

STUDY 4

1 Samuel 11 - 12

An eye-catching king

Ammonstocity

Ammonites

The Ammonites were relatives of the Israelites, being descended from Abraham's nephew, Lot (Gen 19.38). Despite this the Ammonites had a history of hostility towards the Israelites (Jdg 3.13; 10.9; 11.4), and God had warned the Israelites to steer clear of them (Deut 2.19).

Jabesh-Gilead

God had allowed some of Israel's tribes to settle east of the Jordan River, even though the land promised to Israel was on the west side. As a result, the tribes on the west side of the Jordan looked down on them as their 'country cousins'. Jabesh-Gilead was a distant outpost of the eastern tribes, situated on the dusty fringe of Israelite territory. As such, it was vulnerable to attack from marauders and invaders.

Just for starters

What great rescue attempts can you recall? Were they successful?

Read 1 Samuel 11

Investigate

1. How do the people of Jabesh-Gilead try to resolve the threat of Nahash, king of the Ammonites? (11.1-3)
2. How do the people of Gibeah react to the news of the Ammonite attack? (11.4)
3. What happens to Saul when he hears of the Ammonite attack? What does he do? (11.5-11)

4. How did Samuel and the people respond to Saul's victory? (11.12-14)

Gilgal

Gilgal was a site oozing with significance for the nation of Israel. It was where Joshua had erected a monument commemorating Israel's entry into the Promised Land (Josh 4.19-24), and where the nation first camped in it (Josh 5.10). It was where Israel had come of age as a nation. To the common Israelite, Gilgal evoked a sense of pride and national identity, much like Gallipoli does today for Australians and New Zealanders, and the Statue of Liberty does for Americans.

Think it through

5. For what two things do the worthless fellows from 10.27 have to be grateful? In light of this episode, was their distrust merited?

6. How has your impression of Saul changed from the last study?

7. What is the significance of God's Spirit in this episode?

Samuel's reminder

Read 1 Samuel 12

Investigate

8. How are the following people characterised in Samuel's speech?

a. Samuel

b. The Israelites

c. The LORD

9. Does Israel's demand for a king represent a rejection of the LORD? (12.12-13, 17)

10. Whose choice of king is Saul? (12.13)

11. Will the nation now succeed? Why or why not? (12.14-15, 20-25)

Think it through

12. Why does Samuel remind the Israelites of the LORD's righteous deeds? (12.7)

13. In what ways is the king distinguished from the people? (cf. 10.9-10; 11.6)

14. How is the giving of God's Spirit different today? (Acts 5.30-32, Eph 1.13-14)

The Spirit

In Old Testament times God put his Spirit only on select individuals for the purpose of performing a special task. The Spirit was given to priests, prophets and judges. God gives Saul the Spirit to fulfil his role as king. God could, therefore, take his Spirit away once the task was completed.

In the New Testament God anoints Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1.10, Acts 10.38). Jesus fulfils the role of priest, prophet, judge and king (Heb 5.1-10; Mark 6.1-4; 2 Tim 4.1; Luke 1.31-33). Since then, God has given the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus (Acts 2.32-33; Acts 5.32; Eph 1.13-14). This permanent blessing of God's Spirit puts believers in a more privileged position than even the priests, prophets, judges and kings of the Old Testament (Rom 8.14-17; Heb 11.39-40).