

## 1 Samuel 15:1-35 **Saul's incomplete obedience – God rejected Saul as king**

### Saul Spares King Agag

<sup>1</sup> Samuel also said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. <sup>3</sup> Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

<sup>4</sup> So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. <sup>5</sup> And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley.

<sup>6</sup> Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

<sup>7</sup> And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. <sup>8</sup> He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. <sup>9</sup> But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

### Saul Rejected as King

<sup>10</sup> Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, <sup>11</sup> "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night. <sup>12</sup> So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal." <sup>13</sup> Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

<sup>14</sup> But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

<sup>15</sup> And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

<sup>16</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on."

<sup>17</sup> So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? <sup>18</sup> Now the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are

consumed.' <sup>19</sup> Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?"

<sup>20</sup> And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup> But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."

<sup>22</sup> So Samuel said:

"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

<sup>24</sup> Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. <sup>25</sup> Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord."

<sup>26</sup> But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel."

<sup>27</sup> And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. <sup>28</sup> So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. <sup>29</sup> And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent."

<sup>30</sup> Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God." <sup>31</sup> So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord.

<sup>32</sup> Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously.

And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

<sup>33</sup> But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

<sup>34</sup> Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. <sup>35</sup> And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

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Facts Revealed:

**Saul Spares King Agag** [[1 Samuel 15:1-9](#)]

✧ God pronounced war against Amalek forever because they had attacked Israel when Israel first departed from Egypt. [[Exodus 17:8-16](#)]

✧ 550 years later through Saul, God called for the elimination of Amalek with total destruction, men, women, children, and animals. [[1 Samuel 15:1-3](#)]

✧ This is similar to God's statement to Abraham that Israel would be in a foreign land for 400 years and then would be brought back to inherit the land of Canaan because the iniquity of

the Amorites is not yet full, that promise was made about 550 to 600 years before it actually occurred when Israel inherited the Promised Land under Joshua. [\[Genesis 15:13-16\]](#)

- ✧ On special occasions Israel was commanded to utterly destroy the enemies of God in the same manner, men, women, children, animals, spoils and the city. [\[Deuteronomy 13:12-18\]](#)
- ✧ Other times they were to destroy men, women, and children but they could take the livestock as well as the spoils of war for themselves. [\[Deuteronomy 2:26-37, 3:1-7\]](#)
- ✧ Saul gathered an army of 210,000 and set out for the Amalekites, stopping only to warn the Kenites and allow them to escape before the battle. [\[1 Samuel 15:4-6\]](#)
- ✧ The command was: Attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." [\[1 Samuel 15:3\]](#)
- ✧ Saul and his men captured Agag king of the Amalekites alive, destroyed the rest of the people as well as everything that was despised and worthless with the sword, but they spared the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs, and all that was good. [\[1 Samuel 15:7-9\]](#)

#### Saul Rejected as King [\[1 Samuel 15:10-35\]](#)

- ✧ The Word of Yahweh (God the Word) came to Samuel and informed him that Saul had failed to perform the commandment of God and that the Lord regretted having made Saul king. [\[1 Samuel 15:10-11\]](#)
- ✧ Samuel was grieved and cried out to the Lord all night, then arose early to go to Saul, and found him at Gilgal. [\[1 Samuel 15:11-13\]](#)
- ✧ Saul was so pleased by his victory he set up a monument for himself at Carmel. [\[1 Samuel 15:12\]](#)
- ✧ When Saul saw Samuel, He said, "Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord." [\[1 Samuel 15:13\]](#)
- ✧ Samuel responded, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" [\[1 Samuel 15:14\]](#)
- ✧ Saul replied that they had brought back the best of the spoils to sacrifice to YHWH Eloheyk (the Lord your God) and the rest we have utterly destroyed. [\[1 Samuel 15:15\]](#)
- ✧ Samuel informed Saul that Yahweh had spoken to him last night of how He made Saul king over Israel when Saul was still little in his own sight. Now Saul was sent on a mission to totally eliminate the Amalekites both human and livestock. Saul had disobeyed by swooping down on the spoil which was to have been destroyed, and he did evil in the sight of Yahweh. [\[1 Samuel 15:16-19\]](#)
- ✧ Saul attempted to defend his actions by repeating his claim to have done as commanded in destroying the Amalekites with Agag their king as evidence. Then he accused the people but attempted to excuse them by saying the livestock were brought back to offer as a sacrifice to Yahweh in Gilgal. [\[1 Samuel 15:20-21\]](#)
  - ✧ Saul's obedience, even at best, was only partial, because the Amalekites continued to the time of Israel's dispersion in Persia and appeared in Haman the Agagite who sought to destroy the Jews in the time of Esther and Mordechai. [\[Book of Esther\]](#)
- ✧ So Samuel said: "**Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord?**  
Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, And to heed than the fat of rams.  
For **rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft**,  
And **stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry**.  
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." [\[1 Samuel 15:22-23\]](#)
  - ✧ When God sends one on a mission, He demands the mission be done exactly as commanded. Deviations are unacceptable.

- ✧ God viewed Saul's behavior as disobedience. [\[1 Samuel 15:10-11\]](#)
- ✧ Sacrifices do not endear us to God Who is looking for obedience.
- ✧ Because Saul rejected the Word of Yahweh, God has also rejected Saul from being king.
- ✧ Saul finally acknowledged he had sinned, and sought affirmation and forgiveness from Samuel instead of from God Himself. [\[1 Samuel 15:24-25\]](#)
- ✧ So often today, many people seek some human to forgive and excuse them for some sin against God Almighty.
- ✧ Men do not possess the authority to exercise forgiveness in the place of God.
- ✧ We can only forgive sins against our own person, not sins against God.
- ✧ We may teach that God is forgiving and does forgive sins after repentance and through the blood of Messiah Jesus, thus encouraging them to repent, but we may not make the decision in God's place.
- ✧ Even the prophets of old who spoke God's forgiveness, could only make the statement after being so instructed by God Himself.
- ✧ Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." [\[1 Samuel 15:26\]](#)
- ✧ And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent." [\[1 Samuel 15:27-29\]](#)
- ✧ When God Himself has passed sentence, there is no man able to turn the verdict around.
- ✧ Saul said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God." [\[1 Samuel 15:30\]](#)
- ✧ Saul sought to save face before the Elders and the people of Israel, by admitting he sinned, but still wanting Samuel to return with him so he could "worship Yahweh Eloheyk" in his presence.
- ✧ This is a case of a politician seeking a photo opportunity with a man known to be holy as a public show of his own piety.
- ✧ Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul made a public show of worshipping The Lord. [\[1 Samuel 15:31\]](#)

#### Unfinished Business with Agag

- ✧ Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." [\[1 Samuel 15:32\]](#)
- ✧ But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. [\[1 Samuel 15:33\]](#)
- ✧ Agag was well known for his vicious behavior, as indicated by the words of Samuel.
- ✧ Samuel finished the job appointed for Saul by hacking Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal.

#### Parting of their ways [\[1 Samuel 15:34-35\]](#)

- ✧ Samuel returned to his home in Ramah.
- ✧ Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.
- ✧ Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death.
- ✧ Samuel continued to mourn for Saul.
- ✧ Yahweh regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.
- ✧ It is possible to grieve the Spirit of God. [\[Ephesians 4:30\]](#)