

GOD WITH US
Part 3: A King in place of THE KING.
1st and 2nd Samuel

Message 4 – Samuel Anoints Saul as the first King:
1Samuel 8-12

Introduction

God knows what it feels like to be rejected. Yahweh, the great “I AM,” was to be Israel’s one and only KING; yet, the people craved and demanded a human king so that they could be “like all of the other nations.” Yahweh accepted their rejection of Him and, through Samuel’s mediation, gave them the desire of their hearts in the form of a man named Saul. Be careful what you crave in life ... God may just let you have your way.

Samuel and his sons: 8:1-6

Samuel had grown old (early 50s) and his two sons were Israel’s judges in the far south. They perverted justice and took bribes, departing from the good example of their father (12:3-5).

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations” (8:4,5).

Why did Samuel’s sons fail to follow his example? We do not know for sure, but there are several possibilities: 1) Samuel travelled extensively. He may not have been home enough to properly train his sons. 2) Joel and Abiah had their own free will. Though Samuel was a godly, praying father, he could not control the free wills of his adult sons. 3) They could have started off well as younger boys; but older influences may have corrupted their morals during their more independent years (1Corinthians 15:33).

And how did Samuel handle the very direct criticism of his sons by the leaders of Israel? He was “displeased,” but he did not react in anger. ***“And Samuel prayed to the Lord” (8:6).***

Samuel had normal emotions when the elders spoke to him about his sons and their demand for a king (disappointment, rejection, sadness, hurt). How do we normally react when confronted like this? We often defend, deny, argue, make excuses, or attack back. Samuel did none of these; rather, he was “slow to speak and slow to anger” (James 1:19). He processed his emotions with God – “he prayed to the Lord.” Then, he responded to the elders rather than reacting to them. This is what Jesus did when he was attacked by His accusers (1Peter 2:23).

Yahweh the rejected KING: 8:7-9

Israel was to uniquely represent Yahweh to the surrounding nations as His Kingship was displayed through their lives; but now they desired to be “*like all the nations.*” Samuel may have been surprised by the Lord’s response to his prayers.

The Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them . . . they have abandoned Me and served other gods” (8:7,8).

God has been rejected by His people since the beginning of time (Genesis 3). His entire relationship with Israel, up to this point, had been one of constant rejection. Even when He came in person, He was “*despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering*” (Isaiah 53:3). In His final hour, Jesus was rejected. “*Everyone deserted Him and fled*” (Mark 14:50).

God understands rejection and abandonment. When you experience criticism, rejection or abandonment take your feelings to God. “*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

Warnings concerning the ways of human kings: 8:10-22

God had given Moses very clear commands as to how kings should conduct themselves operating under the ultimate authority of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Now, God warns that they would rule with severity. Instead of serving Yahweh, the gracious KING, the people would end up slavishly serving a dominating and demanding human king. Yet, the people blindly insisted that they *must* have their king.

Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also

may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles” (8:19,20).

So often in life we decide we “must have” something or someone, because we think that this will make life better for us. This was Satan’s lie that first caused Adam and Eve to turn away from God: “The fruit that God is withholding from you WILL make your life better” (Genesis 3:4,5). At the deepest level, obeying God is a TRUST issue. Do you trust that He truly loves you and wants what is best for you? Learning to believe that GOD IS GOOD is a critical step in our journey of obedience. Do you have difficulty believing (trusting) that God is FOR YOU? If so, take time to ask God to reveal the roots of this lack of trust in Him.

Saul meets Samuel: 9:1-25

Saul, the son of Kish now enters the story. At the very outset, he is noted for his outstanding physical appearance. He will, on the outside, be *everything* the people hoped for.

“He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people” (9:2).

Saul’s father had lost some donkeys, so Saul was sent out to recover them. In the process, he came to the city where Samuel was visiting. God had told Samuel, the day before, that he was about to encounter the man he should anoint as Israel’s first king:

“About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me” (9:16).

After meeting Saul, Samuel spoke encouraging words to him; but Saul had trouble accepting such lofty words concerning him.

And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father’s household?” Saul replied, “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?” (9:20,21).

Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, which had been decimated in battle by the other tribes (Judges 20). Only 600 men survived at that time. Thus, Saul’s tribe *was* the smallest in Israel.

Samuel anoints Saul: 9:26 – 10:13

Samuel took Saul aside and poured oil on him, anointing him as Israel's first king. He then gave Saul a series of 4 confirming signs that would happen during his journey back to his father's house, the most important being the Lord's Spirit coming upon Saul and changing his heart (10:6). Finally, Samuel gave Saul *one clear command* to follow at the end of this sequence of signs.

"It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you. And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do" (10:7,8).

God placed just 1 restriction before Saul, to test his obedience. After the confirming signs, Saul could *"do for himself whatever the occasion requires, for God is with him"* (v.7). This implied freedom to act in many different ways. Yet, there was one very clear restriction: *"Wait 7 days until I (Samuel) come to offer the offerings."* Saul's failure to heed this restriction becomes a key turning point later in his story.

In the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam and Eve that they could have great freedom: "From any tree in the Garden you may eat freely" (Gen.2:16). Yet, there was one clear restriction: "But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (2:17). God gives all of us great freedom to make decisions; but when He places a restriction before us, He is doing it for two reasons: 1) Our response to His commands is a test of our love for Him. 2) His restrictive commands are intended to protect us from something harmful. Don't resent or ignore God's "No." Like a parent telling a child NOT to touch a hot stove, God is lovingly trying to keep you from 'getting burned.'

All of the confirming signs happened during Saul's return trip to his home (10:9-13). When the Spirit of God fell upon Saul, giving him the ability to prophesy, word quickly spread that a great change had happened to him:

It came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:11).

God gave to Saul an “investment” of His Spirit that was truly life changing and powerful. From that point forward, it was Saul’s responsibility to walk in step with God so that the powerful force of the Spirit could operate in and through Him, for God’s greater purposes. Similarly, at the moment of conversion (the ‘new birth’), God gives to each of His children the gift of His indwelling Spirit. From that moment forward, we are to “walk in step with the Spirit” so that the “fruit of the Spirit” may be revealed through us (Galatians 5:22-25). This requires that each of us allow the Holy Spirit to be “president,” not just “resident.” Make it a regular habit to invite the Holy Spirit to empower you, enabling you to live for God’s greater purposes in your world. (Check out Charles Stanley: *The Wonderful Spirit-filled Life.*)

Saul’s report to his uncle: 10:14-16

When Saul returned home, his uncle asked him specifically about his encounter with Samuel.

Saul’s uncle said, “Please tell me what Samuel said to you.” So Saul said to his uncle, “He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.” But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned (10:15,16).

Why did Saul reveal only *part* of the truth of what Samuel said to him? He likely thought it would appear ridiculous to even suggest that *he* would be picked for such a high honor. We detect here the first signs of fear and insecurity within Saul. He feels ‘inferior.’

Saul publicly anointed as king: 10:17-27

Samuel called for a national gathering at Mizpah, where he publicly announced God’s selection of Saul as Israel’s first king. Yet, when it came time to introduce Saul, they could not find him! It took a special revelation from the Lord to locate him.

So the Lord said, “Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage.” So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward (10:22,23).

Again, his sense of inferiority kept him from believing that he could be God’s choice for this role. Saul was a giant of a man on the outside, but a fearful little boy on the inside; “*a reluctant ruler who followed his emotions instead of building his faith*” (W. Wiersbe, Bible Exposition Commentary, p.231).

True "security" and "self-esteem" grow out of our relationship with our heavenly Father. It is HIS acceptance, love, approval and affirmation that allow us to walk with our heads high. "See how great the Father's love is for us, that we should be called the children of God. And such we are!" (1John 3:1). Our value cannot be derived from changing standards such as: what I think of myself; what others think of me; how much I am producing; what I own; what role I occupy; how fit I am. Ultimate value is derived from what the unchanging GOD, my FATHER thinks of me. He loves me and accepts me like no one else ever can!

Saul defeats the Ammonites: 11:1-15

Saul's leadership role was quickly confirmed as he led the nation in battle against Nahash the Ammonite king, who had threatened to humiliate and enslave the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead. Saul, moved by God's Spirit, rallied Israel to defend their fellow countrymen. Even Saul's detractors were silenced by this display of God's Spirit working in the new king (see 10:27 with 11:12,13).

God gives "spiritual gifts" to each of His children. It is important for each of us to discover, develop and deploy these God-given gifts. As you take on early "assignments" from the Lord, you will discover the unique gift mix He has placed within you. 1) You will enjoy serving in this area of giftedness. 2) You will bear fruit for God's glory. 3) You will receive affirmation from other people. And remember . . . a spiritual "gift" is just that - a gift (ability) from God, placed in you, for the benefit of others. Humbly accept the gift(s) God has given to you, use it to serve His purposes in the world, and give HIM all the glory.

Samuel's address to Israel: 12:1-25

Samuel's address was a major 'state of the union' moment for Israel. They had demanded a king, and God had given them the (sinful) desire of their hearts. Still, the future depended upon the people living under the KINGSHIP of Yahweh.

- **In defense of his conduct (1-5).** Samuel first invited the people to charge him with any crimes of misconduct during his lifelong service to the nation as priest, prophet and judge. He called God to be his witness that the people found no fault in him.

He said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day that you have found nothing in my hand." And they said, "He is witness" (12:5).

Much like Samuel, the apostle Paul called God to be his witness as to his conduct as a leader: "For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord" (1Corinthians 4:4). Do you have a clear conscience before God and men, as to how you are living your life? Are you inviting the Lord to examine you and transform you into the man/woman He wants you to be? "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23,24). Living with a clear conscience before God and people can greatly reduce your internal stress level.

- **God's provision of past leaders (6-11).** Samuel reminded Israel of *all* the leaders that God had raised just when they needed them (in spite of their unfaithfulness to Yahweh):

"Moses and Aaron . . . Gideon, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel . . . and (they) delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security" (12:11).

- **God's provision of Saul (12-13).** He brings them to the present moment and God's provision of Saul as Israel's new king.

"Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the Lord has set a king over you" (12:13).

- **The charge to fear (serve) the LORD (14-15).** Yes, Israel now had a human king that they could trust to lead them and fight their battles. Yet, the key to their future was their ultimate submission to Yahweh as their KING.

"If you will fear the Lord and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the Lord, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God. If you will not listen to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the command of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers" (12:14,15).

As followers of our King, Jesus, it does not matter who we work for. Our ultimate responsibility is to do ALL of our work as if we are doing it for the Lord. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Colossians 3:23,24).

- A thunderstorm confirms the peoples' sin (16-19).

Samuel asked God to bring about a special sign to *confirm* the fact that they had *sinned* against the Lord by demanding a king.

So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. Then all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king" (12:18,19).

- Samuel intercedes for the people (20-25).

Samuel reassured the people that God would not abandon them (even though they had abandoned God).

"For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself" (12:22).

Then, Samuel promised to faithfully pray for the people.

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way (12:23).

It is the duty of leaders to PRAY for those under their charge. Fathers, mothers, teachers, mentors, coaches, business owners, department heads, pastors, government officials, public safety officers, military leaders, judges, doctors, lawyers . . . we ALL are responsible at various levels for the leading of other souls. To fail to PRAY for those under your charge is to "sin against the Lord" (12:23), because we are failing at the most critical point: Claiming God's strong hand of blessing, protection and favor over those He has placed under our care. Make it a habit of praying for the 'flock' He has called you to shepherd.

He concluded with a final charge:

"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, both you and your king will be swept away" (12:24,25).

Summary Thoughts:

Israel wanted a king in place of THE KING. This was a great sin against the Lord. In fact, much later in the history of Israel, God reflected back upon this sad moment through the prophet Hosea:

“I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath. (Hosea 13:11).

“I gave you a king in My anger . . .”. As the story of Saul unfolds, we will see how his appointment was not so much a “gift” to Israel, as a “judgment” upon Israel. Saul was precisely what the people wanted: A king who would be impressive on the outside, thus establishing Israel’s honor among the surrounding nations. The nation wanted to “look good” in the sight of all the other nations. So, too, their new king was all about external appearances – “looking the part.” As the story progresses, we will see Saul being set aside in favor of another man who is “the least” among his brothers, the “most unlikely” in terms of physical stature; but this one will be “a man after God’s own heart.”

There are many valuable lessons throughout this section of Scripture; but one overriding message stands out: *Be very careful what you demand from God ...because He might just give it to you.*

When you turn on your GPS to get directions, you are instantly linked to a Global Positioning System that knows your precise location and can provide you with accurate guidance. If, for some reason, you are unable to connect to the satellites that provide this guidance, your journey will be more difficult. You may get lost.

God’s Kingship was, sadly, rejected by Israel. In essence, they were cutting off their connection to their GPS – God’s Positioning System. Thus, they lost their way and ended up suffering greatly.

Today, we reject God’s Kingship when we refuse to allow Him to rule in our lives. We lose our connection to our King and our Guide, and we get lost.

If you have been trying to find your own way, to lead your own life, you can confess your waywardness and invite THE KING to take His rightful place in your life: “Lord, I acknowledge that I have been trying to run my own life. I have been acting as my own king. Thank You that You are a merciful, forgiving God. I now ask You to now take over. I yield to Your sovereignty over every aspect of my life. Help me to learn to live in daily, humble submission to You.”

Now . . . stay tightly connected to Him on a daily basis. Let God’s Positioning System take you in His wise direction.