

I Samuel (About Samuel, Saul, & David): A Judge, a Rejected King, & a Shepherd King

By Joelee Chamberlain

The last time we got together we talked about the book of Judges, didn't we? Remember, a judge of the Jews was someone who ruled the Jews under God. God was their king, and the judges were under God. Do you remember who the very first judge of the Jews was, though? That was clear back in the book of Exodus, wasn't it? Who was that? Yes, Moses! Moses was the first leader of the children of Israel under God, and he was a judge. He was their leader and judge when he led them out of Egypt and all the time they were in the wilderness. Moses had other little judges under him, but he was the first big judge of the Jews. (Remember, the Jews are called Jews, children of Israel, and Hebrews. Those are all names for the same group of people.)

Then who was the next big judge of the children of Israel, the one who became their leader when Moses died? That's right, Joshua! Joshua was their leader and judge when they crossed the Jordan river to go into the promised land of Canaan, and Joshua was their leader and judge while they conquered the land of Canaan, wasn't he? And while Joshua was alive, the children of Israel obeyed God, didn't they? But then after Joshua died, in the book of Judges it tells how sometimes they would forget about God, remember? It tells how they would forget the Lord God who had taken them out of Egypt, dried up the Red Sea so they could get across, taken care of them for 40 years in the wilderness, fed them with manna all that time and made it so that their clothes and shoes didn't even wear out all of that time, given them water out of rocks 2 times, been so good to them. Yes, they would forget the only real God, the One Who had done all of those good things for them, and they would begin worshipping false gods and idols. And then what would God do, do you remember? He would have to punish them, wouldn't He? God would punish them so that they would remember that only the Lord is God and would turn back to Him. And the way the Lord God would punish them was by having their wicked enemies come in and conquer them.

Well, then after a while the children of Israel would see that the idols they were worshipping couldn't help them against their enemies, and they would remember God and be sorry for how wicked they had been and they'd be sorry that they had been worshipping idols instead of the Lord. And then they would cry out to the Lord God, and the Lord would send a judge who would deliver them from their enemy, and then the Hebrews, the Jews, would be good for a while. This happened over and over, didn't it?

Who were some of those judges that we talked about in the book of Judges, do you remember? There were Ehud, and Deborah, and Gideon, and Samson, weren't there? And today I'm going to tell you about the last two judges of the children of Israel. Their names are Eli and Samuel. We hear about them in the next book of the Bible right after Judges and Ruth. This book is called First Samuel. Let's start before Samuel was born, okay?

Well, there was a man named Elkanah. Now, remember in the book of Genesis when God

made people? God made Adam, and God made Eve. One man and one woman. So Adam had just one wife, right? That was the way that God had made it, one wife for one man. But later sometimes men would decide to marry more than one woman, and this often caused trouble. Well, Elkanah had married 2 women; he had 2 wives. One wife was named Peninnah and the other wife was named Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah didn't have any children, and that made Hannah very unhappy. And sometimes Peninnah would even tease Hannah because she had no children. But Elkanah loved Hannah more than he loved Peninnah, and Elkanah tried to comfort Hannah.

Well, Elkanah used to take his whole family to where the Tabernacle of God was to celebrate the feasts of the Lord. (Remember, the Tabernacle was the special beautiful tent that God had Moses make. It was used in the worship of God. We talked about that in the book of Exodus, didn't we?) Anyway, when they'd get to the Tabernacle, Elkanah used to give lots of food to Peninnah and her children, but he'd give even more food to Hannah.

Well, one time when they had gone up to worship at the Tabernacle, he gave out the food as usual. But Peninnah teased Hannah, and Hannah was crying because she didn't have any children. Elkanah tried to comfort Hannah, but she was still very unhappy. So Hannah went over to near where the Tabernacle was, and she began crying and praying to God to have a son. She promised God that if He would give her a son, she would give him back to the Lord to serve the Lord all of his life. As she prayed and cried there near the tabernacle, a man saw her. His name was Eli. Eli was the high priest, and Eli was a judge of Israel. And Eli thought Hannah was drunk.

Eli said to Hannah, "You shouldn't drink so much wine."

But Hannah said to Eli, "I haven't drunk any wine; I'm just very unhappy and am praying to the Lord."

Then Eli said to Hannah, "Go in peace, and God will give you what you are asking Him for."

After that Hannah was happy. And guess what? God made it so that Hannah could have a baby! She had a baby boy, and she called him "Samuel." The name Samuel means "God listened." She had asked God for a baby, and God had listened to her and given her a baby.

Well, Hannah was very happy now. She took very good care of Samuel, and when Samuel was old enough, Elkanah and Hannah took little Samuel back to where the Tabernacle was and gave him to Eli. Hannah said to Eli, "This is the child that I was praying for. And I had promised God that I would give him back to God for as long as he lived." And Hannah praised God.

We aren't told how old Samuel was when he went to live with Eli, but he was probably somewhere around 5 years old. But little Samuel stayed with Eli, and he helped Eli around the Tabernacle. And every year his mother and father (Hannah and Elkanah) would come see him, and Hannah would make him new clothes and bring them to Samuel. And God gave Hannah 5 more

children. Wasn't God good to Hannah?

Well, Eli was a very good man. But Eli had 2 sons who were also priests, and they were very bad. Their names were Hophni and Phinehas. Hophni and Phinehas did bad things and they would also take for themselves the best parts of the food that people brought to sacrifice to God. Soon people didn't even want to come and sacrifice to the Lord anymore because of Eli's two bad sons. Eli scolded Hophni and Phinehas, but they didn't pay any attention to their father Eli but kept doing bad things.

Now, there weren't many prophets in Israel at that time, but one day God sent a prophet to Eli, and this prophet told Eli that there would be punishment on his family because Eli hadn't stopped his sons Hophni and Phinehas from doing bad things while they were supposed to be serving the Lord. Then the prophet said to Eli, "As a sign to you that the Lord will really do this to your family, someday both Hophni and Phinehas will die on the same day."

But what about little Samuel? Well, Samuel helped Eli, and he was a good boy. One night after they had gone to bed, Samuel was lying down and the Lord called out to him, "Samuel." Samuel thought Eli was calling him, and Samuel said, "Here I am," and he got up and ran over to where old Eli was lying down, and said, "Here I am. You called me."

Eli said, "No, I didn't call you. Go lie down again." So Samuel went back to his own place and lay down.

The Lord called again, "Samuel."

Again Samuel thought it was Eli who was calling him, so he got up again and went over to where Eli was lying down and said, "Here I am, Eli. You called me."

But again, Eli said, "I didn't call you, my son. Go back to bed."

Well, the Lord called to Samuel a third time, "Samuel."

And the third time Samuel got up and went over to where Eli was and said to Eli, "Here I am. You called me."

Then Eli realized that it was the Lord who was calling to Samuel. So Eli said to Samuel, "Go back and lie down, and if you are called again, you say, `Speak, Lord, for your servant hears You.'" So Samuel went back and lay down again.

The Lord called again, "Samuel, Samuel."

This time Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

God went on to say to Samuel, "I'm really going to do all of the bad things to Eli's family that I told him I would, because his sons are very bad and he didn't stop them from being bad. There is now nothing they can do about the trouble there will be."

Well, Samuel lay there until the morning, and then he got up and opened the Tabernacle, but he was afraid to tell Eli what God had told him.

But Eli called Samuel over and said to him, "You must tell me what the Lord said to you, no matter how bad it is." So Samuel told Eli. And Eli said, "It is the Lord who says this; let Him do what seems good to Him."

Well, Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him and sometimes the Lord told Samuel things, and soon everyone knew that Samuel was a prophet, that the Lord would tell him things that were going to happen (like Joseph and Moses were prophets, remember?).

Well, one day some of Israel's enemies, the Philistines came to fight against Israel. So the children of Israel got an army together, and there was a fight -- and the Philistines won. Some of the leaders of the Jews said, "Why did God let the Philistines beat us? Let's take the ark of the covenant out of the Tabernacle and bring it here. Maybe it can save us from our enemies."

Now, do you remember what the ark of the covenant was? It was the special beautiful golden box that God had told Moses to have built. It was kept in the inside room (called the Holy of Holies) of the Tabernacle. No one was to go into the Holy of Holies except the high priest once a year. The Bible tells us that the little room, the Holy of Holies, and the ark of the covenant were like a picture of where God's throne is in heaven. Now, do you think God would want the Hebrews, the Jews, to take the ark of the covenant out of the Tabernacle and take it down near a battle? Had God told them to do this? No! And could a box, even the ark of the covenant save them from their enemies? Of course not!

Well, the children of Israel took the ark of the covenant out of the Tabernacle, and Eli's two bad sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests went with the ark, and when they got to where their army was camped, the soldiers of Israel all started shouting and cheering when they saw the ark.

Well, the Philistines heard them and asked each other, "What's going on over there?" Then they found out that the Hebrews, the children of Israel, had the ark of the covenant right there in their camp, and the Philistines thought, "Oh, how awful for us! That is the God that sent the plagues on Egypt! Who will deliver us from this great God?"

Now, what was wrong with what the Philistines were thinking? They should have feared the real God, the God of the Jews, shouldn't they? But they weren't fearing God Himself, were they? They were afraid of the ark of the covenant! But had the ark of the covenant sent the plagues on Egypt before they left Egypt? No! In fact, the ark of the covenant hadn't even been built when the

plagues came on Egypt! The ark of the covenant was only a box. Who had sent the plagues onto Egypt? Why the Lord God Himself had, hadn't He? The ark was a special box that God had made, but even a special box isn't God, is it? It's only a box. Only God is God, right? But the Philistines were used to worshipping idols that they had made themselves, so they thought that the ark of the covenant was an idol of the Hebrews, that it was their God.

Well, the Philistines were all scared when the children of Israel had brought the ark of the covenant into their camp, so what do you think the Philistines did? They said, "Let's fight really, really hard!" And that's just what they did! They fought very hard, and because the Hebrews were being disobedient, God didn't help them, and the Philistines beat the Jews and killed a lot of them -- and the Philistines ran into the camp of the Jews and captured the ark of the covenant!! But even though the ark was special to God, God wasn't in that box, was He? And God let the Philistines capture it to teach a lesson to the children of Israel and to teach a lesson to the Philistines. We'll hear about the lesson to the Philistines in just a minute.

Well, as I said, the Philistines killed a lot of the soldiers of Israel. And who do you think were among the Jews who were killed that day? Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Remember when God had the prophet tell Eli that the two sons would die on the same day as a sign to Eli? Well, God's prophecies always come true, don't they? And Hophni and Phinehas both died that same day, just as the prophet of God had said.

In the meantime, Eli, the old high priest and judge, was back by the city where the Tabernacle was. Eli hadn't wanted them to take the ark of God out to the army camp, and he was all worried about the ark. He sat there on a seat by the gate to the city, waiting to hear what had happened. Now, Eli was very old, almost 100 years old, and he was blind. And he sat there waiting and scared for the ark of God, worried about it. Well, a man had left the army camp after the battle, and he had come running back to the city. He ran into the city and told the terrible news, and everyone started crying. Eli heard the noise of the crying, and he asked, "What does that noise mean?"

The man quickly came to Eli and said, "I came from the army, but I got away."

Eli said, "What happened?"

The man said, "Israel has run away from the Philistines and lots of us were killed, and your two sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead -- and the ark of God has been captured."

Well, when the man told about the ark of the covenant, Eli just fell over backwards off of his seat, and his neck broke, and he died.

But what about the ark of the covenant? Well, the Philistines were all happy that they had captured it, and they took this special box of God, and they took it to one of their big cities and put it in the temple of their idol. This idol looked sort of like a merman, part man and part fish. The

next morning when the people got up, what do you think they saw? Why, their idol had fallen over on its face before the ark of God!!! It was as if the idol, this false god, were bowing to the ark of the real God!!! So the Philistines took their idol and stood it back up. (Imagine worshipping something that you had to take care of and that couldn't even stand itself up by itself!!) So they stood the idol up again. But what do you think they found the next morning? Why, the idol had fallen down on its face again before the ark of the covenant, but this time the hands and head of the idol had broken off!!! Who do you think made it fall and break? Why, of course, the Lord God did!

Then the Lord sent a big plague on the people of that Philistine city and around the city, and many of them died. He was going to teach them that He was the only real God! Well, the people got their leaders together to decide what to do, and the leaders said, "We're not going to keep the ark of the God of Israel with us! He is doing terrible things to us and to our idol!" And they decided to send the ark of God out of that city and over to another Philistine city. So they did. But then God sent the terrible plague on the people of that second city, and many of those people had this plague and many of them died.

So the Philistine people of the second city sent God's ark of the covenant out of this second city over to a third Philistine city, but those people shouted, "Oh, they're bringing the ark of God here to kill us, too!!"

So the Philistines gathered all of their leaders together and said, "Send the ark of the God of Israel back to where it belongs! Send it back so that we aren't killed! The hand of God is very much against us!"

So they were learning about the real God, weren't they?! Many of the Philistines died and many others had a bad plague, and they were all unhappy.

Well, the Philistines had the ark of the covenant just a little over half a year. And then they called for the priests of their idol and said, "What shall we do about this ark of the Lord? How can we send it back to the right place?"

The Philistine priests said, "Be sure to send it back with a big present. Make golden statues, 5 golden mice and 5 golden things like our plague, 2 statues for each of our 5 big cities. Maybe then God will stop being so hard on us. Don't be stubborn as the Egyptians were a long time ago when God punished them for not letting His people leave Egypt." (Remember when we talked about that way back in the book of Exodus when Moses was their leader?)

Then the Philistine priests said, "Make a new cart and take two cows that have young calves, cows that have never pulled a cart before. Tie the calves up at home and then see what the cows do." (Let me explain something here. A mother cow will NOT leave her baby, her young calf. She will do everything she can to stay with her calf.) Then the Philistine priests said, "If the mother cows go down the road to the Jews, then we will know for sure that it was their God who made us so sick and made so many of us die. But if the mother cows won't leave their calves, then we'll

know that we just happened to get sick and so many of us die."

So that's what they did. They built a brand new cart and put the ark of the covenant on the new cart and they put a box with the 10 golden statues on the cart. Then they tied two mother cows to it, but they tied up the two calves at home. The mother cows had never been tied to a cart before. Also, they didn't want to leave their calves, so what do you think the mother cows did then? Do you think they got scared because they were tied to a cart and tried to get away from the cart? No! And do you think they tried to get away and get back to their calves? No!! Those mother cows just began mooing -- and walking straight down the road away from their calves and toward the Jewish city!!!! They didn't even try to turn around at all; they just kept walking straight down the road! It was several miles to the Jewish city, but those mother cows just kept walking along, mooing as they went. And that was a miracle, wasn't it? God was teaching those Philistines about the real God, wasn't He? And some of the important Philistine leaders followed the cart to see what happened.

Finally the cows got to a field that belonged to the Jewish city. In fact, it was one of the cities that belonged to some of the Jewish priests of Lord God. Some men of Israel were reaping out in the field, and they saw the cart and the cows -- and the ark! And they were so happy! The cows pulled the cart right into the field -- and then just stopped there. Some Levites (Jewish men who could work with God's things) took the ark of God off of the cart and the box with the golden statues off of the cart. And then they held a sacrifice to the only real God, the God of the Jews. The Philistine leaders watched all of this, and then they went back to their Philistine city.

At this time the Philistines had taken many cities away from the Jews. Now, why do you think God had let them do this? Why, because the children of Israel had been worshipping idols again! So after 20 years the Jews were now very unhappy because of the Philistines, and at this time Samuel spoke to the children of Israel. Remember, Eli was dead now. Samuel was a grown man now and a judge of the children of Israel, and Samuel was a priest, and people knew that he was a prophet. And Samuel said to the people, "Come back to the Lord. Get rid of your idols and only worship God, and God will deliver you from the Philistines."

Then the children of Israel got rid of their idols and turned back to the real God. Then Samuel told them, "All of you gather together and I will pray to God for you."

So the Jews, the Hebrews, all gathered together and fasted and told God that they had sinned against Him. Well, the Philistines heard that the Jews were all gathered together, so the Philistines got their army together and came up against them and camped there. And the children of Israel were afraid when they heard that the Philistines had their army together.

Samuel told the children of Israel, "Keep praying to God; ask Him to deliver us from the Philistines."

And then Samuel offered a burnt offering to the Lord and prayed to the Lord to protect them, and the Lord paid attention to Samuel's prayers. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering

to God, the Philistines came near to fight the Jews, and what do you think happened then? God made lots of thunder come and got the Philistines all upset, and the children of Israel were able to attack the Philistines and chase them and kill lots and lots of them. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up and called the stone "Ebenezer." This means "stone of help." He did this because the Lord had helped them, and this was to remind them of the help of the Lord.

Then the Philistines left the children of Israel alone as long as Samuel was alive, and the Jews got their cities back from the Philistines, and Samuel was a judge of Israel as long as he lived.

Now, Samuel, the little boy who used to help Eli and who was now a man and a judge of Israel, Samuel was getting to be old. And Samuel had two sons, and Samuel made his two sons to be judges, too. But Samuel's two sons weren't good men like Samuel was good. They didn't judge fairly; they would judge in favor of whoever gave them money. So the children of Israel went to Samuel and said to him, "Your sons aren't good judges as you are. So we want a king now like all the other countries have." Now let's think about that. Who had we said was the King of the children of Israel? God was their king, wasn't He? But now they wanted a man to be their king, a man they could see.

Samuel didn't like this at all, and he prayed to the Lord. And God said, "Go ahead and do what the people want. They have always been turning away from me. They are rejecting me, not you. So go ahead and give them a king, but warn them what a king will be like."

So Samuel told the people what the Lord had said to him. And Samuel said to them, "A king will draft your young men into his army and take your servants to work for him and take taxes (money) from you. You will be unhappy about this, but the Lord won't do anything about it." But the people still wanted a king, one they could see, like the other countries had. Then Samuel told the people to go back home.

So let's talk now about how this happened, how they got a king.

Well, now, there was a man from the tribe of Benjamin who had some donkeys, and one day these donkeys got lost. So the man sent his son and one of the servants out to find the lost donkeys. The son's name was Saul, and Saul was a very tall, handsome man. Saul went out with the servant looking for his father's lost donkeys. He looked and looked for three days, but he couldn't find them. Finally Saul said to his servant, "We'd better go back home or my father is going to start worrying about us instead of the donkeys."

But the servant said to Saul, "Look, there's a city here where a man of God lives. Maybe he can tell us where to go."

But Saul thought they should give a present to the man of God if they were going to ask him for help, so Saul said, "What could we give this man of God? We don't have anything to give him."

The servant said, "I have a little money with me; I'll give that to him."

So they went up toward the city. They saw a girl coming out to get water, and they asked her, "Is the prophet here?"

"Yes," she said. "Hurry, for there is going to be a sacrifice, and maybe you can find him."

So Saul and his servant went into the city, and there they saw a man coming toward them. And who do you think this man was? Why, it was the prophet! But who do you think the prophet was? It was Samuel! Yes, Samuel was there because the Lord had told him to go there and that the Lord was going to send a man from the tribe of Benjamin to him and that Samuel was to make this man to be the king of the children of Israel and that this man would save the children of Israel from the Philistines.

When Samuel saw Saul coming into the city, the Lord told Samuel, "This is the man I told you about who will be king of my people."

So who was Samuel going to make king of the children of Israel? Why, Saul!! But, of course, Saul didn't know this yet!

When Saul saw Samuel, Saul didn't know this was Samuel, the prophet. Saul said, "Please tell me where the prophet's house is."

Samuel said to Saul, "I'm the prophet. Come with me to the sacrifice and eat with me, and then tomorrow I'll tell you what you want to know. And don't worry about your donkeys that were lost 3 days ago. They've been found. And you're the one that Israel wants."

Saul said to Samuel, "Why, I'm not at all important and neither is my tribe of Benjamin important! Why are you talking to me like that?"

But Samuel just took Saul and his servant in to where the people were gathered and waiting to eat dinner. And Samuel had them sit in the most important place at the table. Then Samuel told the cook, "Bring the food that I told you to set aside." So the cook brought a big dinner and put it in front of Saul. And Samuel said, "See, this is what was saved for you. Eat. I've been waiting for you." So Saul ate dinner with Samuel.

The next morning they got up early and Saul got ready to go back home. Samuel walked with him to the edge of the city. Then Samuel said to Saul, "Have your servant go on ahead of us, but you wait here a minute. I want to tell you what God told me."

Then Samuel took a little bottle of oil and poured it on Saul's head. That's called "anointing." Anointing, pouring some oil on the head, used to be part of the ceremony to make

someone a priest or a king. And Samuel said, "The Lord is anointing you to lead His people." Then Samuel told Saul things that would happen as he started home, how he would meet certain people and what these people would do and say. Then Samuel said, "And the Spirit of Lord will come on you, and you will prophecy, and you will be changed."

Samuel said, "I'm telling you these things so that when they happen, you will know that what I've said is true. Now you go on. And I will meet you in 7 days and will have a sacrifice to the Lord, and I'll tell you what to do."

So Saul started off home. And all the things that Samuel had told him, the people he'd meet and what they would say and do, these all happened. You see, when a real prophet of the Lord says something, it always happens.

So Saul got home with his servant, and told them that Samuel had told him the donkeys had been found -- but Saul didn't tell anyone what Samuel had said about his going to be king. So how are the children of Israel going to find out who their king is going to be?

Well, Samuel called the children of Israel together again and told them again how they were rejecting God by wanting a king, but that God would give them a king anyway. Then Samuel looked at the tribes and chose the tribe of Benjamin. Samuel looked at the tribe of Benjamin and chose Saul's family. Then Samuel looked at Saul's family and chose Saul -- but they couldn't find Saul! So they asked the Lord where Saul was, and the Lord told them that Saul was hiding among the baggage! So they ran and got Saul and brought him out so the people could see him. And Saul was taller than anyone else there. And Samuel said to them, "This is the man that the Lord has chosen." And the people all shouted, "God save the king!" Then Samuel had everyone go back to their homes, and Saul went back home, too.

Well, about that time the Ammonites came up to one of the cities of the children of Israel and camped their army there. The Jews in the city said, "Let's have peace with you. We will serve you." But the Ammonites said, "Yes, we'll make peace with you, but only if you let us hurt your men first."

Then the leaders of the that city said, "Give us 7 days to try to get help. If no one will help us, then we'll let you do that." So they sent messengers to Saul and told him what was happening. Now, why would they tell Saul about this? Why, because Samuel had said Saul would be their king now, right? Saul was really mad about all of this with the Ammonites. He wanted lots of the Jews to come help him fight the Ammonites, so how do you think he got them to come? Why, he took 2 of his own oxen and cut them into pieces and then sent messengers out all over land of the children of Israel with the pieces and said, "If anyone won't come and help me, this is what will happen to his oxen!" So the people were scared and they all came out to help Saul, a great big army of them. So Saul took the big army and went and killed the bad Ammonites. The people were all very happy with this and were glad that Saul was their king, and they offered sacrifices to God and were happy.

And Samuel told the people, "You were very bad to want a king instead of having the Lord be king over you. But now that the Lord has given you a king, be sure that you obey God. If you do, then God will be with you and your king, but if you don't obey God, if you don't follow what God tells you, then God will punish you and your king."

So Saul was now the king of the children of Israel. And when Saul had been king two years, the Philistines gathered an army against Israel and came to fight Saul and his much smaller army. The Hebrew army saw how big the Philistine army was and got scared, and some of them hid and some went away. And the rest of the army, the ones that still followed Saul, were scared, too.

But Samuel had told Saul to wait 7 days until he, Samuel, got there and offered a sacrifice to God. Saul waited and waited. He waited 7 days, but on the 7th day Samuel still hadn't come. Saul's army was starting to run away, and he was worried. He wanted to fight the Philistines, but he didn't want to start fighting until after a sacrifice had been offered to the Lord. So what do you think Saul did? He had someone bring him the sacrifice, and Saul offered it by burning it himself. Now, should he have done that? Or should he have waited for the prophet Samuel as he'd been told to do? Do you remember who God had said were to be the only ones to offer the sacrifices? It was only to be the priests, no one else. People would bring their offering to the priests, and the priests would offer them to God for them. So was Saul doing a good thing when he offered the sacrifice himself? No. He was actually disobeying God, wasn't he? But Saul had thought that offering a sacrifice to God was so important, that Saul had disobeyed God to do it. But which would be more important, to offer a sacrifice to God or to obey God? Why, to obey God, of course!

Anyway, just as Saul had finished offering the sacrifice himself, guess who got there? Yes, Samuel! Remember, Samuel had told Saul to wait for him, and Samuel was a prophet of God and should have been obeyed.

Samuel said to Saul, "What have you done???"

And Saul said to Samuel, "Well, my army was all starting to run away, and here it is the 7th day and you hadn't come yet, and the Philistines are gathered all together, and I was scared the Philistines would attack me and I wouldn't have asked God's blessing by sacrificing yet, so I made myself just to go ahead and do it myself."

And Samuel said to Saul, "You have been foolish! You haven't obeyed God. For this reason, God is going to take your kingdom away from you and give it to someone who will obey Him."

And then Samuel went back home. But eventually the Lord helped Saul and his army, and they won against the Philistines.

Now, God didn't take the kingdom away from Saul right away. And many years later while Saul was still king, Saul again disobeyed God. This is what happened that second time. The great

prophet Samuel went to Saul and told Saul that the Lord wanted him to fight against the Amalekites and kill all of them. The Amalekites were very, very wicked people and had many years before been very mean to God's people the Jews. And now God wanted Saul to punish the Amalekites. Samuel told Saul that he was to kill all of the people in the Amalekite city and to kill all of their animals, too. Well, Saul took his army and went to the city, and he killed everyone -- except the king. He didn't kill the king. And he killed all of the animals -- except the best animals. He kept the best animals alive. You see, Saul's army wanted to make a big sacrifice to God with these best animals (and then they would have had a feast afterwards with the meat from them). So did Saul really obey God? No.

Well, the Lord told Samuel how Saul had disobeyed again. This made Samuel very unhappy, because Samuel liked Saul, and Samuel cried. But then early in the morning Samuel went to Saul and scolded Saul for not obeying God. Samuel said, "To obey is better than to make a sacrifice, and to listen to what God tells you to do is better than to make sacrifices." Then Samuel said to Saul, "God is going to have you stop being king." And then Samuel himself killed the bad Amalekite king that Saul was supposed to have killed. And then Samuel went home and never saw Saul again, though Samuel was still unhappy about Saul, because he liked him.

So twice Saul had disobeyed God. Now, we all disobey God sometimes, don't we? But, you see, Saul was the king and should have been especially careful to obey God. He should have been a good example to all of the people, not a bad example, shouldn't he? Everyone should obey the Lord, of course, but leaders should be even more careful to obey God, because people often do what their leaders do. If people see their leaders disobeying God, then the people will start disobeying God.

Well, the Lord then told Samuel to go to a little city named Bethlehem and there God would tell him whom to anoint as the next king. Do you remember hearing about Bethlehem before? That is where Boaz and Ruth and Naomi lived during the time of the judges, isn't it? And many, many years later Bethlehem is where Jesus would be born. But now Samuel went to Bethlehem, and he found David out taking care of the sheep. David was from the tribe of Judah, and he was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz. Many years later when Jesus was born there in this same Bethlehem, Jesus would be the great-great-great-great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz and of David! Anyway, Samuel went to Bethlehem and anointed David as king over Israel. David didn't become king right away, though. He didn't become king until a few years later when Saul died.

After David had been anointed to be the next king of Israel, he still stayed at home with his father and still took care of the sheep. But the Philistines (who worshipped idols) came again to want to fight against Israel, and Saul gathered his army together. The Philistine army camped on one hill, and the army of Israel camped on another hill, and there was a valley between the two armies. And there was in the Philistine army a great big giant named Goliath. He was about as tall as it would be if you were standing on your papa's shoulders! Goliath had lots of big armour and big weapons. He had a great big spear and a sword, and someone would carry a big shield in front of Goliath. And he was a soldier, a warrior!

And every morning and every evening big Goliath would come out in his big armour and with his big weapons, and he'd shout to the Jews, "Come and fight me! If any of you can win against me and kill me, then all of our army will be your servants. But if I win against you and kill you, then you will have to be our servants." Whenever Goliath shouted this, Saul's army was afraid and wouldn't say anything. King Saul said, "If anyone in our army can kill this giant, I will make him rich and he can marry my daughter, and his father won't have to pay taxes to me." But nobody tried to fight big Goliath. This went on for over a month. Goliath would come out and challenge Saul's soldiers, and they would just be afraid.

Now, David had seven older brothers, and three of his oldest brothers went to be in Saul's army. David's father used to send David to take food to his brothers in the army. Well, one day when David was taking them food, he heard Goliath calling out and making fun of the army of Israel. Then David heard someone in Saul's army tell how Saul would reward anyone who could beat Goliath but that no one had tried to beat him. David said, "Why should this Philistine who worships idols talk like this to God's people?" And David asked someone else what reward there would be for anyone who killed Goliath. Well, Saul heard that someone was asking, so Saul sent for David.

David said to Saul, "Don't worry. I will go fight this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "You can't fight him; you are so young, and he has been a warrior most of his life."

David said to Saul, "Why, I take care of my father's sheep, and I killed both a lion and a bear that tried to take a lamb. Why, I hit the lion and rescued the lamb from the lion, and when the lion turned toward me, I grabbed him by his beard and hit him and killed him. I'll take care of this Philistine who makes fun of God's armies. The Lord helped me then, keeping me safe from the bear and the lion, and the Lord will protect me from this Philistine."

So Saul said to David, "All right, you may go, and may the Lord be with you."

Saul gave David his own armor and sword to wear, but after putting it on, David said, "No, I can't use these. I'm not used to them." And David took off the armor and sword.

So, David took his staff in his hand and chose 5 nice, smooth stones out of the valley and put them into the bag on his belt, and he had his sling in his hand -- and he started walking toward Goliath. Well, Goliath was walking toward the camp of the children of Israel, and he looked and saw young David coming toward him. Goliath said, "Huh! Am I just a dog that you are coming to me with a stick?! Come on. I'll kill you and let the birds and wild animals eat you!"

Then David said to Goliath, "You are coming with a sword and spear and shield. But I am coming in the name of the Lord of armies, the God of Israel whom you have spoken against. Today the Lord will deliver you in my hand, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And I will give the

bodies of the Philistine army today to the birds and wild animals to eat. That way the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. Everyone will know that the Lord can save without swords and spears."

So Goliath started going toward young David, and David started running toward Goliath! David put his hand into his bag and took out a stone and put it in his sling, and he slung the stone -- and it hit Goliath right in his forehead and knocked him down! Then David ran up to Goliath and took out Goliath's sword and cut Goliath's head off with it!! Well, when the Philistine army saw that, they just turned around and ran! And then the army of Israel ran after them and killed lots and lots of them.

When David came back to the camp, they took him to King Saul. David met Saul and Saul's son Jonathan. And Saul had David come live with Saul at Saul's own house, and Jonathan and David became very good friends. David became a very great soldier, and he was always very loyal to King Saul.

Well, sometimes when King Saul and David came back from a battle, the women would come out of the cities and sing and dance to meet them. But the women started praising David more than they were praising King Saul, so Saul started getting jealous of David and not liking him anymore. So things became bad for David. Saul even threw his spear at David to try to kill David, but David jumped out of the way. Finally David had to go and hide from Saul. Saul some way knew that David was going to be the next king, and that also made Saul very jealous and angry. Saul tried to find David and kill him, but God was with David, so Saul never caught him. There were two times when David could have killed Saul, but he didn't. David said, "God made Saul to be king. I won't hurt the one that God made to be king." So David honored God and was always very loyal to King Saul. And Saul's son Jonathan and David were always very good friends. And David loved and trusted God to take care of him. We don't have time to go into all of those stories about when David was escaping from Saul, but you can read them for yourself someday in the book of I Samuel.

Well, finally, after Saul had been king for 40 years, the Philistines again came to fight against the children of Israel. By this time the last judge, Samuel, had gotten old and died. Saul was afraid of the Philistine army and tried to ask God what to do, but the Lord wouldn't answer him. But, remember how Saul, the king of the people, had disobeyed Samuel, the prophet of God? To disobey God's prophet was the same as disobeying God, wasn't it? And God had told Saul that the kingdom would be taken away from him, hadn't He? Well, now was the time that this was going to happen.

So in the very last chapter of I Samuel it tells of a battle that Saul had with the Philistines. Saul and his son Jonathan were both there in the battle. And that day the both Saul and Jonathan died.

And that is where the book of I Samuel ends, with King Saul dead. In the next book of the

Bible, II Samuel, it will tell about when David hears that King Saul and Jonathan are dead and how unhappy he is about it and then how David becomes king of all of the Jews. We'll talk about this next time, all right?

Now, what book of the Bible have we talked about today? That's right, the book of First Samuel. And what 3 men does the book of I Samuel mostly tell about? Yes, it's mostly about Samuel, Saul, and David, isn't it?

Now, let's see. What do we know about Samuel? Samuel was the little boy that his mother Hannah took to the Tabernacle to serve the Lord, wasn't he? And then he grew up to be a great prophet and leader. And Samuel was the last judge of Israel, wasn't he?

But what was it that the Jews insisted they wanted? Yes, they said they wanted a man to be their king, didn't they? But Who had been their king before then? Yes, God had ruled them, hadn't He? But then the children of Israel had wanted a man that they could see to be their king. And who was the very first man to be king of the Jews? That's right, Saul was. Samuel anointed, put oil on Saul, and Saul became their king. But then Saul, as king, disobeyed God two times, and it is especially important for kings and leaders to obey God, isn't it? Because the other people will do what the leaders do, won't they? If the leaders disobey God, then many of the people will start disobeying God. So what did God tell Saul He was going to do? That's right. God was going to take the kingdom away from Saul and his family and give it to someone who would obey God.

And who was the other person who was going to be king some day? Yes, it was David, who lived in Bethlehem and was the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz. And Samuel anointed David. But David didn't get to be king right away, did he? David killed Goliath and then went to live with King Saul, and after a while Saul became jealous of David and tried to kill him. But God protected David through all of his troubles, didn't He? Finally Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in a battle with the Philistines. And that is the end of the book of I Samuel.

Now, the book of I Samuel has lots of exciting stories, doesn't it? But it also teaches us things. It especially teaches us that we should always obey God. God blesses people who obey Him, and if they disobey, God may punish them. But we all disobey God sometimes, even when we try not to, don't we? That's called sinning.

But we also learned that Samuel and David not only obeyed God, they loved God. And God loved them. And God loves us, too. God shows us that He loves us in many different ways. God takes care of us and gives us food and sunshine and rain. But the most important thing God gives us is a way that we can be saved from our sins, so that we can someday go to be with God in heaven. Now, how does God give us that way to go to heaven? Yes, that's right. It's through Jesus, the great-great-great-great-grandson of David! God the Father sent Jesus, who is God the Son, to earth to be a man (though He was still God, too). And Jesus died on the cross for our sins, didn't He? And then He became alive again, was resurrected, and went back to heaven. Jesus is alive in heaven now, isn't He? And if we trust Jesus to save us from our sins, He will take the punishment for our

sins and make it so that someday we can go to heaven and be with Him there. Won't that be wonderful!?

I hope you've enjoyed our visit together today. It was fun hearing about how God works things out and about Samuel and Saul and David, wasn't it?