Saul was disobedient, yet he still offered something to God. Today's situation is exactly the same. People offer something to God for His service, but they disobey God and do not care for His purpose.

1. His Complaint

Saul disobeyed, offering up a sinful offering, yet he complained against Samuel that Samuel had not come at the appointed time. At that time Samuel was the acting God. Saul had an appointment with Samuel, but Saul did not have the freedom to do whatever he liked. He should have been subordinate to Samuel. Apparently, Samuel was mistaken in his delay, but Samuel's delay exposed Saul.

2. His Excuse

Saul's excuse for his disobedience was that the people were scattered from him and that the Philistines assembled themselves for fighting. There was no excuse for what Saul did. He should have waited for Samuel to arrive before taking any action.

B. Resulting in His Losing His Kingship

Saul's disobedience resulted in his losing his kingship (vv. 13-15a; 15:28).

1. Condemned by Samuel

Saul was condemned by Samuel for having acted foolishly and not keeping the commandment of Jehovah (13:13a). Samuel was surely right in condemning Saul.

2. *His Kingdom Not Continuing*

After condemning Saul, Samuel told him that his kingdom would not continue (vv. 13b-14a).

3. *Saul Being Replaced by David, a Man according to God's Heart*

Samuel went on to say to Saul, "Jehovah has sought a man according to His heart for Himself, and Jehovah has appointed him as leader over His people" (v. 14b). Here Samuel was referring to David, to whom God would shift the kingship.

In studying the history in the Bible, we need to learn all the different lessons. First Samuel 13—14 contains a great lesson. It may seem that Saul's disobedience in making an offering was a small disobedience. But Samuel realized that Saul would take the opportunity to usurp God's appointment to build up his own monarchy within the building up of God's kingdom. God intended to build up His kingdom on earth, not to build up a monarchy for Saul.

Samuel taught the people the custom of the kingdom (1 Sam. 10:25). Moses gave the law to the children of Israel, but before Samuel came they did not have a set of by-laws, a constitution. Samuel told the people the by-laws, the constitution, the practice, the customs, the manners, the ordinances, and the rules of how to practice the kingdom of God on earth. Saul should have practiced the kingdom life according to this constitution. Samuel, the composer of the constitution, watched Saul, and he saw a tendency with him to build up a human monarchy by usurping the practice of the kingdom of God.

The recovery around the globe is uniquely one. The intrinsic essence of the kingdom of God is the Body of Christ, the church of God. Through the past several decades, some brothers have worked and labored very well, and we appreciate what they have done. Yet certain of the workers carried out a work in the recovery by usurping the recovery. There are signs that the work in these places is not a pure work—a work purely for the building up of the Body of Christ, the kingdom of God. Rather, it is a work built up for the interest of certain ones.

We practice the local churches, and each of the local churches is autonomous in business affairs. But this does not mean that the local churches are

divided. In a sense they are local churches, but all the local churches on this globe are just one church. Every local church has its own freedom and jurisdiction to make decisions concerning, for example, the times of the meetings. However, this does not mean that the local churches are different. Paul taught all the churches in the same way (1 Cor. 4:17).

All the churches are the same in life, in nature, in testimony, in serving, and in expressing Christ. We may be different in nationalities and languages, but our singing and praising are the same. We are one Body, testifying the same Christ. We preach, announce, admonish, and teach concerning Christ as revealed in the Bible. We do not have different schools, different teachings, or different testimonies. Christianity has been divided because of different practices, for example the practice of baptism. But the "dictionary" in the Lord's recovery has only one word—Christ. We are not for various kinds of teachings. We are for Christ, who is for the kingdom of God. We are for the kingdom of God, which is the Body of Christ, the unique church of God.

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IV. THE SITUATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PHILISTINES

First Samuel 13:15b-23 tells us about the situation between Israel and the Philistines.

A. On the Side of Israel

On the side of Israel (vv. 15b-16a), Saul mustered the people who were with him, about 600 men. Saul, Jonathan, and the people dwelt in Geba of Benjamin.

B. On the Side of the Philistines

On the side of the Philistines (vv. 16b-18, 23), raiders came out from the camp in three companies toward three directions.

C. Israel Being Short of Swords and Spears

Israel was short of sword and spears (vv. 19-22). There was no smith throughout all the land of Israel. At that time, Israel was under the strict control of the Philistines, who did not allow them to make swords or spears. On the day of battle, only Saul and Jonathan his son had a sword and a spear.

V. ISRAEL'S CONQUEST OF THE PHILISTINES

In 14:1-23 we have an account of Israel's conquest of the Philistines. Their situation was that they had no weapons. In such a poor situation, God was their unique weapon. Saul, Jonathan, and the people of Israel fought the battle by God.

A. Under Jonathan

Verses 1 through 15 describe the conquest under Jonathan.

1. Jonathan Not Letting His Father and the People Know That He Was Going to Attack the Philistines

Jonathan did not let his father and the people know that he was going to attack the Philistines (vv. 1-5).

2. Trusting in Jehovah for His Victory

Jonathan trusted in Jehovah for his victory (vv. 6-10), believing that there was no constraint on Jehovah to save by many or by few. Jonathan was assured that Jehovah would deliver the Philistines into his hand.

3. Jehovah Delivering the Philistines into the Hand of Israel

Jehovah delivered the Philistines into the hand of Israel (vv. 11-15). Jonathan and his helper, a young man, killed the Philistines. There was panic among the Philistines in their camp, in their field, and among all the people. Even their garrison and their raiders were in a panic, and the earth quaked.

B. Under Saul

Verses 16 through 23 describe the conquest of the Philistines under Saul. According to verse 16 the multitude of the Philistine army was melting away, and they were going here and there. Saul found out that his son Jonathan and his helper had gone away from him to attack the Philistines (v. 17). In verses 18 and 19 Saul did something quite good—he sought God's leading through the priest and the ark. Saul heard that the tumult that was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase. He and all the people who were with him gathered together and went into the battle, while each Philistine's sword was against his companion, and the tumult was very great (v.

20). The Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and who had gone up with them into the camp also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan (v. 21). Even all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country followed Saul and Jonathan closely in the battle (v. 22). That day Jehovah saved Israel from the Philistines (v. 23).

VI. SAUL'S RASH OATH

Verses 24 through 46 are concerned with the matter of Saul's rash oath. A strong person is often rash.

A. Cursing Any Man Who Ate Food before the Evening

In the oath he laid on the people, Saul cursed any man who ate food before the evening, when Saul would be avenged of his enemies (vv. 24-26).

B. Jonathan Not Hearing His Father's Oath and Eating Some Honey

Jonathan did not hear his father's oath and ate some honey (vv. 27-30).

C. The People of Israel Eating the Sheep, Oxen, and Calves with the Blood

The people of Israel ate the sheep, oxen, and calves with the blood (vv. 31-35). They did this because of the heavy blitz on the Philistines and Saul's rash oath. Saul corrected the people in that sin and asked them to slay their oxen and sheep and eat before him that night. Then Saul built his first altar to Jehovah.

D. Jonathan's Breaking of His Father's Oath Being Caught

Jonathan's breaking of his father's oath was caught (vv. 36-46). Saul sought God's leading for him and the people of Israel to pursue after the Philistines, and God did not answer him that day (vv. 36-37). Following this, Jonathan's death crime was found out (vv. 38-44). When Saul said that Jonathan would die, the people vindicated Jonathan and saved him from the death crime (v. 45). Then Saul went up from following the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to their own place (v. 46).

VII. A CHRONICLE OF SAUL

Chapter fourteen concludes with a chronicle of Saul (vv. 47-52).

A. Saul Taking the Kingdom over Israel and Fighting against All His Enemies All Around

Saul took the kingdom over Israel and fought against all his enemies all around—Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah, and the Philistines (v. 47).

B. Striking Valiantly the Amalekites

Saul struck valiantly the Amalekites and delivered Israel from those who had plundered them (v. 48).

C. Saul's Generations

In verses 49 through 51 we have a list of Saul's generations: his grandfather Abiel; his father Kish; his uncle Ner; his cousin Abner (the captain of his army); his wife Ahinoam; his father-in-law Ahimaaz; his sons Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-shua; and his daughters Merab and Michal.

D. There Being Severe War against the Philistines All the Days of Saul

This chapter concludes by saying that there was severe war against the Philistines all the days of Saul and that Saul took any mighty man or any valiant man for himself (v. 52).

----- [SECTION 3] -----

First Samuel 15 is a record of Saul's disobedience in his conquest of the Amalekites. He conquered the enemy, yet he was altogether disobedient to God. Here Saul was absolutely, thoroughly exposed, and then he was given up by God and also by Samuel. This chapter contains an important lesson for us today.

VIII. IN TYPOLOGY THE AMALEKITES SIGNIFYING THE FLESH—THE FALLEN MAN

In typology the Amalekites signify the flesh—the fallen man (Exo. 17:8-16; Gen. 6:3a; Rom. 3:20a). The divine revelation in the Bible shows us that God did not create the flesh. God created a man. However, man became fallen and eventually became flesh. Genesis 6:3 indicates that because man had become flesh, God could not do anything with him. Romans 3:20a says, "Out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him." Here "no flesh" means no fleshly man. All men have become flesh. We, the

believers in Christ, have been saved, but most of us are still living in the flesh.

In the entire universe, God's real enemy is not Satan but us. As long as we remain in the status of the flesh, we are an enemy to God (Rom. 8:7). Our flesh is altogether one with Satan. Without the flesh, Satan would have no way to fight against God. In the church life all the troubles come from the flesh. The hardest thing for God to deal with is the flesh.

In our daily life we may be either in the spirit or in the flesh. When we exercise our spirit, the vision is clear. But if we remain in the flesh, the vision will become dim. When we are in our spirit, we may regard the church and the elders as wonderful. However, when we are in the flesh, we may be critical of certain elders, or our flesh may be so bothered that we may even consider leaving the church. Whenever we realize that we are in the flesh, the enemy of God and the source of troubles in the church life, we need to pray and ask the Lord to forgive us.

IX. THE AMALEKITES' OFFENSE TOWARD GOD AGAINST ISRAEL, AFTER ISRAEL CAME UP OUT OF EGYPT

In 1 Samuel 15:2 Jehovah said, "I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they set themselves against them in the way as they came up out of Egypt." In the war with Amalek described in Exodus 17:8-16, Moses stood on the top of a hill with the rod of God in his hand, and Joshua went out with chosen men to fight against, and to defeat, Amalek. While Joshua was fighting, Moses was praying. After Joshua defeated Amalek, God declared that He would "have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (v. 16). This shows how seriously God regarded the frustration caused by the Amalekites. At the time of 1 Samuel 15:2, He declared that He would punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel.

X. JEHOVAH'S COMMAND TO SAUL

After Saul was anointed to be the leader of God's people, he defeated the Ammonites and the Philistines. Eventually, the Amalekites rose up to frustrate the establishing of God's kingdom, and Saul was charged to destroy them. In verse 3 Jehovah said to him, "Go now and strike the Amalekites; and utterly destroy all that they

have, and do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, oxen and sheep, camel and donkey." In charging Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, which typify the flesh as God's unique enemy, God wisely put Saul on the spot in order to test him.

XI. SAUL'S ATTACKING OF THE AMALEKITES

Verses 4 through 9 describe Saul's attacking of the Amalekites. Saul summoned the people and mustered them, 200,000 footmen and 10,000 men of Judah (v. 4). Saul then came to the city of the Amalekites and set an ambush in the river valley (v. 5). Before striking the Amalekites, Saul sent the Kenites away from the destruction of the Amalekites, for they showed kindness to the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt (v. 6). Then Saul struck the Amalekites and captured Agag their king (vv. 7-8a). Saul utterly destroyed all their people, but he "spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings, and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was despised and worthless, this they utterly destroyed" (vv. 8b-9). For Saul, this was an opportunity to make himself rich. He was trying to build up his own monarchy within God's kingdom.

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XII. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

Verses 10 through 31 are concerned with the matter of Saul's disobedience.

A. Jehovah Repenting of Saul's Kingship because of His Disobedience, and Samuel Being Angry

Jehovah told Samuel that He repented of appointing Saul as king, for he did not fulfill His words. Samuel became angry and cried to Jehovah all night long (vv. 10-11).

B. Samuel's Dealing with Saul

In verses 12 through 31 we see Samuel's dealing with Saul.

1. Coming to Meet Saul Early in the Morning

Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. It was told Samuel that Saul had gone to Carmel and had set up a monument for himself (v. 12). Saul built this monument not for the kingdom of

God but for the remembrance of himself because of the victory that made both him and his monarchy rich. This was a strong indication that Saul's intention was to build up his monarchy.

2. The Conversation between Samuel and Saul after Samuel Came to Saul

Verses 13 through 23 are a record of the conversation between Samuel and Saul after Samuel came to Saul. When Saul declared that he had fulfilled the word of Jehovah, Samuel asked, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen that I hear?" (vv. 13-14). Saul explained that they had been brought from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to Jehovah and destroyed the rest. Samuel then told Saul to stop and he would tell him what Jehovah had spoken to him the night before. Then he went on to say, "Though you are small in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah has anointed you as king over Israel. And Jehovah sent you on a journey and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed. Why then did you not obey the voice of Jehovah, but flew upon the spoil and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?" (vv. 17-19). Saul responded by claiming that he did obey the voice of Jehovah, but that the people took sheep and oxen of the spoil to sacrifice to Jehovah (vv. 20-21).

In verses 22 and 23 Samuel continued by speaking a very strong word to Saul: "Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices/As much as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? /Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,/And to heed, than the fat of rams./For rebellion is like the sin of divination,/And insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim." Here Samuel seemed to be saying, "Saul, you say that you spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to Jehovah, my God. But God prefers that you obey His word. He told you to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all that they have. Instead of obeying this word, you kept some of the sheep and oxen for yourself. This morning you raised up a monument for yourself. You did not raise up anything for God. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed, to take care of, God's speaking is better than the fat of rams. Saul, you have rebelled against God, and rebellion is like the sin of divination, like the sin of witchcraft. What you did was just as evil as

contacting an evil spirit for the purpose of carrying out the intention of that spirit, not God's intention. You did not subordinate yourself to God as your Head but acted presumptuously, according to your ways and by your will. Now your kingship is over. Because you have rejected the word of Jehovah, He has rejected you from being king." Saul was thus exposed as being a rebel against God and an enemy of God.

C. Saul's Confession and Begging

1. Saul Confessing His Sin with an Excuse of His Being Afraid of the People

Saul confessed his sin to Samuel with the excuse that he had transgressed the commandment of Jehovah and Samuel's words because he "feared the people and obeyed their voice" (v. 24).

2. Saul Begging Samuel to Pardon His Sin and Return with Him

Saul begged Samuel to pardon his sin and return with him, but Samuel refused to do so because of Saul's rejection of Jehovah's word and Jehovah's rejection of Saul's kingship (vv. 25-26).

3. Samuel's Word to Saul concerning Jehovah's Tearing Away the Kingdom of Israel from Him

When Samuel turned around to go, Saul seized the corner of his cloak, and it tore. Then Samuel told him that Jehovah had torn the kingdom of Israel away from him that day and had given it to an associate of his, who was better than he. This associate was David. Samuel went on to say, "Moreover the Eminence of Israel does not lie nor repent, for He is not a man that He should repent" (vv. 27-29).

4. Saul Begging Samuel to Honor Him before the Elders of His People and before Israel

Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. Honor me now, I beg you, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me so that I may worship Jehovah your God" (v. 30). Then Samuel returned after Saul, and Saul worshipped Jehovah (v. 31).

XIII. SAMUEL'S EXECUTION OF AGAG

Samuel asked that Agag the king of the Amalekites be brought near to him. Agag came to him cheerfully, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death has turned" (v. 32). Samuel said to Agag, "Just as your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women," and then he hewed Agag to pieces before Jehovah (v. 33).

XIV. SAMUEL'S DEPARTURE FROM SAUL

Chapter fifteen concludes with Samuel's departure from Saul (vv. 34-35). Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah. Samuel never again saw Saul unto the day of his death, though Samuel mourned for Saul, because Jehovah repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

We should be warned by this account of Saul's disobedience not to do anything in the kingdom of God by our flesh. We need to fear God and remember that we are flesh. But the Son of God has crucified the flesh and He has come into us to regenerate our spirit. Now He is living in our spirit, moving, acting, and taking the lead to guide us into the line of life for the building up of His organism, the Body of Christ. This is the kingdom of God, God's eternal kingdom, which will consummate in the upcoming New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. This should be our goal. We should not try to build a monarchy for ourselves in God's kingdom. This is the lesson that we need to learn from our study of this portion of the history in the Old Testament.

We thank the Lord that, under His mercy, He has opened up the intrinsic secrets in the Word to show us the real lessons. We have to learn the lesson of the cross and crucify our flesh with its passions and its lusts and leave it on the cross always and in everything (Gal. 5:24). We should faithfully exercise our spirit to follow the Lord, who is the life-giving, consummated Spirit indwelling our spirit and who is one with us. Then the kingdom of God, the church as the intrinsic Body of Christ, will be built up.