

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: The Death of Saul and David Made King

1 Chronicles 9:35–11:47

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson contrasts two kings to proclaim that the LORD is the true King over every earthly ruler. Saul died for unfaithfulness, having abandoned God's word and finally consulting a medium, while David was made king in fulfillment of God's promise and grew strong because the LORD was with him. The teacher must draw the line to Christ: the God who raised up David is the God who has exalted Jesus to David's throne at His own right hand, where He reigns now as Lord and Christ. This kingship is not a future earthly empire but the present reign of the risen Christ, and every earthly ruler stands under Him.

The transformational aim presses on the matter of seeking God. Saul's tragedy was that when he most needed guidance, he sought it everywhere but from the LORD. The lesson asks each member the same question: when you are anxious and uncertain, where do you turn? The goal is repentance from our own substitutes for God, whether divination, mere human wisdom, or self-reliance, and a renewed commitment to seek the LORD and keep His word.

Finally, the lesson holds up David and his mighty men as a picture of strength that comes from God's presence rather than human power. The class should be moved both to vigilance, taking Saul's fall as a warning that the faithful can drift and be lost, and to confidence, trusting that the same Lord who was with David is with His people who seek Him, and that He is forming us into loyal subjects of our true King, Jesus.

Question 1

Student Question:

How does the Chronicler's verdict that Saul died for his unfaithfulness (10:13–14) reveal the connection between turning from God's word and ruin?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 10 narrates Saul's death on Mount Gilboa with stark brevity. The Philistines press the battle, Saul's sons including Jonathan are killed, the archers find Saul and wound him, and Saul, dreading capture and abuse, falls on his own sword. His armor-bearer follows him in death. The first king of Israel ends in defeat, and the Philistines strip his body and fasten his head in the temple of their god. It is a grim, humiliating end.

But the Chronicler is not content to report the death; he interprets it. In 1 Chronicles 10:13–14 he gives the divine verdict: Saul died for his unfaithfulness. He broke faith with the LORD by not

keeping the word of the LORD, and also by consulting a medium for guidance, and he did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David. The death on Gilboa was the visible end of an invisible decline.

This is the Chronicler's theology of consequence in concentrated form. Saul's ruin was not random misfortune or mere bad generalship. It was the harvest of a life that had turned from God's word. The unfaithfulness named here was years in the making, a pattern of disobedience and self-will that finally bore its bitter fruit.

We must be careful and accurate here. The Chronicler is not teaching that every defeat or death is a direct punishment for sin, nor that Saul bore guilt for someone else's sin. He is teaching that Saul, personally accountable for his own choices, reaped what he had sown. Turning from God's word is not a harmless preference; over time it leads to ruin. That is the warning the Chronicler wants every reader to feel.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Chronicler's divine verdict: Saul died for his own unfaithfulness (10:13–14)
- Ruin as the harvest of a life turned from God's word
- Personal accountability for one's own choices, not inherited guilt
- Not every hardship is direct punishment, but turning from God leads to ruin
- Unfaithfulness as a long pattern that finally bears bitter fruit

Discussion Prompts

- How does the Chronicler interpret Saul's death beyond the mere facts of the battle?
- What does it mean that Saul's ruin was the harvest of years of drifting from God?
- What is the Chronicler warning every reader to take to heart from Saul's end?

Question 2

Student Question:

Where in your life have you let small acts of unfaithfulness to God's word accumulate, and what might they lead to if left unchecked?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Saul's unfaithfulness did not begin with the medium at Endor; it began with smaller compromises long before. He offered a sacrifice he was not authorized to offer. He spared what God said to destroy and then blamed the people. Each act seemed manageable in the moment, but together they formed a settled pattern of putting his own judgment above God's word, and that pattern ended on Gilboa.

This is how unfaithfulness usually works in our own lives. We rarely abandon God in a single dramatic act. We accumulate small infidelities, a neglected discipline, a tolerated sin, a

command quietly set aside, until the small things have shaped us into people who no longer truly listen to God. The end is not reached in a day, but it is reached.

The sobering truth is that the small acts matter precisely because they accumulate. What we excuse as minor becomes the riverbed in which our lives flow. Saul's story urges us to take the small things seriously before they become a direction we cannot easily reverse.

Press the class toward honest inventory. Where are the small infidelities collecting? What command of God's word have they been quietly setting aside? And what will they do this week to break the pattern before it bears the kind of fruit it bore for Saul?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Small, accumulated acts of unfaithfulness rather than a single dramatic fall
- Compromise as a pattern that shapes the whole life
- The seriousness of small infidelities because they accumulate into a direction
- Breaking patterns of unfaithfulness before they bear bitter fruit

Discussion Prompts

- Where are small acts of unfaithfulness quietly collecting in your life?
- How do minor compromises shape us over time into people who stop listening to God?
- What one pattern will you act to break this week before it grows?

Question 3

Student Question:

What does Saul's decision to consult a medium rather than inquire of the LORD reveal about the heart that has stopped truly seeking God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Chronicler singles out one act for special mention: Saul consulted a medium for guidance and did not inquire of the LORD. The fuller story in 1 Samuel 28 shows the depth of the tragedy. Saul first sought the LORD and received no answer, and instead of repenting and waiting, he turned to a forbidden source, a medium at Endor, to summon guidance from the dead. He sought direction anywhere but from the God he had abandoned.

Consulting mediums was strictly forbidden in Deuteronomy 18, listed among the detestable practices of the nations. The prohibition was not arbitrary; it guarded Israel from trading the living God for counterfeit voices. For the king of God's people to seek a medium was a profound betrayal, a public confession that he no longer truly sought the LORD.

What this reveals is the nature of a heart that has stopped seeking God. Saul still wanted answers; he still wanted help in his crisis. What he no longer wanted was God Himself. So when

God was silent, Saul did not humble himself and return; he went looking for a substitute. The form of religion remained, but the heart of it was gone.

This exposes a danger we all face. It is possible to want God's benefits, His guidance, His help, His blessing, while no longer wanting God. When that happens, we begin to reach for substitutes, for voices and sources that promise direction without requiring repentance and surrender. Saul's medium is the ancient form; the human heart still invents new ones.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Saul consulting a medium instead of inquiring of the LORD (10:13; 1 Samuel 28)
- The prohibition against mediums and divination (Deuteronomy 18:10–12)
- Wanting God's benefits while no longer wanting God Himself
- Reaching for substitutes when God seems silent rather than humbling ourselves
- The form of religion remaining after its heart is gone

Discussion Prompts

- Why did Saul turn to a medium, and what did it reveal about his heart?
- What does it look like to want God's help without wanting God Himself?
- Why does God so seriously forbid seeking guidance from forbidden sources?

Question 4

Student Question:

When you face uncertainty, what substitutes for seeking God do you reach for, and how can you replace them with genuinely seeking Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

We may not visit mediums, but we all have our substitutes for seeking God. When anxiety rises and we need direction, where do we actually turn first? For some it is endless consultation of others' opinions; for some it is the false comfort of a screen; for some it is horoscopes, superstition, or the modern fascination with the occult; for many it is simple self-reliance, leaning entirely on our own understanding.

The common thread is that we reach for guidance without surrendering to God. Like Saul, we want answers more than we want the Answerer. The substitute may be respectable or shameful, ancient or modern, but it functions the same way: it lets us seek direction without repentance.

Genuinely seeking God is different. It means going to His word, going to Him in prayer, submitting our wills before we ask for His guidance, and being willing to wait when He does not answer on our schedule. It means wanting Him, not just His instructions.

Challenge the class to name honestly the substitute they reach for first, and to replace it this week with real seeking of God, in His word, in prayer, in submission, so that He is the first place they turn and not the last.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Modern substitutes for seeking God: opinion-chasing, escapism, occult, self-reliance
- Wanting answers more than wanting the God who answers
- Genuine seeking through the word, prayer, submission, and patient waiting
- Trusting in the LORD rather than leaning on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6)

Discussion Prompts

- When you are anxious and need direction, where do you actually turn first?
- What substitute for seeking God do you most often reach for, and why?
- How will you make genuinely seeking God your first response this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

How does the anointing of David at Hebron, in fulfillment of God's word, show that the LORD is the true King who raises up rulers according to His purpose?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

With Saul fallen, chapter 11 turns to David. All Israel gathers to him at Hebron and says, in effect, we are your own flesh and blood, and even while Saul was king it was you who led Israel out and brought them in, and the LORD said you would shepherd His people. So they anoint David king over Israel according to the word of the LORD by Samuel. The throne does not come to David by his own grasping; it comes by God's appointment, in God's time.

This is the Chronicler's point. David becomes king in fulfillment of God's word. Years earlier Samuel had anointed him; now the whole nation acknowledges what God had declared. The LORD is the true King who raises up rulers according to His purpose. Saul's kingdom was taken and David's was given, and behind both stood the sovereign hand of God.

Remember that David had waited many years for this moment. He had been anointed as a youth, then spent years fleeing Saul, hiding in caves, refusing to seize the throne by force even when he had the chance. He let God give the kingdom rather than taking it. The contrast with Saul's self-willed grasping could hardly be sharper.

The truth here is steadying. Earthly rulers rise and fall, but God is the true King who governs the rise and the fall. He keeps His word, He fulfills His promises, and He installs whom He chooses in His own time. For David, the long wait ended exactly as God had said it would, because God's word does not fail.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- David made king in fulfillment of God's word (11:1-3)
- The LORD as the true King who raises up rulers according to His purpose
- David receiving the throne by God's appointment, not by grasping
- David's years of waiting and refusal to seize the throne by force
- God keeps His word and fulfills His promises in His own time

Discussion Prompts

- How does David's anointing show that the LORD is the true King over Israel?
- What is the difference between David receiving the throne and Saul clinging to it?
- What does David's long wait teach us about God's timing and faithfulness?

Question 6

Student Question:

Where do you need to submit to God's choices and timing rather than insisting on your own way, as David waited years for the throne God had promised him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

David's long wait for the throne speaks directly to our impatience with God's timing. He had the promise, but not yet the fulfillment, and the gap stretched on for years. In that gap he could have forced the issue, but he chose to submit to God's choices and God's schedule rather than insist on his own.

Most of us find this hard. We know what we want, we may even believe it is what God wants, and we grow restless when it does not come on our timetable. The temptation is to seize, to manipulate, to take matters into our own hands rather than wait on the Lord. David models the harder, better way.

Submitting to God's timing is not passive resignation; it is active trust. David kept doing right, kept honoring the LORD, kept refusing shortcuts, all while waiting. He trusted that the God who promised would also provide, and in due time He did.

Invite the class to name the area where they are most tempted to grasp rather than wait, where they are insisting on their own way and timing, and to practice David's kind of trust, doing right and leaving the outcome and the timing to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Submitting to God's choices and timing rather than insisting on our own
- Waiting as active trust, not passive resignation
- Refusing shortcuts and manipulation to force God's promises

- Doing right in the gap between promise and fulfillment

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted to grasp and force your own way rather than wait on God?
- What does David's example teach about how to live in the gap between promise and fulfillment?
- How can you practice active, trusting patience in that area this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

What does the capture of Jerusalem and the note that David grew greater because the LORD of hosts was with him teach about the source of true strength and success?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Chronicler records that David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, then held by the Jebusites, and captured the stronghold of Zion, which became the city of David. David took up residence in the fortress, built up the city, and, the Chronicler adds with quiet emphasis, became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him. That last phrase is the key to everything.

Jerusalem would become the center of Israel's worship and the city of the great King, but the Chronicler is careful to tell us the source of David's success. It was not David's military genius alone, not his charisma, not his army. He grew great because the LORD of hosts was with him. The presence of God was the engine of David's rise.

This is a recurring theme in Scripture. The difference between Saul and David, in the end, was not talent but the presence of God. When God is with a person, even a shepherd boy becomes a king and even a Jebusite stronghold falls. When God withdraws, even a king with every advantage falls on Gilboa.

The lesson for us is that true strength and lasting success come from God's presence, not from our own resources. We are tempted to measure our prospects by our abilities and assets, but the deeper question is whether the LORD is with us. To have God's presence is to have the only strength that finally matters.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The capture of Jerusalem and David's rise (11:4-9)
- David grew great because the LORD of hosts was with him
- The presence of God as the true source of strength and success
- The decisive difference between Saul and David was God's presence, not talent
- Measuring our prospects by God's presence rather than our own resources

Discussion Prompts

- What does the Chronicler identify as the source of David's greatness?
- How is the presence of God a greater asset than any human ability or resource?
- Why is the question whether the LORD is with us more important than the question of our talents?

Question 8

Student Question:

In what area are you tempted to trust your own ability or resources rather than the presence and help of God, and how will you lean on Him instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

If David's strength came from God's presence, then our temptation to trust our own ability and resources is exposed as a quiet form of self-reliance. We plan, we work, we accumulate skills and assets, and somewhere along the way we begin to lean on these rather than on God. We start to live as though the outcome depended chiefly on us.

This is subtle because the resources themselves are good. Ability is a gift; diligence is a virtue. The danger is not in having them but in trusting them, in making them our functional confidence so that the presence of God becomes an afterthought rather than our first hope.

Saul had every earthly advantage of kingship and lost it; David had the presence of God and rose. The contrast urges us to relocate our confidence, to do our work diligently while leaning not on the work but on the Lord who is with us. Strength borrowed from God outlasts strength manufactured by ourselves.

Press the class to identify where they are leaning on their own ability or resources rather than on God's presence and help, and to consciously transfer their confidence back to the Lord, working hard but trusting Him for the outcome.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Trusting our own ability and resources rather than God's presence
- Good gifts becoming a substitute confidence for God Himself
- Working diligently while leaning on the Lord, not on the work
- Relocating our functional confidence from self to God

Discussion Prompts

- In what area are you tempted to trust your own ability rather than God's presence?
- How can good gifts like talent and diligence quietly become substitutes for trusting God?
- What would it look like to work hard this week while truly leaning on the Lord?

Question 9

Student Question:

How does the contrast between Saul, who died for unfaithfulness and consulting a medium, and David, the man after God's own heart whom the LORD made king, reveal that the LORD is the true King over every earthly ruler, and how is this kingship ultimately fulfilled in Christ enthroned at God's right hand (Acts 2:29–36)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the doctrinal summit of the lesson. Set the two kings side by side. Saul, the man who broke faith, who did not keep God's word, who consulted a medium and died for his unfaithfulness, his kingdom torn from him. David, the man after God's own heart, who waited on the LORD, refused to grasp, and was made king according to the word of God, growing great because the LORD was with him. The contrast is not merely between two personalities; it is a revelation that the LORD is the true King who stands over every earthly ruler, raising up and bringing down according to His purpose.

This is the heartbeat of Chronicles. Earthly thrones are real, but they are derivative. Saul sat on a throne, and David sat on a throne, but above both thrones was the throne of the LORD of hosts, the true King of Israel. He gave the kingdom to Saul and took it away; He promised it to David and bestowed it. No ruler reigns except by His permission, and none stands when He removes His hand. The Chronicler wants his battered, kingless readers to know that the real King never lost His throne, not for one moment of the exile.

And this is where the whole movement of Chronicles points to Christ. The God who raised up David did not stop with David. He had promised David an everlasting throne, and the New Testament announces the fulfillment. Peter, in Acts 2, declares that David himself died and was buried, but that he was a prophet who foresaw that God would set one of his descendants on his throne, and that this descendant is Jesus, whom God raised from the dead and exalted to His right hand. The true King has installed His King.

We must be precise about the nature of this kingship, for here many go wrong. The throne to which Jesus has been exalted is not a future earthly political throne in Jerusalem; it is the throne at the right hand of God in heaven, from which He reigns now as Lord and Christ. Acts 2 makes this unmistakable: David's greater Son is reigning today, not waiting to reign in some future earthly empire. The kingdom Christ rules is His church, and His reign is present, spiritual, and universal. To look for an earthly Davidic kingdom yet to come is to miss what God has already done in seating Jesus on the throne.

This transforms how we read the rise of David and how we live. David was a shadow; Christ is the substance. David grew great because the LORD was with him; Christ reigns because He is the LORD enthroned. And the searching question of the whole lesson, where do you turn when you

need a king, finds its final answer here. We do not turn to mediums, to substitutes, to our own resources, or to any earthly power. We bow to the true King, the risen Christ, entering His kingdom through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Him, and living as His loyal, faithful subjects, lest, like Saul, we break faith and be lost.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The contrast of Saul and David revealing the LORD as the true King over all earthly rulers
- God gives and removes earthly thrones according to His purpose
- The everlasting throne promised to David fulfilled in Christ (2 Samuel 7; Acts 2:29–36)
- Christ exalted to God's right hand, reigning now as Lord and Christ, not a future earthly throne
- Rejecting premillennial and dispensational expectation of a future earthly Davidic kingdom
- Entering Christ's kingdom now through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Him
- The warning of Saul: Christians can break faith and be lost (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Discussion Prompts

- How does the contrast between Saul and David reveal that the LORD is the true King?
- How does Acts 2:29–36 show that David's throne is fulfilled in Christ reigning now?
- Why must we reject the idea of a future earthly Davidic kingdom, and what difference does Christ's present reign make for how you live?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over the fall of Saul and the rise of David, name one specific way Jesus is calling you to seek and trust Him as your true King through this passage.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Bring the lesson home. We have stood at Gilboa and watched a king die for his unfaithfulness, and we have stood at Hebron and watched a king rise because the LORD was with him. The two roads are still open before us: the road of drifting, substituting, and breaking faith, or the road of seeking God, waiting on Him, and trusting His presence. The capstone asks you to name one specific way Jesus is calling you to seek and trust Him as your true King.

Perhaps the warning of Saul has named a drift you must reverse. Perhaps the medium has exposed a substitute you reach for instead of God. Perhaps David's patience rebukes your grasping, or his God-given strength rebukes your self-reliance. Perhaps the enthroned Christ simply calls you to bow more fully to His reign.

Whatever the call, do not leave it abstract. Saul's tragedy and David's rise were not given for our information but for our transformation, that we would become people who seek the LORD, keep His word, and trust the true King who reigns now at the right hand of God.

Close by inviting each person to name one specific step of seeking and submitting to Christ this week, so that the lesson ends not merely in agreement but in a fresh allegiance to the King who never lost His throne.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Choosing the road of seeking God over the road of drift and substitution
- Letting Saul's fall and David's rise produce transformation, not just information
- Renewed allegiance to Christ as our true King
- Being formed into faithful subjects of the reigning Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Which figure spoke to you more sharply this lesson, Saul as warning or David as model, and why?
- What one specific way is Jesus calling you to seek and trust Him as your true King?
- How will you turn that call into a concrete step of allegiance this week?