

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles

Lesson 4: The Death of Saul and David Made King -- 1 Chronicles 9:35–11:47

After nine chapters of names, the Chronicler finally turns to narrative, and the first story he tells is a death. He circles back to the family of Saul, Israel's first king, and then takes us to the slopes of Mount Gilboa where that king fell. The battle goes badly, Saul's sons are killed, and Saul, wounded and afraid of capture, takes his own sword and falls on it. The first king of Israel dies in defeat and despair, and the Chronicler does not soften it. He wants us to look hard at how a reign ends when a man turns from God.

Then comes the explanation, and it is one of the most pointed verses in the book. Saul died for his unfaithfulness. He broke faith with the LORD, he did not keep the word of the LORD, and he even consulted a medium for guidance instead of inquiring of God. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David. In a single sentence the Chronicler tells us that Saul's death was not merely military misfortune; it was the harvest of a life that had drifted from God and finally sought help anywhere but from Him.

Against that dark backdrop, the light of David rises. All Israel gathers to David at Hebron and anoints him king, acknowledging that even while Saul reigned, it was David who led Israel out and brought them in, and that the LORD had said David would shepherd His people. David captures the stronghold of Zion and makes Jerusalem his city, and he grows greater and greater because the LORD of hosts is with him. Then the Chronicler honors David's mighty men, the warriors whose courage and loyalty God used to establish the kingdom.

So this lesson sets two kings side by side. One sought a medium; the other sought the LORD. One broke faith; the other was found faithful. One ended in death and a lost kingdom; the other rose to a throne God Himself had promised. And over both stands the truth the Chronicler most wants us to see: the LORD is the true King, who raises up rulers and brings them down, and who is with those who seek Him. The question pressed on every reader is simple and searching. When you need guidance, where do you turn?

Group Discussion: The Chronicler sums up Saul's life in one sentence: he died for his unfaithfulness because he did not keep the word of the LORD and consulted a medium instead of seeking God. What is the Chronicler warning every reader to take to heart?

Personal Reflection: When you are anxious and need direction, where do you actually turn first? What does your honest answer reveal about whether you are seeking the LORD or seeking guidance somewhere else?

Read 1 Chronicles 9:35–11:47

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. When you face uncertainty, what substitutes for seeking God do you reach for, and how can you replace them with genuinely seeking Him?
5. 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?
6. 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?

7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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)?
10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: 1 Samuel 28:6-7, Saul inquires of the LORD, receives no answer, and turns to a medium; Deuteronomy 18:10-12, the prohibition against consulting mediums and the call to listen to God; Acts 2:29-36, God exalts Jesus to David's throne at His right hand as Lord and Christ; 1 Corinthians 10:12, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; Proverbs 3:5-6, trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding

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