

## Rise and Fall of Saul

MEMORY VERSE: People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

SCRIPTURES: 1 Samuel 13:5-14; 15; 16

AIM: Saul's failure was the result of fearing people more than he feared God.

Saul had every appearance of a worthy choice as Israel's first [human] king. And although things started out well for him, they did not end well because in his heart, Saul had a fear problem. Samuel warned the people repeatedly that their decision to choose a human king over GOD, did not free them of the command to Fear the Lord and do what is right. He told the people that, for the sake of HIS NAME, God did not reject His people, BUT if they did not **fear Him** and follow His ways, they and their king would be swept away!

The bible is very clear that the fear of God is the foundation of a proper relationship with Him; Deuteronomy 10 tells us that it is STEP 1 in what God asks of his people. A proper fear of God is based on the understanding that God hates sin, and he wants his followers to hate sin like He does. Of course that it impossible, without being reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the saving Blood of Jesus. Without Jesus, **our hearts are MUCH more inclined to fear other people**, rather than Fear God. And that is exactly what we see in Saul's life.

Saul's first battle went very well. He followed God's plans perfectly, and God helped the Israelites defeat the Ammonites who had invaded the town of Jabesh Gilead. And that battle confirmed Saul as the legitimate king over Israel.

But soon after that, Saul's fear of man created some REAL BIG problems! First, Saul disobeyed God's instruction to wait for Samuel at Gilgal in preparation for a big battle with the Philistines. Saul didn't wait; he made offerings to God in Samuel's place. He did that because he was afraid of the Philistine army.

Saul was also easily swayed by what his soldiers told him to do, rather than what God instructed. In another battle, Saul was told to completely destroy the Amalekites – even the animals, but Saul claimed that his soldiers talked him into disobeying God!

Saul even made a monument to himself to try to force people to approve of him!

If Saul had obeyed God, his kingdom would have stayed in his family. But because Saul did not Fear God, and chose to disobey, God found another who would replace him as king.

The Lord told Samuel. "Go to Bethlehem and offer a sacrifice and make a feast for the people. Invite Jesse and his sons to the feast."

When they arrived, only seven of Jesse's sons came. The youngest was out in the fields taking care of the sheep.

Samuel looked at the oldest son. He was tall and handsome. "Surely this is the man God has chosen," thought Samuel.

But no! God said, "You judge by the way a man looks on the outside. I judge what he is like inside."

One by one the sons stood before Samuel. And none of them were the ones God had chosen.

"Are these the only sons you have?" asked Samuel.

"The youngest is out in the field watching the sheep," answered Jesse.

"Send for him at once," said Samuel.

When David stood before Samuel, God told Samuel, "This is the one I have chosen." Then Samuel poured some oil on David's head to show that he would be the next king.

The Spirit of God came upon David and from that day on he received great power from the Lord.

Saul was proof of God's word to Samuel that it takes more than outward appearances to be a good king. Though Saul was taller and stronger than his countrymen, he failed because in his heart, **he feared people more than he feared God**. The sad truth is, that all hearts are darkened by sin, and we don't have a proper fear of God. But God had a plan for providing a way to give new hearts to people through the once-and-for-all King – Jesus who would be a descendant of David.