

THE RISE AND REJECTION OF SAUL

WAR WITH THE AMALEKITES

Introduction:

1. Chapters 1 – 8 took place during the time of the Judges and focused on the life of Samuel.
2. Chapters 9 – 12 deal with the transition of the nation into a kingdom.
3. Chapters 13 – 15 present the decline and rejection of Saul as King of Israel.

- I. Battle with the Amalekites (15:1-9)
 - A. Background on the history of the Amalekites
 1. As the Israelites left Egypt, the people of Amalek were the first to attack them in the wilderness (Exodus 17:8-16).
 2. The nature of their attack was unusually cruel, for they attacked Israel from the rear and focused on slaughtering the feeble (Deut. 25:17-19).
 3. What makes this even worse is the fact that the Amalekites were descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:12).
 4. This seems to have been almost a religious war on the part of the Amalekites – to destroy Israel before they could inherit the blessing promised through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (cf. Numbers 24:20).
 5. Thus, God promised a severe judgment upon the nation (cf. Numbers 14:43-45; Judges 3:13; 6:33; 7:12; 10:12). **Note Psalm 83**
 - B. God's words were clear and His commands were understandable.
 1. It was God who had chosen Saul to be king over Israel.
 2. Therefore, Saul was to listen carefully to God's instructions.
 3. God had not forgotten the wickedness of the Amalekites, though He had been longsuffering toward them (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-10).
 4. Now, the time had come for their punishment and the judgment of a righteous God.
 - C. Saul gathered a force of 210,000 men to fight against Amalek.
 - D. Before the fighting commenced, Saul gave warning to the Kenites to depart from the Amalekites lest they be killed in the battle.
 1. The Kenites were descendants of Moses' father-in-law and had been helpful to Israel (Judges 1:16; Numbers 10:29).
 2. Thus, they were allowed to escape the coming conflict.
 - E. Thus, the battle began and Israel soundly defeated the Amalekites.
 - F. However, they spared the king, Agag, and took spoils of the possessions.
 1. Clearly, this was something desired by the people.
 2. Sadly, Saul compromised God's instructions and chose to please the people instead of Jehovah.
- II. The Rebellious Sin of Saul (15:10-31)
 - A. At Saul's disobedience, God once again spoke to Samuel.
 - B. God repented, or was made sorrowful, over the choice of Saul as king.
 - C. Likewise, Samuel was grieved over Saul's failure and he cried unto the Lord all night (cf. 7:8-9).
 - D. Early the next morning, Samuel began a long journey to confront Saul.
 - E. As Samuel approached, Saul came out to meet him stating hypocritically, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

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- F. Samuel asked a question that cut right to the heart of the matter: “What then is the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen?”
 - 1. Obviously, Saul had not performed the Lord’s commandment.
 - 2. Yet, Saul seems to have believed that his compromise had made everybody happy.
 - G. Saul immediately shifted the blame to the people for the sin, but credited himself with obedience.
 - 1. Notice that he says the animals were to be sacrificed to “to the Lord thy God.”
 - 2. The sin committed here is parallel to the sin of Achan (Joshua 7; cf. Leviticus 27:28-29).
 - H. Thus, Samuel delivered the decree of God to Saul – God had made Saul king and Saul had rebelled against God.
 - I. Yet, Saul still tried to justify himself by blaming the people.
 - 1. First, he presented the capture of Agag as proof that he had destroyed the Amalekites.
 - 2. In fact, the presence of Agag was proof that he had disobeyed the Lord (cf. vs. 3).
 - J. Samuel replied that God would not be pleased with or accept the sacrifice of one who lived in disobedience.
 - 1. Many attempt to bribe God with partial obedience.
 - 2. They misunderstood the purpose of sacrifice and turned it into a mere ritual (Psalm 50:7-15; 51:16-17; Isaiah 1:11-18; Micah 6:6-8).
 - 3. Saul was guilty of rebellion – and it was just as sinful and wicked as the practice of witchcraft or idolatry.
 - 4. They all consist of placing our will above the Will of God.
 - K. Finally, when he had tried every excuse and had no one else to blame, Saul declared, “I have sinned.” (*Contrast this with David in 2 Samuel 12:13 and Psalm 51:4.*)
 - L. Though he said all the right words, Saul’s desire was not to please God but to honor himself and secure his place as king.
 - 1. It would not look good if there were an obvious division between God’s prophet and the nation’s king.
 - 2. Thus, Saul asked Samuel to turn with him that they might worship the Lord together.
 - M. Samuel refused to go along with Saul, for God had rejected him as king of Israel.
 - N. He tore Saul’s garment to indicate that God would tear the kingdom away from Saul and give it to another.
 - O. In the end, Samuel went with Saul and allowed him to worship the Lord.
 - 1. This was done to hold the nation together until God made known who would be the new king of Israel.
 - 2. It was not an indication of Samuel’s approval of Saul (cf. vs. 35).
- III. The Rejection of Saul as King (15:32-35)
- A. Following his message to Saul, Samuel finished God’s business by killing Agag, king of the Amalekites.
 - B. Samuel and Saul both returned to their respective homes.
 - C. Though he never met with Saul again, Samuel mourned of the fall of Israel’s first king.