

# ONWORD

A weekly publication of the Enterprise Church of Christ

## The United Kingdom

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## Join us:

### Sundays

Bible class, 9 am

Morning worship, 10 am

Evening worship, 5:30 pm

### Wednesdays

Midweek Bible study, 7 pm

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## The United Kingdom: Saul's Three Strikes

*By Jay Tidwell*

When Saul was selected as Israel's first king, he had the qualities that would propel a good leader into a great one - humility, respect for others, commitment to the task at hand. Not to mention that - physically - he was an imposing figure. He also showed political and military savvy in the battle to free Jabesh-Gilead. It was not long, however, before the power that came with being king began to taint him. **I Samuel 13 through 15** records three major misdeeds committed by Saul. These culminated in God's selecting another man through whom the line of kings would descend.

### Strike One: The Ceremony at Gilgal

The Philistines continued to be a problem for the Israelites. Saul and his son Jonathan won skirmishes against them, which incited the Philistines to send a massive army to the Israelite camp at Gilgal (I Sam. 13:1-9). The Hebrews were greatly outnumbered and were terrified. Saul was waiting on Samuel to offer sacrifices for Israel prior to battle, but Samuel did not arrive as early as he had said he would. Tired of waiting, Saul offered a burnt sacrifice. Before the offering was completed, Samuel arrived and strongly rebuked Saul for his presumptive sin (I Sam. 13:10-14). This was improper because only Levites were approved for such activities (Num. 18:7). Samuel advised Saul that God was going to search for a

## Extra Credit: Amalekites Redux

“The Amalekites were a nomadic tribe inhabiting the desert south of Judah in the Negev and Sinai. The biblical writers saw them, like the Edomites, as descended from Esau. They were the traditional enemies of the Israelites... The Amalekites are not mentioned in any extrabiblical source.” (*Bible Background Comm., OT*). “When the Israelites attempted to enter southern Canaan, they were blocked by the Canaanites and Amalekites (Num. 14:44-45; Deut. 1:44). Later, the Moabite king Eglon hired Ammonites and Amalekites to attack the Hebrews, and the raiders from Transjordan captured “the city of palms” (Judg. 3:12-14). In the days of Gideon, Amalek invaded areas as far west and north as the region of Gaza and the valley of Jezreel (Judg. 6:3- 5, 33), joining forces with the Midianites and “people of the East” and attacking on camels (Judg. 6:5; 7:12). \* \* \* Agag was probably a traditional name or title for an Amalekite king — or tribal chief (cf. Num. 24:7).” (*Eerdmans Dict. of the Bible*). “A remnant of Amalekites must have escaped, since they appeared again as David’s foes while he was still a young warrior (27:8). He rescued his two wives carried off by Amalekites and killed most of the raiding party (30:1-20). The Amalekites were Israel’s sworn enemies throughout King David’s reign (2 Sam. 1:1; ... 8:12; 1 Chr 18:11; Psalm 83:7).” (*Tyndale Bible Dict.*). Hezekiah destroyed those remaining in Judah (1 Chr 4:41-43). “The Book of Esther relates the last recorded battle in that war.” (*Believer’s Bible Comm., on Esther 3:1*).

replacement because of the incident.

The Israelites were outnumbered, and had inferior weapons (I Sam. 13:15-23). Jonathan and his armour bearer secretly left the Israelite camp to spy on the Philistines (I Sam. 14:1-15), and once they were spotted, proceeded to slay about 20 Philistines. Jonathan’s courage was built on his confidence that the Lord can have victory “*whether by many or by few*” (v. 6). The resistance startled the Philistines and to add to the panic, an earthquake struck. Saul soon discovered Jonathan was gone, but meanwhile the Philistines, who were in great confusion, retreated (I Sam. 14:16-23).

## Strike Two: The Foolish Oath

After the army was exhausted in battle against the Philistines, Saul nevertheless pressed them and placed all under an oath not to eat anything (I Sam. 14:24-46) until “*I have full revenge on my enemies*” (v. 24). The men became so hungry they later ravaged unclean food (vv. 31-34). Saul also caused an inquisition about who might have eaten anything, which ended in embarrassment (vv. 38-46). Saul was plagued by the Philistines throughout his reign (I Sam. 14:47-52).

## Strike Three: The Amalekite Dissimulation

The Lord remembered His promise concerning the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:8-16) and commissioned Saul to eliminate them (I Sam. 15:1-9). Instead, Saul took their king prisoner and allowed the army to keep choice items. Samuel later confronted him (vv. 10-19), but Saul insisted he had obeyed God (vv. 20-23). Saul eventually admitted his wrongdoing, but his initial resistance reconfirmed God’s decision to replace him as king (vv. 24-31). Samuel chopped the Amalekite king to pieces (vv. 32-33).