

**Meadgate Spring 2019**  
**The Early Kings**

**Session 3 – Saul (Part 1)**

*“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence – it is to act with yesterday’s logic.” – Peter Drucker*

**Bible background - 1 Samuel 8:1 though to 12:25**

Last session we concluded with Samuel leading the people in repentance, and raising up the Stone of Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7:12). However, chapter 8 opens with Samuel appointing his sons Joel and Abijah as Judges for Israel,

*“But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.*

1 Samuel 8:3

What has Samuel learned from Eli? Both Samuel and Eli had trouble being parents

	Eli	Samuel
1.	Lived a life dedicated to God	Lived a life dedicated to God
2.	Did not restrain his sons	Was not aware of his sons’ misdeeds
3.	Hophni and Phinehas – guilty of immorality and greed, within even the Tabernacle	Joel and Abijah accepted bribes and perverted justice
4.	Eli warned twice of their sin, and did nothing	The elders tell Samuel that they want change
5.	Eli repented of mis-judging Hannah (Samuels’ mother), but did nothing to repent of how he did not reprove his sons	Samuel walks closely with God
6.	Hophni and Phinehas die on the same day, as did Eli, in direct judgement from God	Joel and Abijah are ignored once the elders demand a king

- *It is one thing to lead a nation:*
- *It is quite another to **lead your family***

In 1 Samuel 8:5-6, the elders come to Samuel at Ramah and declare:

*“You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, **such as all the other nations have.**” But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord.”*

In this one moment, they are rejecting God as their King. It is not surprising that Samuel was “displeased”. The Hebrew word here is

רָוַח rawah

And literally means “to spoil by breaking apart”. God made it very clear that they were not rejecting Samuel, but Him. Samuel then prophesies that there will be serious consequences of this request (1 Sam. 8:10-18), but they would not listen to his warnings.

## THE PROBLEMS WITH HAVING A KING

### 1 Samuel 8:11-17

Problems (warned by Samuel)	Reference	Fulfillment
Drafting young men into the army	<a href="#">8:11-12</a>	<a href="#">14:52</a> —“So whenever Saul saw a young man who was brave and strong, he drafted him into his army.”
Having the young men “run before his chariots”	<a href="#">8:11</a>	<a href="#">2 Samuel 15:1</a> —“Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty footmen to run ahead of him.”
Making slave laborers	<a href="#">8:12, 17</a>	<a href="#">2 Chronicles 2:17-18</a> —Solomon assigned laborers to build the temple.
Taking the best of your fields and vineyards	<a href="#">8:14</a>	<a href="#">1 Kings 21:5-16</a> —Jezebel stole Naboth’s vineyard
Using your property for his personal gain	<a href="#">8:14-16</a>	<a href="#">1 Kings 9:10-14</a> —Solomon gave away 20 cities to Hiram of Tyre.
Demanding a tenth of your harvest and flocks	<a href="#">8:15, 17</a>	<a href="#">1 Kings 12:1-16</a> —Rehoboam was going to demand heavier taxation than Solomon.

1Samuel 8 closes with some damning comments:

*“But the people refused to listen to Samuel.”No!” they said. “We want a king over us.<sup>20</sup> Then we shall be like all the other nations, with **a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.**”<sup>21</sup> When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord.<sup>22</sup> **The** Lord answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.”*

1 Sam 8:19-22

### POINTS TO PONDER



- What do these verses tell us about the Israel’s relationship with God at this point?
- Have you ever made wrong choices because you wanted to be “like everyone else”?

## Who wants to be king?

Saul is introduced in 1 Samuel 9:2 as:

*“an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites — a head taller than any of the others.”*



What would be the first thing people would say about you to introduce you to someone else?

It is worth noting that although the first thing mentioned is that he was “impressive”, the **emphasis is on the externals**. Many English translations use the word “handsome” for “impressive”. The nation wanted a leader who would “look the part”.

Saul had been sent (with his servant) on a mission to locate some lost donkeys – considered important transportation necessities at the time. They reflected a family’s wealth, and their loss would have been devastating. Saul was therefore entrusted to locate the animals by his father (Kish), but initially had real problems finding them. They approach the town where Samuel was living (probably Ramah), and decided to ask him if he could help locate the animals. Unknown to Saul and his servant, the previous day God has revealed very precise details about Saul to Samuel;

*“Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed this to Samuel:*

**16** *“About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me.”*

1 Sam 9:15-16

Saul approaches Samuel, not recognising him. Samuel instructs Saul to go ahead of him to the high place, and assured him that the following morning, he would tell him “all that is in your heart”. Then he pronounces;

*“To whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and all your father's family?”*  
1Sam 9:20

Saul’s response is very revealing:

*“Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?”*  
1 Sam 9:21

*"This outburst reveals a problem he would face repeatedly – feeling inferior. Like a leaf tossed about by the wind, Saul vacillated between his feelings and his convictions. Everything he said and did was selfish, because he worried about himself. For example, Saul said his clan was "The least" in the smallest tribe in Israel, but 9:1 says his father was "a man of standing" (The tribe of Benjamin was the smallest because they were nearly wiped out as punishment for their immorality (see Judges 19-21.) **Saul did not want to face the responsibility God had given him...**Although Saul had been called by God and had a mission in life, he struggled constantly **with jealousy, insecurity, arrogance, impulsiveness and deceit**. He did not decide to be wholeheartedly committed to God. Because Saul would not let God's love give rest to his heart, he never became God's man".<sup>1</sup>*

Samuel then invites Saul to a meal, for which he has made earlier preparations.

## Chapter 10

The chapter opens with Samuel anointing Saul as "leader" – in effect, though, he has been anointed as king.

### **POINT TO PONDER:**



*It is possible to be anointed by God before a public acknowledgement of the role. God may have anointed you for a role, before you ever have an opportunity to demonstrate that anointing.*

Samuel gives Saul 3 prophetic signs to indicate that what he says is true:

1. *Saul's father's donkeys will be found*
2. *Saul will travel to Tabor, and meet 3 men carrying goats, loaves and wine, who will present Saul with bread.*
3. *Saul will then meet prophets at a Philistine Garrison and start to prophesy himself.*

Saul will then start to prophesy himself, but is commanded to wait for Samuel at Gilgal

All of the prophetic signs come to pass.

<sup>1</sup> Commentary notes on 1 Samuel 9:21 in the Life Application Study Bible (NIV), Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1988

This is one of the first instances of the Holy Spirit coming upon an individual in the OT. Only 4 others are mentioned in this way before Saul.

- Joshua (Num. 27:18)
- Othniel (Judg. 3:10)
- Gideon (6:34) and
- Samson (13:25; 14:6)

They were all leaders, but *Saul is the **first king** mentioned as **having the Holy Spirit upon him**.*

Samuel then summons the nation to Mizpah, and warns them that by choosing to have a king, they have actually rejected God as leader of the nation.

1 Sam 10:19-24

*"So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and clans."*

**20** *When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.*

**21** *Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found.*

**22** *So they enquired further of the Lord, "Has the man come here yet?" And the Lord said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage."*

**23** *They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.*

**24** *Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no-one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"*

This then is the **public** affirmation of kingship, following the **private** one between Samuel and Saul.

However 1 Samuel 10:27 informs us that the decision of having Saul as king was not accepted by all.

## **Chapter 11**

Chapter 11 shows us that Saul can act decisively and with great military success.

*"Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you."*

*2 But Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel."*

*3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days so that we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no-one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you."*

*4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud.*

*5 Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, "What is wrong with the people? Why are they weeping?" Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said.*

*6 When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger.*

*7 He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the Lord fell on the people, and they turned out as one man.*

*8 When Saul mustered them at Bezek, the men of Israel numbered three hundred thousand and the men of Judah thirty thousand."*

## 1 Samuel 11:1-8



The Ammonites prepared to attack Jabesh Gilead. Why did Nahash give them 7 days? Possibly because Israel was still quite disorganised. He assumed no-one would help the city, and that this would be a walkover, without the need for battle or a lengthy siege.

When the 330,000 troops rally, Israel wins, and Saul is re-affirmed as king. Saul is merciful to his former opponents, waiving an opportunity to have them killed. (1 Sam. 11:13)

## JUDAH

It is worth noting at this stage that the tribe of Judah is often mentioned separately to the other 11. This is because:

- Judah was the largest Tribe ( Number 1:20-46)
- It was the tribe from which most of Israel's kings would come (Gen. 49:8-120)

So we now have three occasions to confirm the kingship of Saul;-



- Anointing by Samuel at **Ramah** ( 1 Sam 10:1)
- Saul is chosen by the people at **Mizpah** (1 Sam 10: 17-27)
- Confirmation at **Gilgal** following his first battle victory at Bezek ( 1 Sam 11:15)

## Chapter 12

The prophet Samuel uses his Farewell speech to justify his life, and challenges anyone to question his integrity. He focuses on any potential accusation of **bribery** – issues which were a problem for both Eli’s sons and his own children. The people responded:-

*<sup>3</sup> Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right."*

*<sup>4</sup> "You have not cheated or oppressed us," they replied. "You have not taken anything from anyone's hand."*

*<sup>5</sup> Samuel said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." "He is witness," they said."*

1 Sam 12:3-5

As Samuel passes on the mantle of leadership completely to Saul, he reviews Israel’s chequered history of **apostasy and deliverance**, implying lessons for the future. Samuel predicts a dire warning:

*"But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to rule over us' – even though the Lord your God was your king.*

*<sup>13</sup> Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you.*

*<sup>14</sup> If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God – good!*

*<sup>15</sup> But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers.*

**16** "Now then, stand still and see **this great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes!**"

### **1 Sam 12:12-16**

This "great thing" was that Samuel would ask God to send thunder and rain

It was the time of the wheat harvest for Israel, in the months of May and June, and it was near the end of the dry season. Rain rarely fell during this period, so a great thunderstorm would be regarded as miraculous. However, it was also potentially damaging to the ripe crops, and could cause the harvest to rot. Such an unusual occurrence demonstrated **both** God's power, and his displeasure that Israel had demanded a king. The thunderstorm happens, and the people ask Samuel to pray for them. Samuel exhorts them to "serve the Lord with all your heart", to turn away from idols, and to fear God.

### **Final thoughts – Samuel, the faithful prophet**

It was not easy being a prophet. Most of the messages they had to give were very hard to hear. They preached of;

- repentance
- judgement
- impending destruction
- sin
- how God was displeased over the behaviour of His people.

They were not very popular (unless they were false prophets, speaking lies about God's reactions to sin). But popularity was not the bottom line for God's true prophets; it was **obedience to God** and **faithfully proclaiming God's word**.

### FINAL POINTS TO PONDER



- ***Do you, like Samuel, faithfully pass on God's word to others?***
- ***How can we effectively warn people of spiritual danger?***
- ***What was the difference between a Theocracy and a Monarchy?***
- ***How does the Holy Spirit affect our lives and our calling?***