

# STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



## The United Kingdom

### Lesson 7

The most glorious part of the history of Israel was the **United Kingdom**, so called to distinguish it from the **Divided Kingdom** which followed. It lasted from about 1095 to 975 B. C. and included the reigns of three great kings — Saul, David, and Solomon. The story of this period is related in the two books of Samuel, the first eleven chapters of I Kings and parts of the Chronicles.

### Saul — Israel's First King

You will remember that for about 300 years the twelve tribes of Israel had been loosely governed by judges. The last and greatest of these was the prophet Samuel. But the children of Israel wanted to be like their neighbors; they came to Samuel and asked for a king. Although God was much displeased with their request, He instructed Samuel to anoint as their king a young man named Saul who stood "head and shoulders" above the people. The people gathered at Mizpeh and were presented with their new ruler who was so timid that he hid among the baggage.



Saul began his forty-year reign well. Israel was beset by enemies and he undertook the task of driving them back. His army defeated the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites and others. Soon Saul was a popular figure among the people. But his popularity went to his head and he ceased to be a humble servant of God. Instead he became self-willed, bent on doing things the way he wanted them done, regardless of the will of God. On one occasion he was commissioned to "utterly destroy the Amalekites." Instead he spared the king and saved some sheep and cattle to sacrifice. Because he had thus disobeyed the Lord, Samuel rebuked him with the words, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (I Samuel 15:22.) From that time on, God rejected Saul as king.

After Saul's rejection (although he was still reigning), God commanded Samuel to anoint privately as his successor a young shepherd boy named David, one of the greatest of all Bible characters. After his anointing, David was called upon by Saul to play the harp for him whenever his spirit was troubled. Saul deeply loved him and selected him as his armorbearer. David quickly rose to prominence by slaying with a sling the champion of the Philistines, the giant Goliath. The ensuing glory given David provoked the jealousy of Saul who began to suspect that David was trying to supplant him as king. From that time on Saul sought to kill David and for years hunted him as an outlaw over the hills of Israel.

Perhaps the most beautiful friendship in the Bible is that of David and Jonathan, the son of Saul, who, although he realized that David would become king instead of himself, constantly sought to save David from his father's ire. Saul and Jonathan both fell in battle with the Philistines to prepare the way for David as king.

## David – Man After God’s Heart

After Saul’s death David was crowned king of the tribe of Judah while Saul’s sorry son, Ishbosheth, reigned over the rest of Israel. When his kingdom collapsed after seven years, David’s authority was extended over all Israel. David selected Jerusalem as his capital and set about the task of making Israel a great nation. In successive wars he expanded the kingdom from the Nile to the Euphrates River.

David was truly a man after God’s own heart. The Lord declared of him, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.” (Acts 13:22.) The psalms written by David are an expression of his complete devotion to God. This consecration was especially evident in his constant willingness to obey all the Lord’s commands. We may learn from him that we cannot expect the approval of God unless we are always willing to do what He asks of us without question.

In spite of David’s success and his faithfulness to God, he made one grave mistake that followed him to his death. He committed adultery with Bathsheba,



the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Some stories have portrayed Bathsheba as a siren who intentionally seduced David. Nothing in the Bible bears out this idea. To cover up his sin, David had Uriah placed in the thick of battle so that he might be slain, and then, when he was dead, took Bathsheba as his wife. All of this greatly displeased God and Nathan the prophet was sent to rebuke David by telling him the parable of the ewe lamb. (II Samuel 12.) David repented, but his troubles now began. His son Absalom murdered his own brother. Later Absalom led a revolt against David and died in the attempt. For a time David was forced to flee. Adding to his grief, another son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the kingdom with the help of David’s trusted general, Joab. To forestall the kingdom falling into the wrong hands, David had his son, Solomon,

crowned king while he yet lived. Shortly thereafter David died, bringing to an end the forty-year reign of a great man of God.

## Soloman – From Wisdom To Idolatry

Solomon’s rule was in sharp contrast with his father’s. While David had faced turmoil for almost his entire reign, Solomon’s was one of unbroken peace. He began auspiciously. In a dream he asked of God wisdom rather than riches and honor, and because of his thoughtful request was rewarded with all three. Solomon’s wisdom is known to all. Three thousand proverbs and 1005 songs came forth from this sage! Much of his wisdom is recorded for us in the three books which he wrote and which we will study in another lesson. Politically he extended the influence of Israel to its greatest height, making it a world power.

The fabulous wealth of Solomon astounds us, even in this day. He had 1400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen and an annual income equal to 20 million dollars. And he didn’t have to pay an income tax! On one occasion he was given an outright gift of three and a half million dollars by the queen of Sheba. When she visited Solomon to see if all the reports of his fame were true she was so amazed that she exclaimed, “Behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.” (I Kings 10:7.)

The greatest of all Solomon’s accomplishments was his building of the temple of God to replace the tabernacle in which Israel had worshipped since the wilderness wanderings. Probably no structure in the world’s history has equaled it in cost. Built by 183,000 men in seven and a half years, it cost from two to five billion dollars to erect.

The great wealth of Solomon eventually led to his undoing. He sought every kind of pleasure and married 700 wives and 300 concubines. Most of these were idolaters and what a time he must have had in trying to please them all. His high cost of living led him to tax the people heavily, much to their dissatisfaction. His reign had started with wisdom and wealth; it ended with women and idolatry. When his forty-year rule ended he was a thoroughly disillusioned and unhappy man. In his revelry he had laid the groundwork for the division of his great kingdom after his death. This we shall study in our next lesson.

## *“Seek and Ye Shall Find”*

Give the name of the king described by each of these statements:

- ..... 1. He was the first king of Israel.
- ..... 2. He had 700 wives.
- ..... 3. He was a man after God's own heart.
- ..... 4. His son Absalom led a revolt against him.
- ..... 5. He stood “head and shoulders” above the people.
- ..... 6. Samuel announced to the people at Mizpeh that he was their new king.
- ..... 7. During his reign the temple was built.
- ..... 8. On one occasion he was visited by the queen of Sheba.
- ..... 9. He had a son named Jonathan.
- ..... 10. He sinned by taking for his wife Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite.

**Read I Samuel 15. Circle the letter representing the best answer:**

- a b c 1. Samuel instructed Saul to utterly destroy the: (a) Philistines; (b) Ammonites; (c) Amalekites.
- a b c 2. Saul spared: (a) some of the animals and the king; (b) all the animals; (c) no one.
- a b c 3. Saul's action: (a) displeased God; (b) went unnoticed by God; (c) pleased God.
- a b c 4. Samuel said that which pleased the Lord more was: (a) sacrifices; (b) burnt offerings; (c) obedience.
- a b c 5. Because of his action Saul was: (a) immediately killed; (b) rejected as king; (c) honored by God.

**Read the story of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 and fill in the blanks:**

When the Philistines gathered to battle the men of Israel, they had a champion named ..... who was six cubits and a span tall. The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam and his spear head weighed ..... shekels of iron. He dared the Israelites to send out a man to fight him. The three eldest sons of ....., the father of David, were in Saul's army, but David had to take care of his father's ..... One day his father sent David to Saul's army with corn, loaves of bread and ..... When David arrived he heard the challenge of Goliath and asked to fight him. This made his brother named ..... angry with him. David's brave words were heard by ..... and he sent for David. He gave him his armor and a helmet of ..... for his head. But David took them off because he had not proved them. Instead he selected ..... smooth stones and put them in his bag. When David met the giant he shot a stone with his sling and it struck him in the ..... When he had killed him, the enemy army fled because they had lost their champion.

Student may write here any comment, question, or request.

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Name..... Grade.....

Address..... Date.....

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