



TEACHER NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4 THE KINGS & PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

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THEME	KING SAUL: THE RISE AND FALL OF ISRAEL'S FIRST KING
HOMEWORK BIBLE READING	1 SAMUEL 9, 15, 28
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OVERVIEW

The anointing of Saul as Israel's first King should have been a high point in Israel's story. It certainly is not all bad. Saul's initial reaction to Samuel's advances toward him as Israel's first king show a great sense of humility, however the over arching assessment of his reign would have to be failure. Here we have a great opportunity to highlight the subtleties of Hebrew narrative with the students.

a) He is introduced as a guy who can't find his fathers lost donkeys - David will be introduced to us a shepherd entrusted with all the sheep in his fathers household.

b) He is tall and handsome, a rarity for Hebrew narrative to explain looks, yet his cowardice at his coronation is cringe-worthy. Saul's coronation is one of the classic moments of the Old Testament, particularly as Samuel uses the occasion to give a speech that is more focused on dressing down the people than puffing up the first king who is waiting in the wings. The narrator wants us to see that the people are getting exactly what they have asked for in Saul...a king like the other nations.

c) His failure of obedience to Samuel is highlighted by the way the narrator makes us almost feel sorry for Saul as Samuel arrives right as he is offering the sacrifice that he had waited days for Samuel to come and make. This is no accident. Israel and we need to learn that God's work and his nation in the Old Testament move forward because he is with them not because they have a great man at the helm. The king is subjected to the authority of the Prophet who speaks God's words and holds Israel to account.

The reader's initial concern at Saul's treatment is alleviated by the actions of his later life including his conjuring up of Samuel with the witch of Endor.

You will have fun teaching this chapter!

OUR TIPS

As a character study, Saul provides many great opportunities for self reflection. This is a good place in the study to start highlighting to students that as they come and read these stories, the stories are also reading them.

Saul's failures often cause students to want to sympathise with him. This is understandable because from all of our points of view, compromise regarding our relationship with God and our response to him is present in even the most dedicated followers of Jesus. This chapter demonstrates that from God's perspective it was a serious thing for Saul not to carry out God's instructions. Did he know better? Was his own judgment and assessment of political and military circumstances better than God's? As you explore this with students you may want to explore the statement of Samuel 'To obey is better than sacrifice' in a modern context.

The response of Saul when he is confronted by his sin is also a great chance to explore responsibility and repentance with the students. Why doesn't he repent? David will when he is confronted by Nathan. The entire account is challenging us to see God's place as the true King of Israel and recognise that if the human king does not live this out the nation are doomed. Start to make these observations in the course because they will begin to paint the picture that later will be finished when we encounter the prophets pointing Israel forward to the king who will reign wisely and will be worthy of our trust.

YOUR TIPS

We would love to hear what you have learnt after teaching this chapter. If you have tips that you are happy for us to freely share with other teachers using this course please let us know by emailing them through to us at admin@biblicalturningpoints.com.au.

COMMON QUESTIONS STUDENTS ASK

- Why did God choose Saul if he knew he would fail?
- Did God set Saul up with Samuel?
- If Saul managed to conjure up Samuel after he had died does that mean we can do it today?

We would love to hear what questions students are asking in response to the content of this chapter. Please let us know at admin@biblicalturningpoints.com.au.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU TEACH THIS CHAPTER

- Kings and Prophets Visual aid

If you know of any websites or resources that would assist teachers with bringing this chapter to life please let us know at admin@biblicalturningpoints.com.au.

ANSWERS FOR CHAPTER 4

Answers have been provided for questions where we believe clarification may be needed or where an activity requires the teacher to have the correct answer before the students commence the activity.

If you have any questions about an activity not written up in the following notes, please contact us at admin@biblicalturningpoints.com.au.

CHAPTER 4

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p. 57 Activity

First impressions of Saul

- 1 Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin
- 2 Saul had good standing in the community
- 3 Saul was impressive
- 4 Saul was tall

p. 58 Activity

Saul's donkey chase – Read 1 Samuel 9:14-21

Why is Samuel described as the seer?

It recognises his role as a prophet and spokesperson for God. Literally he sees from God's perspective as he carries out his office.

What evidence in the passage supports the idea that it was no coincidence that Saul was chasing his father's donkeys and met Samuel?

We see that God tells Samuel that Saul is on his way to see him and Saul's travelling companion suggests that Saul go to Samuel, fulfilling this leading from God.

p. 64 Activity

"You must wait seven days" – Read 1 Samuel 13:10-15

What do we learn about Saul by his actions here?

Saul was impatient. While he may have had good intentions, he was disobedient. He had to learn that as a king he was not in charge of this nation, God was. Total reliance on God is the only way to move forward and God was testing him here to see if he would give him that trust.

p. 69 Activity

Unwilling to abdicate – Read 1 Samuel 28 and 31

Why does Saul visit a witch?

Out of desperation. Saul was terrified, Samuel was dead, and God did not answer him in his time frame.

What is ironic and tragic about his visit to her?

Saul had banned mediums and spiritists from Israel. He removed the sin of witchcraft from the land, but not from his heart.

Explain Samuel's message to Saul.

You didn't obey God so now God will let the Philistines defeat Israel, and tomorrow you and your sons will die.