

**THE MORNING OF THE MONARCHY
STUDIES IN FIRST SAMUEL
LESSON 5**

THE ANOINTING AND CORONATION OF THE FIRST KING

1 Samuel 10-12

I. THE ANOINTING OF SAUL FOR THE MONARCHY 10:1

A. The Anointing with Oil

1 Samuel 10:1 speaks literally of “the flask of oil,” because it was that same holy oil with which the priests were anointed (Ex. 29:7). Here is the beginning of the ritual of anointing a man to be king. It afterwards became one of the most important rituals in Israelite thought. Before Samuel, the priests had been consecrated by the rite of anointing. Saul would have well understood the significance of the parallel: kingship was not so much a secular as a sacred office.

Samuel made it clear to Saul that the One anointing him was God Himself. A similar custom in Egyptian culture may shed some light on the meaning of the anointing. They anointed vassal kings; i.e., minor kings who owed allegiance to the great king of Egypt. Although we do not know if Samuel knew of this custom, it may be that it was a way of reminding Saul (and all future kings) that the king of Israel was not a king in his own right but was the vassal of Yahweh, Who was envisaged as the true king of Israel. The human king stood before the people only as God's representative. In fact, from this time on it is the king and not the priest who is especially called "Messiah," Jehovah's anointed, because he represented the authority and power of God.

B. The Kiss of Allegiance

Samuel kissed Saul as a token of homage and a symbol of allegiance (see Ps. 2:12).

II. THE AFFIRMATION TO SAUL OF THE MONARCHY 10:2-7

A. The Signs Authenticating Samuel's Action (2-7)

Samuel gave Saul three prophecies with such a building of meticulous detail that they could not have been of coincidence, guesswork or merely of man.

1. The Message at Rachel's Tomb (2)

Note the place, time, number and sex of the persons, and specific quote of his father's word relevant to Saul. One implication of the message is that God would take care of Saul's work as Saul took care of God's work.

2. The Gift of Bread at the Oak of Tabor (3-4)

Again the details are unmistakable. He was instructed to accept the bread as if he, who had received an anointing (up to this time given only to the priests), was taking only his due as the Lord's anointed. Here was a token that the Lord Himself would sustain him if he continued in His way.

3. The Prophecy at the Philistine Garrison (5-6)

Verse five and 1 Samuel 13:3 and 14:4 show that most of the tribe of Benjamin was still subject to the Philistines. Later we learn that they were also disarmed (13:19). As long as the tribute was paid, its internal administration probably was not interfered with.

Even the four musical instruments used were particularly mentioned. There was a harp without a third side, of ten strings, played by the hand and of very deep tone; a tambourine; a pipe or flute or a reed instrument like the clarinet; and the harp of eight or nine strings, played by a small piece of bone or ivory instead of the tips of the fingers. These four instruments are mentioned in the account of the banquets of drunken Israelites (Isa. 5:12).

B. The Spirit's Authentication of Saul (6-7)

The Spirit of God was to turn Saul into a man with ecstatic, prophetic ability. At each of the occasions he was to do whatever was appropriate to the situation.

III. THE TEST OF SAUL'S FITNESS FOR THE MONARCHY 10:8

Some have seen here an unfulfilled prophecy or a mistake of the writer. There are three possible explanations:

A. A Direction

Samuel was directing Saul to go at once to Gilgal. It is doubtful that the writer would have recorded such a direction or prophecy without explanation, since the events do not turn out this way.

B. A Meeting

He could have been referring to the first meeting at Gilgal (1 Sam. 11:14-15) for the coronation. But he himself went with the people, and Saul had no occasion to wait for his arrival.

C. A Test

It could have been a command testing Saul at the very beginning of the monarchy to enforce the truth that obedience was the one condition to God's blessing. The outcome is recorded in 13:8-14. This second gathering is the one intended by Samuel. Saul failed the test.

IV. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECIES OF SAUL FOR THE MONARCHY 10:9-13

A. The Divine Endowment (9)

God gave him a changed heart.

Henceforward he was a new man, filled with new hopes and aims, rising to meet the lot that awaited him; as it is said very forcibly in the Hebrew text: "it was so that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God turned to him another heart," i.e., changed him and gave him another heart. He was the careless herdsman, the petty, self-interested farmer no longer; he had become a patriot, a statesman, a hero.

-- Deane and Kirk, Studies in the First Book of Samuel

B. The Divine Fulfillment (10-13)

Each prediction came true, even to the prophesying. When Saul met the company of prophets and saw their enthusiasm and heard their stirring music, the Spirit of God came upon him and he joined in their ecstatic songs and praises. His companions were astounded, for Saul was definitely not a prophet.

But one inhabitant, wiser than the rest, saw deeper into the matter. "Ye are surprised," said he, "that the son of Kish should be thus endowed. But what has parentage to do with prophetic gifts? Who is the father of the other scholars? Is prophecy an hereditary gift? If they received their ability from God, why may it not be so also with Saul?" Thus the spiritual transformation which the Holy Spirit was making in Saul's heart was manifested openly to all the world. This remarkable change was long remembered, and in connection with a similar experience in very different circumstances, occasioned the use of the common proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" -- Deane and Kirk

C. The Silence of Saul (14-16)

Samuel undoubtedly told Saul many more things about the monarchy, the meeting at Gilgal and the need for discretion. He did not tell even his closest relatives.

V. SAUL'S SELECTION TO THE MONARCHY 10:17-27

A. The Reminder of their Rejection of the Theocracy (17-19)

Samuel assembled the leadership and reminded them of all that the Lord had done for them, how He had saved them from all that oppressed them. He again declared that deliverance was always conditioned by their obedience to God's requirements and acknowledgment of dependence upon Him. And now they wished to have a king who would lead and deliver them without any such condition. They wanted a monarch and a military organization like the nations around them. They had had time to reconsider their former decision, and Samuel gave them an opportunity to change their minds. They were bent on innovation, on establishing a monarchy. And since this was their desire, God was willing to grant it, but the selection of the king must be left in His hands.

B. The Method of the Election (20-21)

The selection may have been made by the Urim and the Thummim (see Ex. 28:30). Others believe that it was done by the casting of lots. Names would be written on tablets or some other substance, placed in a basin or urn and shaken until all but one fell out;

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the one left in was considered as declaring the Divine choice. By this means the scapegoat was chosen, the land of Canaan was distributed, the sin of Achan was detected, and, very remarkably, in the New Testament, Matthias was elected an apostle. To us, this seems a totally random method, by no means calculated to discover the best man for the job. Throughout the Old Testament, however, it is recognized that through the drawing of lots, human choice is excluded, and so God is freely permitted to choose and to overrule. In the words of Samuel in 10:24, accordingly, God was seen to choose Saul by this mechanism, and the people in general, with only a few exceptions, gladly assented to the choice. --Payne, I and II Samuel

C. The Results of the Selection (21-24)

1. The Tribe of Benjamin

Jacob had predicted that the king would come through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). God seems to make an exception here to teach the people a lesson until David is old enough to take the throne.

Benjamin had always been the most warlike of the tribes. It had shown its courage and endurance under the crushing treatment of its brothers in the time of the Judges; and later we read of its warriors being beyond all others skilled in the use of the sling and the bow, many of them being as efficient with the left hand as with the right.

2. The Matrite Family and Saul (21-24)

Saul hid behind the baggage. The people, collected from all Israel, would come with wagons and provisions, and such arms as they could find to keep away the Philistines who had interrupted such a meeting before (7:7). They probably arranged their baggage as to form a place of defense in case of attack.

D. The Presentation of Saul (24)

Saul was a real hunk, truly a king after man's own heart.

E. The Refusal by Some (26-27)

VI. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY 10:25

From the start, the monarchy was constitutional: the kings would have both "rights and duties." The document mentioned here was a sort of bill of rights for the people, held in the very safekeeping of a sanctuary. (This roll was placed among the national archives in the sanctuary, by the side of the Mosaic Law which was kept there (Dt. 31:26; Josephus, "Antiq." vi.4,6).) Here was an important brake upon the development of absolute power. Such a document (probably a copy of Dt. 17:14-20) must have been a legal one, not a mere description of the ways in which kings were prone to act.

By this constitution and covenant Samuel bound the monarchy to the theocracy. God was still king. Israel's ruler was a vassal king ruling within the covenant and will of Jehovah. It was a monarchy within a theocracy.

VII. THE FIRST VICTORY OF THE NEW MONARCHY 11:1-11

A. The Enemy

The Ammonites were a small state in southern Transjordan who had once been defeated by Jephthah (Judges chapters 11-12). If the Israelite city of Jabesh-gilead had fallen to them, Israel could well have lost the whole of her land east of the River Jordan.

B. The Making of a Leader (4-7)

Saul was told the problem and, by the Spirit, knew righteous indignation.

C. The Making of an Army (8-9)

1. The Graphic Call to Arms

Saul called the people by a graphic object lesson. Bezek was in the tribe of Issachar, about twenty miles from Jabesh-gilead, and must be distinguished from that mentioned in Judges 1:3-4, which was in Judah and too far from this action.

2. The Commands of the New Monarch

Saul commanded obedience. Any leader must have a sense of authority to which others respond. He commanded unity. Without unity, the Israelite tribes had been weak and at the mercy of other

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nations, but numerically the Israelites could master any local enemy, even the Philistines, if only they were united. Saul provided the needed military leadership, taking command in the situation of battle. The result was a swift and total victory.

D. The Forgiving of the Rebels (12-13)

An important detail is Saul's generous treatment of his earlier critics (verse 13; see 10:27), probably men who felt that they should have been chosen.

Too many rulers in history have been merciless and vindictive towards opponents. But forgiveness is God's way, as the Lord's Prayer constantly reminds us -- and it may also be the greater wisdom. The best way of eliminating enemies is to turn them into allies. -- Payne

Here is Saul at his best. We see him with the qualities of self-control, promptitude, courage, capacity, ascription of praise to God and forgiveness to men. What a shame that he never kept them.

E. The Coronation (14-15)

Saul has now been anointed privately, and selected by God at Mizpah. Now he is crowned in a formal coronation ceremony by the unanimous will of the people.

VIII. SAMUEL, THE LAST JUDGE BEFORE THE MONARCHY 12:1-11

Samuel now spells out in more detail the relation of the monarchy to the theocracy. In spite of Israel's rejection of God's immediate rule, there was still a covenant relationship between them.

A. Samuel's Coronation Speech

1. God had consistently helped Israel (7).

This fact ought to produce gratitude for the past and faith for the future.

2. God had made Himself responsible for providing leadership.

The great national leaders of the past, from Moses to the judges, had all been chosen by God just when they were needed.

3. Israel had all too often forgotten and neglected God, going into idolatry (10).

Here lay the cause of all her past problems for God invariably punished disobedience on a national scale.

"Your leader": literally, "walking in front of you," perhaps a military metaphor, but more probably one linked to the idea of the king as shepherd of his people. For this picture applied to Joshua, see Numbers 27:17. Kings in the ancient world were often described as "shepherds." An inscription praising the Assyrian king Adad-nirari (about 800 B.C.) runs: "He whose shepherding they made (to be) as good for the people of Assyria as (is) the plant of life and whose throne they founded securely." Ezekiel condemns Israel's rulers as bad shepherds, and promises a New David, a true shepherd (see Ezek. 34, and especially verse 23). The shepherd metaphor is used of Jesus in the New Testament (see John 10:1ff).

-- The Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel

B. God's Amen (17-18)

A sign of thunder and rain was given, since such weather conditions were almost unheard of at the time of the wheat harvest in Palestine.

C. The People's Hope (19-25)

1. Israel not only had kings now but also prophets (23).

They would do two things: they would intercede with God for their people, and they would clearly reveal God's will.

2. However fallible and forgetful Israel might be, God could never ruin His own reputation by abandoning them (22).

"Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king shall be swept away." -- I Samuel 12:24-25

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

READ LESSON 5.

1. What was the significance of each "sign" that Samuel gave Saul?
2. In Samuel's address to Israel, what sin does he remind them of?
3. How did the monarchy and the theocracy fit together?
4. Share with the group your observations and feelings about Saul and the school of the prophets. Have you ever had an ecstatic religious experience?
5. Why will God not forsake Israel completely?

READ I SAMUEL 13-15.

6. How old was Saul when he began and ended his reign?
7. What was the cause of Saul's rejection?
8. (a) Why was what Saul did wrong?
(b) What three excuses did he give?
9. What were the weapons of the Israelites?
10. What verse best expresses Jonathan's faith?
11. (a) Summarize the story of Saul's anger at Jonathan.
(b) How does this story illustrate Saul's unfitness to be king?
12. State three things Saul did wrong in Chapter 15.
13. Why did Samuel not pardon Saul when he asked him to? (See 25-30)
14. Memorize 15:22 and 15:29.