

Text

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. <sup>2</sup> When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?" ' <sup>3</sup> Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. <sup>4</sup> And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from their hand. <sup>5</sup> After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. <sup>6</sup> Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. <sup>7</sup> Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. <sup>8</sup> Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."

<sup>9</sup> When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. <sup>10</sup> When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. <sup>11</sup> And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" <sup>12</sup> And a man of the place answered, "And who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" <sup>13</sup> When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

<sup>14</sup> Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To seek the donkeys. And when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel." <sup>15</sup> And Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you." <sup>16</sup> And Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But about the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

<sup>17</sup> Now Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah. <sup>18</sup> And he said to the people of Israel, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel

out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’<sup>19</sup> But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, ‘Set a king over us.’ Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands.”

<sup>20</sup> Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. <sup>21</sup> He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot; and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found. <sup>22</sup> So they inquired again of the Lord, “Is there a man still to come?” and the Lord said, “Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage.” <sup>23</sup> Then 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. <sup>24</sup> And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!”

<sup>25</sup> Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. <sup>26</sup> Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched. <sup>27</sup> But some worthless fellows said, “How can this man save us?” And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

## Prayer

## Introduction

In his book *Blink*<sup>1</sup>, author Malcolm Gladwell tells this story of an influential political figure from Ohio meeting a young politician named Warren Harding and being so impressed by the look and temperament of the young Harding that he instantly thought that the state senator had potential to one day be president.

The year was 1899.

As Gladwell describes him, Harding was tall and handsome. He had broad shoulders and a naturally bronze complexion and as he aged, he became more distinguished looking. He had a rich and resonant speaking voice.

He looked presidential.

On March 4, 1921, that same man, Warren G. Harding would become America’s 29th president.

It did not go particularly well.

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<sup>1</sup> *Blink*. Gladwell, Malcolm.

If you look up rankings of best and worst presidents in American history, Harding is almost always in the bottom handful. He wasn't particularly intelligent. When he was a U.S. Senator, he was absent for debates on two of the most important political issues of his time: prohibition and women's voting.

He had a scandal-ridden administration for the two years that he was president before dying of a stroke in 1923.

He had the look of a president. But he didn't have the intelligence, moral conviction, or leadership skills to actually be a good president.

### Bridge

This morning, we're continuing in our series: the Rise and Fall of the First King of Israel.

In our passage, Saul will become Israel's first king. In chapter 9, we were introduced to Saul. He was a man from relative obscurity, from the tribe of Benjamin who had gone in search of his father's lost donkeys but through his search, he found the Prophet Samuel.

Now Samuel had a prophetic revelation the day before that he was going to meet and anoint the future king of Israel.

And then he meets Saul. The future king. Meanwhile Saul doesn't even know who Samuel is when he meets him.

With that background, we come to chapter 10. In this chapter, Saul will officially become king and we will look at Saul's ascension to the throne in three scenes.

### First scene - Saul anointed as king

Verse 1:

**Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.**

Samuel anoints Saul in a private ceremony.

As always, anointing in the Old Testament is something done at the beginning of the ministry of a prophet or a priest, and now of a future king. It is meant to set someone aside for a divine task.

Saul is not yet king. And interestingly, just as we saw in chapter 9, this verse does not use the word king. It uses the word prince. This is another reminder that even though Israel will have a human ruler, God is still the king.

Saul will rule as God's emissary in the land.

### The people's demand for a king

As a reminder, though this will come up at the end of the chapter, the reason why Israel is getting a king is because they had asked for one. In 1 Samuel 8, the Israelites had been in various struggles and wars. Samuel's sons were not as godly as he was and the people did not want them to be in power and so the people demanded a king.

In that same chapter, the Lord warned the Israelites about how badly it would go for them.

More men will have to serve in the army, more taxes, more of their goods will have to be given up in service of the king.

But the people still want a king anyway.

1 Samuel 8:19-20:

**No! But there shall be a king over us, <sup>20</sup> that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."**

They want a king because they think it'll make life easier, even though they're told it will actually make their lives much, much harder.

It's especially interesting that one of the reasons why they want a king is so that they can be like all of the other nations, when God had chosen Israel and redeemed them from slavery in Egypt precisely so that they would not be like all the other nations.

Leviticus 20:26:

**You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.**

So you have a sinful nation who were trying to usurp God and who were graciously warned and yet still wanted a king anyway.

Sometimes God gives us what we want. But in the process, we learn that what we wanted really wasn't good.

Sometimes God's "yes" is a judgment.

Is that because God is unloving?

No. But man is sinful and some of us seem to only learn lessons the hard way!

Romans 1:28 says:

**since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.**

God is the king Israel needs but he'll give them Saul, the king they deserve.

We come to a second scene.

Second scene - Saul prepared to be king

Now let's take a step back and look at this all from Saul's perspective.

He'd just gone out looking for some lost donkeys, minding his own business. And the next thing he knows, he's being anointed to be the king of Israel.

That is quite the series of events.

What would you think if you were Saul?

I'll just speak for myself. I'm a pretty skeptical person. There are lots of things I hear that I question. I think I'd have a hard time believing that a prophet picked me out from obscurity and that it was my destiny to be the king of a nation that's never even had a king.

So to prove that it's all true, the Prophet Samuel gives Saul three signs or prophecies which will happen which are meant to validate that he really has been anointed to be the king.

First, his lost donkeys will be found.

Verse 2:

**<sup>2</sup> When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'**

Part of what this sign is also doing is tying up loose ends from Saul's prior life. It is showing a completion of his former life as a farmer and things that will not be his responsibility when he is king<sup>2</sup>.

We see the second sign. People will give Saul bread.

Verses 3-4:

**<sup>3</sup> Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. <sup>4</sup> And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from their hand.**

The New Bible Commentary is helpful on this verse.

There was a shrine at Bethel and the bread was meant to be given to the priests. So these aren't just ordinary loaves of bread. They're for a special purpose but when the people give the bread to Saul, it's a reminder that he too has been set aside for a special purpose<sup>3</sup>.

We see the third sign.

Verses 5-7:

**<sup>5</sup> After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. <sup>6</sup> Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. <sup>7</sup> Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you.**

This sign points to Saul having the necessary skills to govern.

Borrowing again from the New Bible Dictionary, "Once these signs had been *fulfilled*, Saul could have full confidence to act as king, because God would clearly be with him<sup>4</sup>."

At this point, Samuel is still telling Saul what will happen.

Next, he tells Saul what to do after these things happen.

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<sup>2</sup> The first sign (2) was to assure him that he could put the past behind him; his future role was not that of a farmer David F. Payne, "[1 and 2 Samuel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 306.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Verses 8:

**<sup>8</sup> Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.”**

So after the signs Saul will then spend seven days in the city of Gilgal and wait for Samuel. Gilgal was a city in the Benjaminite territory. Saul was a Benjaminte.

Gilgal was also the place where Joshua built the first monument to the Lord after the Israelites had crossed the Jordan and entered into the Promised Land in Joshua 4:20<sup>5</sup>.

Verse 9:

**<sup>9</sup> When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day.**

This is probably the most hotly debated verse in this entire chapter. What does it mean that Saul was given another heart? Is that a metaphor for conversion or being born again?

Given that this event happens prior to the New Covenant, I don't assume that it refers to regeneration. And given the way Saul's life plays out, we don't see much in the way of fruit or a life dedicated to God.

But in being given another heart, it points to Saul being equipped with what was needed to where he could have been a good king.

It's also important that these verse mention that all of the signs that Samuel had mentioned came to pass.

Continuing in our passage.

Verse 10:

**<sup>10</sup> When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them.**

People who see this are shocked.

Verse 11:

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<sup>5</sup> Richard D. Phillips, [1 Samuel](#), ed. Philip Graham Ryken and Richard D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 153.

**<sup>11</sup> And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”**

And the confusion continues. In some ways, it reminds me of the scene in the Gospels when people are amazed by Jesus, a man who has come from humble beginnings and people say in Matthew 13:55-56:

**<sup>55</sup> Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup> And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?**

But as I said, it’s pointing to the fact that Saul had what he needed to do the job well. He would ultimately fail but he wasn’t setup to fail.

We come to a third scene.

And we’re going to move ahead just a few verses.

Third scene - Saul chosen as king

Keep in mind that no one knows that Saul is going to become the king yet.

Verses 17-18:

**<sup>17</sup> Now Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah. <sup>18</sup> And he said to the people of Israel, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’”<sup>1</sup>**

So Samuel speaks and talks of what the Lord has done for Israel. God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, he had delivered them from opposing kingdoms. God has brought redemption for the Israelites.

Verse 19:

**But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, ‘Set a king over us.’ Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands.”**  
So you have a massive gathering of the tribes of Israel.

And you have a contrast with this group being gathered. Samuel is reminding them of what the Lord has done for them, but the people want a human king to replace God anyway.



## Gospel

Throughout Saul's tragic story, we see him contrasted with the true king and with the true savior.

Saul was given another heart, but it is Jesus who gives all of his followers a new heart.

Ezekiel 36:26:

**I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

Saul failed to honor God, but Jesus never fails.

In the Bible, we see the stories of the various failures of humanity.

Man was given the law but we see that we were unable to follow the law. Because of sin.

God gives Israel the king that they wanted and we'll see that he will lead them imperfectly. Because no human king can adequately serve in the role that God serves in.

We cannot earn God, we cannot be our own saviors, and Saul couldn't be the true king because that wasn't something that a sinful man could accomplish.

Yes, we saw that he was chosen and anointed but it didn't matter who God had picked. A human king was going to bring problems.

The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

The good news is that there would be a future king who would usher in God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. There would be a future king who would talk of a kingdom that was not of this world. There would be a future king who would lay down his life for his subjects. There would be a king who would rule and reign and who would show his authority, not only over life and death but over sicknesses and diseases, over nature and storms.

In his commentary, Richard Phillips points out that Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the final time on Palm Sunday<sup>6</sup>

Five days later, he would be crucified in that same city.

But on Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem as crowds threw their cloaks on the ground. They waved palm branches and shouted "Hoanna," the Aramaic word for "save us." They welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem as a conquering king. They gave Jesus the

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<sup>6</sup> Id, 156.

royal treatment that he deserved. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Saul's story begins with a man who couldn't find his donkeys!

And that is a powerful metaphor for how Jesus was everything that Saul was not.

Israel wanted a king to replace God and so God gave them Saul. But as fallen men inevitably fall, God also gave them Jesus.

Back in our passage.

It's the pivotal moment when the king would be revealed to the gathered tribes of Israel.

**<sup>20</sup> Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. <sup>21</sup> He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot; and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot.**

So they cast lots and what happens is they're narrowing the field down.

First they cast lots among the tribes.

Then a tribe is selected and they cast lots among the clans - or families - within the tribes. And then once a clan is found, they will cast lots of an individual within the chosen clan within the chosen tribe.

I've gone to sporting events where they'll have some prize and maybe early in the game, they'll mention the section that the winner is in. And then later in the game, they'll mention the row they're in within the section. And then towards the end of the game, they'll give the specific seat number.

The only difference is that this is not a random selection. The Lord has chosen Saul.

Proverbs 16:33 says:

**<sup>33</sup> The lot is cast into the lap,  
but its every decision is from the Lord.**

So Saul is chosen. End of verse 21:

**But when they sought him, he could not be found.**

Saul knew that he was going to be chosen but once the lot fell to him, he's missing.

**<sup>22</sup> So they inquired again of the Lord, "Is there a man still to come?" and the Lord said, "Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage."**

It foreshadows things which were to come and the poor skills as a leader which Saul would display.

Saul was fearful and tried to run from his calling.

Anointed, another heart, chosen, signs to confirm that he was chosen and prepared and yet he hides.

Verses 23-24:

**<sup>23</sup> Then 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. <sup>24</sup> And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!”**

So the people see this king who had just been hiding from them. The king that they wanted. And they see that Saul is taller than any of them. When we were first introduced to Saul in chapter 9, the text mentions that Saul was very handsome. This is how we meet Saul in the Bible.

9:1-2:

**There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. <sup>2</sup> And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.**

They don't see a coward who had tried to hide but they see a tall handsome man and they respond by saying “long live the king.”

The first king of Israel was not a George Washington. The first king of Israel was a Warren G Harding. They had wanted a king so they could be like all the other nations, and they got a man who LOOKED like a king.

They got a man who was tall but he wasn't a leader. They got a man who was handsome but he wasn't holy.

The passage ends with the immediate aftermath of Saul's ascension to the throne.

Verse 25:

**<sup>25</sup> Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.**

We see Samuel act, not Saul.

We don't see recorded speech from Saul. Anything he does. He doesn't do anything royal.

Once again, foreshadowing of the type of king Saul will be.

He's weak and not a leader. Samuel writes down the duties of kingship. We actually don't know what all is included in that document but it's almost like a constitution of Israel that Saul is being given.

And then everyone is told to go home.

An underwhelming start to the new kingdom that the people had demanded.

### Conclusion

It's interesting that we live in a nation that fought a war to escape the tyranny of a king. King George III of England.

And yet we have the idea of a good king.

We have the idea of a king who is just and loves his nation, and rules for the good of the people. A king who is wise and virtuous. He brings safety and security to the empire.

Even though many of the actual human kings throughout time have been incompetent, despotic, and led poorly.

Many kings today are actually just figureheads who have little to no real power.

But the Lord is the absolute monarch over creation who does rule with perfect wisdom, justice, and goodness.

Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven during his ministry.

And for the people of God, Philippians 3:20 says that our citizenship is in heaven.

Jesus invites us to live as part of that kingdom.

There are so many other kingdoms we want to try to live in. There's the kingdom of self, the kingdom of politics, the kingdom of money, the kingdom of work.

But in Christ, we're meant to have a heavenly citizenship and to live the rest of our lives on earth as it is in heaven.

We want to be the kings and queens over our own lives and say my kingdom come my will be done. But here's the problem. We're not good at that. But we have a king who leads well. We have a king who points us to righteousness and holiness. We have a king who laid down his life so that we could be part of his kingdom. And so we live as his kingdom people by knowing God, by communing with him, by serving him, by loving him, and by loving others. Even though the world is fallen, we have the opportunity to live as citizens of God's kingdom.

In the Great Divorce, C.S. Lewis said: "the Blessed will say "We have never lived anywhere except in Heaven, : and the Lost, "We were always in Hell." And both will speak truly."

Who is your king? And where is your kingdom?