

Lesson 1: Disobedience



Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

The two books of Samuel follow Ruth in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament - History

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel and the books of 1 and 2 Kings tell the story of Israel as a united nation and the subsequent division into north and south kingdoms. Part of the biblical books of History, some of this same content is repeated in 1 and 2 Chronicles in a more abbreviated form.

Biblical Time Period: Transition

The time prior to the Monarchy was a rough and lawless time. As Scripture says: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Even though God raised up the great prophet Samuel to guide his people in faith, the people clamored for God to give them a king like the other nations around them. God relented, but warned the people that having a king could easily lead to tyranny. Such was the case with Israel's first king, Saul.

Introduction

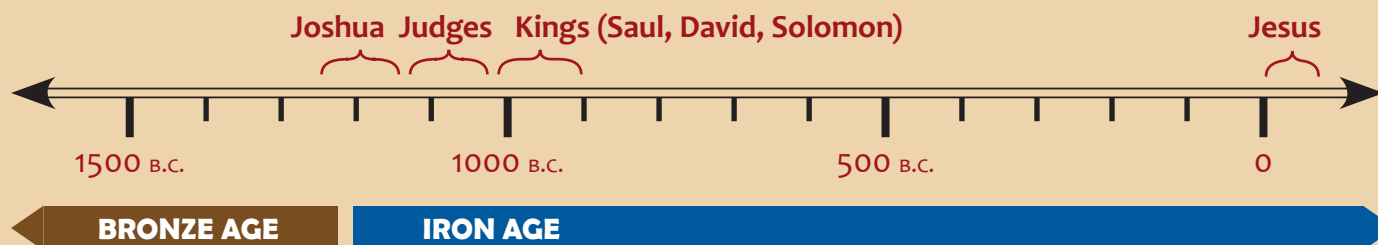
After being anointed as Israel's first monarch, King Saul gradually became less and less obedient to God. After the prophet Samuel died, Saul was left with no advisors. That's when he did the unthinkable, going so far as to employ witchcraft to speak to the dead by consulting the medium at En-dor.

Read: 1 Samuel 28:3-19

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

When in Time?

The transition from the Pentateuch into the History books of Scripture roughly corresponds to the transition from the historical Bronze Age into the historical Iron Age (around 1200 B.C.). Changes in technology and metalworking brought about the decline of long-standing civilizations and gave birth to new ones. It was in this time that Israel grew to be an independent nation.



Discuss: 1 Samuel 28:3-19

1. In earlier days, when he was still obedient to God, Scripture says, "Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land" (v. 3). What changed that led Saul to break his own law?
2. A "medium" is a person who uses occult means to contact the dead. Why does God consider this a sinful act? What commandment does it break?
3. What sense do you get in this story that God was already angry with King Saul? In what way is God's silence a punishment in and of itself?
4. How did the woman respond when Samuel's spirit appeared? Do you think she actually expected the séance to work? Is it possible to contact the dead?
5. Read: 1 Samuel 2:6 and Psalm 88:3-6. The biblical word "Sheol" refers to the place of the dead. From what you read in these verses, *where* did people of the Bible understand Sheol to be located? How does today's story share this same understanding of where people go when they die?
6. Read Hebrews 4:9-13. Many Christian tombstones are inscribed with the phrase "Rest in Peace." What is the "Sabbath rest" of which Scripture speaks here? Is this something you look forward to?
7. How does the Word of God "lay bare" some of the false assumptions we may have about the afterlife? Why is it essential to be guided by God's Word alone?
8. What sense do you get that what Saul did here was the "last straw" for God? What were the consequences of Saul's sin?

Where in the World?

The map to the right shows the Promised Land, which would later become the kingdom of Israel.



Mark with an X where this area is located on the world map to the left.

On the map to the right find these locations:

- a) **Gibeah**, in the land of Benjamin, was Saul's hometown (1 Samuel 10:26).
- b) **En-dor** was the town where Saul encountered the medium (1 Samuel 28:7).
- c) **Mount Gilboa** was the place where King Saul died (1 Samuel 31:8).

Was the place where Saul died closer to the town of Gibeah or En-dor?

