

Church of God Sunday School

ISRAEL CHOOSES TO HAVE A KING

1 Samuel 8:1 — 10:27

In his old age Samuel made his two sons judges over Israel. But those men were not good judges. They went after dishonest rewards, took bribes, and made bad judgments.

The elders of Israel came to Samuel. They told Samuel that, since he was old and his sons were not good judges, they would rather be like other nations and have a king to judge them. (Think how this must have hurt Samuel!)

Samuel went straight to God and prayed about it. What would God say? The Lord encouraged Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." God told Samuel to do as the people wanted. The Israelite nation had continually rejected God's way. They had often turned to false gods and to their own way. Now, God was going to give them what they wanted.

The Lord told Samuel to explain to the people just how a king would rule over them. Samuel told the people all that God had said. He warned them that a king would take their sons and their daughters to work for him. He would take the best of their fields, vineyards, and olive gardens. He would also take a tenth of their seed and vineyards and sheep too.

Samuel told the people when they began to cry out to God because of their king, "the LORD will not hear you in that day." Yet, after hearing of all those things that would take place and change their lives so much, the people still wanted a king. So God told Samuel, "Make them a king."

Now, there was a man named Kish, who was of the tribe of Benjamin. He had a son named Saul. When the asses (donkeys) of Kish wandered away and could not be found, Saul and a servant were sent to look for them.

After searching for three days and not finding the lost animals, Saul wanted to return home. He did not want his father to begin to worry about him and the servant too. But the servant said to Saul, "Behold now, there is in this city a man of God." Perhaps he could tell them where the animals were.

As the men entered the city, they met the Prophet Samuel, going up to the high place to bless the sacri-

fice. The day before, God had told Samuel He would be sending him a young man to anoint to be the first king of Israel. Therefore, when Samuel met Saul, God said to Samuel, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same [man] shall reign over my people."

Saul did not know of this conversation between God and Samuel. He said to Samuel, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's [the prophet's] house is."

Samuel said: "I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago . . . they are found." Then Samuel told Saul that he was "the desire of Israel."

Saul was puzzled by the words of Samuel. He told Samuel that he was "of the smallest of the tribes of Israel" and his family was "the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin." So, why was Samuel speaking so to him?

Samuel took Saul and his servant to the feast and had them sit in places of honor. Then Samuel told the cook to bring out the portion of meat that had been set aside earlier and place it before Saul. Samuel said to Saul that this meat had been saved for him. (Saul must have wondered how Samuel knew he was coming.) So Saul ate with Samuel.

After the meal, Samuel, Saul, and the servant left the high place and went back into the city. Early the next day Samuel and Saul traveled as far as the city limits. There Samuel said to Saul, "Bid the servant pass on before us . . . but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God."

As soon as the servant had gone ahead, Samuel opened a vial (a container for oil) and poured oil on Saul's head and kissed him. Samuel said, "Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?" Saul was surprised by that! He may have thought to himself, Am I to be Israel's king?



Samuel told Saul of three signs that would happen to show him that God was with him. The first sign would be that Saul would meet two men: they would tell him the asses had been found and his father was worried about him.

The second sign would be that he would meet three more men: one man would be carrying three kids (baby goats), one man would have three loaves of bread, and one man would have a bottle of wine. All of them would stop and greet him respectfully. He would be given two loaves of the bread.

The third sign would be that Saul would meet a company of prophets: they would prophesy (speak the words of God). The Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul, and he would prophesy too. As Saul turned to leave Samuel, "God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day."

Later on, Samuel called the people together at Mizpah (*MIZ-puh*), to show them who would be their king. He reminded the Israelites how God had been their deliverer in the past, in troubled times, and how He had blessed them and their fathers and grandfathers too. Samuel said: "And ye have this day rejected your God . . . and ye have said unto him . . . set a king over us."

Samuel told the people to "present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes." So, each of the tribes of Israel passed before God. The tribe of Benjamin was taken, and the family of Kish was chosen. Then of

all the sons of Kish, Saul was chosen, but when they looked for him, he could not be found!

When the Lord was asked where Saul was, God said, "Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff [the baggage]." The people ran and got Saul. (Why had Saul hidden himself? Was he afraid? Or did he feel that he was not worthy enough to be king?)

When Saul was finally among them, he stood out, because he was so much taller than any of the others, "from his shoulders and upward." Samuel asked the people, "See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?"

"God save the king," the people shouted.

Though Samuel was heartbroken, because the people had rejected the divine leadership of God and chose to have a man lead them, still he did what God told him to do. After telling the people what kind of kingdom they would have, Samuel wrote all about it in a book and "laid it up before the LORD." Then Samuel sent everyone back to their homes. Saul went to his home in Gibeah (*GIB-ee-uh*), and a company of men "whose hearts God had touched" went with him.

MEMORY VERSE:

"And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul . . . of the tribe of Benjamin."

—Acts 13:21
