

Week 5 - Saul Anointed King

Introduction

Last week we saw Israel demanding a king, and discussed 3 reasons why that was a sinful demand before God.

1. Expressed trust in a man instead of God
2. Expressed a desire to be like the world instead of set apart to God
3. Would result in corruption and abuse

By way of review, let's read the end of that section together:

READ I Samuel 8:19-22

Now we are going to get into the story of how Saul became king.

Donkeys Sought, A Kingdom Found

The story of Saul's coronation begins in a very mundane way. That isn't accidental.

READ I Samuel 9:1-4

Saul is noted as coming from a well-to-do farming family, he is the best looking guy around, and is tall (head and shoulders above most).

Saul's dad has lost some donkeys and sent Saul and a servant to go looking for them.

The search takes them on a significant trip around the tribe of Benjamin's land, with no luck.

The servant remembers that there is a prophet (called "seer") that lives in the area, and suggests that they find him, bring him a gift, and ask him for help.

Some women at the local well tell them that the prophet will be at a big meal they are having. That's where they find the prophet, who turns out to be Samuel.

Samuel Knew He Was Coming

READ I Samuel 9:15-21

God had told Samuel the new king would be coming to him on this day. When he sees Saul, God confirms that he is the one.

Samuel speaks to him according to what God has shown him (he will be king), not according to who Saul is right then. Saul is uncomfortable with it, and in fact really never is.

Samuel invites Saul and his servant into the party, and treats him very well. They spend the night.

Samuel Gives His Prophecy

The next morning as they are leaving, Samuel prophesies what God had shown him.

READ I Samuel 9:27-10:9

It's important to note that Samuel gives him the prophecy in private - he is not yet king. But he is to go home, see the signs fulfilled, and wait 7 days for Samuel to come make it official.

NOTE: in verse 16, Saul does not tell anyone what Samuel had told him about becoming the king. This is another place where we can see a subtle character flaw in Saul that grows with time.

God Sovereignly Chooses, Despite Us

It's clear that God is orchestrating events here in order to bring Saul into kingship. Saul just thought he was doing a boring task looking for some lost donkeys. It's doubtful he was enjoying his day. Yet, every step was being planned by God down to the small details.

This is what it looks like to be called by God. Everyone sees the moment when you get called out by the prophet, but no one sees all that time you spent wandering the desert looking for lost donkeys.

What if Saul had quit early?

Don't despise the small jobs, because you actually don't know what the small jobs are and what the big jobs are when you are doing them.

Saul Reluctantly Anointed

Samuel's process for selecting the new king is important.

Samuel comes to town. He calls everyone out to anoint the new king.

They cast lots, and the tribe of Benjamin is chosen and separate out from the crowd

They cast lots again, and the clan of Matrites is chosen out of Benjamin

They cast lots again, and Saul is chosen out of the Matrites clan

They look for Saul, and they can't find him. They begin to pray, thinking maybe they got it wrong and the king should be someone else. God speaks to them (presumably to one of the prophets) and tells them that Saul is hiding in the baggage. Someone has to go grab him and drag him out to be selected.

READ I Samuel 10:23-27

The End of an Era

In chapter 11, the Ammonites surround the small town of Gilead and tell them they can all be killed, or the men can surrender and have their eyes gouged out.

Naturally, they don't find either option appealing and call for help.

*Saul is overwhelmed by the Spirit again and musters a large army (by threatening to kill their oxen...)
The Ammonites are totally defeated.*

**Those that were doubting Saul's capabilities are silenced, and Saul is reaffirmed as king.
Samuel's task of ushering in a new king is now complete.**

Samuel gathers the people to bring against them a legal charge. This is the ancient near east version of a lawsuit.

First, he establishes that his job is done. Second, he asks them to bring any charge against him. Has he treated them well? Has he abused them or stolen from them? They say no.

He says that God is witness to this, and they agree.

Samuel then lists all of the faithfulness of God towards them, despite their lack of faithfulness to God, in recent history. This concludes with verse the recent trouble with the Ammonites.

He then accuses them again of unfaithfulness to God in the demand for a king, but tells them that despite that, God will bless them if they are faithful, and their king is faithful.

Samuel is trying to bring the people to repentance over this. He knows that their king will not save them, only righteousness.

As evidence that what he is saying is true, he performs a miracle.

READ I Samuel 12:16-19

Not only would rain be nearly impossible in May-June in Palestine, but a thunderstorm during wheat harvest would have been a bad sign because it would damage the crops.

The people repent of their sin of wanting a king, and Samuel responds with a blessing.

READ I Samuel 12:20-25

Conclusion

1- God is clearly sovereign in this story, yet He also manages to fold into His sovereign will our mistakes and our sin against Him. It's not that our sin is inconsequential, it's that God's will is always bigger. There is enormous mystery here, but we should take comfort in it nonetheless.

2- Samuel anoints Saul in a way that makes it obvious that God is selecting him. It's undeniable. Yet, God's selection of Saul is both for blessing and judgement. Saul will protect them militarily, but be a spiritual curse on the people and himself.

I think this gives us a good model for voting in the US. We cast our lots, God chooses whom He chooses. Every leader we elect from local government to federal, will be chosen by God. Sometimes it will be for our blessing, other times for our judgement. This is how it will be until we are no longer ruled by men, but by king Jesus Himself.

In the meantime, we rest in the sovereignty of God, while we muck about here "looking for our lost donkeys".