

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 23, 1 Samuel: Conflict with Saul and David

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1 Samuel: Conflict with Saul and David

1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 23, 1 Samuel: Conflict with Saul and David, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a transcript of a lecture on 1 Samuel, focusing on the downfall of King Saul and the rise of King David. **Dr. Hildebrandt** covers Saul's disobedience, his flawed character, and his eventual demise. The lecture also **highlights** the contrasting heroism of Jonathan, Saul's son. **Further**, it **examines** the anointing of David and explores theological themes such as God's grief, the nature of prophecy, and the concept of multiple possible futures. Finally, the lecture **discusses** the story of Saul's consultation with the Witch of Endor and its implications regarding the awareness of the deceased.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 23 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament Literature).



**Hildebrandt_OTLit_
Session23.mp3**

3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 23, 1 Samuel: Conflict with Saul and David

1 Samuel Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. Why is Saul afraid when he is at Gilgal?
2. What mistake does Saul make in chapter 13, and what are the consequences of his actions?
3. What bold declaration does Jonathan make in chapter 14?
4. What foolish vow does Saul make that nearly costs Jonathan his life?
5. What does Samuel mean when he says that God is "grieved that I made Saul king?"
6. What does God emphasize to Samuel in chapter 16 when he is choosing a new king?
7. In what ways does Saul attempt to harm or kill David?
8. How does Jonathan help David escape the wrath of Saul?
9. Why does David pretend to be insane while visiting Gath?
10. What does Saul do when the Lord will not answer him, and what is the outcome?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Saul is afraid at Gilgal because the Philistines have crossed through the mountains of Israel and are positioned to attack, putting Saul and his army in a precarious and vulnerable situation. This indicates that the Philistines have penetrated deep into Israel's territory.
2. Saul offers a burnt offering without the authority to do so, which is a priestly act. As a consequence, Samuel tells Saul that his kingdom will not endure and that God would have established him and his line as king forever if he had obeyed.
3. Jonathan declares that nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few. He believes that God can deliver them, even with just him and his armor-bearer against a large Philistine garrison.

4. Saul makes a vow that no one should eat any food until the Philistines are defeated. This vow leads to Jonathan unknowingly breaking it, and Saul wants to kill his son as a result.
5. Samuel's lamentation that God is "grieved that I made Saul king" is understood to mean God is reflecting on his decision, expressing his sadness about Saul's disobedience and the negative outcome of Saul's reign. This doesn't mean God regrets it, but it indicates God's feelings about the situation.
6. God emphasizes to Samuel that He does not look at outward appearance or height, but instead looks at the heart. This highlights that God values a person's inner character and motives over their physical attributes, and it sets the stage for the selection of David.
7. Saul tries to harm David by throwing his spear at him multiple times, using his daughter Michal as a snare, and giving him a dangerous task (demanding Philistine foreskins as a dowry), among other attempts. All of these demonstrate Saul's jealousy, paranoia and determination to get rid of David.
8. Jonathan warns David of Saul's plot to kill him, sets up a signal with him to indicate danger, and pleads with his father on David's behalf, risking his own safety to help his friend escape.
9. David pretends to be insane while at Gath by acting as though he has lost his mind, to ensure the Philistines will not want to keep him as a mercenary, thus protecting himself from being killed.
10. When the Lord will not answer him, Saul consults a medium or a witch at Endor, asking her to summon the spirit of Samuel. The witch summons a spirit that appears to be Samuel, who tells Saul that he and his sons will die in battle against the Philistines the next day.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of leadership in 1 Samuel, contrasting the leadership styles of Saul and David. How do their respective actions reveal their characters, and what does this suggest about what constitutes effective leadership according to the text?

2. Explore the role of obedience and disobedience in 1 Samuel, focusing on the key instances where characters follow or defy God's commands. How do these actions affect the individuals involved and the larger narrative?
3. Analyze the significance of the relationships between David, Jonathan, and Saul. What do these dynamics reveal about loyalty, friendship, jealousy, and power within the narrative?
4. Examine the various ways that the author of 1 Samuel utilizes the theme of divine intervention. How does God's involvement shape the narrative and guide the course of events?
5. Discuss the ways in which 1 Samuel portrays the nature of God, particularly with respect to His omniscience, His relationship with humanity, and the degree to which He allows human agency. How do these portrayals shape your understanding of God's character?

Glossary

Amalekites: A nomadic tribe that opposed the Israelites in the wilderness.

Anointing: The act of pouring oil on someone's head as a sign of consecration for a special role, often a king or priest.

Arum: A Hebrew word meaning shrewdness or wisdom.

Burnt Offering: A type of sacrifice in which an animal is burned entirely, symbolizing complete devotion to God.

Determinism: The philosophical view that all events, including moral choices, are completely determined by pre-existing causes.

Dowry: The property or money a bride brings to her husband upon marriage.

Ephod: A priestly garment used for divination; a tool for seeking God's will.

Edomite: A descendent of Esau, often depicted as an enemy of the Israelites.

Gilgal: A significant location in Israel, located near Jericho in the Jordan River valley.

Imprecatory Psalms: Psalms that express strong curses or calls for judgment against enemies.

Keilah: A city in Judah that David defends from the Philistines, and where he learns about the possibility of being betrayed.

Nob: A priestly city where David receives food and the sword of Goliath; later destroyed by Saul.

Philistines: A group of people who lived on the coastal plains of Canaan, who are often at war with the Israelites.

Ruach: A Hebrew word that can refer to wind, breath, or spirit.

Shrewdness: The quality of being clever and sharp in practical affairs.

Urim and Thummim: Objects used for divination by priests, possibly casting lots to discern God's will.

Ziklag: A city in the far south that David receives from the Philistines where he stays.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes, ideas, and facts from the provided lecture excerpts on 1 Samuel:

Briefing Document: Lecture on 1 Samuel

Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt provides a close reading of key passages in the book of 1 Samuel, focusing on the characters of Saul and David, and exploring theological themes related to obedience, divine sovereignty, human choice, and the nature of the afterlife. The lecture emphasizes a non-deterministic view of God's relationship with the world and draws parallels between the Old Testament narrative and contemporary human experiences.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. Saul's Downfall and Disobedience:

- **Fear and Impatience:** Saul's fear of the Philistines leads him to disobey God by offering a sacrifice, a priestly role he is not authorized to perform (1 Samuel 13). This act demonstrates his abuse of power. "He is the king, and now he's expanding his power."
- **Pious Cover-ups:** Saul uses piety to mask his sin. He justifies his actions by saying he wanted to offer a sacrifice to God. This is an example of how people often use religion to justify wrong actions. "Saul says, 'O but I wanted to offer a sacrifice to God.' That was a pious cover-up. He uses piety, he uses religion to cover his sin."
- **Rejection of God's Word:** Saul's ultimate downfall comes when he disobeys God's command to destroy the Amalekites completely (1 Samuel 15). He spares their king, Agag, and keeps some of their livestock. "God ordered him to kill Agag, the king of the Amalekites, yet Saul won't do what God commanded him to do." This reveals his prioritizing of his own word over God's.
- **Irony and Inconsistency:** Saul is ready to kill his own son Jonathan for breaking a hasty vow, but he fails to follow God's explicit commands to destroy the Amalekites. This inconsistency underscores his flawed character and misplaced priorities. "Saul will kill his own son because his ego is violated, and yet when it comes to God, God ordered him to kill Agag, the king of the Amalekites, yet Saul won't do what God commanded him to do."

- **God's Grief:** God expresses grief over choosing Saul as king, indicating that God experiences emotion and can regret past choices. "God says, 'I am grieved that I made Saul king.'" This raises questions about the nature of God's omniscience and the possibility of regrets in heaven.

1. **Jonathan: A Contrast to Saul:**

- **Faith and Courage:** Jonathan displays great faith and courage, launching a surprise attack on the Philistines with his armor bearer. His belief that "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving whether by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14) is highlighted, drawing parallels with Gideon's story.
- **Loyalty and Friendship:** Jonathan is a loyal friend to David, risking his own life to protect him from Saul. The close bond between them is a counterpoint to the dysfunctional relationship between Saul and his son. "This is one of the most beautiful stories in the Scripture concerning David and Jonathan."
- **Innocence and Victimhood:** Jonathan is nearly killed by his father for unknowingly breaking a foolish vow. This shows how flawed and self-centered Saul has become. "So Jonathan was totally innocent, and yet his father was going to kill him."

1. **David: A Man After God's Own Heart (and not perfect):**

- **God Looks at the Heart:** God chooses David, a young shepherd, as the future king. "The Lord does not look at things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart." This indicates that God values inner character over outward appearance.
- **Anointing with the Spirit:** David's anointing with oil signifies the coming of the Spirit of the Lord, empowering him for his role. "From that day on, the Spirit of the Lord came on David in power."
- **Faith and Courage:** David's victory over Goliath is presented as a testament to his faith in God, not his own strength. "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin but I come against you in the name of the Lord almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."
- **Respect for God's Anointed:** David's refusal to harm Saul, despite having ample opportunities, underscores his respect for God's authority. "Don't touch the Lord's what? Don't touch the Lord's anointed."

- **Not Perfect:** It's noted that David is not a perfect man and will have his own problems, showing that God uses flawed individuals. "Does that mean David is perfect? Is David going to have his problems? He's going to have his problems too."

1. **The Nature of God and Divine Sovereignty:**

- **Free Will and Contingent Futures:** The lecture argues against determinism, pointing out that God's plans are often contingent upon human choices. Saul's potential for an eternal kingship was conditional on obedience. "God said, 'If you had obeyed, I would have made you king forever.'"
- **God's Knowledge of Possibilities:** The example of David escaping Keilah is used to illustrate that God knows not only what is, but also what is possible. "God told him something that was possible in the future, but David chose a different direction so that that never happened."
- **God's Character:** God's character is unchanging, but His actions and plans can be impacted by human choices and actions. "It's his character that doesn't change, his word doesn't change, but you've got to be careful about mapping that into a universal."

1. **The "Evil Spirit" and Depression:**

- **Not Demonic Possession:** The "evil spirit" that torments Saul is not necessarily a demon, but rather could be interpreted as a form of depression. "I don't think this is God's forcing demons on Saul. I think the rest of this will explain this. Saul's attendant said to him, 'see an evil spirit from God is tormenting you.'"
- **Music as Therapy:** The use of harp music to soothe Saul is presented as a form of therapy rather than an exorcism. "When the evil spirit comes on him, then find someone who can play the harp."

1. **Deception and Shrewdness:**

- **Shrewdness vs. Evil:** The lecture suggests that some deceptions are not evil but rather "shrewdness" when dealing with evil. This highlights the moral complexity of the biblical narrative. "So what I tried to suggest earlier was with this kind of deception to move it out of the category of evil, and put it into the term of shrewdness."

1. The Afterlife and the Witch of Endor:

- **Awareness After Death:** The story of Saul consulting the witch of Endor, and the appearance of Samuel is used to argue that those who have died are aware of what happens in the living world. "I want to tell you, I think on the basis of this passage, Samuel was very aware of what was going on."
- **God's Sovereignty over Death:** The lecture stresses that Samuel's appearance is from God, not from the witch's power. "This witch did not bring Samuel back. Samuel came back from God, not from this witch."

Quotes

- "The Lord saves by many or few."
- "to obey is better than sacrifice, to heed is better than the fat of rams."
- "Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart."
- "No one understands my understanding"

Implications:

- **Biblical Interpretation:** The lecture encourages careful and nuanced readings of scripture, avoiding simplistic or deterministic interpretations.
- **Human Experience:** The lecture highlights the relevance of these ancient stories to contemporary human experiences like power struggles, relationships, moral choices, and the questions about human purpose.
- **The Nature of God:** The lecture shows a God who is not a puppet master, but one who interacts with human choice.
- **Practical Application:** The lecture encourages readers to apply biblical lessons on obedience and faith to their own lives, and reminds us that we can learn from the character flaws and victories of biblical people.

Conclusion:

This lecture provides a rich and engaging exploration of 1 Samuel, delving into its complex characters, moral dilemmas, and theological truths. It offers a compelling argument for a view of God that acknowledges both His sovereignty and the genuine freedom of human beings to impact the future.

5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 23, 1 Samuel: Conflict with Saul and David, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about 1 Samuel based on Dr. Hildebrandt's Lecture:

1. Why is Saul so afraid of the Philistines at Gilgal, and what does this reveal about his character?

Saul is terrified because the Philistines have managed to pass through the mountains of Israel, placing them in an incredibly dangerous position at the base of the Rift Valley, near Gilgal. This indicates a severe breakdown in Israelite defenses and demonstrates how far the Philistines had advanced. This fear, however, leads to Saul's major sin. He impatiently takes on the role of a priest by offering a sacrifice, a role he isn't authorized for, which showcases his desire to expand his own power and reveals a character driven by fear and a desire to control, even if that means disobeying God. This act of disobedience is a major turning point in the narrative, showing Saul's failure to follow God's specific commands and demonstrating his self-serving nature, and also sets up God's rejection of his kingship.

2. What is the significance of Jonathan's actions in Chapter 14, and how does it contrast with Saul's actions in Chapters 13 and 15?

Jonathan's actions in chapter 14, where he and his armor-bearer bravely attack a Philistine outpost, highlight faith and reliance on God. Jonathan states that "nothing can hinder the Lord from saving whether by many or by few," a direct parallel to Gideon's story. His boldness and willingness to act on faith contrast sharply with Saul's disobedience in Chapter 13 and 15. In Chapter 13, Saul's fear leads him to take on a priestly role and offer a sacrifice in an act of desperation and disobedience, rather than waiting for Samuel. In Chapter 15, Saul disobeys God again by not destroying all of the Amalekites and their king. While Jonathan's faith is highlighted and rewarded with victory, Saul's pride and disobedience lead to his repeated failures. Chapter 14 serves as a narrative 'high point' between Saul's failures in Chapters 13 and 15.

3. How does Saul's vow in Chapter 14 about not eating and the subsequent consequences affect Jonathan? What does this reveal about Saul?

Saul's rash vow, prohibiting anyone from eating until the Philistines were defeated, ends up endangering Jonathan. Jonathan, unaware of the vow, eats some honey, which makes him feel refreshed. Later on, when the situation is investigated, lots are cast, and it falls on Jonathan as having broken the vow. Saul, despite knowing his son's innocence and the immense victory he had just won, is ready to kill his own son for breaking the vow. This illuminates Saul's warped priorities: valuing his own words over reason and even the life of his own child, while also demonstrating the perversion of the father/son relationship that is meant to protect. Saul is willing to kill his own son over an impulsive vow, while he spares a foreign king when God commanded him to do the opposite.

4. What does the narrative reveal about the nature of God's sovereignty, specifically regarding the idea of 'multiple possible futures'?

The narrative suggests that God is not bound by a predetermined plan but is open to different outcomes based on human choices. The text shows that God will uphold what has been promised, but also interacts and adapts based on human decision-making. This is highlighted when Samuel tells Saul that, had he obeyed God's command, he would have established his kingdom forever, showing that the future was contingent on Saul's actions. Another example is when God informs David at Keilah about possible outcomes—Saul coming to kill him, and the townspeople delivering him over—yet David makes a choice that changed the future of that event. This indicates that God knows not only what will happen, but also what is possible; an idea further supported by Isaiah 40:28 which states, "no one understands my understanding." This showcases that God's knowledge of the future is not a singular fixed path, but a complex landscape of possibilities.

5. How does the text portray deception, and what does this say about "shrewdness" in the face of evil?

The text presents instances where deception is used, not as inherently evil, but as a form of shrewdness when dealing with malevolent figures. God instructs Samuel to take a heifer to Bethlehem and tell Saul he is going there to sacrifice, knowing Saul would kill Samuel if he suspected the true purpose of anointing a new king. The text uses the Hebrew word 'arum' for 'shrewdness', which is also translated as wisdom. It shows that in contexts of danger, such as dealing with the evil character of Saul, deception or shrewdness becomes a necessary tool for survival and to fulfill God's will. This is further supported by the inclusion of Rahab (a harlot) in the lineage of Jesus, an example of a shrewd actor in the Bible that is also rewarded.

6. What is the significance of God's statement "I am grieved that I made Saul king" and how does this connect with the idea of 'tears in heaven'?

God's statement "I am grieved that I made Saul king" highlights God's emotional investment in His relationship with humanity, and shows that God experiences emotion just as humans do. It portrays God as being genuinely saddened and disappointed by Saul's disobedience and failed kingship. This concept is linked with the idea of "tears in heaven," suggesting there is a capacity for grief or sadness even in the divine realm, aligning with the Christian concept of God experiencing genuine emotion, and not just an unemotional, cold figurehead. It further emphasizes how human choices can affect God, implying a relationship of reciprocal responsibility between God and His creation.

7. How is the Spirit of God portrayed in the Old Testament, specifically concerning Saul and David? How does this differ from the New Testament's depiction of demons?

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is depicted as a powerful force that empowers individuals for specific tasks, such as empowering David after his anointing. The spirit that troubles Saul does not appear to be a demon sent by God, but rather an "evil spirit from God," suggesting a negative force allowed by God for disciplinary purposes. Unlike the New Testament, where interactions with demons are frequent, the Old Testament, outside of Job, does not often show demonic activity. In Saul's case, it appears that the "evil spirit" is closer to a state of depression and anxiety brought on by God's rejection of him as King. Music in the form of harp playing brings temporary relief, suggesting a parallel between the human experience of grief and depression and Saul's state.

8. What is the significance of David's refusal to kill Saul, and what does this reveal about David's character and his understanding of God's authority?

David's repeated refusal to kill Saul, even when given the opportunity, stems from his respect for Saul as "the Lord's anointed." Despite Saul's repeated attempts on his life, David's belief is that God, and not him, is the one who has the right to remove Saul from power. This reveals a key facet of David's character: humility, patience, and his recognition of God's authority. David is shown to have courage and strength, but also a deep respect for God's established authority. David's actions show he is both a warrior and a man after God's own heart, and emphasizes his understanding of waiting for God's timing and plan, not acting on his own initiative.