

Saul Anointed King

Lesson Text: I Samuel 9:25—10:1, 6-16

Related Scriptures: I Samuel 16:1-13;
Numbers 11:24-30; I Samuel 19:18-24

TIME: 1043 B.C.

PLACES: Ramah; Gibeah

GOLDEN TEXT — “And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man” (I Samuel 10:6).

Introduction

Just as there are different forms of government, there are different ways people become heads of state or occupy other governmental posts. It was typical in antiquity for power to pass from father to son, and there are still places in the world where this occurs.

More common in the modern world are systems where individuals are either elected or appointed to their respective posts, depending on the position they hold. Even in highly democratic societies like the United States, this still leaves plenty of room for disagreement among varying political positions. In most cases, this means that if the electorate is dissatisfied with certain government officials, they can replace them when their terms end.

In ancient Israel, the first kings were chosen by God. In the case of both

Saul and David, Samuel was charged with anointing them. But just because they were divinely selected did not mean they were immune to sin. In one sense, all rulers are divinely chosen (cf. I Sam. 2:7-8; Ps. 75:7; Dan. 2:21), but they are also responsible for their actions and judged accordingly.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. SAUL CONSECRATED KING —
I Sam. 9:25—10:1
- II. SAMUEL'S COMMISSION FOR SAUL—I Sam. 10:6-8
- III. SAUL'S CHANGE OF HEART —
I Sam. 10:9-13
- IV. SAUL CONCEALS HIS CONSECRATION—
I Sam. 10:14-16

Exposition: Verse by Verse

SAUL CONSECRATED KING

I SAM. 9:25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul

arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

Seeking donkeys (I Sam. 9:25-26).

At the end of last week's lesson, the Lord told Samuel to honor Israel's request and choose a king for them. As this chapter opens, we are introduced to Saul, "a choice young man" (vs. 2). He was the son of Kish, "a mighty man of power" (vs. 1), meaning he was influential and wealthy. Saul was tall and handsome, just what a king was expected to be.

When Kish's donkeys went astray, Saul and a servant were sent to look for them. Having been unsuccessful in their quest, the servant suggested that they go to Samuel and seek his advice.

As it turned out, Samuel was in a certain town, presumably Ramah, to offer a sacrifice. The Lord had revealed to Samuel the previous day that a man was coming who was to be anointed king (I Sam. 9:15-17). When Saul arrived, he was invited to a sacrifice and feast with Samuel at the "high place" (vs. 19) and was honored by the prophet. Places of sacrifice and worship were often located on hills. This was true of both pagan shrines and altars dedicated to Yahweh.

When Samuel and Saul came down from the high place, they went to the top of Samuel's house, and the prophet "communed" (vs. 25) with young Saul. This simply means they carried on a conversation, the details of which are unknown but were probably related to God's choice of a king. Earlier, however,

Saul had expressed reluctance to be any kind of leader in Israel (vss. 20-21).

The next day, Samuel prepared to send Saul on his way. This was at "the spring of the day" (vs. 26), meaning early morning.

The selected king (I Sam. 9:27—10:1). As they walked together to the edge of the city, Samuel told Saul to have his servant go ahead of them so their conversation could be private. But it was not just going to be a private conversation, as Samuel was going to give Saul a message from God. Exactly why this was to be done privately is unstated. It would not be long, however, before all Israel would recognize Saul as their king.

Taking a vial of oil, Samuel anointed Saul. Whether practiced in every case, the anointing of oil was a means of consecrating prophets, priests, and kings in Israel. It was symbolic of God's approval of the one being anointed and the coming of God's Spirit upon that person to empower him in his service.

From the Hebrew word for "anointed" (I Sam. 10:1) comes the word "Messiah," which in Greek is "Christ." Peter confessed that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). He is God's Anointed One, Israel's Prophet, Priest, and King revealed in one person.

Though not using the title of king, Samuel declared Saul to be the "captain" (I Sam. 10:1)—the ruler or leader—of Israel. He referred to Israel as God's "inheritance" since they were the heirs of the blessings promised to the patriarchs (cf. Deut. 32:8-10).

SAMUEL'S COMMISSION FOR SAUL

6 And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.

8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

The Spirit promised (1 Sam. 10:6-7). Before Saul left Samuel, the prophet told him that a number of things would occur. First, Saul would be informed that the donkeys had been found (vs. 2). Second, he would meet three men who would offer him food (vss. 3-4). Third, he would encounter a band of prophets who would prophesy (vs. 5). These were the "signs" (vs. 7) the Lord would give Saul, assuring him of God's presence with him.

As the anointing had anticipated, Saul was promised that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him. As seen in the book of Judges, the coming of the Spirit upon him would enable him to carry out his mission. Saul's ability to prophesy with the band of prophets would be an additional sign that God was with him. Moreover, Saul would be "turned into another man" (vs. 6)—literally "overturned" or "transformed."

Sacrifices anticipated (1 Sam. 10:8). Saul was further instructed to go ahead of Samuel to Gilgal, an important religious shrine in Israel. Together they would offer sacrifices in that place. Saul was to wait there seven days until Samuel arrived. This may have been a test of his obedience. As seen later, Saul would have problems with patience and obedience.

Once Samuel arrived, further instructions would be given to the newly anointed king. "In Israel's monarchy royal authority was derived and secondary; the king was always to be under the Lord's authority. Since the Lord's true prophets were conduits through which the divine word came to kings, these prophets were in a functionally superior position to royalty" (Bergen, *New American Commentary*: 1, 2 Samuel, B&H).

Being called by God does not necessarily equip a person to immediately do what he has been called to do. As someone said concerning ministers, "A call to preach is a call to prepare." In some cases, we are already equipped and just need to obey God's call. In all cases, however, we should respond to God's call as young Samuel did: "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:10).

SAUL'S CHANGE OF HEART

9 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

12 And one of the same place answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?

13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

Signs confirmed (1 Sam. 10:9). Having listened to the Prophet Samuel's forecast of what was to occur in the near future, Saul turned to leave the man of God. As he did, something extraordinary happened: "God gave him another heart." Clearly, Saul was in some sense transformed or changed by God's power. Concerning the aforementioned signs, "all those signs came to pass that day."

If you know anything about Saul's future, you know that Saul ultimately made a number of bad decisions, was rejected by God as Israel's king, and

even ended his own life in the midst of a military disaster. This, of course, raises a theological question concerning the change that occurred in Saul's heart.

While this issue cannot be explored in great depth in this lesson, a couple of observations can be made. First, under the old covenant, the coming of the Spirit upon a person did not necessarily mean the Spirit would abide permanently with that individual. Second, even if a person was endowed with God's Spirit, it did not force him to make correct choices or mean that he would no longer succumb to temptation.

Concerning Saul's change of heart, Warren Wiersbe says that we should not "read New Testament 'regeneration' into this statement; it refers primarily to a different attitude and outlook" (*The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, Cook).

The Spirit falls (I Sam. 10:10-11). "Hill" in Hebrew is Gibeah, meaning "hill of God." When Saul and his servant came to this place, a group of prophets met them. A band of prophets such as this one often consisted of disciples of a notable prophet (cf. I Kings 20:35; II Kings 2:3-7).

When Saul met these prophets, "the Spirit of God came upon him" (I Sam. 10:10). The word translated "came" can be rendered "rushed upon" and reminds us of what occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

Exactly what occurred when Saul prophesied is unclear. But to those present, it was evidence that the Spirit had come upon Saul as he met this prophetic band. Among those who previously knew Saul, this was evidence that something extraordinary had occurred in him. Similarly, those who come to Christ receive the gift of the Spirit and should exhibit qualities that affirm His presence (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

So remarkable was the change in Saul that people wondered aloud, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (I Sam. 10:11).

Since we know nothing of this particular band of prophets, or the nature of their prophesying, it is difficult to know exactly what the response of the people concerning Saul's experience meant. Some think these prophets were involved in some type of ecstatic speaking or otherwise bizarre behavior, at least from the standpoint of the average Israelite at that time. That Saul was joining with them was astonishing to those who knew Saul.

Saul is doubted (I Sam. 10:12-13). Not only did some think Saul's behavior strange, but one person also called into question the validity of the whole experience, even ridiculing Saul, asking, "But who is their father?" This statement "seems intended to degrade Saul and the prophetic movement in general by raising derisive questions about the circumstances of Saul's birth. The logic underlying the saying probably was as follows: To be a prophet, one might be expected to have a father who is a prophet . . . Yet Kish is not a prophet. Thus, either Saul, and, by extension, his prophetic brotherhood are not really prophets. . . . or Saul is only apparently the son of Kish but was actually conceived in an adulterous relationship between his mother and the head of the prophetic band" (Bergen).

Joyce Baldwin sees the irony in Saul's being said to be "among the prophets" since "before long Saul would be opposing the prophet Samuel" (*1 and 2 Samuel*, InterVarsity).

While there is no reason to doubt the legitimacy of the prophets Saul encountered or of his experience, this does not mean we should never question the validity of supposed religious experiences. As the Apostle John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). We are also reminded that Christ said that prophesying, casting out demons, and

performing miracles do not necessarily prove a person is operating with either divine power or approval (Matt. 7:21-23).

Once Saul ceased to prophesy, which seems to have been a temporary phenomenon, he went on to the "high place" (I Sam. 10:13), that is, the place of worship at Gibeah.

SAUL CONCEALS HIS CONSECRATION

14 And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.

15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.

16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

A question (I Sam. 10:14-15). Once Saul and his servant returned home, Saul's uncle asked where they had been. Perhaps he was just curious, or there may have been something about Saul's demeanor that piqued his interest in their recent journey.

Answering truthfully, Saul told his uncle, probably Ner (I Sam. 14:50), that they had been looking for Kish's lost donkeys. Saul also told him they had visited Samuel the prophet.

Since visiting an esteemed spiritual leader like Samuel was likely not a normal occurrence for the average Israelite, Saul's uncle wanted more information concerning this visit. While this exchange might be somewhat normal under the circumstances, there was probably an unstated reason for Saul's uncle's inquiry concerning their recent activities.

A quandary (I Sam. 10:16). Once again, Saul answered truthfully by stating that Samuel had told them the donkeys had been found. Saul, however, did not volunteer any further information

concerning what had occurred in either Samuel's presence or after they left Samuel. Perhaps word had already filtered back to Saul's hometown that something strange had happened to him.

Saul said nothing about his private anointing as king of Israel. Even Saul's servant seems to have been uninformed about this, although being a witness to the aforementioned events would have given him more information than others had at this point.

First Samuel 10 goes on to tell us that Samuel gathered the people at Mizpeh (vs. 17), where a formal declaration was made concerning a king. Time would tell whether Saul had the requisite qualities to be an effective ruler.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What do we know about Saul's family background??
2. How was the loss of the donkeys providential?
3. Why do you think Samuel wanted to deliver God's message to Saul in private?
4. What is meant by Saul's being "turned into another man" (I Sam. 10:6)?
5. What was the point of Saul waiting seven days for Samuel?
6. What was the source of Saul's change of heart?
7. What do we know about the band of prophets Saul met?
8. Why did some people doubt that Saul had been prophesying?
9. What information did Saul's uncle want from him? Why?
10. Do you think Saul's answer to his uncle was dishonest or deceptive?

—John Alva Owston.