

*God's Great Covenant, Old Testament Book 2:
A Bible Course for Children*

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Table of contents

Introduction	9
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Books of the Old Testament	11
--------------------------------------	----

Unit I: The Early Kingdom...The God Who Anoints 13

Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom anoints those who lead His people.

Chapter 1: The Call of Samuel (1 Samuel 1–3).	15
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God calls His people to be holy.

Chapter 2: Samuel—The Last Judge (1 Samuel 4–7).	20
--	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God shows His power over idols.

Chapter 3: Saul—The First King (1 Samuel 8–15).	25
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God anoints and removes the rulers of His people.

Chapter 4: David Anointed as King (1 Samuel 16, Psalms)	30
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God looks at man's heart, not his outside appearance.

Chapter 5: David in Saul's Court (1 Samuel 17–20)	36
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God is faithful to those who trust in Him.

Chapter 6: David—The Fugitive (1 Samuel 21–31, 1 Chronicles 10)	41
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God's plan for His kingdom is right, just, and good.

Chapter 7: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review)	46
---	----

Unit II: The Glorious Kingdom...The God Who Blesses 51

Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom brings blessing to His people.

Chapter 8: The Covenant with David (2 Samuel 1–7, 1 Chronicles 11–17)	53
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God remembers His promises and renews His covenant.

Chapter 9: David's Kindness & David's Sin (2 Samuel 8–12, Psalm 32)	58
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God gives grace and forgiveness to those who repent.

Chapter 10: Troubles in the Kingdom (2 Samuel 12–24, 1 Chronicles 18–27, Psalm 3)	63
---	----

Lesson Theme: The LORD God is present with His people even when they suffer the consequences of their sin.

Chapter 11: The Wisdom of Solomon	
<i>(1 Kings 1–4, Proverbs 1–31, Song of Songs 1–8, Ecclesiastes 1–12)</i>	68
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God gives holy wisdom to those who ask.</i>	

Chapter 12: The Reign of Solomon (1 Kings 5–11, 1 Chronicles 28, 2 Chronicles 1–9). . . .	74
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God brings blessing even when His people are unfaithful.</i>	

Chapter 13: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review)	79
--	----

Unit III: The Divided Kingdom...The God Who Reigns	84
---	-----------

Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom rules over the kingdoms of men.

Chapter 14: A Nation Divided (1 Kings 12–16, 2 Chronicles 10–16)	86
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God rules even when kings are wicked and turn against Him.</i>	

Chapter 15: Elijah—God’s Voice of Judgment to a Wicked King (1 Kings 16:29–19:18) . . .	92
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God proves He is God over nature, kings, and foreign gods.</i>	

Chapter 16: Ahab & Jehoshaphat—Two Very Different Kings	
<i>(1 Kings 20–22, 2 Kings 1–2, 2 Chronicles 17–21)</i>	97
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God controls the course of history.</i>	

Chapter 17: Elisha—God’s Voice to Rulers & Ordinary People	
<i>(1 Kings 19:19–21, 2 Kings 1–8)</i>	102
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God controls the destiny of rulers and ordinary people.</i>	

Chapter 18: Three Prophets of Judgment (Amos 1–9, Hosea 1–14, Jonah 1–4)	108
<i>Lesson Theme: Through His prophets, the LORD God warns of judgment to come.</i>	

Chapter 19: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review)	114
--	-----

Unit IV: The Remnant Kingdom...The God Who Judges	119
--	------------

Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom brings judgment when people refuse to worship Him.

Chapter 20: Israel Falls & Judah Remains (2 Kings 17–19, 2 Chronicles 21–28)	121
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God’s patience with idolatry does not last indefinitely.</i>	

Chapter 21: Two Prophets & a Righteous King	(2
<i>Kings 18–20, 2 Chronicles 27–32, Isaiah 1–66, Micah 1–7)</i>	126
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God warns of judgment and gives hope through the promise of a Messiah.</i>	

Chapter 22: Two Memorable Kings—Manasseh & Josiah (2 Kings 21–23, 2 Chronicles 33–35)	132
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God calls His unfaithful people to remember the covenant.</i>	
Chapter 23: God’s Voices of Judgment to the Nations (Habakkuk 1–3, Zephaniah 1–3, Nahum 1–3, Obadiah 1, Joel 1–3)	137
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God warns the nations of judgment to come.</i>	
Chapter 24: Jeremiah Weeps & Judah Falls (2 Kings 23–25, 2 Chronicles 36, Jeremiah 1–52, Lamentations 1–5)	143
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God’s patience and mercy do not last forever when hearts are rebellious and hard.</i>	
Chapter 25: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review)	148
Unit V: The Exiled Nation...The God Who Restores	153
<i>Unit Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom restores His people in His own time.</i>	
Chapter 26: God’s Messenger to the Exiles (Ezekiel 1–48)	155
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God speaks to His people in exile.</i>	
Chapter 27: Daniel & His Friends (Daniel 1–3)	160
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God cares for His people who fear Him and obey His commandments.</i>	
Chapter 28: Daniel’s Faith (Daniel 4–12)	165
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God answers His people when they pray to Him in faith.</i>	
Chapter 29: The People Return—The Temple Is Rebuilt (Ezra 1–6, Haggai 1–2, Zechariah 1–14)	170
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God keeps His promise and restores His people to their land.</i>	
Chapter 30: The Story of Esther (Esther 1–10)	176
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God protects His people from the schemes of wicked men.</i>	
Chapter 31: The Story of Ezra & Nehemiah (Ezra 7–10, Nehemiah 1–13, Malachi 1–4)	181
<i>Lesson Theme: The LORD God helps His people, who trust in Him.</i>	
Chapter 32: Looking Backwards...Looking Ahead (Review)	187

Appendices

Appendix A: Memory Verse Summary.	192
Appendix B: Pictures of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament	198
Appendix C: How to Use the Psalms.	206
Appendix D: How to Understand the Proverbs	208
Appendix E: Kings and Prophets.	210
Appendix F: Reigns of the Kings of Israel & Judah	212
Appendix G: Intertestamental History.	214
Glossary	218
Chapter Quizzes	234

Maps

Map 1: The Kingdoms of Saul, David & Solomon	229
Map 2: Israel and Its Neighbors (The Twelve Tribes of Israel and Neighboring Nations) . .	230
Map 3: The Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah	231
Map 4: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires.	232

Introduction

“**T**he king is coming! The king is coming!” All around you men, women, and children are shouting loudly. You are pushed and shoved, first this way and then that. Each person wants to be the first one to see the king’s procession. The city is crowded, and everyone’s excited. You are an Israelite child, and King David has come to your city!

God’s people, the Israelites, didn’t always have a king. Many centuries before King David ruled, God had made a covenant with a man named Abraham. “You will be the father of a great nation,” the LORD promised. “I will be your God, and you will be My people.”

The LORD kept his promise to Abraham. Abraham had a son named Isaac, who had a son named Jacob who had a very large family. Jacob’s family moved to Egypt, and 400 years later there were so many descendents of Jacob living in Egypt that the pharaoh was afraid of them. He made Jacob’s descendents, called Hebrews or Israelites, slaves so they wouldn’t be a danger to his kingdom. The Israelites weren’t a nation yet, and they certainly didn’t have a king.

The LORD sent Moses to free the Israelites from Egypt. They spent forty years in the great and terrible wilderness, and then arrived at the Promised Land. The LORD appointed Joshua as Israel’s commander. The people fought many battles, some mighty victories because they trusted the LORD and some terrible defeats because they disobeyed Him. Finally, they possessed the land that the LORD had promised to Abraham. Now the Israelites were a nation with their own land, but they didn’t have a king.

The Israelites lived in the land and enjoyed all the good things that the LORD provided. Sometimes they obeyed the LORD and worshipped only Him. Many times, however, they disobeyed the LORD and worshipped Baal, Asherah, and the other Canaanite gods. The Israelites did what they wanted to do, not what God had commanded them to do.

Because of their idolatry, the LORD sent other nations to bring trouble to the Israelites. When the Israelites became miserable enough, they cried out to the LORD for help. Then the LORD sent men called judges to deliver them from their enemies. The judges ruled the land and saved the people from suffering and oppression. But the people continued to turn away from the LORD, and they didn’t have a king.

Yet from the beginning the Israelites did have a king! God, creator of the world and King of all kings, was Israel's King. Because the LORD was Israel's King, they didn't need a human king.

God's Great Covenant, Old Testament 2: A Bible Course for Children continues the story that *God's Great Covenant, Old Testament 1* began. In the book of 1 Samuel, the Israelites asked God for a king. "We want a king like other nations," they demanded. So the LORD gave them a king. Over the next 500 years the people had many kings. A few of the kings were godly men who worshipped the LORD and ruled the nation well. However, most of the kings were wicked men who rejected the LORD and worshipped foreign gods. The kings' actions and the disobedience of the people eventually brought about the destruction of the nation.

God's Old Testament story would be a tragedy except for one thing: God's kingdom is greater than the nation of Israel. Israel's earthly kingdom was a picture of God's spiritual, eternal kingdom. Behind the scenes, God reigned supreme. He used even the disobedience of wicked kings to bring about His plan. He guided all of history toward its most important event—the coming of the Messiah.

Prophets prophesied about the Messiah, and their words became God's Scriptures. God's people prayed that the Messiah would come soon. Through the centuries, even when times were bleak and sin darkened men's hearts, the LORD's plan was right on schedule.

God's people had times of obedience and prosperity as well as times of disobedience and judgment. Through it all, God's kingdom remained secure because the LORD God was the Keeper of His Kingdom.

***"Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper." (Psalm 121:4-5a)***

What is the Old Testament?

The Old Testament, God's holy Scripture, has thirty-nine books written over 1,200 years by more than 30 authors. It tells you how God created man, how sin entered the world, and how God made a covenant to be the God of His people. Beginning in Genesis 3:15, God hints that a Savior would come. This Savior, or Messiah, would die for His people's sin and then set up an eternal kingdom where He would rule forever. Everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus Christ—the Savior, the Messiah, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

Books of the Old Testament

Type	Old Testament Books	
Pentateuch: The Law (5 books) <i>History before entering the Promised Land</i>	<u>Five books of the Law:</u> Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	
History (12 books) <i>History after entering the Promised Land</i>	<u>Nine books of history before the Exile:</u> Joshua Judges Ruth 1 and 2 Samuel 1 and 2 Kings 1 and 2 Chronicles <u>Three books of history after the Exile:</u> Ezra Nehemiah Esther	
Poetry (5 books)	<u>Five poetry books:</u> Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	
Major Prophets (5 books)	<u>Five books of the Major Prophets:</u> Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel	
Minor Prophets: The Twelve (12 books)	<u>Nine books of the Minor Prophets before the Exile:</u> Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah <u>Three books of the Minor Prophets after the Exile:</u> Haggai Zechariah Malachi	

17 Historical Books + 5 Poetry Books + 17 Prophets = 39 Books in the Old Testament

UNIT I

The Early Kingdom...The God Who Anoints

Theme: The Keeper of the Kingdom anoints those who lead His people.

Shalom. Let me introduce myself. I am Tobias, the royal chronicler, and I work in the king's palace. It's my job to record with utmost accuracy all the royal comings and goings. So with my expertise and wide experience (oh my, oh my, how humble I am!), I'm here, my friends, to retell this amazing story, *The Keeper of God's Kingdom*.

When the story begins, Israel is at the brink of historic changes. In only 100 years, the scattered tribes of Israel would become a mighty kingdom with a powerful army, a magnificent palace, and a world-renowned king. God made this happen through three men: Samuel, Saul, and David.

Until now, Israel's only King was God. When the Israelites demanded a king like other nations, they were rebelling against God. In the covenant, Israel had agreed that God would be their King and have authority over them. Samuel, the last judge and the first prophet, directed the people back to the LORD. It was because of Samuel that Israel's kingdom started out well. Samuel was godly and pleased the LORD.

Israel's first king, Saul, was tall, handsome, and strong. The people thought that he was the perfect king. Too soon, though, Saul's heart became proud. He disregarded the LORD's words and did things his own way.

Although Saul ruled Israel for more than twenty years, the LORD rejected him early in his reign. His sons would never rule after him. He was not a godly ruler. To everyone's surprise, the LORD chose David, a simple shepherd boy, to be the next king. Even though David was young and small, he was brave and mighty, and, most of all, his heart trusted in the LORD his God.

Each of these men—Samuel, Saul, and David—was specially chosen and anointed by God to serve Him. (Being anointed means being chosen by God and equipped by His Spirit to serve God in a particular job.) Now that I have introduced the main characters, let's go back in time to learn exactly how the early kingdom came about.



PSALM 23 A Psalm of David

1. The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
3. He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever.

David, the shepherd boy, wrote Psalm 23, which is commonly called the “Shepherd’s Psalm.” In this psalm, the LORD is the Shepherd, and His people are the sheep.

Sheep do not naturally know what they need. They will not lie down and rest if they are tired, bothered by nasty little insects, or frightened by other animals. When they are thirsty, they do not always choose the refreshing, cool water of the meadow streams. They will drink whatever water they find, even if the water is dirty or unsafe to drink.

A good shepherd takes care of his sheep, even if he must lead them through dark and dangerous valleys to reach the lush mountain pastures where good food and clear water are plentiful. With his rod, a symbol of his strength, and his staff, a symbol of his care, the shepherd protects and comforts his sheep.

In John 10, Jesus Christ is called the Good Shepherd. As the Shepherd, the LORD loves His people, protects them from all evil, and leads them carefully through all the circumstances of life. The LORD does only good things for His people, and His mercy goes with them all the days of their lives until they go to live in His house with Him forever.

Chapter 1

The call of Samuel

LESSON SCOPE: 1 Samuel 1–3

READ TO ME: 1 Samuel 1–3

THEME: The LORD God calls His people to be holy.

MEMORY VERSE:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
(Judges 21:25)

KEY FACTS:

Samuel's Many Jobs

Judge	Priest	Prophet	Nazirite
1 Samuel 7:15 He “judged Israel all the days of his life.”	1 Samuel 7:9 He offered sacrifices and prayed for God’s people.	1 Samuel 3:20 Everyone in Israel knew that God had made him a prophet.	1 Samuel 1:11 His mother set him apart for the LORD before he was born.
Judge	= Person chosen by God to be a deliverer, peacemaker, and civil leader.		
Priest	= Man in charge of offering sacrifices and offerings in the tabernacle.		
Prophet	= Person called to speak for God.		
Nazirite	= Person set apart for God; he could not drink wine, cut his hair, or touch a dead body.		

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Anoint = Chosen by God and equipped by God’s Spirit to serve the LORD in a particular job.
- Covenant = God’s promise to be the God of His people forever.
- Holy = “Set apart by God” or “living in a way that pleases God.”

MESSAGE FROM THE KING: The King wants *you* to be holy.

Even as a child, Samuel was holy. The LORD set him apart, and Samuel pleased God. What does it mean to be holy? Why is being holy so hard?

The call of Samuel

Every year it was the same. The whole family walked through the hill country of Ephraim to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship the LORD. Hannah dreaded these pilgrimages. Hannah loved the LORD, and she loved her husband, Elkanah. He was a good man, and she knew he loved her. But these trips always made her sad because Hannah had no children.

Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, had many children. With gleeful pleasure, Peninnah would tease Hannah mercilessly about having no children until Hannah would weep in agony and could not enjoy the ceremonial meal.

Jesus in the OT

A prophet is a person called to speak God's words. How is Samuel, the prophet, like Jesus Christ, the Prophet?

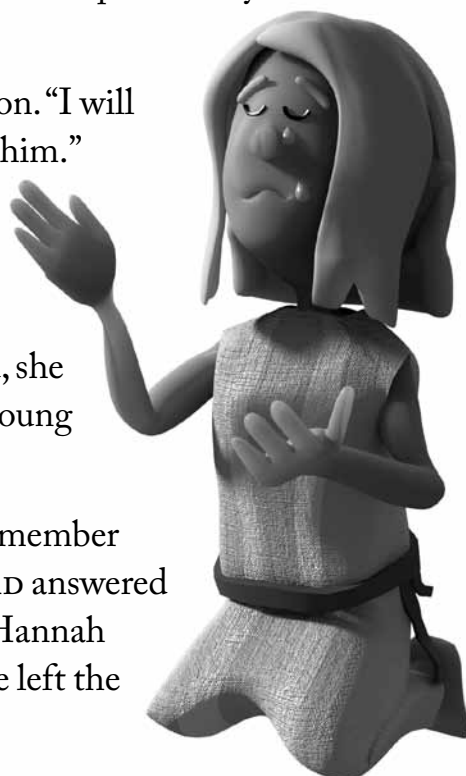
This year Hannah stood before the LORD with a bitter soul and prayed in tears, "O LORD Almighty, see my misery and remember me. If you give me a son, I will give him back to you, and he will serve You his whole life. He will be a Nazirite, and he will never cut his hair."

Eli, the priest, saw Hannah's lips moving, but couldn't hear her words. He thought she was drunk, and rebuked her harshly. Quickly Hannah responded, "Oh, I am not drunk, my LORD, but I am deeply troubled. I was pouring out my heart to the LORD, hoping He would hear my plea." Eli comforted her, saying, "Go in peace. May God grant you your request."

The LORD did answer Hannah's prayer and gave her a son. "I will name him Samuel," she said, "because I asked the LORD for him."

For the next three years, Hannah stayed home when the family went to Shiloh to worship, and she nursed Samuel. Then came that special day when Hannah would dedicate her son to the LORD. Holding Samuel's small hand, she walked to the tabernacle with him. She took offerings of a young bull, a basket of flour, and a flask of wine along with her.

After the sacrifice, Hannah brought Samuel to Eli. "Remember me?" she asked. "In tears I prayed for this child, and the LORD answered my prayer. Now I give him to the LORD for his whole life." Hannah then sang a song of thanksgiving to the LORD, and when she left the tabernacle, Samuel stayed with Eli.



Although Eli was a godly man, his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked. The LORD was very angry with them because they treated His offerings with contempt. Samuel, on the other hand, grew up in the LORD's presence and served the LORD well. Every year, his mother would bring him a little robe; The LORD blessed Hannah with other children.

One day a man of God brought bad news to Eli, saying, "The LORD is angry because you honor your sons more than you honor Him. You didn't stop them when they sinned against Him. Both your sons will die on the same day, and the LORD will choose a faithful priest from a different family."

Years went by. Eli became old and blind. Samuel served the LORD under Eli's care. Unlike in the days of Moses and Joshua, the LORD did not often speak directly to people, but things were about to change.

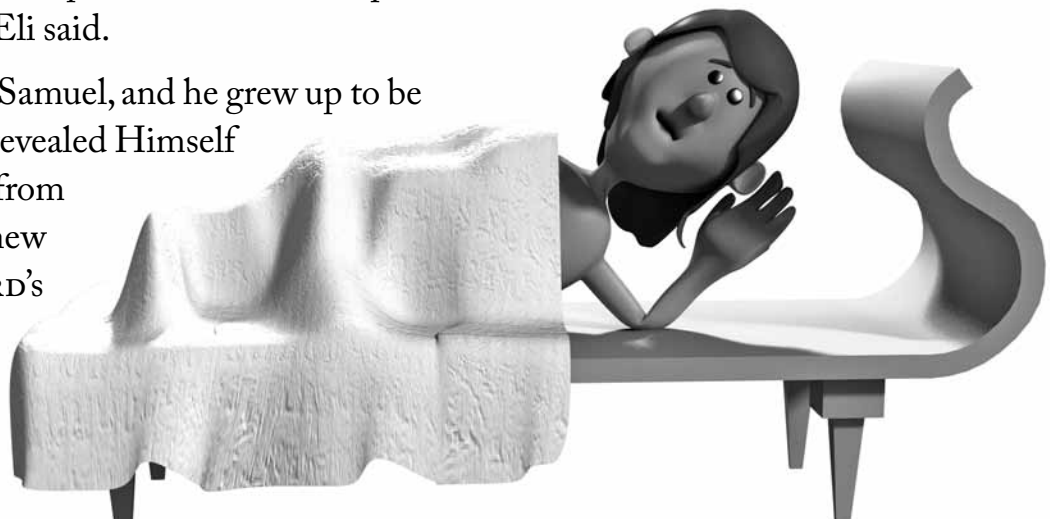
One night, when Samuel was in bed, the LORD called him. Thinking it was Eli who had called, Samuel immediately ran to him. "You called me, Eli? Here I am," Samuel said. Eli was puzzled, and said, "Go back to bed, Samuel. I didn't call you." Samuel obeyed.

The LORD called Samuel a second time, and a second time Eli told Samuel to go back to bed. Samuel didn't know it was God who was calling him. When Samuel heard the voice a third time, Eli realized the LORD was calling Samuel. He told Samuel, "It's the LORD who is calling you. If He calls again say, 'Speak, for Your servant hears.'" The LORD did call again, and Samuel replied as Eli had instructed him.

The LORD's message to Samuel was frightening. The LORD said that He was going to judge Eli's family for their great sin against Him. No sacrifice would ever atone for their sin.

In the morning, Eli asked Samuel to tell him what the LORD had said. Samuel was afraid. How could he speak of God's judgment to Eli? After much urging, Samuel told Eli the sad news, and Eli accepted what God had spoken. "He is the LORD. Let Him do what He thinks is best," Eli said.

The LORD was with Samuel, and he grew up to be a godly man. The LORD revealed Himself to Samuel, and all Israel from the north to the south knew that Samuel was the LORD's prophet.



Review Worksheets

A. MEMORY VERSE:

"In those days there was no _____ in Israel; everyone did what was _____ in his own _____." (Judges 21:25)

B. KEY FACTS: Put the answers to the questions in the boxes below.

1. Judge: How long did Samuel judge Israel?
2. Priest: What two things did Samuel do as a priest in the tabernacle?
3. Prophet: Who made Samuel a prophet over everyone in Israel?
4. Nazirite: Before Samuel was born, what did his mother do?

Samuel's Many Jobs

Judge	Priest	Prophet	Nazirite
1. _____	2a. _____	3. _____	4. _____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	b. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

C. STORY FACTS: Fill in the blanks below.

1. Elkanah's family worshipped at the tabernacle at _____.
2. Hannah prayed that the LORD would give her a _____.
3. The LORD said Eli honored _____ more than he honored God.
4. Hannah sang a song of _____ because God gave her a son.
5. Anoint means _____ by God and _____
by God's Spirit to _____ the LORD in a particular job.
6. God's promise to be the God of His people forever is His _____.

D. WHAT'S THE RIGHT ANSWER?

Circle the word that completes the sentence correctly.

1. When Eli saw Hannah praying, he thought that she was _____.

angry

drunk

depressed

2. One night the LORD called Samuel _____ times.

two

three

four

3. Hannah named her son Samuel because she _____ God for him.

asked

yelled at

cursed

4. The LORD's message to Samuel was about _____ for Eli's family.

blessing

prosperity

judgment

E. WHAT DOES THIS PERSON DO? Match the job with the description of the job.

_____ Judge

1. Person called to speak for God

_____ Priest

2. Person set apart to serve God

_____ Prophet

3. Man who offered sacrifices

_____ Nazirite

4. Deliverer, peacemaker, and civil leader

F. HOW DID SAMUEL ANSWER THE LORD?

Circle every other letter and put the letters in the spaces below.

A S E P C E T A U K I F Y O K R
Q Y R O T U F R D S R E C R B V E A T N L T J H M E N A T R E S

_____, _____

G. FIND OUT...

Who else did God call to serve Him? Look up the verses below to find out.

_____ Exodus 3:4,10

_____ Jeremiah 1:1-5

_____ Matthew 9:9

_____ Romans 1:1

What did the LORD call these men to do? _____

Chapter 2

Samuel—The Last Judge

LESSON SCOPE: 1 Samuel 4–7

READ TO ME: 1 Samuel 4–7

THEME: The LORD God shows His power over idols.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me.” (Isaiah 46:9)

KEY FACTS:

	The Ark of the Covenant’s Journey
From Shiloh	Where it sat in the tabernacle.
To the battlefield	Because Israel wanted victory over the Philistines.
To Ashdod	Where God destroyed Dagon in his temple, struck the Philistines with tumors, and sent rats to ravage the land.
To Gath and Ekron	Where God sent more tumors and rats to the Ekron and Gath Philistines.
To Israel	Where it stayed at Abinadab’s house for twenty years.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

Ark of the covenant	= Box that contained the Ten Commandments and reminded Israel that God was with them.
Ichabod	= Means “the glory [of the LORD] has departed from Israel.”
Ebenezer	= Means “thus far has the LORD helped us.”

MESSAGE FROM THE KING: Do you have an Ebenezer stone?

Samuel set up an Ebenezer stone to remember what the LORD had done for Israel. How can you set up an Ebenezer stone to remind you of what God has done for you?



Samuel—The Last Judge

The battle was over, and 4,000 Israelites were dead! How could the LORD let this happen? The elders of Israel shook their heads in disbelief, and said, “Maybe if we bring the ark from Shiloh, the LORD will protect us from the Philistines. If the ark is with us, the LORD will be with us, too.”

So they sent for the ark of the covenant, which was in the tabernacle at Shiloh. When the ark entered Israel’s camp, the Israelites shouted so loudly that the ground trembled. Hearing the deafening shouts, the Philistines exclaimed, “A god has come into the Israelites’ camp. We’re in trouble now. But don’t give up. We must be strong and fight!” The Philistines attacked again and won another mighty victory over Israel.

Meanwhile, old Eli was sitting along the road near Shiloh, anxiously awaiting news. A messenger with ragged clothes and dust covering his head ran into town. “I’ve come from the battlefield and have dreadful news,” he shouted. “Thirty thousand Israelites are dead, Hophni and Phinehas have been killed, and the Philistines have captured the ark!”

Jesus in the OT

What does a priest do? A priest makes sacrifices for sin. Samuel, as priest, offered a sacrifice for the people’s sin, and the LORD forgave them. What does Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross do for you?

Eli’s grief over his sons’ deaths was great, but to Eli the capture of the ark was the worst thing that could ever happen to Israel because it may have meant that the LORD’s presence was gone from Israel. Unable to bear this, Eli fell backwards from his chair and died. Phinehas’s wife was expecting a child. When she heard the news, she went into labor and had a son. In the last moments before she died, she named the baby Ichabod, meaning “the glory [of the LORD] has departed from Israel,” because her husband and father-in-law were dead and the ark was captured by the Philistines.

What was happening? Israel wasn’t supposed to lose battles. Wasn’t the LORD stronger than the gods of the Philistines? The problem was that the Israelites thought the ark was a magic box that would always bring them good fortune. They had forgotten that God was holy and desired holiness from His people. They thought that they could do whatever they wanted and that the



priests could dishonor the LORD in the tabernacle and God would still do whatever they asked Him to do. They had forgotten that the LORD blessed those who obeyed and brought judgment on those who disobeyed.

The Philistines put the ark beside the statue of Dagon inside Dagon's temple at Ashdod. (Dagon was one of the chief gods of the Philistines.) The next morning, Dagon was on the floor bowing before the ark. They put the idol back on its seat, but the next day it was on the ground again. This time its hands and head had broken off.

At the same time, the LORD sent a plague of rats and tumors to the people at Ashdod. The people panicked and sent the ark to Gath and then to Ekron. Everywhere the ark went, the people got sick, and rats scurried through the fields, eating up the crops. The people cried out, "Send the ark back to Israel or it will kill all of us."

The Philistines met with their own priests and sorcerers to devise a strategy to return the ark to Israel. "Put the ark on a new cart pulled by two cows who just had calves. Send a guilt offering of five gold tumors and five gold rats," their advisors said. "Then send the cart down the road toward Israel. If the cows pull the cart toward Israel, leaving their calves behind, we will know that it was the LORD that brought this disaster upon us."

The Philistines did as they were advised, and the cows pulled the cart straight back to Israel, mooing in distress the whole way. The Israelites were harvesting wheat when they looked up and saw the cart with the ark beside a large rock. What a celebration they had! They chopped up the cart and killed the cows as a sacrifice to the LORD. They put the ark in Abinadab's house and asked Eleazar, his son, to guard it.

For twenty years the ark remained there. All that time, the Philistines continued to harass Israel, and Israel worshipped idols. Finally the people called out to the LORD, and He called Samuel, the last judge, to deliver them. Samuel assembled the people at Mizpah to confess their sins and sacrifice to the LORD. The Philistines took this opportunity

to attack Israel again. This time was different, however. With a thunderous voice, the LORD brought confusion on the Philistines, and they fled. At that place, Samuel set up a memorial stone and called it Ebenezer, which means "thus far has the LORD helped us." Then Samuel ruled over Israel as judge for the rest of his life, and Israel had peace from their enemies.



Review Worksheets

A. MEMORY VERSE: “Remember the _____
of old, For I am God, and there is no _____; I am God, and there is
_____ like Me.” (Isaiah 46:9)

B. KEY FACTS: Use the words below to answer the questions. (Hint: One word is used twice.)

Shiloh Battlefield Dagon’s temple Ashdod Gath Ekron Abinadab’s house

1. Where was Dagon’s temple located? _____
2. Where did the ark stay for twenty years? _____
3. Where was the tabernacle located? _____
4. Where did the Philistines put the ark after they captured it? _____
5. In what cities did the Philistines get tumors? _____,
_____, and _____
6. Where did the Israelites take the ark to give them good fortune? _____

Can you find Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, and Shiloh on Map 1?

C. STORY FACTS: Cross out the answer that is NOT correct.

1. When the Philistines heard the Israelites’ loud shouts, they said, “_____.”
Don’t give up Be strong Let’s make a treaty
2. Eli was sad when he heard the news of _____.
his sons’ death the ark’s capture the plague of rats
3. The Israelites forgot that God was holy and _____.
judged sin desired holiness changed the rules
4. The Philistines’ plan to send the ark back to Israel included _____.
a new cart a guilt offering two mother donkeys
5. When Samuel assembled the Israelites at Mizpah, the people _____.
sang songs confessed sin sacrificed to the LORD

D. DO YOU KNOW THE REASON? Circle the statement that completes each sentence.

1. The Israelites moved the ark from Shiloh to the battlefield because _____.
 - a. they thought the ark would be safer there than at the tabernacle
 - b. they thought the ark would protect them from the Philistines
 - c. God commanded them to move the ark
2. The Philistines defeated the Israelites in battle because _____.
 - a. the Philistines had a bigger and stronger army
 - b. the Philistines' god Dagon was mightier than Israel's God
 - c. the LORD was bringing judgment on Israel for their sin
3. The Philistines sent the ark back to Israel because _____.
 - a. Israel threatened to burn up their wheat fields if they didn't
 - b. they thought the ark would kill all of them if they kept it
 - c. they wanted to make peace with the Israelites

E. IMPORTANT NAMES TO REMEMBER...

1. _____ Means "the glory [of the LORD] has departed."
2. _____ Means "thus far has the LORD helped us."

F. FIND OUT...

Psalm 115 compares God, who is in heaven, with idols. Write down three things that Psalm 115 says about idols.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How is our God greater than idols?

Chapter 3

Saul—The First King

LESSON SCOPE: 1 Samuel 8–15

READ TO ME: 1 Samuel 8–12, 15

THEME: The LORD God anoints and removes the rulers of His people.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22b)



KEY FACTS:

Israel's Neighbors

Nation	Founder of Nation	Famous Events	Israelite Defenders
Amalek	Amalek: grandson of Esau	Israel defeated Amalek at Rephidim in the wilderness. King Saul defeated King Agag.	Moses Saul
Ammon	Ben-Ammi: son of Lot and his second daughter	Jephthah defeated Ammon. Saul defeated Ammon and was accepted as king by Israel.	Jephthah Saul
Edom	Esau: son of Isaac	Israel could not pass through their land on the way to Canaan.	
Moab	Moab: son of Lot and his first daughter	King Balak of Moab asked Balaam to curse Israel. Ehud defeated King Eglon.	Moses Ehud
Philistia	Sea People from Aegean Sea	The Philistines captured Samson. They captured the ark, but returned it after they got sick. They threatened Saul with chariots.	Samson Samuel Saul

Can you find these nations on map 1?

MESSAGE FROM THE KING: The King wants you to obey from your heart.

The LORD your King wants you to do the right thing for the right reason. What are some wrong reasons for doing the right thing? Why is obeying the LORD from the heart so important?

Saul—The First King

Samuel was old, tired, and discouraged. He had judged Israel well over the years, but his sons were wicked men, and the elders of Israel were now demanding that a king rule over them.

Samuel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD answered, “It’s not you that the people are rejecting. They’re rejecting Me as their King. They are again forsaking Me and the covenant. Let them have a king, but warn them what a king will do when he rules over them.”

Jesus in the OT

Saul thought that because he was king he could do whatever he wanted. He forgot that God is the great King above all kings. In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is the King of kings.

Samuel spoke frankly to the people, “A king will take your sons and make them go to war in chariots. Some will be commanders over thousands, and others will harvest the king’s fields. A king will take your daughters to be bakers and cooks in his palace. He’ll take the best of your fields and olive groves, your faithful servants, and your flocks and livestock. You will have to pay high taxes, and you will be his slaves. Is this what you want?” No matter what Samuel said, the people kept demanding, “We want a king like other nations to lead us and fight our battles.”

One day a tall, handsome young Benjamite named Saul and his servant were out looking for his father’s lost donkeys. After many unsuccessful days, Saul was ready to give up and go home. “No, don’t stop now,” said his servant. “A prophet named Samuel lives in this town. He’s highly respected and what he says comes true. Let’s ask him.”

The day before, the LORD had spoken to Samuel, “Tomorrow a man will come to visit you. Anoint him to be king in Israel.” Samuel met Saul, told him where the donkeys were, but more importantly, anointed Saul to be Israel’s first king. Saul said he was from the smallest tribe, Benjamin, and the smallest family in the tribe. He thought he was not important enough to be the king. But Samuel assured him, “The LORD has chosen you to be king, and God will go with you.”

Actually, Saul was anointed king three times. The first anointing happened privately at Samuel’s house. Sometime later, Samuel gathered the people



together at Mizpah to anoint Saul publicly, but Saul was shy. He was hiding behind some baggage. The people found him, and Samuel anointed him in front of everyone. Then they shouted, “Long live the king!”

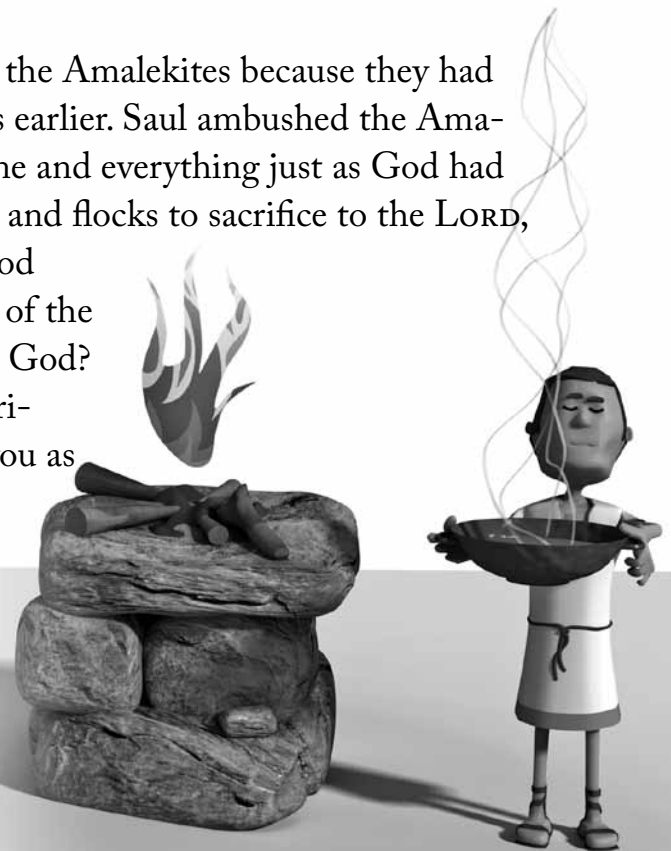
Some Israelites doubted that Saul was the right man to be king, but soon all doubts were gone. The Ammonites besieged Jabesh Gilead in Israel. When Saul heard the cruel terms of the Ammonites’ treaty, he was furious. God’s Spirit came upon him, and he led Israel in an attack upon the Ammonites, killing most of them and scattering the few who had survived. Now all the Israelites gladly accepted Saul as their king, and he was anointed the third time.

After Saul’s third anointing, Samuel made a farewell speech to the people, begging them to follow the LORD as their supreme King. The people repented of their sin in asking for a king and worshipping idols. They asked Samuel to pray for them.

Saul was king about two years when he committed his first big sin against the LORD. The Philistines were threatening Israel with thousands of chariots and soldiers. Saul’s soldiers were hiding in caves and among the rocks, and Samuel had not arrived to offer the sacrifice asking for God’s help in battle. Instead of waiting for Samuel, Saul offered the sacrifice himself. Out of fear, Saul had acted foolishly. He was not a priest and had no right to offer sacrifices to the LORD. The consequence for Saul’s disobedience was severe: God decided to take the kingdom away from Saul and give it to a man with a godly heart!

Sometime later the LORD told Saul to attack the Amalekites because they had attacked Israel in the Sinai wilderness many years earlier. Saul ambushed the Amalekites and crushed their army, destroying everyone and everything just as God had commanded, except he took the best of the cattle and flocks to sacrifice to the LORD, and he didn’t kill Agag, the Amalekite king, as God had instructed! When Samuel heard the bleating of the sheep, he confronted Saul, “Why did you disobey God? Don’t you know that obedience is better than sacrifice? Because of your sin, the LORD has rejected you as king.”

Saul was not repentant of his disobedience. By his actions, Saul had shown that he didn’t want God to be the supreme King of Israel. The LORD was grieved that He had made Saul king, but there was no going back. Sadly, Samuel left Saul and that’s the last time Samuel ever saw Saul.



Review Worksheets

A. MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, to _____ is better than sacrifice,

And to _____ than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22b)

B. KEY FACTS: Use the table on the **Memory Page** to answer the questions. The words can be used more than once.

Amalekites Ammonites Moabites Philistines

1. The nation that Israel defeated in the wilderness: _____
2. The nation that captured Samson and took away his strength: _____
3. The nation that Jephthah fought and defeated: _____
4. The nation that captured the ark in battle: _____
5. The nation ruled by King Eglon: _____
6. The nation that came to Canaan from across the sea: _____

C. STORY FACTS: Fill in the blanks.

1. The elders of Israel were demanding that God give them a _____.
2. Saul was looking for his father's _____ when Samuel anointed him to be Israel's king.
3. Saul was anointed as king _____ times by Samuel.
4. After the battle with the Amalekites, Saul refused to destroy two things:
_____ and _____.
5. Saul was not allowed to make sacrifices because he was not a _____.
6. _____ was the king of the Amalekites.

D. WHAT'S TRUE AND WHAT'S NOT?

Circle "T" if the sentence is true. Circle "F" if the sentence is false.

1. The people were rejecting Samuel when they demanded a king. T F
2. Saul disobeyed God when he offered a sacrifice. T F
3. The LORD was grieved that He made Saul the king. T F
4. Saul thought he was not important enough to be a king. T F

E. WHAT WOULD A KING BE LIKE? Write three things that God said a king would do if he ruled over Israel.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

F. DO YOU KNOW THE ANSWER? Put the answers in the spaces on the left. Then use the boxed letters to find the answer to the question below.

- Eglon was king of _____.
 Esau was founder of _____.
 The people demanded to have a _____.
 Eli's sons were _____.
 Saul was looking for _____.
 The Philistines had thousands of _____.
 Saul was anointed _____ times.

What does the LORD say is better than sacrifice?

G. FIND OUT...

You can obey God with good motives or with selfish ones. In John 14:15, Jesus gives you a good motive for obeying him. What does He say?
