LESSON 15

Israel rejects God as King

1 SAMUEL 8:1–12:25

CENTRAL TRUTH

God is still King even when His people reject Him.

KEY VERSE

"But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us'" **(1 Sam 10:19).**

Supporting Truths

1. God is King.
2. We reject God as King when we trust in people or things instead of God.
3. God is still King because He is still in control.
4. God deserves to be treated as King because His is powerful and kind.
5. When we reject God as King, we must repent and return to Him.

Objectives

1. List two things God did for Israel as Israel's King.
2. Explain why Israel wanted a human king.
3. Explain how God controlled the circumstances and used Saul.
4. Describe the storm and explain why God is still faithful to His people.
5. Explain what Samuel told Israel to do when they saw God's power in the storm.

Lesson Summary

Samuel felt rejected when Israel asked for a king. But Israel was actually rejecting God as their King. They wanted a human king in order to be like all the nations around them. So God gave them Saul, a king similar to those of the surrounding nations. Despite their poor choice, God used Saul to rescue Israel from the Ammonites.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God used Israel's sinful request to establish the kingship in Israel. Although Saul was not a godly king, the next king, David, was a man after God's own heart. Through David the prophesied King would come—Jesus, the King of kings. All who trust in Jesus as King of their life will be saved, because King Jesus died to defeat sin and rose to defeat death.

LAST WEEK

God gives Israel a prophet and judge
1 Samuel 1:1–7:17

THIS WEEK

Israel rejects God as King
1 Samuel 8:1–12:25

NEXT WEEK

Saul disobeys God
1 Samuel 13:1–15:35

Lesson Commentary

God is still King even when His people reject Him.

The revival under Samuel restored Israel to God and reunited the twelve tribes. Samuel truly was a gift of God's grace. But as Samuel grew old, his sons failed to follow his godly example. So the elders of Israel came to Samuel at Ramah to ask for a human king. Their request was reasonable. Samuel was aging and his sons had disqualified themselves from leadership. However, the Israelites sinned when they sought protection from a human king in the place of God as their King. Even so, despite man's rejection of God, He remains King and continues to reign from His throne in heaven.

Israel rejected the LORD as their king (8:1–22)

Because Samuel's sons broke God's law for judges (1 Sam 8:3; Deut 16:19) and the system of judges was failing, it seemed logical to seek a new form of government. So the elders of Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king (1 Sam 8:5). After all, God had revealed that Israel would have a king, and the prophecies of a coming king contained blessings, not warnings (Gen 35:11; 36:31; 49:10; Num 24:7, 9, 17; Deut 17:14–20).

So why was Samuel upset when Israel asked for a king (1 Sam 8:6)? The request for a king was not sinful in itself. Rather, it was the motivation behind the request. It was wrong because Israel was called to be holy as God is ***holy***. They were called to be *different* because God is different (Lev 20:26). But they wanted a king in order to be like all the nations around them (1 Sam 8:20). It was also wrong because God was the one who went before them and fought their battles (Exod 14:14; Deut 3:22; Josh 10:14). But Israel wanted a human king to go before them and fight their battles (1 Sam 8:20).Israel foolishly put their hope in human kings and not in God (Ps 118:8–9; 146:3).

God told Samuel to warn Israel (1 Sam 8:9). Israel had thought only of what the king would do for them, but Samuel warned of all the king would take from them (8:10–18). But they would not listen. So God granted them their request, allowing them to feel for themselves the pain a king would bring (8:22).

How often we commit the same error as Israel! We strive to be like the world around us, and when trouble finds us, we look to worldly methods and personalities for salvation (Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17). But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the power of God is greater also (1 Cor 1:25). Let us look only to Him in our time of need.

The LORD gave Israel a human king (9:1–10:1)

God was still ***sovereign***, *in control* even over Israel's sinful choice. He controlled all the details—the lost donkeys, the unsuccessful search, and the servant's suggestion. It was God who brought Saul to Samuel, just as He planned (1 Sam 9:1–16; Prov 16:9; 20:24). He chose Saul as king, not because Saul was fit to be king, but because Saul was what Israel wanted. He was tall and handsome, just like the kings of the nations surrounding them (1 Sam 9:2; cf. Deut 1:28; 2:10; 9:2). Israel would get the king they deserved—tall, handsome, and godless.

THINK ABOUT IT
It is a warning to be careful what we pray for. Answered prayers are not necessarily good prayers.

But God can use even a sinful request to accomplish His purpose. Through Saul, God would rescue Israel from their enemies (1 Sam 9:16). And despite Israel's rejection of God, He had compassion on them. Truly God's ***mercy***, *His kindness to those who do not deserve it*, is very great (Ps 103:11).

God used Saul as king to rescue Israel (10:2–11:15)

Before using Saul, God confirmed that Saul was to be His servant. Samuel predicted three detailed signs showing that Saul was God's choice (1 Sam 10:2–7). Since he was God's choice, Saul was to be God's

servant, submitting to God's word spoken through Samuel (10:8).Israel's kings were always to obey God's word spoken through the prophets.

God then confirmed to the people that Saul was His choice for king. This did not change the sinfulness of Israel's request, as Samuel pointed out again (10:12–19). Even Saul's timid behavior while hiding among the luggage did nothing to convince Israel that he might be the wrong choice for king (10:22). Ironically, the people thought a king could save them, yet they could not even find their king without God's help. After this ceremony, Samuel again affirmed that Saul's authority was under the authority of God's word (10:25).

THINK ABOUT IT
God's law is over every person, no matter how great their earthly authority.

Having confirmed Saul's position, God began to use Saul to free Israel from Ammonite oppression. Nahash, whose name means "snake," was threatening to mutilate the warriors of Jabesh-Gilead (11:1–2). But the Spirit transformed Saul from a timid farmer into a brilliant military general (11:6). In less than a week, Saul united Israel, assembled an army of over 300,000 men, coordinated an all-night march, and utterly defeated a foreign enemy before the heat of the day. All this from a man who couldn't even find his father's donkeys! Clearly it was God, not any human leader, who won the victory.

Samuel rebuked Israel for rejecting the LORD (12:1–12:25)

As Israel officially crowned Saul king, Samuel tried once more to lead the nation to repentance. He began by reminding Israel of his faithful service (12:1–5). He then reminded Israel of times in the past when disaster threatened and God delivered them (12:6–11). But this time, when Israel was in need, they cried out not to God but to a human king (12:12). Even though they could recall numerous instances of God's deliverance, they quickly forgot His faithfulness and chased after man-made solutions.

THINK ABOUT IT
They traded the glory of immortal God for the glory of mortal man (Rom 1:23).

Samuel offered a final reminder: God sent thunder and rain during harvest (12:16–17). This was proof that Samuel was speaking for God, since thunder and rain almost never occurred at that time of year. Rain during harvest could destroy the crops, ruining months of labor in a moment. It was proof that God was still Israel's king, whether they recognized Him or not. If Israel continued in rebellion against God, no king would be able to rescue them from God's wrath (12:15, 25). When Israel saw how terrible their sin was in God's eyes, they feared God as they should (12:18).

Although God detested their sin and demanded obedience, He was ***faithful***. He would *not abandon His people*. Why? Because He had chosen them, and He would not go back on His choice. For the sake of His name, He would never reject them (1 Sam 12:22; Isa 48:9). Samuel, too, would faithfully fulfill his duty to pray for Israel (1 Sam 12:23).

The nation had their earthly king, but their allegiance still belonged to the King of heaven (12:14–15). Before this King all men will one day stand to give an account of everything they have ever thought, said, and done (Rom 14:10, 12). At this time every knee will bow before Him (Rom 14:11). Let us bow before this great King while we yet live, seeking His grace and forgiveness while it may be found.

Lesson Outline

God is still King even when His people reject Him.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Israel wanted a king just like the people around them (8:1–22).**
2. **God gave them a king just like the people around them (9:1–10:1).**
3. **God used Saul to rescue Israel (10:2–11:15).**
4. **Samuel told Israel to repent for rejecting God as their king (12:1–25).**

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Israel rejected the LORD as their king (8:1–22).**
   - Samuel was old and his sons were dishonest (8:1–3).
   - Israel wanted a king just like all the other nations(8:4–5).
   - The LORD revealed why Israel wanted a king (8:6–9).
   - Israel did not listen to Samuel's warning (8:10–22).

2. **The LORD gave Israel a human king (9:1–10:1).**
   - Saul was tall, good-looking, and godless (9:1–8).
   - The LORD directed Saul to Samuel (9:3–17).
   - Samuel anointed Saul as king (9:18–10:1).

3. **God used Saul to rescue Israel (10:2–11:15).**
   - God confirmed His choice of Saul as king (10:2–27).
   - The Spirit empowered Saul to defeat Israel's enemy (11:1–11).
   - Israel made Saul their king (11:12–15).

4. **Samuel rebuked Israel for rejecting the LORD (12:1–12:25).**
   - Israel knew that Samuel was trustworthy (12:1–5).
   - Israel had not trusted the One who had rescued them in the past (12:6–12).
   - No king could protect those who rebel against the LORD (12:13–18, 25).
   - Israel should fear and worship the LORD, who will not abandon His people (12:19–24).

Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.

Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **What did Israel want?**
   They wanted a human king like the nations around them.
2. **Why did they want a human king?**
   They wanted a human king because they did not trust God to save them.
3. **Who was the king God gave them?**
   Saul.
4. **What did Samuel tell them to do?**
   Samuel told them to repent and worship God as their true King.

Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **Why did Israel want a king?**
   They wanted to be like the nations around them. They did not trust God to fight their battles as their King.
2. **Did they listen to Samuel's warning?**
   No. They chose foolish human thinking instead of God's wisdom.
3. **What kind of a king did God give them?**
   God gave them a tall, handsome, and godless king. Saul was the king they asked for and the king they deserved.
4. **Was God still King? How do you know?**
   God was still King. He controlled the events to make Saul king, and He changed Saul and gave Saul power to deliver Israel.
5. **Did God reject His people when they rejected Him?**
   No. He still had compassion on them, and He used Saul to save them.
6. **Why was it silly for Israel to choose a human king in the place of God?**
   (1) Because God had already proven that He could rescue them; (2) Their problems were the result of sin, not lack of a king; (3) A human king could do nothing without God; (4) A human king could not protect against God's wrath.
7. **What did God do to show Israel how much He hated their request for a king?**
   He sent thunder and rain during wheat harvest.
8. **What did Samuel tell Israel to do?**
   Samuel did not tell Israel to get rid of their new human king. Instead, he said that Israel and their king should worship God as the true King.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5

INTRODUCE

A KING—GOOD OR BAD?

In today's lesson, Israel demands a king from Samuel. Although asking for a king was not wrong in itself, God warned Israel about the dangers of having a king. Like many other things, a king could bring both good and harm. Bring a number of objects to class and ask the children whether they are good or bad (knife, medicine,food, stick, money, matches, handcuffs, etc.). These things can be either helpful or harmful, depending on who uses them and how they are used. God warned Israel that their kings would ultimately bring them harm rather than good.

WHO SAYS?

Play a game of "Simon Says" with the children. After the game, ask the children what happens when someone doesn't follow the directions Simon gives them (they are out of the game). Then ask the children if they can just replace Simon if they don't like his directions. Maybe they think they or someone else can do a better job? Explain that that is what the nation of Israel does in today's lesson. They did not want to follow God's directions anymore and replaced Him with a human king.

ILLUSTRATE

SAUL STANDS OUT IN A CROWD

Have one teacher sit in the middle of the children during the lesson. When it comes time to describe God choosing Saul in 1 Samuel 9:2, have the children stand up and the teacher stand up in the middle. Wow! He really stands out in a crowd. The point to remember is that God is the one who chose Saul.

OBJECTS OF A KING

Make use of objects to teach about some of the functions of a king. As the lesson progresses, a child can be called up to hold one or more of the objects. A crown, robe, scepter, Bible, sword, shield, money, treasure, picture of horses, food, etc., can all be used as you explain God's warning to Israel.

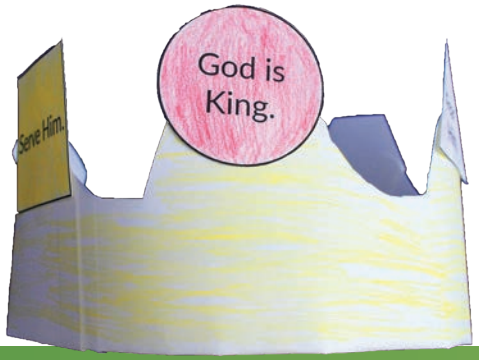
APPLY

GOD IS KING CROWN

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, glue, and crayons.

Directions: Pre-cut the shapes from the craft sheet. Have the children color the shapes. Give each student a crown made of construction paper or bulletin-board borders. Have them color the crown and glue on the shapes from the craft sheet.



God is King Crown
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

Israel rejects God as King • 1 Samuel 8:1–12:25

AGES 6–8

INTRODUCE

EXPECTATIONS

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you thought you would burst if you didn't get it? Maybe you waited day after day, counting down how much time was left until it arrived. But after receiving it, you soon discovered that it was not all that you had thought it would be. You were actually disappointed and not very happy with it. In today's lesson, the children of Israel say that they want a king. Once God gives them a king, however, they realize that he is not all that they thought he would be.

THE IGNORED WARNING

Have you ever been warned not to do something? Warnings are good to listen to because they can save you from a lot of pain and problems later. When Israel said that they wanted a king, Samuel warned them that it would mean some very painful things. Their sons and daughters would be taken from them. They would one day regret having this king that they were asking for. But even though they were warned, Israel still wanted to have a king like the other nations.

ILLUSTRATE

GOD VERSUS A HUMAN KING

Make two different kinds of crowns, one elaborately decorated and one made from plain paper with marks and tears on it. Begin the story by wearing the gold crown, and explain to the children that Israel had no human king because God was their king. Review some of the ways God had protected and provided for Israel. As you go through the lesson, explain that Israel rejected God as their king and chose rather to have a human king. Put on the poorly made crown, and explain that even the best human king could not rule as well as God had.

DANGER AHEAD

Bring a traffic warning sign ("Danger Ahead") to class. Use this object to begin a discussion about some of the signs that warn us when we have rejected God as our king. Some warning signs include: (1) Disobeying God's commands in the Bible; (2) Rebellion against God's representatives: parents, teachers, and government (police); and (3) Rejection or apathy towards God's church.

APPLY

WHO IS YOUR KING?

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, brads, and crayons.

Directions: Have the children color and cut out the pieces. Glue the picture to the middle of the craft sheet. Attach the arrow with a brad. Glue a strip that says "Who Is Your King" to the top of the craft sheet.

Who Is Your King?
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

AGES 9–11

INTRODUCE

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE

Have you ever wanted something because everyone else has it? Many people think that if they could have a particular thing, they would be happy. This wrong belief was a problem in Samuel's day, too. Israel wanted to be like everyone else. They wanted a king just like the other nations. They thought that having a human king would be better than having God as their leader. Today, we often think that we are better leaders of ourselves than God, just as Israel did.

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Ask the children whether they have heard the saying "Don't judge a book by its cover." This means that we shouldn't decide whether the inside of a book is good based on the picture or title on the cover. This applies to people, too. But just because the outside is impressive doesn't mean that the inside is, too. And the inside is what counts; it is what God cares about. The people of Israel saw Saul and thought that because he was tall and handsome, he would make a good leader. They judged the book by the cover and didn't ask the truly important questions.

ILLUSTRATE

THE EVERLASTING KING

Ask the children if the lights are on in the classroom. Then put a blindfold over your eyes, blocking out all light. Again, ask the children if the lights are on. When they say "yes," respond with "no." Continue to do this, trying to convince the children that the lights are not on because you can't see them through your blindfold. Finally, tell the children that God exists and rules over all men whether they accept Him as king or not.

WHAT IS YOUR WISDOM IQ?

A person with an IQ of 130 is considered smart. A genius has an IQ above 150. Einstein's IQ was 230. But the IQ of man does not compare with the wisdom of God. God always knows what is best in every situation. As you grow older, you will encounter many tough situations where people will give you their opinions of what you should do. That is what we call human wisdom. That does not compare with the wisdom that God gives us through His Word. List some life situations and what human wisdom would tell us to do. Then, discuss what God's wisdom would have us do.

APPLY

WHO RULES YOUR HEART?

Have the children write down what they did this week. Ask them how much television they watched throughout the week, how many hours of sports they played, and how long they spent on the phone with friends. After asking them about the activities they did for themselves, ask them how much time they spent serving God in ministry and spending time in prayer and Bible study. Discuss how a person would determine who their king is. Finally ask them to take a look at their own heart to determine who rules it.