Lesson 65 – The First King of Israel

based on 1 Samuel 8 to 12.

The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God. The work of Moses, of the seventy elders, of the rulers and judges, was simply to enforce the laws that God had given; they had no authority to legislate for the nation. This was, and continued to be, the condition of Israel's existence as a nation. From age to age men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people and to direct in the enforcement of the laws.

1) What happened as Samuel aged?
   1 Samuel 8:1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his _____ judges over Israel.
2) Was that a good thing?
   1 Samuel 8:3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after _____, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.
3) What did the people ask for?
   1 Samuel 8:4-5 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a _____ to judge us like all the nations.

The Lord foresaw that Israel would desire a king, but He did not consent to a change in the principles upon which the state was founded. The king was to be the vicegerent of the Most High. God was to be recognized as the Head of the nation, and His law was to be enforced as the supreme law of the land.

When the Israelites first settled in Canaan they acknowledged the principles of the theocracy, and the nation prospered under the rule of Joshua. But increase of population and intercourse with other nations brought a change. The people adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbors and thus sacrificed to a great degree their own peculiar, holy character. Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honor of being His chosen people. Attracted by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity.

4) Samuel took their request to the LORD, what did God respond?
   1 Samuel 8:7-8 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected _____, but they have rejected _____, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have _____ me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

Since the days of Joshua, the government had never been conducted with so great wisdom and success as under Samuel's administration. Divinely invested with the threefold office of judge, prophet, and priest, he had labored with untiring and disinterested zeal for the welfare of his people, and the nation had prospered under his wise control. Order had been restored, and godliness promoted, and the spirit of discontent was checked for the time. But with advancing years the prophet was forced to share with others the cares of government, and he appointed his two sons to act as his assistants.

5) What is a nation's strength?
   Deuteronomy 4:6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your _____ in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

By departing from God's law, the Hebrews had failed to become the people that God desired to make them, and then all the evils which were the result of their own sin and folly they charged upon the government of God. So completely had they become blinded by sin.

6) What did Hosea say about the request for a king?
   Hosea 13:11 I gave thee a king in mine _____, and took him away in my wrath.

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The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king; but it does not follow that this form of government was best for them or according to His will. He permitted the people to follow their own choice, because they refused to be guided by His counsel.

When men choose to have their own way, without seeking counsel from God, or in opposition to His revealed will, He often grants their desires, in order that, through the bitter experience that follows, they may be led to realize their folly and to repent of their sin. Human pride and wisdom will prove a dangerous guide. That which the heart desires contrary to the will of God will in the end be found a curse rather than a blessing.

When a man was placed upon the throne, it would tend to turn the minds of the people from God. They would trust more to human strength, and less to divine power, and the errors of their king would lead them into sin and separate the nation from God.

7) Under God's counsel, what did Samuel warn the people?
1 Samuel 8:11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will _____ your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.
1 Samuel 8:12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to _____ his harvest, and to make his instruments of _____, and instruments of his chariots.
1 Samuel 8:13-15 And he will _____ your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will _____ your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will _____ the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.
1 Samuel 8:16-18 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your _____ young men, and your asses, and put them to _____ work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall _____ out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.
8) …And the people said?
1 Samuel 8:19-20 Nevertheless the people _____ to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be _____ all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

"Like all the nations." The Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen! And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God. As they depart from the Lord, they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Christians are constantly seeking to imitate the practices of those who worship the god of this world.

9) What should we never forget?
1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a _____ generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should _____ _____ the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:
10) What did God tell Samuel?
1 Samuel 8:22 And the LORD said to Samuel, _____ unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

Though a monarchical form of government for Israel had been foretold in prophecy, God had reserved to Himself the right to choose their king. The Hebrews so far respected the authority of God as to leave the selection entirely to Him. The choice fell upon Saul, a son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin.

11) How does the Bible describe him?
1 Samuel 9:2 … a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a _____ person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

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The personal qualities of the future monarch were such as to gratify that pride of heart which prompted the desire for a king. Of noble and dignified bearing, in the prime of life, comely and tall, he appeared like one born to command. Yet with these external attractions, Saul was destitute of those higher qualities that constitute true wisdom. He had not in youth learned to control his rash, impetuous passions; he had never felt the renewing power of divine grace.

Saul was the son of a powerful and wealthy chief, yet in accordance with the simplicity of the times he was engaged with his father in the humble duties of a husbandman. Some of his father's animals having strayed upon the mountains, Saul went with a servant to seek for them. For three days they searched in vain, when, as they were not far from Ramah, the home of Samuel.

12) What did Saul's servant suggest?
1 Samuel 9:6 And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a _____ of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

He proposed that they go to Samuel to inquire about the location of the lost animals.

13) What did God tell Samuel before they arrived?
1 Samuel 9:15-16 Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of _____, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have _____ upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

At the gate of the city Saul was met by the prophet himself. God had revealed to Samuel that at that time the chosen king of Israel would present himself before him.

14) What did God tell Samuel when he saw him?
1 Samuel 9:17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall _____ over my people.
15) What did he invite Saul to do?
1 Samuel 9:22-23 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the _____ place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the _____ which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

Saul was given a place of honor not quite knowing what was about to happen.

16) What did Samuel do shortly thereafter in the presence of the people of town?
1 Samuel 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of _____, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath _____ thee to be captain over his inheritance?

As evidence that this was done by divine authority, he foretold the incidents that would occur on the homeward journey and assured Saul that he would be qualified by the Spirit of God for the station awaiting him.

17) What would happen?
1 Samuel 10:6-7 **…**And the _____ of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion _____ thee; for God is with thee.

As Saul approached a group of prophets, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him also, and he joined in their song of praise, and prophesied with them. He spoke with so great fluency and wisdom, and joined so earnestly in the service, that those who had known him exclaimed in astonishment, ***"What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"***

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As Saul united with the prophets in their worship, a great change was wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. The light of divine purity and holiness shone in upon the darkness of the natural heart. He saw himself as he was before God. He saw the beauty of holiness. He was now called to begin the warfare against sin and Satan, and he was made to feel that in this conflict his strength must come wholly from God. The plan of salvation, which had before seemed dim and uncertain, was opened to his understanding. The Lord endowed him with courage and wisdom for his high station. He revealed to him the Source of strength and grace and enlightened his understanding as to the divine claims and his own duty.

18) After his anointing, what did Samuel do?
1 Samuel 10:25 Then Samuel told the people the _____ of the kingdom, 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.

Samuel then set before the people ***"the manner of the kingdom,"*** stating the principles upon which the monarchial government was based, and by which it should be controlled. The king was not to be an absolute monarch but was to hold his power in subjection to the will of the Most High.

19) Was Saul's King role accepted by all?
1 Samuel 10:27 But the children of _____ said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

While the people in general were ready to acknowledge Saul as their king, there was a large party in opposition. For a monarch to be chosen from Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and that to the neglect of both Judah and Ephraim, the largest and most powerful, was a slight which they could not brook. They refused to profess allegiance to Saul or to bring him the customary presents. Those who had been most urgent in their demand for a king were the very ones that refused to accept with gratitude the man of God's appointment.

20) What brought everyone around?
1 Samuel 11:1-2 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a _____ with us, and we will serve thee. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right _____, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.
21) What did Saul do?
1 Samuel 11:4-5 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in _____, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the _____ of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

Three hundred and thirty thousand men gathered on the plain of Bezek, under the command of Saul. Messengers were immediately sent to the besieged city with the assurance that they might expect help on the morrow, the very day on which they were to submit to the Ammonites.

22) What did Saul do?
1 Samuel 11:11 And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and _____ the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

The promptness and bravery of Saul, as well as the generalship shown in the successful conduct of so large a force, were qualities which the people of Israel had desired in a monarch, that they might be able to cope with other nations. They now greeted him as their king, attributing the honor of the victory to human agencies and forgetting that without God's special blessing all their efforts would have been in vain.

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23) What warnings did Samuel give as he handed the keys of power to the king?

1 Samuel 12:13-14 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and _____ his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

1 Samuel 12:15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but _____ against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Samuel did not leave the people in a state of discouragement, for this would have prevented all effort for a better life. Satan would lead them to look upon God as severe and unforgiving, and they would thus be exposed to manifold temptations. God is merciful and forgiving, ever desiring to show favor to His people when they will obey His voice.

Samuel said nothing of the slight which had been put upon himself; he uttered no reproach for the ingratitude with which Israel had repaid his lifelong devotion; but he assured them of his unceasing interest for them.

24) What did he tell Israel (and you)?

1 Samuel 12:23-24 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in _____ to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in _____ with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

Can you see that whatever your situation, we need to be led by God?

Would you like live under God's protection?

When is it time to humble yourself before the LORD?

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