

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (48)

The United Kingdom of Israel (2) – Saul becomes King

1 Samuel 9-13

Tonight, we continue our Journey through the Bible. In our last lesson we introduced the 9th of 17 time periods of Bible history, the United Kingdom. This is a time when Israel is ruled by a king and there is one nation. During this time period we will study 3 kings – Saul, David and Solomon. Each reigned about 40 years (120 years total from ~1050-930 BC) and it consists of 1-2 Samuel 1 Kings 1-11, and 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles 1-9.

In our last lesson we revisited 1 Samuel 8 where Israel demanded a king and we discussed what a king would be like both what YHWH instructed about the behavior of a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20) and what a king would do to the people (1 Sam. 8:11-18 – he would take their children for his service, tax them and use them as he willed). But the people wanted a king anyways. Tonight, we address Saul being made Israel's first king and the beginning of his fall.

I. **Saul chosen to be their king -1 Samuel 9-13**

- a. 9:1-2 - we are introduced to Saul, the son of Kish. He was tall and handsome.
- b. 9:3- 26 – The donkeys of Kish had been lost and Saul is sent to find them. They search throughout the land and cannot find them. So Saul's servant suggested going to a prophet to inquire (note vs. 9). They go to find the prophet. It is Samuel who has been told by YHWH that Saul was coming and to anoint him as king over Israel. Samuel treats Saul to a royal meal and tells him the donkeys have been found.
- c. 9:27-10:16 – Samuel sends the servant of Saul away and then anoints Saul to be commander (king) of Israel. He then tells him that a number of things would happen (in great detail) as he returned toward his home. 2 men would relay that his donkeys had been found, then he would meet 3 men with 3 young goats, 3 loaves of bread and a skin of wine. One would give him 2 loaves of the bread. THEN he would meet a group of prophets and prophecy with them. Those who knew Saul would be surprised. As he begins his journey home what Samuel prophesied happened that day (10:9). He arrives at his uncle's house who asks him what has happened. Saul tells him about the donkeys and Samuel BUT leaves out that he had been anointed as king (about the matter of the kingdom – recall what I said at the beginning of this lesson).
- d. 10:17-27 – Saul is introduced as king chosen by YHWH. Samuel gathers the tribes and nations. He rebukes them for rejecting God (10:18-19). Then the selection process begins. Benjamin is chosen, followed by Saul's family. But when they look for Saul, he cannot be found. YHWH tells Sameul he was hidden among the equipment. The people ran to get Saul. He stands taller than anyone else. The people rejoice and shout, “Long live the king.” Saul returns home to Gibeah accompanied by men whose hearts God had touched. We are also told that there were some rebels who despised Saul and refused to pay tribute. But Saul held his peace.
- e. 11:1-15 records an incident at Jabesh Gilead. The Ammonites come against the city of Jabesh Gilead (recall this was the city who did not join Israel in battle against Benjamin because of their sin. From that city wives were provided to preserve the tribe of Benjamin – Judges 21:8-14). They ask conditions of peace, and the Ammonites propose a cruel condition – putting out the right eyes of the men. For 7 days the men of Jabesh seek someone to deliver them. Word comes to Gibeah where Saul is and he musters all of Israel against the Ammonites (330,000 soldiers). They come and handily defeat the Ammonites. Saul is established as king. As for those men who refused to submit to Saul they wanted to kill them, but Saul said no and attributed the victory to YHWH. (vs. 12-13).

- f. 12:1-25 – Saul is coronated as king. Samuel gathers all Israel and speaks with them. Note vs. 1- 5, Samuel declares his integrity in leading them. He then retells a brief history of how YHWH had delivered them over and over from enemies even though they had rebelled against Him. NOTE v. 12-14, *And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king.* “Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you. If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. Following this, Samuel warns them what would happen if they refused to obey the LORD. As a demonstration, great thunder and rain came upon the land and Israel. The people feared and asked Samuel to plead for them and acknowledged that what they had done was a sin. Samuel’s responds by noting in vs. 20-22, that if they stay faithful to YHWH He would not forsake them. Then note vs. 23-25, *Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.*” They now have a king, so Samuel steps aside
- g. And thus Saul is firmly established as Israel’s first king.
- h. 13:1-15 – Saul’s downfall begins. After 2 years (NOTE: Some versions say, “he reigned 42 years over Israel” summarizing the entirety of his reign) Saul chooses 3000 men to go against the Philistines. He and his son Jonathan are commanding the armies. The Philistines prepare to retaliate so Saul gathers his army at Gilgal but they are outnumbered. Israel trembled and feared. Saul waits 7 days for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice. But because Samuel had not come (yet), Saul offers the burnt and peace offerings. But as he was finishing, Samuel appears and asks, “What have you done?” Saul explains (is it an excuse), since the people were scattered and Samuel did not come in the appointed days, he feared and offered the sacrifice. He said, “I felt compelled and offered a burnt offering.” (vs. 12) Vs. 13-14 – Samuel noted he had done foolishly by NOT keeping the commandment of the LORD. Because of this his kingdom would not continue (a dynasty would not be established). Note then in vs. 14, ... *The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.*” Saul numbered the people with him, about 600. This will be followed up with continued wars between Israel and the Philistines. We will address this in our next study.

II. Lessons to consider

- a. **Who do we really want as our King?** Israel wanted a physical king to be like everyone around them. But God WAS their king. Do we ever find ourselves desiring to replace God with someone/something of this world? James 4:4 – friendship with the world..., Matthew 6:24 – no one can serve two masters.
- b. **Pride goes before a fall** – Proverbs 16:18, *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.* As we are introduced to Saul in this text we find a man who is humble, and perhaps even timid. This seems to be how King Saul began his reign. Sadly, as we see this did not last long. If we are to be pleasing to God, we must empty ourselves of our pride and humble ourselves. Let Him do the exalting – 1 Peter 5:5-6.
- c. **God can use you no matter who you are** – Saul when first called by Samuel notes that he was from the least of the tribes of Israel, and his family insignificant – 1 Sam. 9:21. There is always something you can do, and to God it may the crucial role. We see that often in the history of God’s word.
- d. **God knows what will happen** – as Saul was anointed by Samuel, he was told several things would occur. The first two events were minimal, but the final one – Saul would prophecy was significant.

From that time, the Spirit of the LORD was with him (until his fall). *This also demonstrates God's providence and foreknowledge.*

- e. **God does not expect us to blindly follow Him** – yes we walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), but God has given us plenty of evidence and reason to trust Him. Cf. Romans 1:20. When “insignificant Saul” was anointed king, Samuel provided irrefutable evidence that this was the hand of God at work.
- f. **Never stop praying for those in need** – Samuel promised that he would not cease to pray for them. James 5:13, 16. Sometimes, later in life, when we are unable to do as much as we did before, we can still pray.
- g. **Leaders step up in times of crisis** – chapter 11 finds King Saul stepping up when Jabesh Gilead was under attack. Leaders need to be capable and willing to lead. The church desperately needs this.
- h. **For leaders to be effective we must stand behind them** – The people got behind king Saul as he was anointed, AND after he had proven himself. We need to stand behind our leaders, especially our spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17).
- i. **Serve God with your whole heart** – as Samuel is giving final admonition, he encourages them to remain faithful to God and serve Him with “all your heart” (1 Sam. 12:24) and all would be well. That applies to us as well. God wants not only our actions, He wants our heart – Matthew 22:37.
- j. **Feelings can lie** – Saul told Samuel he “felt compelled” to offer the sacrifice. Many today act without authority because they “feel this is what God wants me to do”. Feelings are NEVER a safe source of authority. Paul recounting his life “felt” that he should persecute Christians. (Acts 26:9) Jeremiah 17:9-10, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*
- k. **We must always obey God.** Tied to our previous point, Saul did NOT obey God. If we want God to bless us, we must submit to His will in all that we do.
- l. **God is seeking those who will follow Him from “after His own heart.”** This is a prophecy of choosing David.
- m. **The choices we make have consequences.** King Saul learned that by the actions he engaged in. Galatians 6:7-8 reminds us that we will reap what we sow. Proverbs 14:12, *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*

And thus we begin an examination of this time period in Israel’s history. As with all of scripture, it was written for our learning (Romans 15:4). How will you serve your King? Think about it!