

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 23RD-24TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

A MAN NAMED SAUL (1 SAMUEL 9:1-17)

The people of Israel wanted a king like all the other nations (8:19–22), so God is going to grant their request.

- Even though Israel did not trust in the Lord as their king and did not wait on His timing, God was still sovereign in the selection and anointing of Israel's first king.
- We are first introduced to Kish, a prominent Benjaminite (vs. 1).

Kish had a son named "Saul" (sha'al, "asked") who was an impressive young man who stood a head taller than anyone else in all of Israel (vs. 2).

- Saul definitely looked the part—but not much is said about Saul's character or spiritual life.
- One day, his father's donkeys wandered off, and Saul went with some of his father's servants to look for them (vs. 3–4).

The servant suggests that they go to the "man of God" (Samuel) to get help for the lost donkeys, and Saul seems to think that Samuel must charge a fee (vs. 6–8).

- The fact that Saul was from Gibeath (5 miles from Samuel's home in Ramah) and didn't know much about Samuel, the man of God, indicates that Saul wasn't greatly concerned about spiritual matters or very religiously observant.

It just so happened that Saul and his servant came looking for Samuel on the same day that Samuel had come to this particular city to sacrifice (vs. 10–14).

- This wasn't a coincidence—God was guiding and sovereignly ordaining these circumstances, even though Saul wasn't even aware!
- The day before Saul's arrival, the Lord had "uncovered Samuel's ear..." (vs. 15).

God had "whispered" (Ruth 4:4) to Samuel that Saul would come to him and that Saul was to be leader of Israel, as the people had requested.

- Even though Israel had rejected God's plan and timing, God was still in control and would still use Saul to win a victory over the Philistines (vs. 16).
- God can still use broken and flawed leaders in spite of their sins and shortcomings to bless His people.

"HERE IS THE MAN...HE WILL ATsar MY PEOPLE." (VS. 17)

This Hebrew verb can be translated as "govern," but it can also mean "restrain" or "imprison."

- Saul's actions will be a mix of good and bad—he'll be used to deliver Israel from the Philistines, but his eventual sin will "restrain" Israel.
- Saul will "imprison" or "restrain" God's people from receiving all of the providential blessings that God has for them.

Flawed, self-centered, idolatrous people who demand someone to lead them on their terms will get a leader who looks just like them.

- Saul will practice unspiritual leadership that will manifest itself in pride, selfishness, compromise, disobedience, and idolatry, all while self-justifying every decision he makes.
- Interestingly, this looks just like the people of Israel at this particular moment.

MEETING THE SEER (1 SAMUEL 9:18-27)

Saul just so happened to approach Samuel to ask for directions to the seer's house (vs. 18).

- Samuel responds to Saul's request in four ways.
 - First, Samuel identifies himself as the seer. Second, he invites Saul to come with him and eat the sacrificial meal (vs. 19).
 - Third, Samuel reveals his ability to prophesy by offering free information on the lost donkeys (vs. 20).
- Finally, Samuel hints about the incredible destiny that awaits Saul. He tells him he is "the desire of Israel" (vs. 20).
- All of Israel desired ("sinful craving") a king, and Saul would become the answer to that desire.
 - Saul was a bit confused—after all, he was a Benjaminite from a tribe with a history of corruption, murder, and rape (Judges 18–19).
 - Why did Samuel (and the Lord) pick him?

Saul seemed to reflect the understanding of the people of Israel—that a king would be chosen because he was "kingly". A king was to be tall, handsome, strong, and from the right pedigree.

- Saul was 3 for 4 in earthly qualifications, but he failed to see that he was being picked because of something much bigger than himself—this wasn't really about Saul; it was about God's plan.

Saul went with Samuel to a banquet hall at the high place where a feast was to be held.

- At the feast, Saul was given the seat of honor and a special portion of meat set aside just for him (vs. 22–24).
- Why did Samuel extravagantly pour out such a lavish display of honor upon this young man? Doesn't this seem a bit excessive and overboard?

Maybe Samuel was watching Saul closely to see how he'd respond.

- Our inner character as a leader is revealed when we're criticizing and critiqued, but it's also revealed when, as a leader, we're honored and complimented.
- Would Saul respond humbly and with gratitude, or would he become proud and entitled and respond with false humility or arrogance?

After the feast, Saul returned with Samuel to his house, where they had a long talk together through the night (vs. 25).

- Most likely, Samuel told Saul of all the events that led up to this meeting and Israel's desire for a king.
- The next day, Samuel sent Saul's servant on his way so they could be alone for a significant event (vs. 26–27).

ANOINTING (1 SAMUEL 10:1-8)

After the servant left, Samuel took out a flask of oil, anointed Saul, and kissed him as a sign of his personal support for Saul (vs. 1).

- The idea of anointing with oil was a picture of what God would do in Saul spiritually as the king of Israel.

- The Holy Spirit was to be poured out on him, equipping him supernaturally for the job of ruling and leading.

As Christians, we also have an anointing from the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20).

- We have been given the spirit of God to equip us supernaturally to do the work God has called us to do as the Church.
- We have been baptized in and filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). As we mature, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is something we are to be more submitted and responsive to.

After Samuel anointed Saul as king, he gave him four signs that would confirm that God had chosen him as king of Israel.

1. The Message of Two Men (vs. 2): two men would meet Saul at Rachel's grave and tell him that the lost donkeys had been found.
2. The Gift of Three Men (vs. 3–4): three men would meet Saul by the great tree of Tabor with very specific items and offer Saul a gift.
3. The Procession of Prophets (vs. 5): when Saul came to Gibeath, he would meet a group of prophets carrying various musical instruments and prophesying.
4. The Power of the Spirit (vs. 6): when Saul saw this final sign, the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him, transform him, and cause him also to prophesy.

After these signs occurred and the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, Saul could do whatever the circumstances required because God would be with him (vs. 7).

- Saul would have everything he needed to lead God's people only because God's spirit and anointing would rest upon him.
- After this, he was told to go to Gilgal and wait for seven days for Samuel (vs. 8).

Saul is essentially told, "God's spirit will empower you, and you'll be king, but after you're king, you still need to wait on and listen to the Lord".

- Saul's authority wasn't absolute—he was to be under the authority of the true King, Yahweh.
- Every position of authority, influence, and leadership is given by God. If we mismanage and abuse it by not being fully under God's authority, we will be held accountable.

IS SAUL ALSO AMONG THE PROPHETS? (1 SAMUEL 10:9-16)

As Saul went his way, all the signs Samuel prophesied came to pass.

- More miraculous than any sign was the fact that God changed Saul's heart supernaturally (vs. 9).
- Some read New Testament regeneration into verse 9, but most likely, this is referring to God giving Saul a new perspective, outlook, and attitude toward leadership of the people of Israel.

Saul's change of heart was a gift of God for God's sovereign purposes and plans.

- A change of heart from the Lord is what many believers need more than anything in their life.
- Many of us need a change of heart from the Lord regarding our sins, other people, the meaning and purpose of life, and our priorities.

We can't be who God has called us to be unless God gives us a change of heart.

As God changed Saul's heart, he had an encounter with a group of prophets (vs. 10).

- Suddenly, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul in a way he'd never known.
- There's no evidence that young Saul was particularly wicked or evil, but it seems fairly obvious that he wasn't particularly spiritual.
- Now, Saul has a radical encounter with the power of the Spirit (probably for the first time in his life).

Through the Holy Spirit, Saul begins to prophesy—not necessarily predicting the future, but speaking the word of the Lord and worshipping God under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

- Everyone who knew Saul previously and saw him prophesying was astonished and asked, "What's happened? Is Saul also among the prophets?" This apparently became a popular saying amongst the people.

Commentators disagree with each other as to the exact meaning of the saying, but essentially it's intended to describe one who steps out of character and does the unexpected.

- Saul was an unspiritual man who suddenly became very spiritual when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.
- After this supernatural encounter with the Holy Spirit, Saul went to the high place (vs. 13).

Saul's uncle asked him where he'd been, to which he said that he'd gone looking for the donkeys and run into Samuel, who assured him they'd been found (vs. 14–16).

- Saul didn't tell him about his powerful encounter with the Lord—despite what he'd seen, witnessed, and experienced, he seems almost ashamed to acknowledge God's activity in his life.

THE TROUBLE WITH SAUL.

- Saul is shown so much grace in this account: God communicates supernaturally to him through miraculous circumstances, through Samuel, and through the Holy Spirit.
- God chooses him as king and even gives Saul a change of heart and a supernatural anointing of power through the Holy Spirit.
- Yet, at the end of this account, Saul seems passive, embarrassed, and hesitant to acknowledge God's presence and work in his life.
- It shouldn't surprise us when later we read about Saul choosing not to obey God's commands and doing things his own way, therefore leading him to be rejected by God as king (1 Samuel 15).
- The trouble Saul experiences in his leadership later in life can be chalked up to his failure to see that apart from God's hand and anointing, Saul was absolutely nothing.
- In some way, Saul represents our tendency as human beings to be self-reliant, self-assured, self-centered, and completely unwilling to rely on and acknowledge the Lord.
- Have we acknowledged God's grace, presence, and work in our lives up to this point?
- Do we recognize that the work God has called us to do is bigger than us and not about us? Do we know that we can't do it in our own strength?
- Do we need a change of heart from the Lord? Do we need a fresh outpouring of His Spirit in our lives?