

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of 1 Samuel – Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Alex O. Stone

Classes Presented on “Zoom”

[MEETING ID: 395 133 283 * PASSCODE: 281215] Or, Call: [1-646-558-8656](tel:1-646-558-8656)

Overall Theme: “Saul - First King of Israel” (8:1–15:35)

Israel Demands a King (1 Samuel 8:1-8:22)

- I. Israel Demands a King (1 Samuel 8:1-8:22)
- II. Saul Chosen To Be King (1 Samuel 9:1-9:26)
- III. Anointed King Saul (1 Samuel 9:27-10:27)
- IV. Saul Saves Jabesh Gilead (1 Samuel 11:1-11:15)
- V. Samuel’s Address at Saul’s Coronation (1 Samuel 12:1-12:25)
- VI. Saul’s First Rebuke (1 Samuel 13:1-13:23)
- VII. Johnathan’s Peril (1 Samuel 14:1-14:52)
- VIII. Saul’s Rejection (1 Samuel 15:1-15:35)

Israel Demands a King

8 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. ²The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were* judges in Beersheba. ³But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. ⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵and said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” ⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. ⁸According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. ⁹Now therefore, heed their

voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.”

The Nature of the King (8:10-8:18)

¹⁰ So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. ¹¹ And he said, “This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots. ¹² He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, *will set some* to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and *some* to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴ And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. ¹⁶ And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. ¹⁸ And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.”

The Introduction of The King (8:19 – 9:14)

¹⁹ Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, “No, but we will have a king over us, ²⁰ 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.”

²¹ And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. ²² So the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed their voice, and make them a king.” And Samuel said to the men of Israel, “Every man go to his city.”

Saul Chosen to Be King

9 There was a man of Benjamin whose name *was* Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of

power. ² And he had a choice and handsome son whose name *was* Saul. *There was* not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward *he was* taller than any of the people.

³ Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son Saul, "Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys." ⁴ So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find *them*. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and *they were* not *there*. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find *them*. ⁵ When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who *was* with him, "Come, let us return, lest my father cease *caring* about the donkeys and become worried about us." ⁶ And he said to him, "Look now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go." ⁷ Then Saul said to his servant, "But look, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and *there is* no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?" ⁸ And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give *that* to the man of God, to tell us our way." ⁹ (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer"; for *he who is* now *called* a prophet was formerly called a seer.) ¹⁰ Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God *was*.

¹¹ As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?" ¹² And they answered them and said, "Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now; for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place. ¹³ As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him." ¹⁴ So they went up to the city. As they were

coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

THE CHOICE OF THE KING (9:15–27)

¹⁵ Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying,
¹⁶ “Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me.” ¹⁷ So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, “There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.” ¹⁸ Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, “Please tell me, where *is* the seer’s house?” ¹⁹ Samuel answered Saul and said, “I *am* the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that *is* in your heart.” ²⁰ But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on you and on all your father’s house?” ²¹ And Saul answered and said, “*Am* I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?”

²² Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there *were* about thirty persons. ²³ And Samuel said to the cook, “Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, ‘Set it apart.’” ²⁴ So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set *it* before Saul. And *Samuel* said, “Here it is, what was kept back. *It* was set apart for you. Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people.” So Saul ate with Samuel that day. ²⁵ When they had come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* spoke with Saul on the top of the house. ²⁶ They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, “Get up, that I may send you on your way.” And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel.

Saul's Ascendancy (Chaps. 10–14)

Anointed King Saul

²⁷ As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the servant to go on ahead of us.” And he went on. “But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God.”

10 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured *it* on his head, and kissed him and said: “*Is it* not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance? ² When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, ‘The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, “What shall I do about my son?”’ ³ Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. ⁴ And they will greet you and give you two *loaves* of bread, which you shall receive from their hands. ⁵ After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison *is*. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. ⁶ Then **the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.** ⁷ And let it be, when these signs come to you, *that* you do as the occasion demands; for God *is* with you. ⁸ You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings *and* make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do.”

⁹ So it was, when **he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart;** and all those signs came to pass that day. ¹⁰ When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God

came upon him, and he prophesied among them. ¹¹ And it happened, when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, that the people said to one another, “What *is* this *that* has come upon the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?” ¹² Then a man from there answered and said, “But who *is* their father?” Therefore it became a proverb: “*Is* Saul also among the prophets?” ¹³ And when he had finished prophesying, he went to the high place.

¹⁴ Then Saul’s uncle said to him and his servant, “Where did you go?” So he said, “To look for the donkeys. When we saw that *they were* nowhere *to be found*, we went to Samuel.” ¹⁵ And Saul’s uncle said, “Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you.” ¹⁶ So Saul said to his uncle, “He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.” But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said.

Saul Proclaimed King

¹⁷ Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah, ¹⁸ and said to the children of Israel, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians *and* from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.’ ¹⁹ But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, ‘No, set a king over us!’ Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.” ²⁰ And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. ²¹ When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. **And Saul the son of Kish was chosen.** But when they sought him, he could not be found. ²² Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, “Has the man come here yet?” And the LORD answered, “There he is, hidden among the equipment.” ²³ So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. ²⁴ And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen, that *there is* no one like him among all the people?”

So all the people shouted and said, “Long live the king!”²⁵ Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote *it* in a book and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.²⁶ And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant *men* went with him, whose hearts God had touched.²⁷ But some rebels said, “How can this man save us?” So they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

Saul Saves Jabesh Gilead

11 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you.”² And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, “On this *condition* I will make *a covenant* with you, that I may put out all your right eyes, and bring reproach on all Israel.”³ Then the elders of Jabesh said to him, “Hold off for seven days, that we may send messengers to all the territory of Israel. And then, if *there is* no one to save us, we will come out to you.”⁴ So the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the people. And all the people lifted up their voices and wept.⁵ Now there was Saul, coming behind the herd from the field; and Saul said, “What *troubles* the people, that they weep?” And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh.⁶ Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused.

⁷ So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, “Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen.” And the **fear of the LORD fell on the people**, and **they came out with one consent**.⁸ When he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.⁹ And they said to the messengers who came, “Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: ‘Tomorrow, by *the time* the sun is hot, you shall have help.’” Then the messengers came and reported *it* to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad.¹⁰ Therefore the men of Jabesh said, “Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do with us whatever seems good to you.”

¹¹ So it was, on the next day, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and killed Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it happened that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. ¹² Then the people said to Samuel, “Who *is* he who said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Bring the men, that we may put them to death.” ¹³ But Saul said, “Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel.” ¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.” ¹⁵ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Samuel’s Address at Saul’s Coronation

12 Now Samuel said to all Israel: “Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. ² And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and gray headed, and look, my sons *are* with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. ³ Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received *any* bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore *it* to you.” ⁴ And they said, “You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man’s hand.” ⁵ Then he said to them, “The LORD *is* witness against you, and His anointed *is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.” And they answered, “*He is* witness.”

⁶ Then Samuel said to the people, “*It is* the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. ⁷ Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers: ⁸ When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.

⁹ And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. ¹⁰ Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.' ¹¹ And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety. ¹² And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God *was* your king.

¹³ "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen *and* whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you. ¹⁴ If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. ¹⁵ However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers. ¹⁶ "Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: ¹⁷ Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves."

¹⁸ So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. ¹⁹ And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves." ²⁰ Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. ²¹ And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they *are* nothing. ²² For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. ²³ Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in

ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. ²⁴ Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. ²⁵ But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.”

Saul's First Rebuke

13 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, ² Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

³ And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. ⁴ And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. ⁵ And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. ⁷ And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

⁸ And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. ⁹ And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. ¹⁰ And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. ¹¹ And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not

within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; ¹² Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. ¹³ And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. ¹⁴ But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

¹⁵ And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men. ¹⁶ And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. ¹⁷ And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth to* Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: ¹⁸ And another company turned the way *to* Beth-horon: and another company turned *to* the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. ¹⁹ Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears: ²⁰ But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. ²¹ Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. ²² So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found. ²³ And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Johnathan's Peril

14 Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not his father. ² And Saul tarried in

the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men; ³ And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

⁴ And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. ⁵ The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah. ⁶ And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few. ⁷ And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart. ⁸ Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. ⁹ If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. ¹⁰ But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us. ¹¹ And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves. ¹² And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. ¹³ And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him. ¹⁴ And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, *which* a yoke of oxen might plow.

¹⁵ And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling. ¹⁶ And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked;

and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down *one another*.¹⁷ Then said Saul unto the people that *were* with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer *were* not *there*.¹⁸ And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.¹⁹ And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that *was* in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.²⁰ And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* a very great discomfiture.²¹ Moreover the Hebrews *that were* with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp *from the country* round about, even they also *turned* to be with the Israelites that *were* with Saul and Jonathan.²² Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.²³ So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

²⁴ And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food.²⁵ And all *they of* the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.²⁶ And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.²⁷ But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.²⁸ Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint.²⁹ Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.³⁰ How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among

the Philistines? ³¹ And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

³² And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood. ³³ Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. ³⁴ And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there. ³⁵ And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD. ³⁶ And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

³⁷ And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. ³⁸ And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. ³⁹ For, *as* the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people *that* answered him. ⁴⁰ Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. ⁴¹ Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. ⁴² And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. ⁴³ Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die. ⁴⁴ And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. ⁴⁵ And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: *as* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground;

for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. ⁴⁶ Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

⁴⁷ So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed *them*. ⁴⁸ And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

⁴⁹ Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua: and the names of his two daughters *were these*; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: ⁵⁰ And the name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host *was* ^fAbner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. ⁵¹ And Kish *was* the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel. ⁵² And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Saul's Rejection

15 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. ² Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. ³ Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. ⁴ And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. ⁵ And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. ⁶ And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of

Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. ⁷ And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that *is* over against Egypt.

⁸ And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

¹⁰ Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, ¹¹ It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for *he is turned back from following me*, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD *all night*. ¹² And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. ¹³ And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. ¹⁴ And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? ¹⁵ And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

¹⁶ Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. ¹⁷ And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? ¹⁸ And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. ¹⁹ Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? ²⁰ And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. ²¹ But the people took of the spoil, sheep

and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

²² And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is better than sacrifice*, And to hearken than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion *is as the sin of witchcraft*, And stubbornness *is as iniquity and idolatry*. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from *being king*. ²⁴ And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. ²⁵ Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. ²⁶ And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. ²⁷ And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. ²⁸ And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou. ²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent. ³⁰ Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. ³¹ So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

³² Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. ³³ And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. ³⁴ Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. ³⁵ And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Commentary: Israel's First "King" (CHAP. 8:1-15:35)

1. THE DEMAND FOR A KING (8:1–9)

1 Samuel 8:1–6. Shortly before 1051 B.C., the year Saul became king (**when Samuel** was 65–70 years **old**), the people of **Israel**, aware of Samuel's advanced age and of the wickedness of **his sons** (vv. 3, 5) demanded of the prophet that he select **a king** to rule over them. Samuel's sons, who had been serving as judges **at Beersheba** in Judah, no doubt reminded Israel of the sons of Eli (2:12, 22).

Probably the people were afraid that they might return to the wicked days the nation had known before Samuel had been raised up by the Lord. Samuel's sons, **Joel** and **Abijah** were **dishonest** judges, accepting **bribes** and perverting, rather than upholding, **justice. Samuel**, of course, was grieved that they should seek **a king**, for God, who had redeemed them from Egypt to be His people, was their King.

1 Samuel 8:7–9. But **the LORD told** Samuel that **the people** were rejecting **not** him **but** God. Furthermore, God would permit them to have a **king**, but they would live to regret their hasty impulse.

The request for a human king was not in itself improper, for God had promised such a leader (see *Introduction*). But the refusal to wait for God's timing was clearly displeasing to the Lord and to His prophet. In the face of impending conflict with the Ammonites (see 12:12–13) the people wanted a king "such as all the other nations have" (8:5). Even after witnessing the leadership of the Lord in

stunning victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer, Israel demanded a fallible, human leader.

2. THE NATURE OF THE KING (8:10–18)

1 Samuel 8:10–18. At last **Samuel** relented. He told **the people** God would give them what they wanted, but **the king** would be a despot, a demanding dictator who would enrich himself at the people's expense. He would press them into his military and domestic enterprises (vv. 11–13, 16, 17). He would appropriate their properties to his own use (vv. 14, 16) and would inflict heavy taxes on them (vv. 15, 17). And **when** all this happened it would be too late to complain, for the people would have reaped the consequences of their own fleshly desires (v.18). Shortly after Saul ascended the throne many of these predictions came to pass (14:52) and continued to mark the long history of the monarchy in both Israel and Judah (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 12:12–15; 21:7).

3. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE KING (8:19–9:14)

1 Samuel 8:19–9:2. After **the LORD** had agreed to let **the people** have a king ... like **all the other nations**, **Saul** was introduced in the story. He was a tall and striking **Benjamite** (9:1) who appeared quite naive and unkingly in many ways. He hailed from the town of Gibeah (10:26), where the concubine of a Levite who had sought hospitality ¹ hospitality was raped and killed (Jud. 19). Excavations at Tel

¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 439–440). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

el-Ful, just three miles north of Jerusalem, have established it as the site of ancient Gibeah. Though a **son** of **Kish**, a man of some influence (1 Sam. 9:1), Saul had little to commend him to the high position of **king** except his physical impressiveness (9:2). God had to convince both Saul and **the people** that he was the proper candidate.

1 Samuel 9:3–11. On a mission to find some lost **donkeys** belonging to his **father Kish**, Saul approached the region **of Zuph** (in **the hill country of Ephraim**; cf. 1:1, the home of Samuel). It occurred to Saul's **servant** that since Samuel was a **seer** he could help **find** the animals. In Saul's day a **prophet** was known primarily as a **seer** (*rō'eh*) undoubtedly because the major thrust of his ministry was associated with receiving divine revelation, even in matters as mundane as finding **lost** animals. Later prophets served more as proclaimers of revelation, spokesmen for God (*nābî'*), though of course all prophets were both seers and proclaimers. Samuel, for example, was expressly described by both terms (9:11; 3:20).

1 Samuel 9:12–14. When Saul and his servant arrived in Samuel's **town**, they found that the prophet was on his way to a nearby **high place** (a place of worship on a hill) to offer a **sacrifice**. Undaunted, they continued on until they located him.

4. THE CHOICE OF THE KING (9:15–27)

1 Samuel 9:15–27. Meanwhile **the LORD had revealed ... to Samuel** that Saul was on his way and that he was the divine choice for king (vv. 15–17).² This does not mean that Saul satisfied God’s ultimate requirements but only that He was graciously letting the **people** have their own way. When the two met (by God’s providential control), **Samuel** not only put Saul’s mind at ease concerning the **lost** beasts but also told him that he was God’s choice for king (v. 20). Astounded, **Saul** could only reply that he was unworthy of this high honor (v. 21). The transparency and humility of Saul are evident at this stage of his career. **Samuel** then invited **Saul** to sit with him as guest of honor at the sacrificial feast (vv. 22–24) and then to spend the night in his home in **the town** below. Next morning **Samuel** detained him so that he might communicate with him alone (with Saul’s **servant** going **on ahead**) the revelation of **God** about his selection as king (vv. 25–27).

II. The Period of Saul (chaps. 10–31)

A. Saul’s ascendancy (chaps. 10–14)

1. SAUL’S CHOICE BY ISRAEL (CHAP. 10)

1 Samuel 10:1–8. As **Samuel** prepared to reveal God’s purposes to Saul, he first anointed him with **oil**. In the Old Testament anointing with oil symbolized the setting apart of a person or even an object for divine service (Ex. 30:23–33). It was also accompanied by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13). **When Samuel poured oil on Saul’s head, that act represented God’s**

² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 440–441). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

approval of Saul as **leader of His people**. In confirmation to both Saul and the people of his divine call and commission, Saul was told that he ³ would experience three signs:

(a) he would **meet two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin** and Ephraim, who would tell him of the whereabouts of the lost **donkeys**;

(b) he would meet **three men** at the (oak) **tree of Tabor**, somewhere between Zelzah and Gibeah, who would give him **two loaves of bread**; and

(c) he would **meet a procession of prophets** descending **from the high place at Gibeah**.

Remarkably, he would join in with the prophets in their **prophesying as the Spirit** of God enabled him and he would **be changed into a different person**. This is frequently taken to mean that **Saul was converted or spiritually regenerated**.

However, such language for spiritual renewal is foreign to the Old Testament, and Saul's subsequent attitudes and behavior do not bear out that this was his experience (16:14; 18:12; 28:15–16). Actually the Spirit made the inexperienced and unlettered Saul able to assume kingly responsibilities in much the same way as the judges before him were blessed (Jud. 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

1 Samuel 10:9–13. After **Saul** left **Samuel**, the promised **signs** came to pass. So amazed were the witnesses to Saul's dramatic and powerful change of character that they created a proverb which thereafter was quoted to describe a totally unexpected and unexplainable phenomenon: **Is Saul also among the prophets?**

³ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 441). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

This does not suggest, of course, that Saul became part of the prophetic ministry led by Samuel, but only that he was able to exercise a prophetic gift,⁴ at least on this occasion, though never having received prophetic training. This was a remarkable and convincing sign of God's presence and power in Saul's life.

Further evidence that Saul did not actually become a prophet lies in the stem of the Hebrew verb here. **He joined in their prophesying** means literally, "He acted like a prophet among them," that is, to all outward appearances he was a prophet because he was able to enter into their activities.

1 Samuel 10:14–16. Saul told his uncle about finding the donkeys with Samuel's help, **but** Saul **said** nothing **about the kingship**.

1 Samuel 10:17–27. Sometime later **Samuel** gathered the leaders **of Israel** together **at Mizpah**, a favorite place for assembly in Samuel's day (cf. 7:5–6). After reminding them of their foolish insistence on having **a king** apart from the directive will of **God**, he set about to demonstrate God's selection of Saul by a process of elimination (10:18–19). By lot or some similar means the choice was made of **tribe**, that **of Benjamin ... clan**, that of Matri; and family, that **of Kish** (vv. 20–21). But when **Saul** was **chosen**, he was nowhere **to be found**. Indicative of his unassuming humility were his initial attempts to avoid the glare of publicity (v. 22) and his refusal to be vindictive against those who ridiculed his selection as king (v.

⁴ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 441). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

27). But the masses were convinced of his eminent suitability for the high office and in jubilation cried out, **Long live the king!**

However, **in the eyes of the Lord, Saul was disqualified**. The prophetic ⁵ word of Jacob was that the scepter (of kingship) would not depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10). **The promised dynasty of kings which would eventually produce the Messiah must originate in Judah**. Saul as a Benjamite could not, then, meet the basic prerequisite of lineage. Nonetheless the people had made their demand, and **the LORD** had acquiesced. All that **Samuel** could do was invest Saul with his authority and responsibility as outlined in **a scroll** prepared for this occasion of coronation (1 Sam. 10:25). Undoubtedly the scroll included the Mosaic regulations for kingship found in Deuteronomy 17:14–17. Interestingly **valiant men** were immediately attracted to Saul **in Gibeah** (see comments on 1 Sam. 9:1).

2. SAUL'S FIRST VICTORY (CHAP. 11)

1 Samuel 11:1–6. No sooner had Saul begun his rule than a distant but important part of his kingdom was attacked by the Ammonites. This was the city of **Jabesh Gilead**, about 25 miles south of the Sea of Galilee, east of the Jordan River. Saul's special concern for this community may well lie in possible ancestral ties which he had there. **Judges 19–21** records the story of the civil war between Benjamin and the other tribes, which resulted in the annihilation of all but 600 men of

⁵ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 441–442). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Benjamin. With no wives and children it is apparent that the tribe would become extinct. To prevent this the leaders of Israel proposed that the virgin women of any town which had not sent troops to combat Benjamin should be seized and given to these survivors as wives. When it was discovered that Jabesh Gilead ⁶ had failed in this respect, the 400 virgins of the city were captured and given to the Benjamites. Since Saul was a Benjamite, it is entirely possible that his ancestry sprang in part from Jabesh Gilead.

When **Saul** learned of the plight of Jabesh Gilead, a city so hopelessly besieged by the Ammonites that defeat was inevitable, he became enraged (1 Sam. 11:6) and set about to raise an army capable of delivering the place. So confident was **Nahash**, king of Ammon, that he made **a treaty** with Jabesh Gilead to the effect that if they surrendered he would pluck out every **right eye**. If they resisted, Nahash would probably kill them. The **Jabesh** elders asked for **seven days** of grace in which to find help. Nahash agreed, to spare the expense of a long and costly siege, assuming that Saul, who did not even have an army, would be powerless to intervene.

1 Samuel 11:7–15. Saul, hearing of the people's plight, **cut** up two **oxen** and **sent the pieces ... throughout Israel**, saying that **anyone who would not follow Saul and Samuel** would have their **oxen** similarly dissected. This method of getting the attention of the tribes is remarkably similar to that of the Levite of Ephraim who

⁶ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 442). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

dissected his concubine's corpse and sent the parts to the various tribes, a part of the story from Judges 19–21 (see comments on Jud. 19:27–30). After assembling 330,000 soldiers **at Bezek**, 12 miles west of **Jabesh Gilead**, Saul marched all night and early in the morning (**the last watch** was the last third of the night) engaged **the Ammonites** in battle, **and slaughtered them**. The distinction between **Israel** and **Judah** (cf. 1 Sam. 15:4; 17:52; 18:16) indicates that 1 Samuel was written after the nation was divided in 931 B.C. into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. **After this decisive victory Saul was hailed as a hero and became firmly entrenched in his monarchical role.** And he gave **the LORD** all the glory. This achievement convinced even **Samuel** that God had His hand on Saul, so the prophet convened another assembly at **Gilgal** so that+ the people could **reaffirm the kingship**. Though the evidence is somewhat meager the occasion described is likely a covenant-renewal ceremony, perhaps on the occasion of Saul's first anniversary as king. The presence of **the LORD**, the **king**, and **the people** would suggest this, particularly in light of the sacrificial festival which highlighted the event (1 Sam. 11:15).

3. THE ADDRESS BY SAMUEL (CHAP. 12)

1 Samuel 12:1–5. As **Samuel** had spoken to them earlier about his age and the imminence of his death, so now again he addressed the assembly of **Israel**, this time after Saul had become **king** and had distinguished himself. As though now to reestablish his credibility among them, Samuel asked whether or not the people had ever detected any moral or spiritual flaw in his life. (By contrast, flaws had certainly been evident in his **sons**, 8:3.) The answer, of course, was no. Samuel's

intent was to show that just as he could be trusted in the past so his word for the present and the future could also be ⁷ accepted with confidence.

1 Samuel 12:6–25. *A critical point had been reached in Israel's history. The people had demanded and had been given a king, contrary to the precise purposes and will of God. And that king had led them to a glorious victory in his very first campaign! Now the question was, Would Israel see this victory as evidence of God's blessing and give Him the glory, or would they interpret it as a human achievement devoid of divine enablement? Samuel anticipated that question and sought to direct the people to a fresh recognition of the sovereignty of God and to the need to worship and praise Him as the Source of all their blessing.*

He did this first by reminding them of how God had redeemed them from **Egypt** and brought them into Canaan (vv. 6–8). He then recounted their disobedience under the Judges (vv. 9–11). (**Jerub-Baal**, v. 11, was another name for “Gideon,” Jud. 6:32. **Barak** in the NIV is lit., in the Heb., “Bedon” [see NIV marg.]. Bedon was either another name for Barak or another judge mentioned only here in the OT.)

Next *Samuel pointed out that the Ammonite menace had prompted them to request a human king*, a request to which **the LORD** had graciously acceded (1 Sam. 12:12–15). Finally, **Samuel** appealed to **the LORD** to **send** a sign from heaven both to authenticate his own warnings of judgment and to cause the people to

⁷ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 442–443). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

revere the God who had called them and who desired to bless and use them (vv. 16–18). The Lord reminded them that *their insistent demand for a king, though He would grant it, was still an evil request because it was premature and wrongly motivated.*

When the people witnessed the display of **thunder and rain**, a phenomenon unheard of in early summer, the time of **wheat harvest** (v. 17), they turned to **Samuel** in earnest penitence and asked the prophet to **pray** that **God** might forgive their hastiness in seeking a **king** (v. 19). In a marvelous manifestation of the grace of God, **Samuel** related to the people that God would bless them in spite of their wrong choice if they would only be steadfast in their obedience from this point on. The past could not be undone but their future was untainted and could be devoted to the Lord (vv.20–22). **And Samuel also, as a true mediator, pledged to keep praying for the people. (Centuries later Jeremiah spoke of Samuel as a great man of prayer, Jer. 15:1.)** Failure to do so, Samuel said, would be **sin against** God! (1 Sam. 12:23) If the people would respond affirmatively, they could expect God's continued blessing on their nation. But if they did not, they could expect the judgment of God on them (vv.24–25).

4. SAUL'S FIRST REBUKE (Chap.13)

1 Samuel 13:1. If the setting of the reaffirmation of Saul's kingship and Samuel's address on that occasion is the first anniversary of his coronation, it may be that the events of this chapter occurred after his second anniversary. This is a possible

interpretation of the textually difficult passage translated by the NIV as **Saul was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel 42 years.**

The Hebrew is literally, “Saul was years old when he began to reign and he reigned two years over Israel.” Obviously a figure has dropped out of the first part of the statement, and the second part cannot mean that he reigned for a total of only two years. Old Testament chronology implies—and Paul in his address at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:21) distinctly teaches—that Saul reigned for 40 years, no doubt a round number but close to the actual figure. There is no reason to think that the number “two” is suspect, however, for all manuscripts and versions retain it. It is only the desire to see 1 Samuel 13:1 as a regular formula for kingship (as in 2 Sam. 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; 22:42; etc.) that leads many scholars to postulate that “40” or some other figure is missing. In the context, however, the historian is not introducing a kingship formula (why do so here, well into Saul’s reign?), but is probably indicating that the Ammonite threat had come in Saul’s first year and now, in his second, the Philistines must be encountered.⁸

A problem remains with the first part of the Hebrew statement, “Saul was years old....” Many scholars, following Origen (ca. A.D. 185–254), postulate “30” (so NIV). Since Jonathan, Saul’s son, was already grown then and served as a military commander, Saul would have been older than 30. It is more likely that the figure to be supplied is “40” though this too is difficult to reconcile with the description (1 Sam. 9:2) that Saul was, at the time of his anointing, “an impressive young

⁸ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 443–445). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

man.” Of course, “young” in this latter passage may not be a good translation for the Hebrew *bāḥûr*, a word that could be rendered “choice.” The best translation of 13:1 would seem to be, “Saul was [40] years old when he began to reign, and he reigned over Israel for two years.” This is further supported by the next verse which begins with a verb in the preterite tense, a construction indicating a close connection with the previous clause. “Saul chose ...” (v. 2) implies that after he had reigned for two years Saul began to select and train a regular army, not the larger militia he had used previously.

1 Samuel 13:2–15. Having learned from his recent experience with the Ammonites, **Saul** set about to create a standing army of **3,000** trained troops—2,000 under his direct control and **1,000** under his son **Jonathan**. These he stationed at **Micmash** and **Gibeah** respectively, in order to avert Philistine attacks. After a preliminary encounter **at Geba**, halfway between Micmash and Gibeah, **the Philistines** (with **3,000 chariots**, **6,000 charioteers** and innumerable foot **soldiers**) pushed the Israelite troops eastward all the way to **Gilgal** (vv. 3–7). This is the first of Israel’s three major battles with the Philistines in Saul’s reign (cf. 17:1–54; 31:1–6). (Though the Heb. reads “30,000 chariots,” this is problematic because this would mean 5 chariots for every charioteer. The Heb. words for “30,000” and for “3,000” look almost alike. The one could easily be mistaken for the other when the text was being copied. Perhaps this suggests that the text of 1 Sam. has suffered a bit in transmission.)

There **Saul** waited for **Samuel** to come and offer sacrifice (13:8) as he had been told to do two years earlier (10:8; see comments on 13:1–2). But on the seventh day, the day **Samuel** was to arrive, **Saul** could wait no longer and unlawfully took on himself the priestly task of **offering** community sacrifice. Then **Samuel**⁹ came and when he knew that **Saul** had taken liberties by offering the sacrifice, he rebuked him with the words, **You acted foolishly**. Because of this deed, Samuel said, Saul’s dynasty would come to an end (**Your kingdom will not endure**), and that of another man would take its place, **a man after God’s own heart**. The severity of God’s judgment on Saul must be seen in the light of God’s holiness. As in the instance of the people’s careless handling of the ark at Beth Shemesh, so Saul had now violated the holy standards of the Lord by disobeying the Law of Moses (Lev. 6:8–13) and the word of His Prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 10:8). That there was the possibility of the eternal duration of Saul’s dynasty is clear from 1 Samuel 13:13, but this in no way teaches that the rise of David’s dynasty was contingent on the fall of Saul’s. All Samuel said was that Saul’s kingship would end and someone else’s would begin.

1 Samuel 13:16–18. Having taken **Geba** from the Philistines (v. 3), **Saul and ... Jonathan**, after the incident with Samuel at Gilgal, were once again attacked by **the Philistines** from **Micmash**. The latter divided themselves into **three** companies of **raiding parties**, one of which **turned** north of Micmash **toward Ophrah**, the second southwest **toward Beth Horon**, and the third east **toward ...**

⁹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 445). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Zeboim (the Jordan Valley). The rest of the overconfident Philistine army remained at Micmash.

1 Samuel 13:19–23. This parenthetical note explains that the Israelites were at a big disadvantage because they were not skilled in the manufacture and use of iron; **the Philistines** had kept them from metallurgy for fear the Israelites would **make swords** and **spears**. **The Philistines** had apparently learned sophisticated metallurgy from the Hittites or other Anatolian peoples with whom they had come in contact as part of the Sea People's migration from the Aegean Sea area to Canaan around 1200 B.C. Israel had to depend on the Philistines for iron weapons and tools (v. 20). In wartime such services were not available, so **only Saul and ... Jonathan had** iron weapons (v. 22).

5. JONATHAN'S PERIL (CHAP. 14)

1 Samuel 14:1–14. With the resumption of the skirmish against the Philistines, **Saul** camped near the capital **Gibeah** (v. 2), with **about 600 men**. But **Jonathan** undertook a secret mission into the enemy camp itself near Micmash. On the way Jonathan and his **armor-bearer** passed between two cliffs named **Bozez** and **Seneh** (v. 4). As they came through the narrow crevice they were spotted by **the Philistines**, who challenged them to a contest (v. 12). Having undertaken his mission with confidence in **the LORD** (vv. 6, 10), **Jonathan** knew that he and his servant would prevail. Together they **killed some 20** of the enemy in a small field.

1 Samuel 14:15–23. Jonathan’s heroic encounter shocked and frightened the Philistines. **Saul’s lookout** could see the enemy in flight. Knowing that this must have come about because of some Israelite involvement, the king checked to determine who among his troops had undertaken this independent action. **Jonathan and his armor-bearer** were missing.

Meanwhile **Ahijah** the priest (cf. v. 3) came bearing **the ark of the Lord** (vv. 18–19). **It was** still housed at Kiriath Jearim (7:1) but as a symbol of the presence of the Lord, it was summoned by Saul to the battle. When **Saul** saw that the Philistines were in total disarray, he ordered Ahijah to **withdraw his hand** (i.e., from the sacred lots, the Urim and Thummim, 14:19; cf. Ex. 28:29–30; 1 Sam. 14:40–42). The will of God was now clear so **Saul**, with Israelite defectors and refugees, achieved a great triumph (vv. 20–23).

1 Samuel 14:24–48. Prior to this **Saul had** commanded all his men to fast until they had defeated the Philistines. As hungry as they were in the battle, they refused to eat anything, even some **honey** in the forest, for **they feared** the curse that attended their vow to fast. **Jonathan had not** known of the vow, **so** when **he** came across the honey he ate it and was immediately refreshed (**his eyes brightened**; cf. v. 29). The rest of Saul’s army was so famished that after the victory they took the Philistine animals, slaughtered them, and ate them without proper draining of **the blood** (vv. 32–33; cf. Lev. 17:10–14). This so alarmed **Saul** that he hastily built **an altar** on which to offer *a propitiatory sacrifice to the Lord* (1 Sam. 14:35).

Saul then determined to pursue and **plunder** the **Philistines** further but could not get an **answer** from the Lord (v. 37). This meant to **Saul** that someone had violated the fast, and by means of the **lot** (i.e., the Urim and Thummin, vv. 41–42; cf. v. 19) he discovered it was his own **son Jonathan**. Only the interposition of **Saul's men** prevented Jonathan's execution (v. 45).

The major campaigns of **Saul** are listed in verses 47–48 and include victories over **Moab**, Ammon, **Edom ... Zobah** (the Arameans), **the Philistines**, and even **the Amalekites**, though his success over the latter was tempered by his lack of complete obedience to God (cf. 15:20–23).

1 Samuel 14:49–52. The royal family consisted of **Saul**; his wife **Ahinoam**; his three **sons ... Jonathan, Ishvi** (not the same as Ish-Bosheth or Esh-Baal; cf. 1 Chron. 10:2 where Ishvi is the same person as Abinadab), **and Malki-Shua**; his daughters **Merab** and **Michal** (David's first wife; cf. 1 Sam. 18:27); and **Abner**, who served as **Saul's commander** of the **army**. Ishvi is probably not the same as Ish-bosheth because Ish-bosheth was apparently **Saul's youngest** son born after **Saul** began to reign. For that reason, he is not listed in 1 Samuel 14:49 but is listed in the total list of **Saul's sons** in 1 Chronicles 8:33 (cf. comments on 2 Sam. 2:8).

According to 1 Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39 **Ner** was **Saul's grandfather** (**Ner's son** was **Kish** and **Kish's son** was **Saul**), but in 1 Samuel 14:50 **Ner** appears to be **Saul's uncle** and **Abner** his cousin. In 1 Chronicles **Abner**, though not mentioned, would be **Saul's uncle**, for **Abner** was **Ner's son** (1 Sam. 14:50). This seeming

contradiction is eliminated by the Hebrew of 1 Samuel 14:50b, which says literally, “Abner son of Ner, uncle of Saul,” with the understanding that the ambiguous “uncle of Saul” refers not to Ner but to Abner. Charted, this relationship was as follows:

B. Saul’s Rejection (Chap. 15)

1 Samuel 15:1–8. Long before the time of Saul, in the days of the wilderness wandering, Israel had been savagely attacked from the rear by **the Amalekites**, a deed the Lord had promised to avenge someday (Ex. 17:8–16). The time had now come, so **Samuel** commanded Saul to **destroy** the Amalekites **totally**, that is, to “place them under the ban (*ḥērem*) of holy war” (1 Sam. 15:3; cf. vv. 8–9, 15, 18, 20–21; Deut. 20:16–18; see comments on Josh. 6:21). However, **Saul** was to spare **the Kenites** since they had **shown kindness** to Israel in the wilderness wandering (1 Sam. 15:6; cf. Ex. 18:9–10 [Jethro was a Kenite, Jud. 1:16]). **Saul** proceeded to do the bidding of Samuel (1 Sam. 15:7–8) but not entirely.

1 Samuel 15:9–35. When **Saul** saw the fatness of the Amalekite **sheep and cattle** and when he considered the enhancement of his own glory and prestige in bringing back **Agag, king of Amalek**, as prisoner, he could not resist returning them as public exhibits of his leadership (v. 9). That this was Saul’s intent is clear from verse 12, which speaks of Saul’s erecting **a monument to his own honor**¹⁰

¹⁰ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 446–447). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

at **Carmel** (in Judah, not the Carmel on the upper Mediterranean coast). When accosted by **Samuel** (v. 14), **Saul** tried to justify his disobedience by claiming that the animals were brought as **sacrifice to the LORD** (vv. 13, 15), and were brought because of the insistence of **the soldiers** (vv. 20–21). But **Samuel** responded with a statement of principle that is timeless in its application: **To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams** (v. 22). In addition to disobeying, Saul was guilty of **rebellion ... arrogance**, and rejecting God's **word** (v. 23).

The result for **Saul** was the Lord's rejection of him **as king** (v. 26), symbolized by Saul's tearing of Samuel's **robe** (vv. 27–28). This repudiation of Saul and selection of a replacement (David) did not mean that God had misled Samuel or even changed **His mind** (v. 29). Rather, God had from the beginning chosen another, one who would be "after His own heart" (cf. 13:14; 16:1). Though *still recognized by the people as their king for about 15 more years*, **Saul** was deposed by **the LORD** right then (cf. 16:14), and **Samuel** executed **Agag** (15:32–33). The finality of it all was not missed by **Samuel** for from that day **Samuel never visited the king again** (v. 35). The estrangement between **Samuel** and **Saul** represents that which now existed in permanent form between the Lord Himself and the disobedient king. Though God had permitted Saul to reign in response to the demand of the people, that very concession now **grieved** the heart of **the LORD** (v. 35).¹¹

¹¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 447). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.