

## Saul Chosen and Anointed King

There is really no indication of what led them to make this request except for the one single statement: "like the rest of the nations."

*Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and 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." 1 Sam 8:4-5*

Thus this was peer pressure. The desire to be like the rest of the nations. They never really had the faith to understand that God was the source of their protection and guidance. They use the age of Samuel and the wickedness of his sons as an excuse. What do these two things have to do with God's providential care? Like so many, they have used the weakness of other people to justify turning against God.

Samuel is shocked! He spends the night pondering and considering the implications of what has been done and probably taking it very personally. God appears to him and comforts him by telling Samuel that the people have not in fact rejected him, but they had rejected God.

*But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And 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. 1Sam 8:6-7*

This was a continuation of the same unfaithfulness that God had tolerated since the very beginning of Israel's history. Although God is angry and hurt over this rejection, He still wants Israel to be warned of the terrible consequences of this act.

*According 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. 9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them." 1 Sam 8:8-9*

The king they will choose will not be as fair or generous as God has been with them. God warns of taxation and servitude.

### **This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: 1Sam 8:10-18**

- 1 Take your sons and appoint them for his chariots horsemen, run before his chariots.
- 2 Appoint captains over his thousands and 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.
- 3 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.
- 4 Take the best of your fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his servants.
- 5 Take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants.
- 6 Take your male servants, female servants, finest young men, & donkeys, & put them to his work.
- 7 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.

**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."**

Even with this stern warning, the people once again can't see far enough ahead to be concerned about such things. Once again, the peer pressure of their day and desire to be like all the other nations takes precedence in their minds over the power God Himself could wield to help them.

*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." 1Sam. 8:19-20*

In the end, Samuel returns to God with their message of unfaithfulness and rebellion. God then gives them a king, but not in joy and happiness but in anger and wrath.

*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." 1 Sam 8:21-22*

*9 "O Israel, you are destroyed, But your help is from Me. 10 I will be your King; Where is any other, That he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and*

princes'? 11 I gave you a king in My anger, And took him away in My wrath. Hos 13:9-11

Thus the chapter closes without any conclusion. God only told Samuel to make them a king. But whether Samuel told Israel of this, or simply dismissed them is not stated. Samuel knows that God has allowed their desire to be fulfilled, but not how it will be done.

The only thing revealed that explains Samuel's involvement in this process is found a day before Samuel anoints Saul.

*Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me."*

We see several interesting points in this scripture. First, God expressly stated that it was He who sent Saul from the land of Benjamin. Second, this is the result of the cry that had come up from the people of Israel. Sometimes God will grant what his people pray for and request even if it is not in their best interests.

## **I Will Send you a Man**

This is one of the most extraordinary ways that God has sent a man. Instead of directly revealing to Saul that God wanted him to go to the city where Samuel would be, a series of seemingly unrelated things actually brought Saul there. It all begins with Saul's father losing his donkeys and sending out Saul to find them.

Of all the tribes of Israel, the least likely tribe to contain the next king was Benjamin. At the end of Judges, all but a handful of the tribe of Benjamin was destroyed.

*46 So all who fell that day of Benjamin were 25,000 men who drew the sword, all of them men of valor. 47 But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon and remained at the rock of Rimmon four months. ... 21:12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. ... 21:16 Then the elders of the congregation said, "What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?" 20 And they commanded the people of Benjamin, saying, "Go and lie in ambush in the vineyards 21 and watch. If the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and snatch each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. Judg 20:46-47; 21:12, 16, 20-21*

Yet from these 600 men, God chose the king requested by Israel. This man from Benjamin is identified by the wealth and might of his father and the quality of his stature and looks.

*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. 1Sam 9:1-2*

This seems to be an important fact since both the selection of David and the visage of Jesus were specified as not being important to their selection.

*But the Lord said to Samuel, "**Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature,** because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1Sam 16:7*

*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. **He has no form or comeliness;** And when we see Him, There is **no beauty that we should desire Him.** Isa 53:2*

The first king of Israel had physical power and beauty, and it all ended with sorrow. We must be careful that we do not allow such things to influence us either.

Saul's call and God's sending a man all began with the donkeys of Kish wandering away from home. Whether God caused them to wander or used this as the means by which He would lead Saul to where He wanted him to be is not revealed. But the fact that they were gone is what led Saul to begin this journey.

*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." 1Sam 9:3*

Our difficulty here is that God did not reveal where Saul's home was nor do we know where the land of Zuph is located. So the time he was gone and the distance he covered is impossible to find.

We know he was gone long enough that Kish had begun to worry about the loss of his son.

*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." 1 Sam 9:5*

The servant has knowledge that Samuel often frequented this city and at this time, they used the knowledge of the prophet to seek for things like the loss of donkeys.

*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." 1Sam 9:6*

After they enter the city, in a way very similar to the meeting of the Philip and the eunuch, they meet at exactly the time that one is coming to find him and the other is going to the place where God had revealed Samuel would meet the next king of Israel.

*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. 1 Sam 9:14*

While Samuel was expecting Saul, Saul had no idea what was transpiring. As soon as they meet, again just like Philip, God told Samuel that this was the man he was to work with and all the earlier preparations would be fulfilled.

*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?" 1Sam 9:17-18*

While Saul was seeking the prophet to find the donkeys, Samuel had prepared for Saul's arrival. **NOTE:** Saul did not even have the opportunity to ask about the donkeys, Samuel already knew.

*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?" 1Sam 9:19-20*

Saul is amazed and perplexed at this greeting. He has no idea how he could be the one "on whom is all the desire of Israel." Saul speaks the truth in humility when he described his father's house:

*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?" 1Sam 9:21*

But this greeting is only the first of several amazing things that occurred to Saul that day. First he is seated in the place of honor. Second, the food brought was specially prepared for him even though there was no way Samuel could have known he was coming.

*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. 1Sam 9:22-24*

It is not until the next morning that Samuel revealed only to Saul what God had determined.

*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." 1Sam 9:27*

*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? 1Sam 10:1-2*

Although this is the noun form, it is the term used for the Messiah.

***mashiach*** "anointed one; Messiah." Of the 39 occurrences of ***mashiach***, none occurs in the wisdom literature. They are scattered throughout the rest of biblical literary types and periods. First, ***mashiach*** refers to one who is anointed with oil, symbolizing the reception of the Holy Spirit, enabling him to do an assigned task. Kings 1 Sam 24:6, high priests, and some prophets 1 Kings 19:16 were so anointed: "If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people..." Lev 4:3 — Second, the word is sometimes transliterated "Messiah." After the promise to David 2 Sam 7:13 ***mashiach*** refers immediately to the Davidic dynasty, but ultimately it points to the "Messiah," Jesus the Christ: (Vines 4889)

Saul is the first king and thus received the anointing just as the High Priests and many of the

Once again, God's providence is revealed since everything that would occur to Saul that day was already known and thus prophesied(1 Sam 10:2-8).

- 1 When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb
- 2 they will say to you, 'The donkeys have been found, now your father is worrying about you.
- 3 you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor.
- 4 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.
5. they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall receive from their hands.
- 6 After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is and 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.
- 7 Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.
- 8 And let it be, when these signs come to you, that you do as the occasion demands; for God is with you.

After all these things, Saul's free will is to be exercised. The importance of this command will be seen later when it is given again and after ignoring it, Saul lost the right to be king.

*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." 1 Sam 10:8*

Later, when Saul met his uncle, he kept all these things to himself.

*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. 1 Sam 10:14-16*

## **Saul Proclaimed King**

The day Samuel had told Saul of arrived, and the events transpired that made him king. It began with all the people being invited to this assembly.

Samuel made it very clear that this was not something God had planned but was the result of their rebellion.

*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." 1 Sam 10:17-19*

The process is done in such a way that no one could claim God had not done the choosing. When they can't find Saul, God revealed the This location where he was hiding.

*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." 1 Sam 10:20-22*

After they find Saul and bring him before the people, his stature moves them to proclaim him king.

*423 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!" 1 Sam 10:23-24*

The chapter closes with the mixed response from the people.

*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. 1 Sam 10:26-27*

## **Saul's First Battle**

The brutality of the age is seen in the events that led up to Saul's first opportunity to show the value of Israel having a king. The king of Ammon comes up against the city of Jabesh Gilead. While the city is willing to surrender and become servants, Nahash puts a terrible condition on their doing so.

*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." 1 Sam 11:2*

The elders ask for seven days to see if someone will come and help them. Nahash either doesn't know about Saul, or is so confident that he doesn't care since he gives them this time.

*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." 1 Sam 11:3*

When Saul hears of this he musters Israel in a way reminiscent of the Levite in Judges. He cuts up a yoke of oxen, sent the pieces to all in Israel and threatened to do the same to their oxen if they do not come.

*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." 1 Sam 11:7*

The fear of the LORD comes upon all and soon 300,000 men from Israel and 30,000 from Judah have arrived and a message is sent to Jabesh promising deliverance.

*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.'" 1 Sam 11:8-9*

Israel is victorious and the people of Ammon are routed. Samuel then calls Israel to Gilgal to "renew" the Kingdom. We don't know anymore about this than can be gleaned from the account in the next chapter.

*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. 1Sam. 11:14-15*

## **Renewing the Kingdom**

By our standards, what occurs in this chapter would not be called a renewal, yet that is exactly how Samuel termed it. So we will look at these events as they are placed under this heading.

Samuel first proclaims his own innocence. He gives no reason for beginning this way, but it appears he is seeking to prove to them that they could not use him as an excuse for what they had done. No one could bring any accusation against him.

*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." 1 Sam 12:3-5*

Samuel then gives a brief overview of the history of Israel beginning with Jacob going into Egypt and the oppression they had heaped upon Israel. He reminds them that God delivered them through the hands of Moses and Aaron. Skipping over Joshua and the conquest he moved to the time when Israel rejected God for idols and sent them judges.

Yet they in spite of all the times God had delivered them, they had rejected him in favor of a human king.

*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. 1Sam 12:12-15*

Through Samuel, God wanted it clearly understood that nothing had changed. If they continued to be rebellious, they would have the same trials and troubles they had before. If they were faithful, then they would have the same success as they had before. The king would gain them nothing in the sight of the Lord. It was always their faithfulness/unfaithfulness that led to all their troubles, not the lack of a king.

To prove his point, he calls upon God to do a mighty work that would not only prove God was behind these words but also punish them for their sins by compromising their harvest.

*"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." 1Sam. 12:16-19*

The purpose for this thunder and rain is for them to see that their wickedness was great in asking for a king. Even though God had granted their request, it was a terrible flaw in their character that they had so asked. The people were so moved by this sight that they repented and pleaded with Samuel to pray for them.

Samuel gives a dual answer. First, God was not casting them off for this sin. He will forgive them, but allow them to reap the terrible consequences of this sin. Second, Samuel would never stop praying for them as it would be a sin in the eyes of the Lord for him to do so.

*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." 1 Sam 12:22-25*

## **Saul Fails his First Test**

Two years came and went and the first real crisis occurred where Saul and the peoples faith in God was sorely tested. Jonathan destroys a garrison of the Philistines and the Philistines determine to retaliate with a massive army. When the children of Israel see the dire strait they are now in most of them simply bolt to the nearest cave, thicket, rock or pit

*Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. 7 And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. 1Sam. 13:5-7*

Saul goes to Gilgal to wait for Samuel in exactly the manner that Samuel had told him to do the previous time.

*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." 1 Sam 10:8*

*As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. 8 Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 1Sam 13:7-8*

At this point, one can understand the fear and concern on the part of Saul. The Philistines have a mighty army which could come upon him at any time, the people are becoming increasingly distressed and more and more are leaving as the days pass, and still Samuel does not come. Saul allows earthly fears and concerns to sway him into disobeying a plain commandment of God.

With all these warnings, with all the signs God has given to Saul of His providential care and with the Spirit being mighty upon him, Saul failed at what Abraham had succeeded. God made him wait for Samuel up to the very last moment(13:5-8). But in the end something led Saul to lean upon his own wisdom and understanding and set aside the command of God.

Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin chose to offer the burnt offering that only the priest could do. It is obvious from the timing(as soon as he finished the offering), that God had tested him and he had failed it.

*So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. 11 And Samuel said, "What have you done?"1 Sam. 13:9-11*

No amount of pressure nor human wisdom could justify disobeying a direct commandment of God. God could not overlook this act, and immediately sends the prophet to rebuke him and declare his fate as a result of the action. There is no remorse or repentance whatsoever recorded on the part of Saul. His excuse is so very sad, as is God's rebuke(13:13-14)

*Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, 12 then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering." 1 Sam 13:11-12*

*And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." 1 Sam 13:13-14*

What can we learn here?

Saul is like so many today who look out and survey the situation of the world determine that the commands of God must be modified to fit their assessment of how to make things work better. Today people do exactly the same thing Saul did when they change the conditions of salvation(baptism), worship, or church organization to make it more palatable to the world. What folly to follow in the steps of Saul! Saul was so convinced that the command to wait for Samuel was not as wise as leaning upon his own understanding. Instead of putting his total, complete trust and reliance upon God he relied upon his own wisdom.

God's similar warnings today. II Jn 9; Mt 15:8-9; Gal 1:6-9;

## **Saul Gains “sovereignty” and fights against the “Amalekites”**

As Saul's reign progressed, he gained further and further control over Israel until he “*established his sovereignty*.” This revealed itself in the fighting and winning against the various enemies of Israel. All the nations that had troubled Israel during the time of the Judges are now fought against. These opportunities seem to have arisen because these nations were still plundering even at that time. As each nation created a problem similar to what the Ammonites had done to them earlier (1 Sam 11:1-11), Saul fought against them and God gave him the victory.

*So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed them. 48 And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them. 1 Sam 15:1-3*

Since the Amalekites will play such an important role in the outcome of Saul's reign, it is important to review their dealings with Israel.

The origin of Amalek is nowhere mentioned. They are first mentioned in the time of Abraham along with the Amorites.

*In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar. Gen 14:5-7*

While Balaam was under the influence of inspiration (Num 24:2), he spoke of the ultimate end of these people.

*And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him. 3 Then he took up his oracle and said: 20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "Amalek was first among the nations, But shall be last until he perishes." Num 24:2-3; 20*

So although one of Esau's sons was named Amalek, it is not possible their origin began at that time.

*And this is the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. 10 These were the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. 11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. 12 Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore **Amalek** to Eliphaz. .... 15 These were the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn son of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz, 16 Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief **Amalek**. These were the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. They were the sons of Adah. Gen 36:9-12, 15-16*

Our first real introduction to them as a nation occurred as Israel came out of Egypt. This account occurs just before Israel arrived at Sinai and therefore Rephidim is located somewhere near Sinai. Why Amalek was so far South is not revealed. But they chose to attack Israel and God revealed to them that without his help they could not be victorious. Only while Moses held up his staff did they prevail.

*1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. ... 8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." 10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Ex 17:1, 8-13*

After the defeat, God did something unique. He was so angry with Amalek for what they had done that He placed them in the same category as the seven nations of Canaan.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; 16 for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Ex 17:14-16*



God wanted this written in a book and when Moses later wrote Exodus, he placed these words as a memorial that God will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek. He is threatening them with the same type of destruction that He did with the flood and Sodom & Gomorrah. This would be a divine judgment.

When the 12 spies came out of the land of Canaan, they listed Amalek as one of the nations living in Canaan that would make it impossible for them to take the land. They obviously remembered their last encounter with these people. They are identified as living in the land of the Negev which is located near the bottom of the Dead Sea.

*"Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified {and} very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. **Amalek** is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan." Num 13:28-29*

The last words spoken about Amalek are delivered by Moses in his final address. It is a call to never forget what Amalek did in that battle. This time it is specified that they waited until the strength of Israel went past and attacked the stragglers at the rear when they were tired and weary.

*"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, 18 how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. 19 Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget. Deut 25:17-19*

God then inspires Moses to give a prophecy. After Israel has finished conquering Canaan and they have rest from their enemies then at that time they must "*blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*" Even though it may be a long time, God solemnly charged them "**You shall not forget.**"

## **Saul's Second Failure to Serve God**

It is with all these things clearly in our minds that the event that changed the course of Saul's life occurred. Samuel was charged by God to give Saul the mission to blot them out. It is amazing that due to Israel's unfaithfulness it had taken about 400 years to fulfill this command. Since David reigned 40 years and Solomon only four, at the end of Saul's reign it was 436 years since they had come out of Egypt. This event occurred even before they got to Mt Sinai, so it was still the first year that they had come out of Egypt that this prophesy had been given.

*And it came to pass in **the four hundred and eightieth year** after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord. 1Kings 6:1-2*

How much of the above history Samuel told Saul is not indicated, but it was his duty to know it anyway. God had commanded in prophesy that all kings of Israel should "*write for himself a copy of this law in a book, and "read it all the days of his life."*

**"When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' 17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. 18 **"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. Deut 17:14-20****

Yet it is evident from how the events unfolded that Saul was not aware of these things as he should have been and it gravely affected the outcome. Since he did not take God's feelings into account, he thought lightly of the specific commands God had given to him about the exact way that this vengeance was to be meted out.

## Heed the Voice of the Lord

First, Samuel reminded Saul that it was the Lord who had sent him to anoint Saul as King. Then he was very specific about what he said next. The term “*heed*” could also be translated hear and obey, or give careful consideration to what you are hearing and do well.

*Samuel also said to Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey. 1 Sam 15:1-3*

Samuel then gave Saul the words he is to carefully heed and obey. The Lord has revealed to Samuel and now Samuel to Saul that the time has come for Amalek to be punished. As noted above, God had been very specific about what was to be done even before these words were given to Saul.

This is not Saul, but God who is punishing. This was a Divine judgment! Saul is to be God’s instrument just as the flood(ancient world) and the brimstone(Sodom & Gomorrah) were. He is to carefully heed and do exactly what God says to do because He is that instrument.

The punishment & command is clear and explicit:

1. Attack Amalek.
2. Utterly destroy all they have.
3. Not to spare them.
4. Kill man and woman, infant and nursing child.
5. Kill ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

With such a clear and specific command, it is hard to understand how Saul could fail to fulfill it, but that is exactly what happened.

It was revealed that Saul had no difficulty defeating the Amalekites. The battle was won and there was no reason that God’s commands could not be carried out. Actually it is obvious that the command could have easily been fulfilled when it is revealed “*everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.*” They were able to utterly destroy what they chose to destroy and they were able to spare what they wanted to spare.

*And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8 He also took Agag 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, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. 1Sam. 15:7-9*

The account is clear and forceful. It was not in the will of Saul and the people to fulfill the command. They chose to modify the command in order to make it more pleasing and more logical. Why waste all that is good. They destroyed what was worthless and then like Achan before them chose to ignore the clear instructions and keep “*the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good.*” This is clearly stated with the words “*were unwilling to utterly destroy them.*” It was a problem of will and heart.

*’ābā* ... I, accede to a wish, accept (a reproach), want to, be willing, consent to ... The primary meaning of this root is “the willingness (inclination) to do something under obligation or upon request.” (TDWOT # 17)

It was not their will, so they would not consent or accept what God asked them to do. Though obligated and under request from God they were unwilling to do it. This is always the problem when with itching ears, they seek for teachers after their own lusts. Whether Saul was the driving force or just the one who allowed it to happen is not revealed.

They loosely fulfilled God’s command, but did not do exactly what God demanded that they do. God’s reaction is important for it has never changed since the garden of Eden.

*Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, 11 I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not carried out My commands. And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night. 1Sam. 15:10-11*

God was so disappointed in Saul's decision that he regretted ever making him king. He revealed that the manner in which Saul had fulfilled the command could only be summed with: "He has turned back from following Me." This is how God sees man's efforts to serve Him substituting their own will for His. Though Saul had accomplished most of what God asked, the subtle changes led God to charge Saul with: "He has not carried out my commands." Half hearted service was seen as open rebellion. Samuel was deeply grieved by Saul's disobedience and its consequences.

But what about Saul? He was so pleased with the way things turned out that he had actually built a monument to himself so everyone would remember it.

*So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal." 1Sam. 15:12*

When Samuel met up with him at Gilgal, Saul can hardly contain himself he is so excited about the way everything had turned out, and immediately proclaimed "I have carried out the command of the LORD."

*And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD. 14 But Samuel said, What then is this bleating of the sheep in my 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 oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed. 15:13-15*

Samuel doesn't argue with Saul or even charge him with rebellion. He asked a simple question that had great bearing on what was about to be said. If they had utterly destroyed the animals(God's mission) it would have been completely silent.

Saul is unconcerned with this question. He already has an explanation that he believes will relieve him of all responsibility and guilt. For him it is simple. As Adam in the garden, he blamed it on some one else. The fact that he was the king and the leader who was responsible does not seem to trouble Saul. To Saul it was simple. God gave them a mission, they changed that mission to suit their own will and then perfectly fulfilled that new mission. Instead of utterly destroying the Amalekites and all they had, they destroyed some of the Amalekites and brought the rest back to offer in sacrifice. Though Saul was quite pleased with the results, God was not!

### **The Lord sent Saul "on a Mission"**

*Then Samuel said to Saul, Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night. And he said to him, Speak!... 18 and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated. 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD? 1Sam. 15:16, 18-19*

God viewed Saul's changes as doing *what was evil in the sight of the LORD*. Any change to God's instructions manifested a lack of faith and a lack of submission. Sadly, Saul was unconvinced with this reasoning. He still believed what he had done was better and began to argue with the prophet.

*Then Saul said to Samuel, I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal. 1Sam. 15:20-21*

Saul's point is based on seeing things as man sees them.

- ◆ All he did was try to make God's plan better.
- ◆ In his view, the Amalekites were still going to be killed,
- ◆ the possessions were still going to be taken away,
- ◆ no one in Israel was going to profit from them.
- ◆ God was going to get additional sacrifices
- ◆ and everyone was going to come out ahead.

The problem with this reasoning centers on two realms. First God doesn't see as man sees, hence such reasoning is full of grave danger. Even if a man was wise enough to take on such a thing as improving God's plan, If we missed even the tiniest thing, we would ruin everything. No one is wise enough to try to better God's missions. But the real issue is much deeper. Man can't improve on

God's plan! God has never sought such advice and no would be capable to do it.

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 'Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?' 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Rom 11:33-36*

Second, it destroyed the submissive walk of faith that God so strongly desires. In addition to how God dealt with Saul here, we have even more reasons not to attempt to do what Saul did.

Other reasons why God will not accept worship from those who rebel against His law:

**1. We must worship in the truth of God's word. Without this we are not genuine worshipers.**

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Jn. 4:23-24*

**2. Worship is vain when man's commands are used.**

*He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." 9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. Mk. 7:6-10*

**3. The work, worship and mission of the church were prepared in eternity.**

*To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, Eph 3:8-12*

Since the angels see God's manifold(many sided multicolored) wisdom in the church, how can any one think that making changes in "the eternal purpose" would please God? Imagine the wide eyed astonishment of angels when they see man dare to better it.

**4. Man is to speak and to minister only with the strength God has supplied in His word.**

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10-11*

**5. God has never sought a counselor! His ways are past tracing out.**

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 'Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?' 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Rom 11:33-36*

**6. God has placed throughout the Scriptures things "foolish" to man to test us.**

*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ... 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1Cor 1:21, 26-29*

God chose "foolish things, weak things, base things of the world and things which are despised and things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are." The things man is tempted to make better to suit his own wisdom are the very things God placed in His word to test us. They are meant to screen out those whom God does not desire to have entrance. When a man changes them he literally screens himself right out of the picture. He may appeal to more people than otherwise, but

ends up with his own perverted gospel and not God's (Gal 1:6-9).

This is what Samuel's final words reveal.

*And Samuel said, Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king. 1Sam.15:22-23*

Note the emphasis on obedience and heeding versus rebellion and insubordination. We can heed and submit to His missions, or we can rebel and become insubordinate by changing them. The real punch in the verse is the comparison of Saul's changing God's mission with divination and idolatry. In God's eyes, elevating man's opinion to God's word is the same as idolatry. In failing to fulfill this mission God removed him from being king.

Saul has been blinded to the need of exact obedience by his pride and arrogance. None who truly loved and respected the power and glory of God would have reasoned as an equal and attempted to better the command of God. Only the most arrogant would have the audacity to bring anything back with them for whatever reason. Saul now falls into the same excuse making stance that Adam and Eve did when confronted with their sin. The people took the best, but again, he stresses they took it to offer as sacrifice to God. God was going to receive the glory in all this. He still does not see the nature of his transgression.

## **Saul "Repents"**

It is important to carefully consider these words. We know God is no respecter of persons so if Saul had truly repented, he would have been forgiven. But the account does not deal with that here. It is only stated that the consequences of the sin could not be removed by forgiveness.

*Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord." 26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." 1Sam. 15:24-26*

It is later revealed that God did not forgive Saul for this event, hence this was only worldly sorrow that led to death not godly sorrow leading to life.

*So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. 1Chron. 10:13-14*

*Then Samuel said: "So why do you ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from you and has become your enemy? 17 And the Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. 18 Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day. 19 Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines." 1Sam. 28:16-19*

The final events of the chapter reveal this also. The way Samuel dealt with Agag revealed how this should have been done. Samuel showed no mercy, but God continued to regret He had made Saul king.

*Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. 34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel. 1Sam. 15:32-35*

We will study the remainder of Saul's life as it relates to David since the beginning of the next chapter marks the turn from Saul to David. The remainder of Saul's life is focused on his dealings with David.

*Now the Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons." 1 Sam 16:1*