



Study Guide: 1 Samuel – Chapter 15

Study Guide: 1 Samuel – Chapter 15

This study guide provides an educational overview of 1 Samuel Chapter 15 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

1 Samuel Chapter 15 presents a pivotal moment in the history of Israel and the reign of King Saul. This chapter captures God's command to Saul through the prophet Samuel to utterly destroy the Amalekites, a people who had opposed Israel during their journey from Egypt. The chapter highlights themes of obedience, judgment, and the consequences of disobedience. It marks a turning point where Saul's failure to fully obey God's instructions leads to his rejection as king. This study guide will explore the chapter's content, its theological significance, and practical lessons for today.

Context

The book of 1 Samuel records the transition of Israel from a loose confederation of tribes under judges to a centralized monarchy. Saul, the first king, was anointed by Samuel but his reign is marked by moments of obedience and failure. The Amalekites were longstanding enemies of Israel, known for their ruthless attacks during Israel's wilderness wanderings. God had previously commanded the complete destruction of Amalek as a judgment for their opposition. In chapter 15, God reiterates this command through Samuel, emphasizing the importance of total obedience. This chapter sets the stage for Saul's downfall and the rise of David.

Outline

The chapter begins with Samuel delivering God's command to Saul to attack the Amalekites and destroy everything, sparing no one and nothing. Saul assembles his army and carries out the attack but spares King Agag and the best of the livestock. When Samuel confronts Saul, Saul offers excuses, claiming he saved the animals to sacrifice to God. Samuel rebukes Saul, emphasizing that obedience is better than sacrifice. The chapter concludes with Samuel pronouncing God's rejection of Saul as king and executing King Agag himself, symbolizing the seriousness of disobedience.



Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1-3: Samuel commands Saul to listen carefully to God's instructions. Saul is to utterly destroy the Amalekites, including men, women, children, animals, and possessions. This command reflects God's judgment on Amalek for opposing Israel.

Verses 4-9: Saul gathers his troops and attacks the Amalekites, defeating them. However, he spares King Agag and keeps the best sheep, cattle, and other valuables, disobeying God's explicit command.

Verses 10-11: God expresses regret that He made Saul king because of Saul's disobedience. Samuel receives this message and mourns for Saul, indicating the gravity of the situation.

Verses 12-15: Samuel confronts Saul, who claims he obeyed God but just spared the best animals to sacrifice. Samuel challenges Saul's justification, pointing out that obedience is more important than sacrifice.

Verses 16-23: Samuel delivers God's verdict that because Saul rejected the word of the Lord, God has rejected him as king. Samuel declares that rebellion is like the sin of divination and stubbornness like idolatry. Saul's partial obedience is equated with disobedience.

Verses 24-31: Saul admits his sin and asks Samuel to forgive him. Samuel refuses to return with Saul, stating that God has rejected him. Samuel executes King Agag himself, demonstrating the seriousness of God's judgment.

Verses 32-35: The chapter closes with Samuel leaving, and Saul's kingship is effectively ended. Samuel mourns for Saul, but the Lord does not relent from rejecting him as king. This sets the stage for David's rise.

Key Themes

Obedience to God is paramount. The chapter underscores that God values complete obedience over ritual sacrifice or partial compliance. Saul's failure to fully obey God's command results in divine rejection.

The seriousness of sin and rebellion. Saul's disobedience is equated with rebellion and idolatry, highlighting how stubbornness against God's will is a grave offense.



God's sovereignty in leadership. God's regret over making Saul king reveals that divine approval is essential for legitimate leadership, and leaders are accountable to God's commands.

The role of the prophet. Samuel acts as God's messenger, delivering commands, confronting disobedience, and executing judgment, illustrating the prophet's critical role in guiding the nation.

Cross-References

Exodus 17:8-16 records the initial conflict with Amalek, where God commands Israel to remember and blot out Amalek's memory, providing the foundation for the command in 1 Samuel 15.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 commands Israel to remember what Amalek did and to blot out their memory, reinforcing the divine mandate for their destruction.

1 Samuel 13:13-14 shows Samuel's earlier rebuke of Saul for disobedience, foreshadowing the rejection pronounced in chapter 15.

Proverbs 21:3 emphasizes that doing what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice, echoing the message in 1 Samuel 15 about obedience over ritual.

Hosea 6:6 highlights God's desire for mercy and knowledge of Him rather than sacrifice, aligning with Samuel's rebuke of Saul's misplaced priorities.

Application

This chapter challenges believers to examine their obedience to God. Partial obedience or selective compliance is not acceptable; God calls for wholehearted commitment. It reminds us that external religious acts cannot substitute for genuine submission to God's will.

Leaders, especially, are reminded of their accountability before God. Saul's story warns that divine approval is essential and that failure to follow God's commands can lead to loss of position and blessing.

The chapter also encourages humility and repentance. While Saul admits his sin, his excuses reveal a heart not fully surrendered. True repentance involves recognizing the seriousness of sin and turning fully to God.



Finally, believers can learn from Samuel's example of faithfully delivering God's word, confronting disobedience, and trusting God's sovereignty even when outcomes are difficult.

Summary

1 Samuel 15 is a sobering chapter that reveals the consequences of disobedience to God's commands. Saul's failure to completely destroy the Amalekites results in his rejection as king, emphasizing that obedience is more valuable than sacrifice. The chapter highlights God's holiness, the seriousness of rebellion, and the importance of heeding prophetic guidance. It serves as a timeless reminder that God desires full obedience and that leadership carries great responsibility. Through this study, believers are called to examine their own hearts and commit to following God's will fully and faithfully.